Reviewer's report

Title: Smoking, heavy smoking and expenditure in low income Chinese: cross-sectional survey

Version: 1 Date: 26 October 2006

Reviewer: Jonathan Samet

Reviewer's report:

General

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

1. The authors describe the sampling approach but the details for selection are not described with sufficient specificity. How were the two districts of the city selected? What was the form of convenience sampling of the work units? How were the two counties selected from Western Zhejiang?

2. The results of the models need further clarification. In Table 4, are the unadjusted values from univariate models? Are the “adjusted” estimates from models including three variables, i.e., age, residence, and the specified variable, or from a model that includes all variables. Presentation of the findings might be simplified by simply noting the p values with appropriate symbols.

3. The Discussion ends with only general comments on the potential utility of the findings for tobacco control. Clearly, implementing tobacco control in China poses enormous challenges. How does another survey add to the scientific evidence for tobacco control? What tobacco control activities are presently in place in Zhejiang Province?

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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)

1. In discussing the current prevalence figures in Zhejiang Province, the authors devote a substantial proportion of the discussion to the possibility that smoking prevalence has dropped. The national data, comparing 1996 and 2002 for the same locations and sampled with comparable methodology, show little decline. I would urge greater caution in interpreting the difference between the 1996 national survey from Zhejiang Province, carried out through the Diseases Surveillance System, and the current survey which uses a different methodology.

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

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