Reviewer’s report

Title: Oral Cancer Awareness of Undergraduate Medical and Dental Students

Version: 2 Date: 6 July 2007

Reviewer: Anne Koerber

Reviewer’s report:

General

-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

1. The authors state that Wilcoxin Signed Rank statistics and "extended chi" statistics were used. The Wilcoxin use is a mistake in table 1--age comparisons are appropriately done with a t test, and in any case the Wilcoxin Signed Rank requires that subjects be matched or paired, as in a before-and-after situation, which is clearly not the case when medical students are being compared to dental students. Furthermore, age is usually shown with means and standard deviations. The other information is unimportant in this context. If ordinal unmatched comparisons are to be made, the Mann-Whitney U is the correct statistic. Presumably, this was the statistic used to compare the number of risk factors identified by medical students compared to dental students on page 6, and the authors should so identify. Furthermore, there is no need for an "extended chi" test (with which I am unfamiliar), since the chi square test is used throughout and is adequate.

2. In the abstract, the conclusion contains information that was not obtained in the study. The conclusions should start with "This study highlights the need..." If the other two conclusion sentences are needed they should be in the objectives section.

-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

2. There is no statement that the students were aware the data would be used for research purposes or that an institutional review board approved it. The last may not be required since as a survey, this may be exempt. However, even survey research should be collected with the permission of the subject for its use in research.

3. The word "less" is often used when "fewer" is the correct word.

4. On page 6 and again on 7, the authors don't address if subjects listed incorrect risk factors or oral changes, and if so, how they were handled in the analysis.

5. page 4, paragraph 2 1st sentence is a run-on sentence.
Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

6. There are more figures than are warranted by the importance of the information. Since this is intended for on-line submission, perhaps length isn't as important as in paper journals. I didn't find any of the information in any of the figures to be of great interest, and it could easily be covered in the narrative.

7. I dislike the use of decimal points when presenting percentages. They imply an accuracy that isn't warranted and makes the paper harder to read. On page 7, the authors even go to 2 decimal places!

8. The discussion is more lengthy than is justified by the importance of the information. Furthermore, it repeats the results section unnecessarily. Again, maybe this is less important for an on-line journal, but if I were editing it, I would cut it in half. This applies to the literature review as well.

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

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.