Author's response to reviews

Title: Exploring comorbid use of marijuana, tobacco, and alcohol among 14 to 15-year-olds: Findings from a national survey on adolescent substance use

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Author's response to reviews: see over
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Re-submission to *BMC Public Health*

Dear Natalie Pafitis, Executive Editor, BMC Public Health

Please find attached our manuscript, *Exploring comorbid use of marijuana, tobacco, and alcohol among 14 to 15-year-olds: Findings from a national survey on adolescent substance use* by Joanna White, Dr. Darren Walton and Dr. Natalie Walker, now revised to address your concerns about ethics approval.

I have revised the methods section to include further details of the ethics approval, the consent procedure and the information regarding the permission from schools. The methods clarify that:

- Written consent to participate was given by School Principals and Deputy School Principals on behalf of their students.

- Given the anonymity of the survey and the relative minimal risk of harm to students it was not considered necessary to seek active consent from parents, although parents were advised that their child’s school had been invited to take part, the details of the survey, and that their child would decide whether or not to participate.

- Participants completed the questionnaire anonymously in a classroom setting under supervision of their teacher and a trained fieldworker. They were informed that their responses would remain anonymous and that participation was voluntary, and were asked to tick a box on the front of the questionnaire to indicate their consent.

- The participants did not put their name on the survey and neither teachers nor parents were permitted to look at the survey questionnaires after completion.

- Participating schools were not named or identified in any way in any publications or to the media.

- Ethical approval for the YIS was granted by the Ministry of Health’s multi-regional ethics committee in 2007.

Thank you again for considering our manuscript and for taking the time to follow up about our ethics approval.

Yours sincerely

Joanna White