Reviewer’s report

Title: Consumption of alcohol, nicotine and illegal substances among physicians and medical students in Brandenburg and Saxony (Germany)

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Reviewer: Kavumpurathu Thankappan

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Consumption of alcohol, nicotine, and illegal substances among physicians and medical students in Brandenburg and Saxony (Germany)

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. The manuscript needs language editing.
2. Method section needs to be detailed.
3. One of the major limitations of this manuscript is the low response rate of physicians which might be a limitation to generalize the findings to the physicians in the selected states. This may be reported as a limitation in the manuscript.

Minor Essential Revisions

Title:

4. Instead of the word ‘nicotine’ it might be better to use the word ‘smoking’ in the title since cigarette smoking is the term used commonly in the manuscript. The title could be modified accordingly.

Abstract

5. There is scope for providing some more details on the methods in this section and reducing the conclusion part of the abstract. Method section should mention the number of physicians and medical students participated in the study with % of women or men in the brackets. It should also mention that information on smoking and consumption of alcohol and illegal substance was collected using a self administered questionnaire. Better to mention briefly the analysis of data also in this section.

6. It might be better to specifically report that significantly more men reported hazardous and harmful drinking compared to women instead of reporting significant gender related differences.

Background

7. Page 3 first para. Provide the % in bracket for the 16 million German adults and for 9 million Germans.

8. Page 3 same para. The sentence starting with “ consequently----- risky health behaviors. It might be better to specify here alcohol, smoking and illegal substance since the manuscript does not deal with other risky health behaviors such as unhealthy diet, physical inactivity etc
Methods

9. How many medical schools were there in the two states? If there was only one medical school specify that in this section. If there are more than one medical schools the rationale and method of selecting this medical school may be mentioned. Generally response rates for postal questionnaire are low. However the authors may have to report the response rate in previous similar studies. Was there any attempt to increase the response rate? If the non-respondents are likely to be using more risky behaviors then there is a possibility of underestimate.

10. The authors need to include in this section how information on smoking and consumption of illegal substance was collected. What was the recall period? Only one week? Smoking information was only on current smoking or ever smoking? Similarly on illegal substance. This information needs to be provided in this section.

11. Why different units such as 11 grams of alcohol and 13 grams of alcohol are used? WHO uses the concept of a standard drink. Why the authors did not use the concept of a standard drink?

12. What was the definition used for illegal substance?

Discussion

13. The justification for the statement that the findings appear to be representative does not hold good because of the low response rate.

14. Page 11. Last para. The sentence starting with “May be the different findings in both studies -------were not available” It might be useful to add a reference to this point that in GDR illegal substances were not available.

Tables

15. Table 2. It might be useful to mention the units of alcohol consumption.

16. Table 2. The word ‘modus’ does not seem to be an English word. May be mode

Discretionary Revisions

Authors can do a subsample of the non-respondents and find out the consumption pattern among them. This will enhance the validity of the study. This is particularly useful when the response rates are very low.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

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