Reviewer's report

Title: Support for smoke-free policy, and awareness of tobacco health effects and use of smoking cessation therapy in a developing country

Version: 2 Date: 25 January 2011

Reviewer: Sandra Japuntich

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In this manuscript, Owusu-Dabo et al. examine the prevalence of many variables assessing awareness and beliefs about tobacco control policy, self-reported smoking prevalence, and awareness and utilization of tobacco treatment in Ghana. This paper’s main strength is that it examines tobacco-related beliefs in an interesting and anomalous country: a developing (and tobacco producing) country for which tobacco use rates have remained relatively low. Despite the interesting premise, this paper falls short by not having a clear focus, guiding questions or hypotheses. This resulted in a long and somewhat unfocused manuscript.

Major essential revisions:

1. The introduction should review studies of this sort that have been conducted in other developing countries. How do these countries differ from Ghana in ways that would influence smoking rates?
2. The introduction should review the literature on the main variable categories for analysis and justify why these would be important to examine in Ghana.
3. This paper would benefit from guiding hypotheses as to which cultural and smoking-related factors might influence Ghana’s low smoking rate.
4. The list of variables reported on is very long and it is easy to get lost in the details. The authors should use the guiding hypotheses to carefully select variables of interest (and thereby reducing the number of total items on which they report in the manuscript).
5. The methods, data analysis and results sections are quite long and could be streamlined considerably. For example, it is not necessary to report the text of every questionnaire item, particularly when using standardized questionnaires (like the ITC survey). When reporting answer choices, all answer choices are not needed (e.g., could report that answer choices ranged from strongly agree-strongly disagree). It is not necessary to include syntax used for data analysis. It is repeated both in the measures and the data analysis section how items were dichotomized for analysis, stating this in one place is sufficient.

Minor essential revisions:

1. This manuscript would benefit from a thorough proofread. There were several instances where words were used incorrectly (e.g., on page 25, “suggesting that cultural influences and beliefs may be playing a major role in determining specific
attitudes TOWARD smoking”), or words were missing from sentences (e.g., page 23, “the degree of AWARENESS OF current smoke-free policy…”). Quotation marks should be included for all questionnaire items when the authors choose to write out the entire item.

2. In the study design section, the authors did not explain how a systematic sample of 20 households was identified in selected EAs.

3. In the “Study Variables” section, the authors should note when items come from standardized questionnaires (e.g., ITC survey).

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.