Reviewer's report

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

Version: 1 Date: 20 January 2008

Reviewer: Michelle C Kegler

Reviewer's report:

This paper describes the adaptation and piloting testing of the Global Youth Tobacco Survey for Taiwan. Methods include expert review, forward and backward translation, focus groups, and reliability calculations. Given the high rate of smoking among males in China, it is important for China to use a reliable and valid version of the instrument for cross-country comparisons. Documenting the process for adapting the instrument may provide a useful example of the process for other countries.

Major Compulsory Revisions

Methods
Translation and cultural barriers were mentioned, but the only discussion of these is the terms used to describe people who smoke such as “loser.” Were there any others? This is what makes the paper interesting I think.

More detail is needed on the focus group methods. Were the students and teachers in the same group? If so, how did power dynamics affect the group process? It seems like the students might have been intimidated by the teachers. This should be discussed as a possible limitation. Also, were the students male or female, or both? Given the large discrepancy in smoking prevalence by gender, how might the gender composition of the group have affected results? Were participants, both teachers and students, recruited from just one school? How was this school similar or different from other schools in Taiwan, and what are the implications of these differences (could discuss more in discussion). I'd also like to read about some more detailed examples of what was changed or clarified as a result of this data collection activity (in results). How was the focus group data analyzed? Was it tape-recorded, transcribed and coded, or was a more informal approach used?

More detail is also needed on the field test. Where were the 10 cities located? Were there differences by geography or socioeconomic status from the rest of the country? If so, these should be discussed in the discussion. Also, were two classes selected per school? This is not clear as currently written. What was the age/grade of the students and gender? How are schools organized in Taiwan which grades are together in one school?

The authors state they used t-tests to compare the means from the test-retest procedure. Given this isn't the standard approach to calculating test-retest
reliability, the authors should provide a reference for their methods, or at least talk about the implications of this approach.

Results

The results section would be easier to read if there were subheadings or a more logical conceptual link to the domains from the GYTS and the tables.

A concern with Table 2 is that there seems to be an assumption that if a student ever tried, smoking cessation questions are relevant. For example, if they tried smoking a year ago, but haven’t smoked since, why would you ask them if they want to stop smoking now. The table suggests there is a logical connection, but it is hard for a reader to see the connection. Perhaps the text could explain a few of these links. It would also be helpful to label the items by construct. For example, several of the items in Table 2 fall under the Cessation/Dependency domain.

The labels seem off in Table 4. The items labeled smoking attempt appear to be susceptibility, the items labeled smoking related human relations seem to be attitudes toward smoking (if this is a sub-domain this should be described clearly). Also, I’d like to see the response options for the media messages items to be certain that conducting a Cronbach’s alpha makes sense (they look like they might be counts of exposure on days).

The conclusion says that 15 items were modified slightly. I’d like to know which these were and how cultural differences contributed to these changes.

Minor Essential Revisions

Introduction

What is the planned use of the Chinese version of GYTS? The authors focus on Taiwan, but mention China as a whole. Are there any plans to use the survey inside or outside of Taiwan?

Methods

Who conducted the two-day GYTS workshop, was it CDC, WHO?

Six epidemiologists participated in the expert meeting. Where were these experts from Taiwan or elsewhere? Were these government employees, university faculty or from some other type of organization?

Results

Table 1 is ok, but the response options should be a footnote so the reader knows what a 4 or 5 means.

In Tables 2-4, the authors include Item numbers in the titles. This isn’t necessary and makes the titles harder to read. I’d also add a separate column for Item Number (if that is important across various versions of the survey), the table is hard to read as currently constructed. These tables are essentially logic checks.
Discussion
The last sentence in the first paragraph needs a reference (the point that GYTS has been translated into numerous languages).

The authors discuss validity here and in a few other spots. The point needs to be clear that only face validity was checked.

Discretionary
Consider adding a table showing more about the respondents, including some basic smoking behavior. That would help the reader know if this population represents the study as a whole. For example, how many were regular smokers or experimenting with cigarettes?

It would be useful to add a column for number of items in the tables that list Cronbach’s alpha.

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: Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

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.