Reviewer’s report

Title: Addiction to nicotine gums in never smokers, an internet survey

Version: 1 Date: 15 March 2007

Reviewer: Dorothy Hatsukami

Reviewer’s report:

General

This manuscript provides a very informative “case report” description of never smokers who developed dependence on nicotine gum. Although the paper is valuable, the following provides suggestions to strengthen the manuscript.

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)

Because of it is a “case report” paper, the author may consider reducing its length.

The title of the manuscript is somewhat misleading. Most researchers perceive a survey as a more proactive and comprehensive sampling of participants. In this study, subjects who were interested in a topic, e.g., nicotine gum, had “Googled” the information on the internet and the questionnaire appeared as one of the websites. Thus, as described by the author, the data from this “survey” is somewhat biased and limited.

The author might want to describe the pros and cons of addiction to pure nicotine—e.g., the potential health effects from nicotine replacement therapies (e.g., fetal toxicity) and its relative harm compared to tobacco products.

A summary statement should be included at the end of the discussion section that might state that although addiction on the nicotine gum is rare among never smokers, addiction can occur.

Other comments:

In the abstract, the last sentence should be changed to reflect the following: The phenomenon is however rare and although the long-term effects of nicotine gum are unknown, this product is significantly less harmful than tobacco use.

On page 3, first paragraph, line 6, the line should read: “…nicotine has the potential to be addictive.” Nicotine’s addiction potential also depends on the speed of its delivery to the brain and the amount.

On page 3, third paragraph, line 4, the line should read: “How long did your current episode of nicotine gum use last?”

On page 4, second paragraph, line 11, “into” should be replaced by “to.”

In most sentences, nicotine gums should be nicotine gum.

On page 5, fifth paragraph, omit the repetitive “to” and “with.” (e.g., Both answered “extremely” to: “I use nicotine gum because I am addicted to it”, “I use nicotine gum because I cannot stop using it”……

On page 7, second, omit repetitive “with.”
Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.