Reviewer's report

Title: Development of Chinese Version of the Global Youth Tobacco Survey Instrument

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Reviewer: Chi Pang Wen

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Development of Chinese version of the GYTS instrument By Chen et al.

GYTS has been used to survey school children for smoking behavior and attitudes across countries and culture. The questionnaires, developed by US CDC, included school curriculum, local advertisement, etc, with a significant portion culturally relevant, more to the U.S. than others. Authors had conducted GYTS in Taiwan and had accumulated sufficient experience in interpreting and comparing the results internationally. In so doing, Chinese version of GYTS has been in use, at least for Taiwan. This study is to validate such a product with additional efforts, by claiming as a "Chinese version". The word Chinese has two implications: the literary Chinese and the cultural Chinese. Authors first resorted to forward and back translation technique to make sure translation was accurate. In addition, 6 experts were invited to review, and 5 school teachers and 8 students for focus group meeting. Only the latter could be considered as research, as linguistic transformation should not be the main part of this study.

If the purpose of the development was just to make sure translation was accurate and understandable by school children, the forward and back translation would have largely accomplished the mission. However, one would expect more from a study to make "Chinese version" out of the English version. As a research project, the objective was not just the linguistic transformation, but the cultural and social adaptation. An ideal product from this survey tool would bring out the smoking issues among Chinese population, both common to other countries and those different from others. Unfortunately, this was not done in a cursory way, let only pursuing rigorous way with objective evaluation. Much of this study focused on the translation efforts and not on describing the process in incorporating the smoking culture of the Chinese or creating a version tailored made for the Chinese youth. The study should have considered the addition of "smoking-specific" issues such as smoking and quitting practices in Chinese culture, current advertisement features, parental behavior and attitudes among Chinese, etc, but the method section and results section did not address these issues. As a result, the developed version is a "translated Chinese version of GYTS". The study seems to be a superficial attempt, and not a thorough "internalization of the product" for Chinese. Overall, this study lacks transparency and objectivity throughout the development process as well as in reaching the conclusion that the finished product was reliable and valid.
Major comments:

1) Although expert review and focus group were employed, no results or details of such activities were provided. In an open-ended meeting with free exchange of information, one would expect a good deal of information, both positive and negative, to be recorded or analyzed. In the absence of such information, one wonders as to the usefulness of such perfunctory functions. Correlation conducted remains a black box for most readers, even though the results were favorable as interpreted by the authors.

2) The "culture" and "Chinese" emphasized in this study should provide more information as to how that was accomplished. Smoking attempts, attitudes, and behaviors were mentioned, but not described in specific terms. For example, parental smoking, particularly by the father, or male dominating smoking, has been reported to be unique to Asians, and should be incorporated into the GYTS questionnaire design. The reaction towards "Point-of-sale" advertisement or "Price of cigarette relative to allowances" also deserves mentioning as any item that would have policy implications should be addressed.

3) Translation is both a science and an art. Translation is a translation, but the quality could vary from A+ to C-. In this case, a validation from an objective, internationally recognized agency will be highly desirable, such as UN translation services.

4) As the authors are from Taiwan, the version translated may not be culturally relevant in China. The version would have to be tested in different parts of China to become a true "Chinese" version. The authors did not attempt to see the extent of acceptability of this version or difficulty encountered by anyone other than authors themselves.

5) An effective Chinese version not only would be able to make international comparison, but also would address the culture-specific problems and would collect data accordingly to solve these problems. To what extent the Chinese version was able to address the smoking issue in China or in Chinese speaking locations, both the core items universal to all regions and specific ones unique to Chinese, remains the criteria to judge on the value of the new product.

6) The field test was not only limited in scope, but also a self-perpetuating process. The target group was limited to a small group in Taiwan. No diversity was attempted.

7) There was no alternative process proposed to validate the results, a critical process in validating the value of a product.

8) The information contained in the tables did not help readers in understanding what has been included or what has been attempted, particularly among those with cultural implications. High degree of "Agreement" did not say much of the validity or creativity.

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:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**Statistical review:** Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

'I declare that I have no competing interests'