Author's response to reviews

Title: Socio-demographic factors and processes associated with stages of change for smoking cessation in pregnant versus non-pregnant women.

Authors:

Alessandra Buja (alessandra.buja@unipd.it)
Emanuela Guarnieri (emanuela.guarnieri@unipd.it)
Giovanni Forza (giovanni.forza@unipd.it)
Federica Tognazzo (federica.tognazzo@sanitapadova.it)
Paolo Sandonà (paolosandon@gmail.com)
Alessandra Zampeiron (alessandra.zampeiron@unipd.it)

Version: 6 Date: 29 December 2010

Author's response to reviews: see over
I submit the twice revised paper for publication in "BMC Women's Health".

As suggested by associate editor, we improve the quality of English writing for the most recently inserted text.

We highlight with yellow underlines text all changes made when revising the manuscript.

We address the comments in the revised manuscript and we provide a point-by-point response to the concerns.

**Reviewer: Ross Barnett**

**Reviewer's report:**

*Major Revisions*

I still feel that the authors have paid lip service to environmental factors and the way they affect the chances of smoking cessation. For example, there is a large US literature on this topic especially as it relates to African Americans. Some mention of this literature is necessary. Even if a women is pregnant and more sensitive to the health risks of smoking other environmental factors may affect the perceptions of smoking risk.

We stress the role of environmental factors in introduction. We add in the text: “Furthermore, much of the public health policy debate on smoking cessation has continued to focus on educational models of behavior change, which place individuals, rather than their environment, at the center of the debate(17). In contrast, recent studies have identified the contextual, socio-environmental mechanisms that influence smoking behaviors and that probably differ for pregnant and non-pregnant women. Our review of the determinants of smoking cessation during pregnancy showed that factors such as socioeconomic status, education level, a partner’s smoking habit and passive smoking may affect a woman’s smoking behavior during pregnancy(18). A cohort study of women verified that being married or in a committed relationship is significantly associated with quitting and that living in rural or remote areas and having lower educational attainment are associated with continued smoking(19).”

*Minor revisions*

The discussion is still relatively descriptive. Take one example - discuss why for non-pregnant women there was no relationship between cessation and education. Why not?

We add in the discussion the text: “Furthermore a time-trend study conducted in northern Italy found that women with a low level of education who also exhibited low smoking levels were the only category to increase their smoking during the study, which narrowed the gap between them and more educated women in the sample(37). The fact that educated women are accustomed to smoking and less inclined to quit smoking is a characteristic phenomenon of northern Italian culture that is probably is due to custom or to stress caused by high expectations and time pressures at work. “

Reviewer: Monique Baha
Also, they authors mention publications of Stotts and Scheibmeir already show that pregnant women adopt less behavioral as well as experiential strategies to stop smoking. What is thus the objective of their work? Is it simply to illustrate/confirm these findings?

We jet enlighten relevant objective of this paper that is “To design the most effective interventions for these two distinct groups of women, we require more comprehensive information on how pregnant women who smoke differ from other women smokers across the different determinants of smoking cessation. These determinants include in the processes adopted in different stages of change, the situations that tempt women to smoke, the demographic and socio-environmental factors associated with the stages of change and the perceived acceptability of smoking. Thus, our study, conducted on a Mediterranean sample of pregnant and non-pregnant women smokers, aimed primarily 1) to assess the frequency of each stage of change in smoking cessation based on the Transtheoretical Model and 2) to examine the socio-demographic factors and processes associated with these stages for each group”

Methods and Results:
The methods and results are presented more clearly.
I notice now that the authors do not indicate the proportion of smokers/ex-smokers among pregnant and non-pregnant women. This concerns me, as 60.5% of pregnant women were in maintenance stage and the average number of cigarettes smoked was low. Could it be because most pregnant women in the sample were not smoking anymore? One can thus wonder if there’s enough data to draw any conclusion on pregnant smokers. Anyways, this information should be mentioned in the methods and presented as a limit in the discussion.

**The maintenance status implies that a woman was not smoking anymore from more than six months ago.**

The association between relationship status (or living with smokers/ non smokers) and smoking has been documented in literature. Authors should present and discuss it as such.

**We add this literature in introduction when we speak about environmental factors.**

“college education” in the text becomes “degree” on table 1.

**Thank you, we rephrase text.**

“acceptability of smoking” in the text becomes “acceptability of smoke” on table 4.

**Thank you, we rephrase text.**

I hope the paper is now suitable for publication.

Sincerely
Alessandra Buja