Reviewer's report

Title: Screening for oral potentially malignant disorders among areca (betel) nut chewers in Guam and Saipan

Version: 3
Date: 7 September 2014

Reviewer: Zohaib Khan

Reviewer's report:

General

This is a well written manuscript with an adequate sample size and sound methods, which may new knowledge to the field in the context of the region in which the study was undertaken and may be considered for publication once the following issues have been addressed.

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. In the "Methods" section perhaps it will be more appropriate if the number of participants from Guam was described in the "Results" section rather than the methods and only the strategies used to recruit participants were included in the "Methods".

2. Under the "Results" section, subheading "Oral Screening": Since the analysis is based on " Number of participants having lesions" and not the "Number of type of lesions" perhaps it would be appropriate to substitute the number of type of lesions with the number of individual having different types of lesions e.g. 8 % (n=6), where n = number pf participants, had both white and red lesions. As this may cause confusion among the reader.

3. Under the "Discussion" section, in the second paragraph, it has been stated that, " the prevalence of Oral Pre Malignant Disorders may have been underestimated especially after considering previous reports", given the general objective of this study was to pilot test methods to study the condition, It would be apt, if a plausible explanation is given for this difference.

4. The authors build up a case for this study by citing higher prevalence of oral cancer in Micronesia as compared to the U.S population, however in the "Discussion" section, findings with regards to screening etc are mainly compared to other regions rather than the U.S. Comparison with the findings from a few U.S studies will be more appropriate.

5. Since it is stated that the general objective of the study was to pilot test methods, the "Conclusions" section should include the authors conclusion/s about the effectiveness/appropriateness etc of the methods described in the study with regards to the study of oral pre-malignant disorders in the region.
Minor Essential Revisions

1. The email address of (SW) needs correction.

2. In the "Abstract" under the result sub-section (Page 3, Line 21) "for" shall be added between "chewing" and "more years".

3. In the "Background Section" of the main text, most of the text pertains to previous evidence from Guam and very little for Saipan. Also there is a difference between the age demographic between the participants of that cited study in the Saipan region (School going) versus the participants (> 18) of the current study, may be some more evidence regarding use of Betel nut and/or OPMDs (If available) from the Saipan or CNMI may be included.

4. In the "Methods" section, once again given this was a pilot study of methods, perhaps it would be appropriate to include the percentage of potential participants who were asked to participate but refused to take part in the survey. This would be advantageous to future researchers who might want to deploy the methods used in this study.

5. Sticking to the "Methods" section under the subheading recruitment (Page 8, Line 11,12,13), the sentence can be rephrased to something like "All eligible candidates within a household were invited with an upper limit of three participants/household, in cases where there were more than three...........".

6. Referring to "Point 1" under the "Major Revisions" section of this review, again given the objectives of the study it would be beneficial to the reader to have the exact number of participants recruited through "advertisements" and "community meetings" in Guam.

7. Under the "Methods" section in the subsection "Questionnaire" (Page 9, Line 13), the spelling of questionnaire shall be corrected.

Discretionary Revisions

1. Under "Methods" and "Results", if any effort was made to record the reasons and the recorded reasons, for dropping out of the participants after initial screening, shall be stated. If not available, can the authors state possible explanations for the drop out in the discussion section?

2. In the "Discussion section" (page 15, Para 1, Line 4), the sentence sounds like, IARC concluded something from this study, may be it can be rephrased e.g. however IARC has previously concluded....

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published
Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests.