Reviewer's report

Title: Association between tobacco use and body mass index in urban Indian population: implications for public health in India.

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Reviewer: Prabhat Jha

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For authors

The authors describe the association between different types of tobacco use and low BMI in an Indian population. The strengths of the paper are the large study population and the use of reasonable statistical methods.

The key gaps are as follows:

1. More data needs to be presented if the results rule out residual confounding by a variable both associated with low BMI, poverty and with bidi smoking (the associations of Low BMI and smoking cigarettes are less robust).
2. The authors should explore this further by comparing adjusted and unadjusted rates, and if multivariate results altered the results.
3. More data on why the associations were stronger for bidi vs cigs when the mortality impact is the same or similar.
4. The intermediate BMI categories (e.g., between 18.5 and 25) should be provided. Was there a dose response even at levels above 18.5? The means shown in table 1 don’t convey this.
5. The discussion wanders a bit on issues of reproductive health, infectious agents, women. Much of this could be cut and focused largely on the links of smoking different types with lower BMI.
6. The conclusions need to be more cautious—the tobacco-BMI link is an association only, and the authors are treating it as causation, including public health calls. The rationale for reducing tobacco use is clear from the earlier work, including the excellent work done by the authors. The additional evidence here points to more research on the links between BMI and smoking and not necessarily control efforts.