Author's response to reviews

Title: Tobacco promotion 'below-the-line': Exposure among adolescents and young adults in NSW, Australia

Authors:

Donna A Perez (donna.perez@cancerinstitute.org.au)
Anne C Grunseit (anne.grunseit@sydney.edu.au)
Chris Rissel (chris.rissel@sydney.edu.au)
James Kite (james.kite@cancerinstitute.org.au)
Trish Cotter (trish.cotter@cancerinstitute.org.au)
Sally Dunlop (sally.dunlop@cancerinstitute.org.au)
Adrian Bauman (adrian.bauman@sydney.edu.au)

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Dr Thomson,

Re: Tobacco promotion 'below-the-line': Exposure among adolescents and young adults in NSW, Australia (MS: 1821808599653649)

Thank you for the opportunity to revise the above manuscript. We appreciate the reviewer’s comments and thank her for the kind remarks. Please find our point-by-point response to the reviewers’ concerns below.

1. Methods

"We have added a sentence to the method section noting that the questionnaire was piloted (p6, par5)."

[I couldn’t find this sentence in your text – I strongly recommend adding it in for publication as it addresses my and probably others’ concerns about the validity of your assessments. I suggest that you mention how it was piloted (i.e. cognitive testing, etc), rather than just saying it was piloted and leaving it at that.] [The rest of the justification is satisfactory – thank you.]

As noted by the Associate Editor, the sentence was in fact mostly on p7. Apologies for the confusion.

4. Limitations

[i sic strongly suggest but will leave it up to you to put a little more thought into the discussion of your study's limitations. First off, I'd remove the statement that, as cross sectional data, you cannot infer causal associations. While true, this is like saying the drawback of a dog is that it doesn't have wings -- that's not the dog's fault. You don't make any causal claims in the manuscript [sic]. This is not a limitation of your study -- it's simply a fact. Second, I'd move the last sentence in paragraph 3 of the discussion section on participant recall of tobacco displays in venues that have tobacco display bans to this section. You should point out that this could be due to: 1) actual law breaking by venues; 2) respondents conflating small and large scale groceries; 3) respondents assuming that they had seen tobacco ads because they had grown used to them (as you state).]

We agree that the sentence about the cross-sectional nature of the data being a limitation is unnecessary and removed it. Thank you for pointing this out. We have not, however, moved the sentence relating to participant recall of tobacco displays. We feel that points 1) and 3) that you raise, and were already included in the manuscript (p14, par2), are more relevant as points of discussion, rather than limitations, because they speculate on things beyond the ability of this study to control (i.e. non-compliance by retailers and assumed exposure on behalf of participants). Point 2) is currently mentioned as a limitation on p16, par 1 because this reflects the nature of the questionnaire.

Once again, we thank you for the opportunity to revise this manuscript. We look forward to hearing from you again.

Sincerely,

James Kite (on behalf of all authors)