Reviewer's report

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

Version: 1 Date: 19 January 2012

Reviewer: Jennifer Pearson

Reviewer's report:

This article presents research summarizing youth and young adult exposure to no-traditional forms of tobacco promotion in New South Wales, Australia. The study is well written, with appropriate references to previous work and apparently solid statistical methods (though I would like more information on them –see below). Unfortunately, the study design and methods are rather weak, making interpretation of the results difficult.

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. Methods – the study design is a major drawback to interpretation of these results. It is difficult to believe that these retrospective reports of exposure to tobacco advertising are valid, especially at such a fine-grained level (i.e. distinguishing small and large grocery stores – how did you explain the difference between the these types of stores to your participants? Why is this difference important scientifically or for policy?). I would like to see discussion of why the reader should believe that retrospective data on this topic is valid. Also, there is a big difference between interviewing a 12 year old and a 24 year old – how do you think this age difference affected the validity of your data? I need you to “sell” me a lot more on your study design and methods.

2. In general, your statistical methods are appropriate. I would like to see more of an argument justifying why your sample is representative, especially considering your 45% response and RDD sampling frame. Perhaps RDD is not an issue in Australia, but in the US, many households (especially young adults) do not have landlines and are thus unreachable via RDD. How were your weights constructed?

3. I’m confused by your decision to lump 12-15 year olds into the “never/rarely” category (p. 9). Wouldn’t this inflate the effect reported in Table 3 for 18-24 yr olds in bars/pubs/nightclubs? Wouldn’t it make more sense to exclude them from this analysis and just compare 16-17 year olds with the young adults?

Minor Essential Revisions

1. It’s a pleasure to read such a nicely polished article.

2. Reference 18 is incomplete

Discretionary Revisions

1. Considering how exhaustive your were with the channels you asked about, I’m
surprised you didn't ask about tobacco exposure on social networking sites or Youtube. This is a big deal in the US and could give you some nice results. For example, you could ask if the respondent had ever “friended” a tobacco company or brand.

**Level of interest:** An article of limited interest

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare I have no competing interests