Reviewer's report

Title: Long-term follow-up of a high- and a low-intensity smoking cessation intervention in a dental setting- a randomized trial

Version: 2 Date: 28 March 2013

Reviewer: Christian Meyer

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General comments
This is an interesting study investigating the stability of smoking abstinence following counseling interventions with different levels of intensity. The study extended previous results from a RCT by adding a follow-up assessment covering 5-8 years. The intervention was based in the dental care setting, which was an innovative approach for implementation. Such data are rare and in particular relevant to evaluate the public health impact of respective smoking interventions. The study group realized an impressive long-term follow-up rate. The study is limited by a relatively small sample sizes that merely allow the testing of larger intervention effects although even small effects could be expected to impact on public health. Nevertheless, the results revealed a highly consistent pattern indicating that 12-month outcome data fairly well approximates maintenance across several years.

Specific Comments
- In the abstract it is stated that smokers were recruited from dental or general health care. Later on and in the title only dental care was mentioned. This is confusing.
- The statement that 70% of Swedish smokers want to quit is puzzling in light of international results indicating that 60-70% of populations smokers do not intend to quit within the next six month and only a very small fraction seriously consider quitting in the next 4 weeks (e.g. Wewers ME, Stillman FA, Hartman AM, Shopland DR. Distribution of daily smokers by stage of change: Current Population Survey results. Preventive medicine 2003;36(6):710-20). At least the method of assessment should be reported for this data referring to a source in Swedish language (high rates are expected if you ask about quitting at some time in your live – but predictive validity of such questions are low)
- It would be important to know if the intervention study was a “cessation induction” or “aid to cessation” trial. This is important for the evaluation of relapse curves and the intervention effect. It should be stated if the initial study recruited participants among consecutive patients. What are the inclusion criteria and participation proportion? This basic study feature might be documented in the cited paper but should also be state here.
- The range of the follow-up period is rather large. What is the reason? How do the authors reflect this issue in there analyses. I would suggest adjusting
analyses for FU length or model time effects.

- I miss a baseline measure of intention to quit and nicotine dependence (FTND, HIS, ...). These would be important outcome predictors and potential moderators.

- How were the follow-ups tied between study groups (first counseling, last counseling, or planned date for cessation)? Was a “grace period” applied to define sustained abstinence?


- Page 10, para “other support”: It is not clear what and how it was measured – “....mainly social....” – what else?

- Results: Given the low power of the analyses, estimates should also be presented for non-significant results.

- Page 11 para “still trying”: “responding to the questionnaire” or telephone interview / follow-up?

- Page 12 para 1: In my opinion it would be very interesting to report separate analyses for the predictive value of 7-day point abstinence rather than “7-day but not 6-month...”. The first outcome measure is very common the later one very unusual (Hughes JR, Keely JP, Niaura RS, Ossip-Klein DJ, Richmond R, Swan GE. Measures of abstinence in clinical trials: issues and recommendations. Nicotine Tob Res 2003;5:13-25.). The use of these artificial measures substantially reduces the practical utility of the results.

Christian Meyer, Senior Researcher at the University of Greifswald

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

Quality of written English: Acceptable

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

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests