Reviewer's report

Title: Parental smoking and child poverty in the UK: An analysis of national survey data

Version: 2 Date: 24 December 2014

Reviewer: George Thomson

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This is an important area in both social and health policy. It is of particular relevance to interventions which decrease the affordability of tobacco and nicotine products. The methods appear sophisticated (given the data that appears to be available) and the estimate of the potential impact of smoking just above the poverty line is original. The aims are ambitious (particularly as they have been done without reference to previous work in the area) but appear to have been well realised. The article is well written.

Major revisions

Some matters where changes might be positive:

Abstract:
1) Line 21: Suggest rewording ‘interventions which effectively enable low income smokers to quit’

Introduction
2) Line 23: suggest ‘To our knowledge, the impact of parental smoking on child poverty in the UK has not previously …’. See previous work:
o Thomson et al. Tob Control. 2002 Dec;11(4):372-5;

[Likewise for p.10, lines 1-2: suggest ‘a contributor to UK child poverty that has not, to our knowledge, previously been quantified in this context’ ]

Methods
2) P.5, lines 15-17: It is not clear why the assumption was made – as those in poverty are likely to have a greater smoking prevalence than those in the ‘routine and manual occupational socio-economic group’. Is there no other relevant survey data? Mention in Discussion?

3) p.6: Lines 22-23: This is the reported cigarette usage – but reported usage is not dependable. Are there no objective ways to estimate usage for those in poverty? If not – mention the need in Discussion
Results
4) p.8, lines 11-15: The heading leads one to expect a result about children in households with smokers, but you give a number of children 'with adults who were married or civil-partnered' 

Discussion
5) P.10, lines 5-6: As with the Abstract I suggest rewording ‘effective interventions which enable low income smokers to quit’.

6) It would also be helpful if at least a reference could be made to the recent reviews of effective tobacco policy interventions to increase health equity:

And to the debate between comprehensive and upstream solutions to smoking equity, and individual intervention approaches: eg.

7) There is also the unmentioned ethical and political aspect of government collecting tobacco tax from the households of these 1.5m children (perhaps estimate this revenue), but using less than 5% of the revenue in dealing with tobacco addiction. That is, using tobacco as a way to transfer money from the addicted poor to spending for the general population.

8) The Further Research section needs to point out the problems of not having a smoking question in the UK census. Such a question would enable researchers to see children in in households with smokers (not just with parents who smoke) and by household income.

Minor revisions:
9) p.8, line 13 – the reference is not shown.
10) The references need work: Refs 1,3 are incomplete, Ref 2 needs an author and city, etc.

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