Reviewer’s report

Title: The impact of the Cyprus comprehensive smoking ban on air quality and economic business of hospitality venues

Version: 2 Date: 10 October 2012

Reviewer: Bernice Elger

Reviewer’s report:

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined?
The research topic is very interesting and the three main aims of the study are:
1. To assess the indoor levels of particulate matter in hospitality venues in Cyprus before and after the implementation of the law
2. To evaluate the role of enforcement
3. To examine the legislation’s effect on revenue and employment
Overall, the questions in this paper are well defined, but the answers need to be revised and clarified.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described?
The methods and results section are inappropriate. They need to be described both in the methods and results section in more detail in order for the reader to understand what was actually done and why these methods were chosen.

3. Are the data sound?
We are not able to tell because major information is lacking in the paper: who carried or placed the TSI SidePak AM510 Personal Aerosol Monitors? How many hours on how many days was each venue sampled in periods before and after the smoking bans, etc.

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?
See above 3.

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?
See above 3.

6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated?
Some limitations of the work are stated in the text, the possible impact of these limitations on the results should be explained more clearly, i.e. more people sitting (and smoking) outside during spring/summer – what does that mean and were these things considered when analysing the data?
7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished?
The authors cite different studies, one statement (part) needs clarification, but the rest is done appropriately.

8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?
The title of the paper is well chosen. When reading the abstract, certain questions arise, which could and indeed should be answered more clearly.

9. Is the writing acceptable?
The quality of written English is acceptable. Some minor changes are needed.

Please number your comments and divide them into the following categories:

Comments:

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. Throughout the paper it is not clear which districts of Cyprus the authors talk about and which parts are included in the Cypriot Statistical Service (there are 6 districts in Cyprus, but only 5 are actually included in this paper which is important to mention). Due to the political situation a short explanation should be added as a footnote.

2. Furthermore, the full name of the law or at the least the common short version of it should be mentioned in the beginning of the text, i.e. the original name with an English translation in a footnote to give interested readers the chance to look it up and compare with other legal regulations in this field.

3. In the Background section, after the first sentence, a reference should be added.

4. In the 3 sentence in the Background section, a number of studies are mentioned, but only one is cited. Therefore, at least three or four of these studies should be cited additionally to give a broader overview of the existing literature and to support the strength of this statement.

5. Sentence 8 and 9 in the Background section points out that there is a debate about the economic consequences of smoking bans; here as well citations or examples are needed in order to support this statement.

6. When mentioning the approximate number of 600 deaths and the annual economic burden for the health care system per year due to smoking in sentence 10 of the Background section, the overall numbers per year should be mentioned to give a better overview. It should also be noted that the numbers are based on a study that was published in 2007, which means that the numbers could have changed or are not up to date anymore.

7. If there is any data/information available about the reasons for the high level of cigarette consumption in Cyprus, which is mentioned in sentence 11 of the Background part, it would add a lot to the paper as it is quite outstanding that the numbers are this high.
8. The Methods part needs major revisions. In the venues part, the authors of this paper have to explain why they chose to use a convenience sample and not, i.e. a randomised sample. Furthermore, it has to be explained why different venues were sampled at different times and how a decision was made about the reasonableness of the times. It is not clear to the reviewer what “relatively busy” means. A table with the distribution of the 35 respectively 21 venues in the four cities should be added. The reviewer strongly criticises that the authors do not explain why only 21 of 35 venues were resampled and how the resampling was undertaken. Besides that, it would be of interest if the owners of the venues were asked for consent and if that was a reason for the smaller number of venues.

9. In the Air monitoring part it is important to keep in mind that particles of this size are released due to other causes than smoking. This, as well as the description of “the appropriate methodology” should be mentioned in the second sentence of the air monitoring section.

10. Is spending one hour at the venue a reasonable time?, the same question arises about spending two minutes outside the venue before entering and after leaving the venue.

11. In the Indoor air quality part it should be explained, why no post-ban measurements took place in clubs.

12. Regarding the numbers in the Enforcement part, the authors should make sure, that the numbers are well explained as right now there is a difference in the amount (6540 overall checks – 6449 on-the-spot fines – 83 court cases = 8 remaining cases without explanation)

13. Please name the highest absolute number of on-the-spot fines (n=x)

14. Table 2 is missing

15. Concerning the Economic revenue and employment part, either in this part or later in the discussion, it is inevitable to discuss the reasons for the increase in the turnover indices in the different areas and the decrease of the employment rate (and what effect that has on the results). Furthermore, the term “hospitality industry” should be defined, this is important to understand which venues were included for the statistical analysis of the Cypriot Statistical Service and if that actually corresponds with the selected venues were the research was conducted.

16. For the Discussion section, it should be explained more detailed why enforcement plays a key role in initiating and maintain a smoke-free legislation.

17. Please give examples for countries were the task of implementing the smoking ban was perceived as relatively easy.

18. The authors mention in sentence 2 of the third paragraph of the Discussion section, that their results are in agreement with other studies, please cite 2-3 of these studies in the text.

19. Please provide the overall number of on-spot-fines (as a short reminder) in sentence 3 of the third paragraph of the Discussion section.

20. Sentence 8 of the fourth paragraph of the Discussion section starts with “the authors”, it should be made clear that the authors of the previous mentioned
study are addressed and that it is not a conclusion of the authors of this paper. In sentence 9 and 10, other studies are described; this is not obvious and irritating for the reader.

Minor Essential Revisions

- Enforcement information, first sentence: … Department, which is part of (delete under) the Ministry …
- Conclusion, second sentence: … that nations with high (high is missing right now) smoking rates …

Discretionary Revisions

- Regarding the abstract, the Background part should mention the year in which the smoking ban was introduced in Cyprus.
- Regarding the Keywords: all five keywords should be written with capital letters, not only the first four

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.