Reviewer’s report

Title: Do people with risky behaviours participate in biomedical cohort studies?

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Reviewer: T Chandola

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I appreciate the author’s attempts to answer my concerns in the first review. I agree that it is important to analyse the representativeness of participants in a cohort study, and that this should be made transparent to readers. What I am still not convinced about is the generalisability of their results. In their response to me, the authors themselves acknowledge that their conclusion cannot be directly transferable to other studies, so I cannot see how they can then argue the this particular study is of relevance and importance to other researchers (the last sentence of their response to me is a little ambiguous).

Also in their response to me, the authors mention that there is a methodological debate on who participates in cohort studies and how typical they are of the general community- but this debate does not get mentioned at all in the paper. If this debate is so important, it needs to be developed in the main body of the paper, preferably the introduction, rather than mentioned in a response to one of the referees.

Their concluding sentence “This study has shown that people...to participate” is hence misleading and different from the conclusion in their abstract. It should actually read “People IN THIS STUDY who have risk factors for ill-health...” I leave it up to the editors whether they think establishing the representativeness of a particular cohort study is important enough to warrant publication in their journal, when the authors themselves state that their conclusions are not directly transferable to other studies.

Finally, a small matter. The authors mention implementing “well recognized, epidemiologically sound survey techniques”. However, many of the techniques mentioned actually come from good practice on social science surveys. Rather than getting into a debate about who came up with these survey techniques first, it may be easier to delete “epidemiologically sound” from the sentence.