Reviewer's report

Title: Comparison of patterns of use, beliefs, and attitudes related to waterpipe between beginning and established smokers

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Reviewer: Silvano Gallus

Reviewer's report:

General
This is an interesting manuscript, whose goal is to “explore the time course of waterpipe smoking” in Syria. Prevalence of waterpipe smoking is increasing among Arab communities and monitoring smoking habits and prevalence in younger generations (comparing them with those of older ones) is important to understand the impact of waterpipe smoking for the next future, and to “aid the development of intervention strategies”. Moreover, scanty information is available on this smoking method. Therefore, it is of interest to compare various patterns of use, beliefs, and attitudes related to narghile smoking in younger and older generations. Although discussion is well-written, in the present form the manuscript could not be accepted for publication for some major points.

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

1) Major point:
The major point refers to the entire structure of the paper: the title of the manuscript is “Comparison of patterns of use, beliefs, and attitudes related to waterpipe between beginning and established smokers”. Whereas Discussion Section and Tables correctly refer to the comparison between the two groups, Abstract, Methods and Results Sections refer more to the survey of the “café group” only.
   a) Methods: should show at the first beginning the two samples (with median age and age range), and only the items of the questionnaire common to both the groups.
   b) Results: should compare the two samples, and not refer (in many paragraphs) to the waterpipe “café group” only. The main results of a single group could be discussed in the Discussion Section.
   c) Abstract: Methods: delete the paragraph on the interview questionnaire and show results in the Results Section; Results: the main results on the comparison should be shown; Conclusions: a comment on the main results should be added.

Other major points:
2) Introduction: An explanation of what waterpipe is and which is the difference, if any, between waterpipe and nargile (or hubbly-bubbly, shisha) is needed. Dialing “waterpipe” on Pubmed, only 13 papers are found, and in some countries narghile smoking is very rare. For many readers of these countries narghile could be unknown.
3) Introduction: At least a paragraph should be provided, including the evidence of the risk on various disease associated to waterpipe smoking, putting in evidence the differences in risks with cigarette smoking. This could be important in order to understand the magnitude of this epidemic. Scanty information is in fact available on the association between waterpipe smoking and cancer risk, and it is not obvious to derive the absolute risk of waterpipe smoking from risks of cigarette smoking.

These relevant reference could help in the review of the literature:

Of interest is a recent paper analysing the differences on dependence between waterpipe and cigarette smoking:


4) The prevalence of waterpipe smoking among University student is one important result: this should be put in evidence at least in the Results Section.

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

1) An accurate reading of the entire manuscript needed because of some mistakes of the English language.
2) The first paragraph of the Results Section could be deleted since the distribution of the sample according to sex and age is already given in the Methods section.
3) It’s important to show the median age and the age range of the two samples considered.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests