Reviewer’s report

Title: Preventive and clinical care provided to adolescents attending New South Wales Public Oral Health Services, Australia: A retrospective study.

Version: 7 Date: 22 September 2014

Reviewer: Carolina Borges

Reviewer’s report:

Review for BMC Oral Health

I would like to thank you this opportunity of reviewing the paper entitled “Preventive and clinical care provided to adolescents attending New South Wales Public Oral Health Services, Australia: A retrospective study” that brings an important description of the actual panorama of oral health care targeting teenagers in Australia. In my opinion, it is an important study and I recommend its publication, however need some enhancement on its discussion session in terms to explore more the causes of low engagement of Dental Therapists with preventive actions like fluoride use, fissure sealant, dietary and smoke cessation advices. In my opinion, this study discussion section is basically descriptive rather than a discussion of main results per se.

Minor revisions needed on Discussion:

1) I have not seen any paragraph discussing the main limitations of this study (e.g.: working on secondary data that can lead some under/overestimation of data);

2) On page #11, line 184, you have mentioned that was very disappointed to note “the low levels of topical fluoride use and hygiene instruction across LHDs (...). Assuming that it is an aim of Australian Gov. Teen Dental Program, and you’ve checked that it is not effectively happening, we can assume that there is a lack in some part of the process, right? What do you think could explain this (e.g.: employees are not well paid? Or the high demand for clinical treatment is compromising the time spent on preventive care?, or these professionals are not well trained to do this actions? Or can a combination of factors?).

3) My comment above also applies for these next points on page #12, line 200 (...) fissure sealants provided to adolescents as a preventive modality were particularly low”.

4) Another good point that should be better discussed on page #13, line 211: “explanation for these inadequacies should be further explored”, how?

5) Still on page #13, line 217, the authors mentioned that the percentage of provision of sealants was inadequate in comparison with the time devoted to restorative care (...), saying that further investigation is required to access the reasons for this reluctance. Again, my question and a suggestion that you can discuss, for instance, low investments in this sector? Low investments in
personnel training? Is there any study that has previously discussed the reason for this reluctance overseas?

6) As the authors used a National dataset it could be interesting if you conduct another study in the future, targeting to answer the questions pointed above, using a qualitative approach (focus groups) in each one of the health districts.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

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