Reviewer's report

Title: Snus user identity and addiction - a Swedish focus group study on adolescents

Version: 1 Date: 11 June 2012

Reviewer: Thomas Power

Reviewer's report:

This is an informative, well-written, and well-conducted focus group study of Swedish snus using adolescents. Strengths include separate focus groups for boys and girls, focus groups made up of adolescents who use snus but do not smoke, the exclusion of subjects with chronic illnesses, and the independent coding of the focus group transcripts by two researchers. The authors do an excellent job interpreting their findings in light of the Theory of Planned Behavior and identity theory. Particularly interesting findings were the adolescent’s limited understanding of abstinence symptoms and the nature of parent responses to adolescent usage. Limitations involved only running one focus group of girls (although admittedly, the frequency of usage in girls is much lower than usage in boys), the focus on students from vocational programs (although usage rates in these schools were higher), and the rather small number of subjects (it is possible with a sample of this size that theoretical saturation was not reached). However, given that this is the first study of adolescent snus usage from the user’s perspective, the contributions outweigh the limitations. A few minor points need to be addressed:

Major Compulsory Revisions

None

Minor Essential Revisions

1. Since what comes out of the analysis of focus group data is largely a function of the specific questions that were asked, it would be helpful if a table with the focus group questions was included.

2. Related to this point, one of the questions had to do with the participants’ views on prevention. No themes emerged in this area. Was this an area that was not covered or were the answers not informative or too short?

3. How many girls were in the girls’ focus group? Given that there was only one group of girls, I would recommend that the finding regarding the use of snus in response to negative emotions not be mentioned. This is only based on one group and possibly only one or two girls. It is likely something that some boys do as well. On the other hand, I think the gender role findings should be retained since these would likely be replicated if more girl groups were included.
4. Since these groups were only conducted with students enrolled in vocational training, and many of the results had to do with occupational identity, it is likely that different conclusions would be drawn in a study of college preparatory students. This is acknowledged in the discussion—however, I think it would be good to include a reference to this population in the title of the study as well.

Discretionary Revisions

1. I may be missing something, but I’m not sure how the “approach” theme relates to the “influence others” and “ambivalence” categories. Maybe another word or phrase should be used.

**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.