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: 13 July 2012

Reviewer: Italia Rolle

Reviewer’s report:

Overall, this manuscript contributes substantially to understanding trends in the tobacco epidemic in Italy using population pyramids. The use of the population pyramids was innovative. There are no major edits or revisions for the background, methods, and results.

Discussion

The authors recommend that focusing only on young adults with the lowest educational level would provide only minor public benefits (pg. 12, 3rd paragraph). The manuscript could be further improved if the authors provide alternative policy interventions for the groups with the higher smoking levels and greater number of smokers. Additionally, how would policy interventions differ for those with low educational levels compared to higher levels of education? The authors do not link the changes in the number of smokers to policy changes e.g. smoke free legislation, higher taxes on tobacco products. I understand the paper is exploratory, however, the manuscript can benefit from including contextual policy changes as it relates to changes in the number of smokers by age group and gender in the time period examined. Recommend adding “in Italy” to the end of the following sentence: “PPs made clear that, within about 20 years, smokers with a low educational level will start to be…” (pg. 12, last paragraph).

Level of interest: An article of outstanding merit and interest in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.