Reviewer’s report

Title: The association of smoking status with healthcare utilisation, productivity loss and resulting costs: results from the population-based KORA F4 study

Version: 4 Date: 4 May 2013

Reviewer: Nadine Berndt

Reviewer’s report:

This study addresses the important issue of the impact of smoking on healthcare costs, direct medical costs and productivity losses for different groups of smokers in Germany. Thank you for addressing the concerns from the first review. The manuscript is considerably improved and the authors were highly responsive to the comments by outlining their responses and rationale. The authors addressed all the issues identified. Just a few areas remain that need clarification so a few last changes would improve the manuscript. I still have the following concerns:

Minor Essential Revisions

1. Please specify the design from the study under ‘Methods: data and study design’. Although in the Abstract and Discussion it is mentioned that the study was cross-sectional, this information is lacking in the relevant section. From the first version of the manuscript it was not absolutely clear that survey and healthcare costs and productivity losses where only measured in the F4 study (and thus the design of the study was only cross-sectional). The authors might therefore also consider mentioning explicitly that only F4 data was used for this study and analysis, and not the S4 data (since costs where not measured in S4).

2. Indirect costs (p.8). It is still not mentioned that in Germany the maximum number of working days is 213, and therefore the authors chose this number. Please insert this information since otherwise the number of 213 remains an arbitrary number.

Discretionary Revisions

1. The authors have added detailed definition of the classification of smokers, occasional smokers, former-smokers and never smokers to the Methods section. The distinction between former smokers who smoked occasionally and never smokers who may have smoked less than 100 cigarettes in their lifetime seems to be arbitrary and highly subjective to recall bias. This shortcoming may additionally be discussed in the Discussion section.

2. Some minor language errors (punctuation, grammar) remain. Please reread carefully to avoid errors in the final version of the manuscript.

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.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.