Reviewer’s report

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

Version: 1 Date: 27 October 2006

Reviewer: Richard O'Connor

Reviewer’s report:

General
This is a good paper on an important emerging topic in tobacco control, in a unique population. However, there are several places in the paper where statements are unclear and confusing, and these detract from overall understanding and impact.

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)
The authors report that questionnaires were completed at workunits in the city and at home in villages. Is there any reason to believe that responses might be influenced by where the survey is completed, especially given the very high cooperation rate at worksites?
The authors need to justify dichotomizing age at 30 and income at 900RMB. Why were these cutpoints chosen, rather than being treated continuously (as dichotomizing decreases power and can obscure interesting relationships).
p8. It is unclear whether 49% of current smokers smoke 10 or more cigarettes per day, or 49% of all respondents.
p8 the last sentence "The relatively low prevalence in the under-20 age group..." is confusing.
The expenditure on smoking section, which could be an important section, is under-analyzed. Authors should compute an average price per cigarette (e.g., spending on cigs per month / cpd*30) to control for consumption differences across subjects. This would then allow a fairer comparison between the urban and rural workers and justify the statement that rural workers indeed smoke cheaper cigarettes.
Why were the exploratory questions asked only of the moderate and heavy smokers? This should be mentioned as a limitation.

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)
p17 the proper name of the treaty is ‘Framework Convention on Tobacco Control’

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)
The discussion is difficult to follow--it should be organized in the same sequence as the results; limitations would not normally come first

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 importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

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