Author's response to reviews

Title: The odd man out in Sub-Saharan Africa: Understanding the tobacco use behavior in Madagascar

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Editor,

We are pleased to submit our paper, ‘The odd man out in Sub-Saharan Africa: Understanding the tobacco use behavior in Madagascar’, for publication in the BMC Public Health. Tobacco use in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) has been increasing over the past decades and expected to reach over 80% of global use rate by 2030. As a result, over 70% of all global tobacco-related deaths will occur in these countries where governments are already over-burdened with infectious diseases. However, understanding this global tobacco epidemic in LMICs is problematic because of inadequate data and research. To close this gap, we used the 2008 Demographic Health Survey, a nationally representative data to estimate the prevalence of tobacco use in 17 Sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries and perform much detailed analysis to identify demographics and socioeconomic factors associated with the use of all forms of tobacco use (smoking, smokeless tobacco and dual use) in Madagascar. We found that while tobacco use in all the 17 SSA countries has strong gender gradient, the usage rate was exceptionally high in Madagascar (48.9% of males; 10.3% of females), which provided the rationale for the detailed analysis.

The knowledge about tobacco use and control in LMICs continues to grow, but Madagascar is one of the few countries where there is very little research to shed light on the situation in the country. Moreover, there is a dire need for information about tobacco use in the country for at least two major reasons: 1) the emergences of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) as a major cause of death and 2) the heavy investment by Imperial Tobacco Limited since it acquired the Tobaccor Group in 2001 to bolster consumption. These underlying dynamics generate an urgent need for a thorough investigation into tobacco use in the country.

This study employs rigorous analytical methods, including weighted prevalence estimates and multinomial logistic regression model, to analyze a nationally representative data so that the results can be extrapolated to the entire adult population in the country. Furthermore, unlike many studies on tobacco use, this study simultaneously assesses smoked, smokeless and dual tobacco use among adults and the analysis can be a guide to other SSA countries to simultaneously examine the determinants of tobacco consumption when multiple tobacco products are present. Thus, the publication of this paper will not only close major gap in knowledge about international health and tobacco use in LMICs but also provide important information for policymakers and the public health community in their efforts to combat the rising NCDs in SSA. The paper has not been submitted to any other journal and will not be submitted elsewhere for publication while under consideration by BMC Public Health.

Sincerely,

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