Reviewer’s report

Title: Reactions to FDA Regulation of Tobacco Products: Findings from the 2009 ITC United States Survey

Version: 1 Date: 17 October 2011

Reviewer: Richard Edwards

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Reviewer report on “Reactions to FDA Regulation of Tobacco Products: Findings from the 2009 ITC United States Survey” by Brian V. Fix et al for BMC Public Health.

Richard Edwards, Oct 12 2011

This is a report from a cross-sectional sample of smokers from the US ITC cohort. The main focus is on describing attitudes towards potential FDA regulatory actions on tobacco products. There is also a sub-study of packs returned by regular smokers.....

I am broadly supportive of the publication of this paper, as it is important to document levels of support for important and topical tobacco control measures. This study provides some baseline data about levels of support for these measures which may be used to assess change (probably an increase) over time as debate about the FDA regulations develops.

BMC Public Health Questions
1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined? Yes, mostly
2. Are the methods appropriate and well described? Yes, mostly
3. Are the data sound? Yes
4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition? Yes, mostly
5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data? Yes
6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated? No, not much on limitations
7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished? Yes, mostly
8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found? Yes, mostly
9. Is the writing acceptable? Yes

Compulsory revisions:
1. The last para of the background states “In the US, there is little data from a
nationally representative sample of smokers to provide baseline measures [i.e. about support for the FDA regulatory powers]. I think this needs to be more explicit. Is there any published public opinion data from smokers or the general population? If so it should be referenced and any strengths/weaknesses/gaps noted. If this is the first such survey, then clearly it is of more interest as a paper.

2. There is no description given for the sampling methods (e.g. sampling frame and recruitment methods) for the US ITC sample. No reference is made to a published methods paper/report about the US ITC sample, for readers wanting further methodological detail.

3. There are no confidence intervals given for the point estimates of support.

Discretionary revisions:
1. The purpose of the paper is described as to provide baseline measures of attitudes and beliefs in these areas (proposed and implemented FDA regulations) among smokers. The pack collection study rather seems to be a test of manufacturer compliance with the light and mild descriptor ban, and does not fit with the main purpose of the paper. I suggest this could be omitted and possibly submitted as a separate short report.

2. In the abstract, over half of the results section is taken up with the findings from the packs study (NB also see point 1 above). This seems unbalanced given the main paper focuses much more on the findings from the survey of smoker attitudes and support for tobacco control measures.

3. In the background section, first page, the fourth bullet point is difficult to interpret e.g. are all of the listed to be banned? Which of the preceding list are currently stayed pending the outcome of litigation?

4. Some of the background material doesn’t seem that relevant e.g. the detail about previous research on the impact of GHWs. The smokers were not asked about GHWs in this study, so other than a brief statement that the FDA has introduced new requirements about GHWs, I am not sure much more information is needed.

5. Where the dates for data collection are given, I think it would be worth stating that this occurred prior to any of the specific FDA regulation measures described in the bullet points in the background being implemented.

6. Discussion could mention that this is baseline data, before there was much awareness of FDA regulatory powers; and that follow up data will be required to track support over time.

7. Last paragraph of the discussion seems a bit of a hot potch, and doesn’t really round off the paper.

Minor Essential Revisions
1. There is a typo where ‘higher education’ is repeated in footnote 2 for table 1”

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests
Quality of written English: Acceptable

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

Declaration of competing interests:

No, except I have been an occasional collaborator and co-author with Ron Borland over the last 5-6 years.