Reviewer's report

Title: Young adult smokers' responses to novel tobacco warnings

Version: 1 Date: 15 April 2013

Reviewer: Ron Borland

Reviewer's report:

This is an interesting qualitative study. The findings are of potential importance as they point to new possibilities for communication.

Essential revisions: The authors take into consideration the following comments and revise the manuscript accordingly: My main concern with it is that it both implicitly and explicitly makes claims about the relative prevalence of the patterns of beliefs and reactions it describes. I do not believe these are legitimate inferences or conclusions that can be drawn from qualitative studies unless the sample is genuinely random and the patterns reported on are close to universal among the sample.

What is of interest here is the patterns of responding within individuals and the nature and range of reactions elicited. The results need to focus more on this. It would be reasonable to call for quantitative estimates of the prevalence of the patterns of belief that appear resistant to current warnings, but not to draw conclusions about prevalence. In this regard I would like to see links between responses of participants to the various forms of stimuli, if the patterns are of sufficient interest.

My second concern is that there is no discussion of the viability of mandating warnings about social factors on packs. While these may be useful strategies for independent anti-smoking activities, to be placed on packs requires legitimacy under the relevant legislation. Most labelling requirements are about warning about material harms from use, about potentially harmful substances in the product, and about more or less harmful methods of use. I personally doubt that the suggested warnings would survive legal challenge in most jurisdictions.

A more minor point. Some discussion is needed as to whether the reduced impact of current warnings is due to them being generically familiar or to them likely never being effective with this group. I would also like to see some discussion of the potential impact of disgust at the images in affecting behaviour in conjunction with or independent of beliefs about personal vulnerability.

Thus I would like to see both the study be more modest in its conclusions, but go beyond the pack in its suggestions about the utility of the more social messages.

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.