Reviewer's report

Title: Looking at the smoking epidemic through the lens of population pyramids: socio-demographic patterns of smoking in Italy, 1983-2005

Version: 1 Date: 11 July 2012

Reviewer: Van Tong

Reviewer's report:

The purpose of this study was to compare information derived from commonly used measures of smoking with that presented in modified Population Pyramids, using the example of diffusion of smoking in Italy over the past 2 decades. Overall the paper was well-written with a clear results section describing the difference of using the two methods and a very convincing discussion on how these results might lead to differences in interpretation of trends in smoking. A few minor comments for the authors consideration.

1. P6, para 1, In the background, can the authors elaborate on the statement “Given the importance for health care systems and organizations…” This implication was clearly described in the discussion, but it will be helpful to the reader to re-state here how these data might be more useful for resource allocation.

2. P6, para 3. The authors mention that the epidemic has moved into the later stages. Those who work in tobacco control may be aware of what these stages are, but it may be more clear to describe what this means (e.g., decreasing rates of smoking and/or changes in mortality).

3. P7, para 1. Could response rates or range be provided for each survey phase.

4. P7, para 2. Though I agree with the variables selected in the paper, please add a brief justification at why age, gender, education were selected for this analysis.

5. P9, para 1. Current smoking prevalence of men in 1983 was presented as 47.6% in text, but in table 1, it is 46.6%. Please clarify.

6. P12, para 3. It would be useful to provide a couple of sentences regarding what the tobacco control recommendations are based on the findings. Also to reference the WHO framework for tobacco control.

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 no competing interests.