Reviewer’s report

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

Version: 1 Date: 20 September 2006

Reviewer: jean-bernard Ruidavets

Reviewer’s report:

The aim of this study was to analyse, in the Portuguese population, the consumption of selected food and alcoholic beverages in smokers in comparison with non-smokers.

Methodology section

Major revisions
The methodology section needs to be more developed.
Is each member of household interviewed (all members complying with criteria selection) or only one person in each household? The selection of participants has to be more precise.
The cut-off points used to establish educational levels are rather strange, 3 years, 1 year, 8 years and more than 12 years of schooling duration. What were the reasons; statistical distribution, specific levels of education of the Portuguese population or another one.

It is not clear what nutritional method was used; food recall or record, food frequency questionnaire, dietary histories ...etc
Has the method used been validated? The determination of food consumption is puzzling. More information about nutritional method used is needed to understand how the consumption of food has been established.
Only 13 questions about food were asked and among them 5 questions concerned alcoholic beverages. Moreover no energy intake has been recorded. Indeed, it is not enough to study dietary behaviours.

Result section

Major revisions
The sum of number of men and women is not equal to the sum of educational levels or the sum of age groups in males and in females. Are the same subjects used to analyse data in each table? Neither information of missing data have been given nor the corresponding potential bias.
In table 4 all the ORs for heavy smokers were lower than the reference group, whatever the sex. What is the meaning of these relationships? Total energy intake was lower in smokers comparatively to non-smokers or the consumption of non-recorded food could be potentially higher in non smokers. The lack of energy recorded and the limited number of food items reduce considerably the interpretation of the figures. So the interest of this analysis is less obvious.

Minor revisions
No result about milk has been given. Why?
Are results significantly different when occasionally smokers are included in smokers?

Discussion section

Minor revisions
All the food items selected can be considered as good for health, except one. So it is not exact to write that smoking is associated with less healthy dietary behaviours, data cannot support this conclusion.

The title should be more restrictive and the expression dietary behaviours is not right in this study.

What next?: Reject because scientifically unsound

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

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