Reviewer's report

Title: Translation of tobacco policy into practice in disadvantaged and marginalized subpopulations: a mixed methods study of challenges and opportunities in remote Australian Indigenous communities

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Reviewer: Marewa Patricia Glover

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Minor Essential Revisions
2. Introduction Paragraph 1: “One important region” – For an international audience it would be useful to say why is it important?
3. “where around 26,000 Indigenous people live” – is it because this is a higher proportion?

Paragraph 2:
4. “…for the first time offer hope for a reduction in the persistently high smoking rates…” and “The current policy environment in Australia provides the first major opportunity to reduce extraordinary high smoking rates…” – Repetitive, say once. Minor issue not for publication.

Paragraph 3
6. “…we focused on challenges and opportunities for program implementation in interviews.” – with whom? Could rewrite this last sentence: omit “We examined these potential moderators of effective implementation of current tobacco policies, as voiced by those…” Add: “with stakeholders mainly working at the operational level in remote communities in Arnhem Land in the NT’s ‘Top End’” as a continuation of the previous sentence. Minor issue not for publication

Data analysis
Paragraph 1
7. Omit “These abbreviations are used in the results to describe comments participants made on themes”. Minor issue not for publication.

Paragraph 2
8. Omit “in the transcribed data”. Minor issue

Themes emerging from interviews
Paragraph 4

Paragraph 5
10. Add colon after “seen as a challenge…”, omit comma between “non-indigenous” and “frontline service providers…”. Minor issue.

Paragraph 7
11. Two sentences beginning with ‘Homelands or …’ What’s the message here? How does this paragraph fit in to the surrounding text?

Paragraph 9
12. Typo, add “the”. “…by the research team at the time…” Minor issue not for publication.

Paragraph 13
13. Typo, add comma. “In particular, mention was made…” Minor issue not for publication.

Paragraph 17
14. Typo, add “a”. “…mentioned as a challenge.” Minor issue not for publication.

Discretionary Revisions

Methods

Setting

Paragraph 1
15. The sentence beginning “Tobacco is locally available from…” breaks the flow of topic in previous and following sentences. Move to end of next paragraph. Discretionary revision.

Data analysis

Paragraph 1
16. Omit “Following standard qualitative data analysis procedures, the data analysis program Nvivo assisted”, could be changed to “Nvivo was used…”. Minor issue not for publication.

Data analysis

17. The use of the scatter plot is a unique way to present qualitative results. Is there a reference for this method or it original? If original – why did the researchers design it? Was it important for being able to show in an illustrative way the results to stakeholders or participants? There is a risk using graphs to present qualitative data, that quantitative type interpretation can be implied. For instance, the scatter plot conveys weighting, determined by way of a frequency count, that can be applied to each opportunity or challenge. The authors report that they used purposive sampling complimented with a snowball technique “to achieve saturation.” But we are not given an idea of the likely total size of the participant pool. The validity of the method would be strong if the whole of the potential pool of stakeholders was interviewed. The claim to have reached saturation instead is used to bolster validity, but saturation can as much be due to homogeneity among the participants or data collection tools or method restricting the range of opinion expressed. In this study sampling was designed to ensure diversity and “a balance between Indigenous and non-Indigenous
participants”. Some numbers around the potential participant pool, numbers invited and response rate would strengthen the claim of representativeness that is made.

The data collection tool was more deductive than inductive. The framework for categorising information sought and analysed was to code units of analysis as ‘opportunities’ or ‘challenges’. Is there a relevant theoretical basis for doing this? It was kind of like a SWOT analysis. Reference to theory or other literature where this analytical approach is supported would strengthen the paper’s scientific contribution. The researchers’ approach aligns with a ‘Developmental Evaluation’ approach (Patton, 2008 http://www.wu.ac.at/inst/fsnu/vienna/presentations/patton.pdf). It would be useful if the researchers’ philosophical basis underpinning their approach, e.g. the change theory they are influenced by, was referenced.

Discussion & Recommendations

18. There have been vast efforts to standardise tobacco control strategies across the world (e.g. the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control and MPOWER). The researchers start the discussion with a hint of a critical theory approach: raising the question of whether the top-down centralised generic tobacco control programme is relevant for isolated Indigenous communities suffering from entrenched inequalities? This was exciting. But, they conclude that the current national policy framework is congruent with the stated needs coming from participants in those communities. But the discussion goes on to stress the significant challenges to implementation in those communities. Might there not be other solutions, innovations, different methods that could be effective? If the participants knew of alternatives such as other more innovative, potentially more effective approaches, maybe more difference would have been found? Tobacco control is an evolving field and it can take time for new evidence of effectiveness and innovations to be shared, accepted and integrated into practice.

19. The study identified significant challenges to tobacco control policy and programme implementation in the focus community. Some of these challenges have been and are shared by other Indigenous and non-Indigenous marginalised societies and population sub-groups elsewhere. In New Zealand, Maori are one such group. After almost 20 years of generic and kaupapa Maori (Maori designed and delivered) tobacco control interventions Maori smoking prevalence is trending downwards. It may be beyond the scope of this paper, but I think it is a shame that there is not more sharing of programme knowledge and solutions between like communities. I would have liked to have seen more reference to how similarly challenged communities elsewhere have succeeded in turning the tide of smoking normality, to support the authors’ recommendations. Reference to literature was a bit insular (Australian-centred).

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

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.