Reviewer’s report

Title: Knowledge, attitudes, and perceptions towards waterpipe tobacco smoking amongst college or university students: a systematic review.

Version: 0 Date: 24 Sep 2018

Reviewer: Fadi Hammal

Reviewer's report:

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I would like to thank the authors for their work on this manuscript, it is important and well written paper, however there are several points that could improve its quality:

1. The literature search was performed in August 2016. Based on the authors' correctly commented in (page 4, line 19) "plethora of published evidence" and in (page 5, line 37), it is reasonably expected that many relevant studies were published since then and are missed in current review. Probably authors could update their search and include studies published since 2016.

2. Authors reasoning for performing this review (page 4, line 29) "there is no evidence that WTS use extends once students leave university." and their comment regarding exploring reasons for this uniquely high prevalence. This is a valid and sound research question; however, answering this type of questions could be more thorough and detailed in a primary study. In (page 5, line 33), it would be good to clarify and support the assumption that university student "may be distinct in their behaviours of WTS compared to other cohorts". Is it possible that age is an important confounder here?

3. Some of the references especially in the introduction are old and there are some newer studies to use here.

4. No need to include a photo for waterpipe or to describe how waterpipe functions (page 4, lines 6-12), readers will most likely be familiar with that.

5. This review is closer to "narrative or scoping review" and I think it should not be called a "systematic review" and so.

6. Readers would like to know more about the included studies. Lot of data that were collected according to appendix 1 are not presented in the manuscript. It would be an important addition to the paper to include a table of the characteristics of the included studies (e.g. study design,
sample size, tool used, response rate, country, participants, ...) (even as appendix).

7. No critical appraisal for the quality of the included studies was reported (not needed in all types of reviews).

8. Authors could follow a recently published PRISMA checklist for scoping review to format their manuscript.

9. Detailed search strategy, including terms used, could be presented in the appendix and could be more informative than data extraction form.

10. Authors also reported that they "hand-searched references' lists and used PubMed's related articles function", that was not reported in figure 2 and we do not know how many articles were identified through that route. Also in figure 2, reasons for excluding studies after being retrieved and read in full should be linked to numbers as it was done in the previous box.

11. As search was restricted to (1990-present), readers would like to know how it returned 584 pre-1990 articles?

12. Finally, an important factor and a major difference between global north and global south that should be addressed. (Herbal vs tobacco), it has major impact on believes and attitude regarding health effects and addictive potential, on waterpipe smoking initiation, and on policy measures regarding waterpipe use including, flavouring, marketing and promotion, and smoking in public places.

Best regards,

**Are the methods appropriate and well described?**
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

**Does the work include the necessary controls?**
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Unable to assess

**Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?**
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Yes

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Not relevant to this manuscript

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Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Acceptable

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