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: Judith McCool

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

General comments

Overall, the paper is well a well edited piece that would add to the US interest in the benefits or otherwise of introducing graphic health warnings. It is still perplexing, from a New Zealand perspective, that these are not already mandatory and that there is a lag in the research contribution in this arena. However, this group has conducted a study within a high priority group to explore perceptions of efficacy, essentially. In terms of international literature on this subject, it is not necessarily new; from a US perspective, this study is likely to garner some interest – if not to support implementation, but to further examine the impact on specific population groups. Unintended impacts from population based intervention are ideally avoided.

It must be noted that the evidence in support of GWLS is reasonably well established and the US lags well behind in this research and this data is therefore important to publish in that is represents a

Major compulsory changes:

The literature sources that the authors have drawn upon are somewhat dated and perhaps preclude a more detailed appraisal of what tobacco means within and among low income groups. Such is the current climate of economic deprivation and relative inequalities in society (where New Zealand and the US rank among the highest) poverty is a social and economic issue. It would be ideal to have seen some recent critical analysis of the post global financial crisis on social change – and risk behaviors. The assumption, with some evidence, that poverty, relative inequalities and in general low SES are likely to have an impact on how GWLS is not well developed. This would strengthen the contribution of the paper in the context of a reasonably large database of research on the development and impacts of GWLS.

Action: revise the background and discussion section to reflect recent literature / critical analysis.

Minor compulsory changes:

Methods: It is not clear in the current paper when the data was collected. I think that this is important to appraise the context of the work.
Action: please add this information about the date / time of year of data collection.

The selection of warning labels to be shown during the interviews is neatly presented in table 1. It is not clear however where each have come from and what basis they were developed, where they originated from and what, if any reliability analysis has been conducted on them. This would then assist to determine if participants in the present sample were consistent in their perceptions of the images compared to other samples. It is not the central question of the work, but it adds some reference to whether these images are going to weakly viewed in other settings as well.

Action: Table 1: include further information on the origin, date and (if available) test data on that image.

No other changes required.

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 that I have no competing interests'