Reviewer's report

Title: Motorcyclists Reactions to Safety Helmet Law: A Qualitative Study

Version: 1 Date: 6 May 2009

Reviewer: Sandy Wells

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MAJOR COMPULSORY REVISIONS

1. The study is an interesting addition to helmet usage research. However, the writing includes an unacceptable number of English language (grammar, spelling, style) issues. A professional translator or native English-speaker in this field of research should be consulted before resubmitting.

2. The Methods and Data Analysis sections should be expanded. More information regarding how themes were identified, how codes were assigned (some examples might be useful), how the interviewees were recruited and selected, how the interviews were conducted, and what questions were asked during the interviews (was there an interview schedule? was each interview different? how were in-depth respondents chosen from among the focus group?). It is difficult to assess the value of the analysis without such details.

3. In the Discussion, the authors speculate that the helmet behaviours of the respondents rest primarily on their (respondents') "appraisal of risks associated with consequences of non-compliance". I find this problematic considering the dearth of information offered on the interview schedule and process. Were the respondents asked about how they understand "risk"? If so, where is this discussed in the manuscript? If not, why not? And in this case, how can a theory of the respondents' perceptions of risk responsibly be advanced? And what kind of risk are the authors concerned with? Physical? Legal? Financial? The risk of injuring another person? All of these? A more thorough theoretical understanding and discussion of "risk" is needed AND stronger evidence connecting thrill-seeking or risk-taking to non-compliance with helmet laws in developing countries before this study can make claims about risk or risk-compensation.

4. Further to the previous point, no competing theories to explain non-compliance with helmet laws was offered to compare their speculation on risk-taking. For example, the sample was exclusively male; one might be interested in how gender norms or expectations produce non-compliance with helmet laws.

5. Finally, the authors outline 5 well-supported themes: dodging police; simulating helmet-wearing behaviour; accepting and paying inevitable traffic tickets; taking advantage of uneven enforcement; and using cheap helmets instead of standardized helmets. The conclusions recommend that the public should educated regarding the risks involved in non-compliance and the importance of standardized helmets. I would ask the authors about their decision not to recommend stricter enforcement of helmet laws in order to motivate riders
towards proper helmet use.

MINOR ESSENTIAL REVISIONS

6. A theme outlined in this manuscript is "using cheep [sic] and convenience helmet [sic]". I would ask the authors to define what they mean by a convenience helmet.

7. I would ask the authors to indicate whether the helmet law in Tehran is new or pre-existing. Are the respondents reacting to the introduction of a new law?

8. Page two contains confusing language regarding head trauma: "head trauma is one of the most consequents of accident among motorcyclists". Please clarify.

9. On page ten, the authors write: "Indeed helmet research shows that this law has contributed to higher number of accidents in roads". This statement requires a citation.

10. On page 12, the authors write: "...[this study] can offer valuable suggestions for developing assessment tools to quantitatively measure reactions and factors related to non-compliance among [motorcyclists in developing nations]". However, no examples or "valuable suggestions" for developing such tools are offered.

DISCRETIONARY REVISIONS:

11. The word "accident" to describe motorcycle collisions should be avoided, in my opinion.

12. Explain why only men were included in this study.

13. Why is educational level, marital status, and age important? Why include this information if it does not contribute to the discussion?

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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.