Reviewer's report

Title: Trends in socioeconomic inequalities in smoking prevalence, consumption, initiation, and cessation between 2001 and 2008 in the Netherlands. Findings from a national population survey.

Version: 2 Date: 15 March 2012

Reviewer: Jamie Bryant

Reviewer's report:

An interesting article with a few minor points to be addressed as minor essential revisions. I think the article could be shortened by tightening of the expressions and language used. There is some redundancy throughout the manuscript.

Abstract

1. ‘Were more likely to be smoker’ is grammatically incorrect.
2. The conclusion of the abstract could be strengthened. The novel aspect of this study is the examination of differences in smoking consumption, initiation ratios and quit ratios, rather than prevalence, which provides information about how SES differences in smoking prevalence originate. A statement about these should be added- currently, only prevalence is addressed.

Introduction

1. The reference provided for the statement ‘Nowadays, mortality rates tend to be higher among lower socioeconomic status (SES) groups in most Western countries [1]’ refers only to European countries. Additional references should be added to support this statement, or the statement changed.
2. ‘The higher prevalence of smoking in individuals from lower SES groups is the most important single cause of socioeconomic differences in mortality [2]’. Smoking is a significant contributor to socioeconomic differences in mortality, accounting for up to a third of all differences between those of low and high socio-economic status. See more recent reference by Stringhini S, Sabia S, Shipley M, Brunner E, Nabi H, Kivimaki M, et al. Association of socioeconomic position with health behaviours and mortality. JAMA 2010;303(12):1159-1166. References need to be provided for the paragraph outlining the implementation of tobacco control policies in the Netherlands (page 4)
3. Aims need to be rephrased. Currently there is a change of tense in description of aims and one two.

Method

1. Is ‘TNS NIPO’ an acronym? If so, should be spelt out on first use.
2. The three income categories seem reasonable, but what is the basis for selecting these cut points?
Results
3. Consider using ‘Demographic characteristics’ or ‘Socio-demographic characteristics’ rather than ‘Background characteristics’.

Discussion
4. ‘Our findings suggests that’ grammatically incorrect.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

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.