Reviewer's report

Title: Association between tobacco and alcohol use among young adult bar patrons: a cross-sectional study in three cities

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Reviewer: Sean P. Barrett

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Ling and colleagues report on the association between alcohol and tobacco use among a random sample young adult bar patrons from three American cities. High rates of tobacco use were reported in each city (>50%) and strong associations were observed between tobacco use and various indices of heavy drinking. Although the link between drinking and smoking among young adults has well established, this study is among the first to examine it in bar patrons specifically.

Major Compulsory Revisions

1) Although the frequency of past 30 day tobacco and alcohol are reported, the temporal associations between drinking and smoking were not directly examined by this study. Thus, it is possible that (heavy) drinking and smoking episodes were separate. This limitation should be addressed.

2) The categorization of smoking (e.g. Occasional, Regular) and drinking status (e.g. Occasional, Frequent) appeared to be somewhat arbitrary. What was the empirical basis for these operationalisations? It could be informative if the authors reported on the linear relationships between drinking and smoking frequency using (the original) continuous data.

Minor Essential Revisions

1) A number of lines of evidence suggest a bidirectional relationship between drinking and smoking at the episode level (e.g. drinking is associated with increased smoking AND smoking is associated with increased amounts of alcohol consumed). This should be noted/discussed.

2) ~80% of the sample were current or past college students. This does not appear to be representative of the general young adult population. This should be noted/discussed.

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

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