Reviewer's report

Title: The impact of televised tobacco control advertising content on campaign recall: Evidence from the International Tobacco Control (ITC) United Kingdom Survey

Version: 3 Date: 14 February 2014

Reviewer: Matthew C Farrelly

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Major

I have no major revisions to suggest.

Minor

1.) There is work by researchers (Langleben, Wang) at the U. of Pennsylvania that warrants being cited and discussed. If I remember correctly, they have found contradictory findings based on fMRI studies. While I think the bulk of the research now indicates that graphic/emotional ads are more effective, the Langleben research is worthy of discussing.

2.) I appreciate that the authors explored non-linearities in GRPs, however, I would suggest trying the square root of GRPs as an alternative to quadratic GRPs because quadratic GRPs can lead to lower levels of awareness as GRPs increase, whereas the square root of GRPs reflect diminishing returns and a possible plateau in awareness at high levels of GRPs which I think makes more intuitive sense.

3.) Given the variation in the timing and delivery of GRPs for the two styles of ads, it would be good to superimpose the number of observations (with bigger and smaller bubbles representing the number of surveys) from the survey over time on the figures with GRPs to illustrate that there is no bias in the timing of surveys and GRPs. In other words, if the survey is completed at certain times of year that is closer in timing to one style of ad over another, that might boost recall. If the surveys are spread out evenly over time, there should be no issue.

4.) The measure of recall is quite general. The results, while convincing, would be even stronger if the measures of recall were tailored to each of the ads (i.e., one question per ad and then aggregated). That said, the current measure works in that only those that are truly memorable appear to register in this general measure of awareness.

Discretionary

None.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field
Quality of written English: Acceptable

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

Declaration of competing interests: I declare I have no competing interests.