Reviewer's report

Title: Can primary care data be used to monitor regional smoking prevalence? An analysis of The Health Improvement Network primary care data

Version: 1 Date: 15 August 2011

Reviewer: May Chiew

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Major Compulsory Revisions

1. No mention of what the proportion of researchers with patients with missing smoking status and THIN records and what happened to them. Were they excluded from the analysis?

2. Methods page 4. In 2008, the GLF collected information from 16 407 adults. The researchers states 'from around 17 000 adults' which over represents the amount of people actually surveyed.

3. Is the GLF the 'gold standard' for measuring smoking prevalence at a regional area?

Minor Essential Revisions

1. It would be informative to include a description of patient characteristics in the results section or even a table displaying the mean age, proportion of males and females for THIN patients and also characteristics from GLF.

2. Limitations do not include the risk that both THIN and GLF smoking prevalence may under represent true smoking prevalence as there is no bio-chemical validation for smoking status. Furthermore, was there any variability between general practices in their completeness and quality of data recording?

Discretionary Revisions

1. The introduction is very brief and could be more detailed. What is the current situation in regional areas? Have any past studies found that there are significant discrepancies between regions? Why it is important to be able to measure the prevalence of smoking at a regional level.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests