Reviewer's report

Title: Before and after study of bar workers' perceptions of the impact of smoke-free workplace legislation in the Republic of Ireland

Version: 2  Date: 5 October 2006

Reviewer: Phillippa Howden-Chapman

Reviewer's report:

General
This is an interesting article, one of a small number to look at the impact of important environmental tobacco policy changes. It provides further evidence that behaviour change precedes attitude change. This is a psychological truism, but one that has valuable implications for public health and health promotion. The evidence is growing internationally that bar workers, in smoking jurisdictions have anti-smoking attitudes and may therefore help to support the culture change to non-smoking environments. Interestingly, this is consistently true both for smokers and non-smokers, although clearly non-smokers are less ambivalent. The use of documentary analysis to shape the attitude questions is a nice methodological point. The article is enhanced by the economic data, which shows a short-term drop in pub business, but a medium-term up-swing in business. In California and New Zealand, business in pubs has improved after a ban on smoking in public places. The post-ban evidence on the prevalence of smoking in homes is also consistent. However, the authors do not detail any major anti-smoking campaigns or taxation changes during the period of the study, but these could have had an impact on behaviour and attitudes.

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

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 punctuation is somewhat erratic, e.g. double commas in title, full-stops after question marks and absent hyphens in compound words.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)
The dichotomising of the five-point scale is somewhat problematic, as there is no stated justification for combining the 'undecided' category into the 'not agree' category. I would have liked a sensitivity analysis included that compared the explicit agree and disagree categories and excluded the undecided category. This appears to have been done when looking at the effect of the negative economic perceptions of health benefits after the ban. It is not made clear why two different definitions are used.

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.