Reviewer's report

Title: Patterns of motivations and ways of quitting smoking among Polish smokers: A questionnaire study

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Reviewer: Paul Aveyard

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Review of Sieminska et al

It is good to see an attempt to gather data on smoking cessation behaviour in countries, such as Poland, as this can be of use in planning campaigns. The questionnaire is largely appropriate and the data have been analysed correctly and the paper is clearly written (though see later). However, I have some concerns.

Major essential

This is a survey of current and former smokers recruited from medical outpatient clinics. As the authors acknowledge, this is unlikely to be representative of ever smokers in Poland. A further difficulty with the sampling is that it is unclear whether this was all patients that were approached, a random sample of patients, haphazard selection, or some other sampling. Thus it is possible that it is not representative of medically ill smokers/former smokers, though this of course could be clarified. Given the aim is to investigate what is true of Poles in general, this severely dampens my enthusiasm for the paper. I think it is highly likely that medically ill somewhat older Poles (mean age 52) behave differently to Poles in general. Consequently, it is difficult to use the data for the purposes to which they were collected, as stated in the abstract, and it is difficult to see why such data are particularly useful as a description of the medically ill in Poland. This concern could perhaps be ameliorated if the authors were to state that no representative data of this kind exists on Poland and that this, while somewhat odd sample, is the best available estimate of the use of cessation aids, for example.

A second difficulty is that, throughout the paper, an important focus is on the contrast between former and current smokers. While I think that describing the data from these samples separately is sensible and useful, this seems to have been used as a means to do statistical tests to generate p values for the differences between the samples. I cannot think why this is useful. I suggest the focus is changed to descriptive data.

Another important difficulty with the questionnaire is that the questionnaire on use of cessation aids refers (or seems to in the English translation) to ever use of the aid, not use in a particular quit attempt. The authors should make this clear. It is probably more useful if the authors had collected data on use of aids in the last quit attempt, which would give some index of the prevalence of their use, but
knowing the prevalence of ever use is still somewhat useful.

Minor essential

The main minor point is that this manuscript is over 4000 words long. In fact it presents simple survey data and the manuscript could be a lot shorter without loss. The Introduction contains lots of passages describing the use of various aids in Poland, which are not referenced, and in any case the data on this are presented later in the report. The Method has a lot of verbose description of the measures that could be made much more succinctly. Would a table of definitions be helpful? I am not sure that I trust the data on differences in motivation between first and last quit attempt in former smokers. Remembering back many years to motivation is difficult and this could be lost. Overall, this is a simple survey that should, in my view, concentrate on use of quit aids and motivation to quit due to illness/fear of illness as these are probably key drivers of smoking cessation activity. I think this is somewhat swamped by the amount of data and the amount of words presented.

A useful website is www.smokinginengland.info which contains a paper showing that many quit attempts are forgotten and go unreported. Your data on former smokers will be particularly unreliable in this regard.

**Level of interest:** An article of limited interest

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I have acted as a consultant to and been paid by McNeill, Pfizer, and Xenova, all of whom manufacture products for smoking cessation.