Reviewer's report

Title: Smoking, alcohol and dietary choices: evidences from the Portuguese national health survey

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Reviewer: Aage Tverdal

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Smoking, alcohol and dietary choices: evidences from the Portuguese national health survey

This is a simple cross-sectional study on the relationship between smoking status and alcohol and dietary intake. As might be expected, smokers generally seemed to have more unfavourable pattern.

One limitation seems to be the response rate. The reported response rate of 82% is quite good. However, in table 1 the percentages in the educational categories do not add to 100, as they do for the two gender and the six age categories. For men the educational categories add to 90% and for women to 83%. Does this mean that information on educational status is missing for 17% of the women? If so, this indicates that when adjusting for education, only 65% and not 82% of the women enter into the analyses. This point needs elaboration and discussion.

Participants were selected from households that had been sampled and trained interviewers conducted interviews in each household. Does this mean that several persons from the same household entered into the study? Persons within a household are more likely to have more similar eating and drinking pattern than persons from different households. This dependency within household should be taken into account in the analyses.

It is difficult to assess the results as long as the relationship between different food and drinking items are not reported or discussed. For instance people who drink a lot of beer might not be able to or have no need to drink a lot of other alcoholic beverages. In other words is it the same group of heavy smokers who both drink a lot of beer and a lot of wine?

The health survey was carried out during 1998 and 1999. Both drinking and eating pattern might vary with season. Perhaps alcohol intake is greater during holidays or high festivals. This might introduce confounding if for instance a greater part of the heavy smokers have been interviewed in connection with high festivals.

Several paragraphs of the discussion are in my view irrelevant. On page 10 both DNA damage, antioxidant nutrients and the smoking relation to homocystein are discussed. These are interesting topics, but this study does not make any contribution to these questions.

The paragraph on page 9 on residual confounding is in my view more a question of misclassification.

The language needs to be improved in several places.

On page 3 it is stated that “Chronic disease prevalence is increasing….”. I suspect it should be Chronic disease mortality…”.

On page 11 reference is made to “Oshaug et al” instead of using the reference number.

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

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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)

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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 limited interest

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

Statistical review: Yes

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests.