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: 3 Date: 17 May 2013

Reviewer: Christian Meyer

Reviewer’s report:

Discretionary Revisions

The authors did a nice job in revising the paper! I think they adequately addressed most points. However two points are still questionable:

1. “Intention to quit was assessed at baseline but we have chosen not to present the data explicitly. However, the information of intention to quit and of number of cigarettes/day was used in the multivariable analyses.”

“We have chosen not to present the data explicitly” is no acceptable explanation. If you choose to adjust the multivariable analyses it would be relevant to know the base-line distribution. Hiding such information without giving a reason makes me skeptical with respect to the integrity of the data analysis.

2. “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.

Response: We agree that “point prevalence but <6months” is an artificial measure, yet we chose to use it as a predictor because point prevalence, by definition, includes continuous abstinence. However, we append a table at the end of this response letter where analyses with point prevalence are added. As can be seen in that table, we think that the use of point prevalence, due to the strong correlation with continuous abstinence, gives a misleading picture. E.g. that point
prevalence at 12m is more significant than continuous abstinence at 12m for continuous abstinence at long-term follow-up."

Thank you for your illustration. However, what I tried to suggest was to either include point or continuous abstinence in two different models. I am aware that this is very detailed. However, the advantage would be that one could approximate the sustainability of outcome data from previous and future studies. Further one could compare both measures and may have a solid rational for choosing an outcome measure when planning a study. In the current analyses you have a factorial variable with three categories represented by two indicator variables. This has to be considered as one predictor variable and predictive relevance of both underlying measures are hard to disentangle. In conclusion, I still think that the authors could improve the impact of the paper by the approach suggested above.

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**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