Reviewer’s report

Title: Cigarette Smoking, Nicotine Dependence and Anxiety Disorders: A systematic review of population based, epidemiological studies

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Reviewer: Ulrich John

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Ms Cigarette Smoking, Nicotine Dependence and Anxiety Disorders: A systematic review of population based, epidemiological studies

This is a review of population-based studies about relations between smoking and nicotine dependence and the single anxiety disorders. Such comorbidity has been revealed by several studies. It seems worthwhile to analyse these relations. Insofar, the review has its merits. However, this reviewer missed the presentation of ideas what we should expect according to these relations. Why should it make sense to expect smoking, why should it make sense to expect nicotine dependence as supporting the development of a specific anxiety disorder. Why should this be the other way round? In its present state the paper appears somewhat arbitrary. The authors should provide the reader with some idea about why a specific relation seems likely to exist.

Major compulsory revisions

Abstract. The abstract leaves the reader with some uncertainty: Anxiety disorders may support smoking and nicotine dependence and vice versa. Could the authors not give a sentence in a discussion section of the abstract whether the stronger evidence reveals anxiety disorders being the grounds for nicotine dependence or the other way round?

Intro, para 1, last sent: The understanding of this reviewer is that if a dose-response relation exists according to a population survey. This means that the number of anxiety disorder criteria are related with the likelihood to be a current smoker. Please clarify.

Intro: It would be helpful if the authors could include a para about why anxiety disorders might be associated with, first smoking, second number of cigarettes per day, and third, nicotine dependence.

Minor essential revisions

The table of contents seems to be uncommon. However, it might fit in the rules of this journal.

Table of contents: Please do not use abbreviations in the table of contents.

Abstract: Please write nicotine dependence instead of ND.
P 10: It would be helpful if the authors could explain in some more detail which studies included an interview such as the CIDI in which onset and recency of single criteria for a diagnosis were assessed. This makes possible to estimate which disorder was first: anxiety disorder or ND.

Discussion

It would be helpful and would increase the value of the paper if the authors could give explanations for why first smoking and second nicotine dependence might be related with the different anxiety disorders. Might smoking be used as a quasi medication? Might nicotine dependence produce states of depression that might support anxiety? Or is there an overall proneness among suppopulations to develop psychiatric disorder in a way that the more severe the disorder the more psychiatric comorbidity exists? Do the data give any answer to some of these questions?

Do the findings provide any information according to the question whether time since anxiety disorder has been present relates to severity of smoking and nicotine dependence?

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.