Reviewer's report

Title: Chronic Respiratory Symptoms and Pulmonary Function Status in Ethiopian Agricultural Workers: a Comparative Study

Version: 0 Date: 20 Jan 2020

Reviewer: Jacqueline O'Toole

Reviewer's report:

General Comments:

Interesting article on an underserved population in need of data to support future interventions aimed to prevent respiratory diseases. I would have appreciated a little more information on the control subjects and their exposure risks. You did a nice job of controlling for many confounders in your exclusion criteria.

Minor Essential Comments:

1. You reference duration of employment for both the agricultural group and the control group, but you do not provide information that I could find on what types of employment those in the control group had. Were these individuals commuting away from their village each day, were they in a similar environment to the agricultural workers? It would be helpful to know if these control individuals are inside all day or something to that effect in order to compare their exposure risk to the agricultural workers.

2. Do you have information about second-hand smoke exposure between the two groups? Or close contacts/living in same dwelling as smokers? This would be helpful to include in the model in table 3 if you have this information to see if close smoke exposure has any effect on the chronic symptom report or not.

3. Table 2: I'm not sure I understand this table. Is this the Chi-squared results comparing the prevalence of symptoms in agricultural workers and controls? If so, why two separate confidence intervals for each set of symptoms? Or, are you reporting confidence intervals surrounding the percentage of prevalence, I have not seen this reported like this before? Based on your reference from the text and the title of the table I am looking at expecting prevalence of symptoms and then a significance value based on a chi-squared if you are comparing scores or t-test if comparing prevalence as continuous value read out. This needs clarification of what tests you are showing the results of.
If you do not have information about the employment of the controls and any second-hand smoke or in-home smoke exposure this should be included in the limitations of the study as potentially confounding the effect of agricultural work exposure on respiratory symptoms.

Minor comments:

There are a few grammatical issues. For example, Line 76, "work leads to a high levels..." can delete the "a". Line 215-216: "were not showed significant difference between..." should read "were not significantly different between..." Line 245 should probably read "...group of farmers did not use personal safety..." Paragraph of lines 252-264 when referencing other studies there are a few areas of cleaning up.

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.

Yes

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

I am able to assess the statistics

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