Reviewer's report

Title: The role of theory-driven graphic warning labels in motivation to quit: a qualitative study on perceptions from low-income, urban smokers

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Reviewer: Gera Nagelhout

Reviewer's report:

This is a qualitative study that explores perceptions of different pictorial warning labels on cigarette packages among low-income smokers. Interviews were conducted with 25 low-income adult smokers. It is an interesting study, but it is limited because: 1) only perceptions were examined and no effects could be determined, and 2) only low-income smokers were examined and this could thus not be compared with the perceptions of high-income smokers. This is acknowledged in the paper.

MAJOR COMMENTS:

The authors could be more careful in describing (the implications of) their study in the introduction and discussion section. Phrases like ‘to address these gaps in the literature’, ‘their influence’, ‘fills a gap’, and ‘were important motivators’ suggest that we can draw important, causal conclusions from this paper. This study could certainly be described as a first step to address gaps in the literature, but the authors should not induce false expectations of (the implications of) their study.

In the last sentence of the discussion, the authors state that disparities in smoking cessation may be reduced with the evidence-based pictorial warning labels. However, this study only examines low-income smokers and not high-income smokers. Therefore, we cannot say whether the warning labels could reduce differences, because the results may be exactly the same among high-income smokers.

MINOR COMMENTS:

Abstract - results: The first sentence of the results of the abstract should probably be ‘Labels depicting negative health effects to smokers were identified as most motivation, followed by labels depicting negative health effects to others’. Now, the words ‘negative health’ are missing.

Abstract – conclusions: The first sentence of the conclusions of the abstract could be formulated more carefully, giving the limited design of the study. ‘may be’ is probably more appropriate than ‘are’.

Results: Perhaps the exact age of respondents can be given, instead of only using ‘older’ and ‘younger’ man/woman?
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