Reviewer's report

Title: Factors influencing the choice of transport mode for short distances in older adolescents: a qualitative study

Version: 1 Date: 24 January 2013

Reviewer: Palma Chillón

Reviewer's report:

This manuscript addresses an important public health issue, i.e. the factors associated with the choice of transportation mode among Belgian old adolescents. The stronger value of the study is the use of qualitative data. However, the manuscript would need a deep and meticulous work to be clearly understood. There are several major issues and minor issues that should be addressed by the authors to improve the manuscript. See the comments below.

Major Compulsory Revisions:

1. It is strongly recommended to reduce the results and discussion. There are too many information, the same information is repeated sometimes and it is difficult to follow the article. I would suggest discuss only the most relevant factors that have influenced the mode of transportation. Results and discussion are in some cases very similar.

2. There must be consistency in the terms used and chose only 1 term per each concept. For example, authors use active transport, active transportation or active commuting for referring the same issue. Or bicycle and cycle. Or transportation mode and transport mode and mode of transportation…etc.

3. It is suggest a deep review of the grammar by an English native expert of the overall article. There are many colloquial expressions and incorrect constructed sentences.

4. The introduction is confusing.
   - The 1st paragraph references studies about transportation to school (1-4 and 6-8), however, they are included as references for overall active transportation, which is not true. Authors must specify always in the article when the active commuting is on the way to school or when the active commuting is on the way to other destinations (example in page 5, line 86).
   - Moreover, the information provided in the introduction must belong to other studies and have references; the second paragraph in page 6 (from lines 95 to 104) has only 2 references at the end.
   - Regarding the last sentence of this paragraph, it is suggest including reference indicating that public transportation is an active transportation.
   - The third paragraph (lines 105 to 110) must be deeply reviewed and this
information should be included in the method.

5. There is, under my knowledge, one study focused in older adolescents (since the sample was adolescents from 12 to 18) and in the overall commuting (see the reference: Chillón P, Ortega FB, Ruiz JR, de Bourdeaudhuij I, Martínez-Gómez D, Vicente-Rodríguez G, Widhalm K, Molnar D, Gottrand F, González-Gross M, Ward DS, Moreno LA, Castillo MJ, Sjöström M on behalf of the HELENA study group. Active commuting and physical activity in adolescents from Europe: Results from the HELENA study. Pediatric Exercise Science, 2011, 23(2):207-217.). So, there are some unreal statements in the introduction. It is suggested rewriting the introduction and include this study in the discussion.

Minor Essential Revisions:

1. Title. It is suggested to rewrite the title in a more direct way. I do not think is necessary to include “short distances”.

   - Sampling. The name of the University hospital must be included. The justification of choose Antwerp regarding the distance is not clear; aren’t there other cities with short distances?
   - Research protocol and measures (line 132). The single question about PA was valid in adults (reference 30), and not for older adolescents. This must be solved.

3. Results.
   - It is suggested including percentages of the number of participants supporting every opinion for every variable (i.e. Instead of writing “A lot of participants…” write the exact percentage…).
   - Table 2, “transportation and physical activity behavior”. It is suggested separating the group of variables a better understanding. For example, the first 4 variables of %cycling/walking to school, %car passenger to school, %moped to school and %public transport to school should be separated from the next variables group of variables (i.e. there will be 3 groups separated by two horizontal lines).

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

Quality of written English: Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

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’