Reviewer's report

Title: Smoking in film in New Zealand: measuring risk exposure

Version: 1 Date: 17 August 2006

Reviewer: Ivana Croghan

Reviewer's report:

General

This manuscript looks at smoking in films and its association with increased smoking initiation in adolescents. This is an interesting topic for discussion in the literature.

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

To begin with, the authors indicate that smoking has increased between the ages of 9 and 18. The authors also state that this is of great interest to tobacco advocates and (I would assume) this is a reason for conducting this study. I would ask the authors at this point not only discuss the increase of smoking as these kids go from pre-teens to become teenagers, but perhaps another comment on the increase in movie viewership may make the potential association a bit more obvious.

In addition, they indicate in the discussion that smoking in movies has decreased through the years. I would like to see the authors compare the decrease in smoking in movies to the rates of smoking initiation throughout the same years (I would suggest a figure to show the different rates). This can then open the discussion on whether they believe reducing smoking messages in movies will help decrease smoking initiation.

Finally, the authors state that pre-film antismoking messages can be an effective option for reducing the impact of these films on smoking initiation. Whereas this is a good option, I would stress that based on this manuscript, this is an opinion. The authors need to provide better evidence for making this conclusion.

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

The % spread for social class in table 2 does not add up. Nor is it discussed in the manuscript. Please correct.

I would like to see the authors move the definition of terms into the methods section. In other words, I would like the authors to further define how they arrived at certain definitions. For example, how and why was rebelliousness categorized as a positive point - this is not consistent with other traits in that same category.

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

In reference to their conclusion that pre-film anti smoking ads would help reduce the smoking initiation influence caused by smoking in films, I would like to suggest to the authors that focus groups of teens of varied ages who can view the film(s) (or have viewed the films) and then discuss if a pre-film antismoking ad would have changed their opinion - may be a viable option - and can provide a basis for the conclusion that these pre-film ads are a viable option.

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: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:

'I declare that I have no competing interests'