Reviewer's report

Title: Pulmonary function, respiratory symptoms, and dust exposures among workers engaged in early manufacturing processes of tea: a cohort study

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Reviewer: Jordan Minov

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Tea processing is known health hazard for exposed workers which has been investigated in several studies in the last decades (Uragoda, 1970; Blanc & Trainor, 1986; Roberts & Thomson, 1988; Cartier & Malo, 1990; Shirai et al., 1994; Zuskin et al. 1996; Jayawardana & Udupihille, 1997; Abramson et al., 2001; Minov et al. 2007; etc). The results obtained from these studies indicate that workplace exposure to herbal and fruit tea dust is associated with occurrence of respiratory symptoms, lung function impairment, as well as with both allergic and non-allergic occupational asthma.

The authors of present study aimed at assessment of respiratory symptoms, lung function, allergic sensitization to common and occupational allergens, and tea dust exposure among workers engaged in early-stage tea manufacturing and to identify contributing factors to potential respiratory effects. The conclusion of their investigation designed as a cohort study is that these workers have higher prevalence of respiratory symptoms and lung function impairment as compared to controls unexposed to tea dust which may be related to tea dust exposures, especially to the coarse fraction.

The paper is reasonably clearly written (some grammatical errors, easily corrected), with a clear study goal and a proper length, well done study work-up, appropriate statistical analysis of data obtained, and with conclusion based on the study results.

Despite the readers will not gain a substantially new insight regarding this issue, this paper still contribute to our knowledge of adverse respiratory effects of exposure to tea dust. I recommend the manuscript to be accepted for publication after minimal revision.

Abstract

- The key words should be arranged according to the Medical Subject Headings – MeSH (manufacturing process of tea?).

Discussion

- The discussion should be shortened and more focused on the results of the study;

The language should be polished up where necessary.
Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

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.