Reviewer's report

Title: Population tobacco control interventions and their effects on social inequalities in smoking: placing an equity lens on existing systematic reviews

Version: 1 Date: 10 March 2008

Reviewer: Scott L. Tomar

Reviewer's report:

Major Compulsory Revisions
1. None

Minor Essential Revisions

1. It would be useful if this paper included a table that summarized the findings for each of the tobacco use outcomes, by sociodemographic group (where possible).
2. The table included as a supplementary file does not use categorizations consistent with those used in the text (i.e., increasing price of tobacco products; restricting young people’s access to tobacco products; and restricting or banning smoking). The table includes six systematic reviews categorized as “community-based programmes,” which is not informative in a review in which all included systematic reviews were supposed to be on community-based interventions. Two systematic reviews were categorized in the table as focusing on “reductions in ETS”, but the text (p. 11) describes four reviews on that outcome.
3. p. 11. Although the text identifies 4 reviews that examined the effects of bans or restrictions on exposure to ETS (refs. 24, 26, 33, 34), it then cites a different review (23) in discussing the findings.

Discretionary Revisions

1. The authors use the term “gender” and “sex” interchangeably, but the term “gender” is incorrect in this context. Gender is a sociologic construct, where nearly all underlying original studies included in the reviews were actually measuring the biological variable of sex.
2. p. 5, bottom. More correctly: …”we included reviews that (rather than “which”) were “borderline” systematic…”
3. p. 5, bottom. Actually, it appears that the aim is to determine what could be inferred rather than what could be deduced from existing reviews. This paper does not use deductive reasoning.
4. p. 12. should read: “…there were (rather than was) little available data.”

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, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.