

“Review with meta-analysis relating North American, European or Japanese snus or smokeless tobacco use to major smoking-related diseases” by Peter N Lee, Katharine

J Coombs and Jan S Hamling

(Manuscript No: 75545; Systematic Reviews)

Point by point reply to comments received in e-mail “Notification on manuscript revision” received on 13th April 2022

We are glad to hear that the academic quality, language quality, and ethics of your manuscript basically meets the publishing requirements of the *World Journal of Meta-Analysis* and that a preliminary decision has been made that it is acceptable for publication after our appropriate revision, though we understand that it will be sent for re-reviews before a final decision is made.

Reviewer #1:

Scientific Quality: Grade C (Good)

Language Quality: Grade B (Minor language polishing)

Conclusion: Minor revision

Specific Comments to Authors: the manuscript analyzed multiple studies done in US and Scandinavia on smokeless tobacco and analyzed the risk of COPD, IHD, Stroke and lung cancer and proposed that the risk of smokeless tobacco is lesser than smoking tobacco and suggested the use of smokeless tobacco as a substitute of smoking tobacco. however, the use of smokeless tobacco is maximum in Asian countries and the studies from these countries were not included in the study. this is one of the major limitation of the study. Moreover, there are nicotine based preparations available in market and approved by FDA for deaddiction of smoking tobacco. the conclusion that smokeless tobacco can be a lesser harmful substitute for smoking tobacco is giving a wrong message for readers as smokeless tobacco has been proved to be harmful and cause multiple cancers. future studies should consider the other effects of smokeless tobacco affecting the mortality and morbidity like oral cancer.

Reply to Reviewer #1. The work described in our paper is part of a larger project (looking also at cigarettes, pipes and cigars) restricted to North America, Europe and Japan. Though clearly it would be better if we had good data for the whole world, this is well beyond the scope and budget of the project. That said, the original title of the paper was misleading as it did not mention any such restriction. For that reason, the title has been changed to read “Review with meta-analysis relating North American, European or Japanese snus or smokeless tobacco use to major smoking-related diseases” and the text has been revised in various places to make the restriction clearer, and to carefully ensure that inferences are not drawn beyond the scope of the data considered, both as regards location and diseases studied, i.e. that no “wrong message”, as Reviewer #1 phrased it, is given. The final sentence of the Conclusions section makes this abundantly clear - “Though the data have limitations, providing information only on risks from the major smoking-related diseases, and none on risks from the smokeless products used in Africa or Asia, our findings clearly show that risks of the diseases considered from US ST and snus use are much less than for smoking”.

As regards the comment that Minor Language Polishing is required we have gone through the paper carefully to attempt this. Note that all three of the authors are English, so there seems no need to send it elsewhere for checking, a procedure never used previously in the many hundred publications we have contributed to.

Reviewer #2:

Scientific Quality: Grade C (Good)

Language Quality: Grade B (Minor language polishing)

Conclusion: Major revision

Specific Comments to Authors: I thank the editor for giving me the opportunity to review the manuscript and thank you Author's for interesting in the topic of smokeless tobacco, ST. But the document sent for revision is too huge probably unnecessary files were attached mistakenly or some thing else. Too many tables and two separate portions of references included??? Either the editor or corresponding author have to revise this and related issues before sending for revision. Regards.

Reply to Reviewer 2. When the paper was submitted originally, we started with a main paper including 5 tables and 54 references, and a single additional file (giving full details of the search procedures) with 3 more tables and 125 more references. However we got the impression (possibly wrongly) that these two files should be joined together on submission. Now we have submitted them separately, which should solve the misunderstanding. We do not think that five tables is too many for our paper, a number that is less than other publications of ours in the journal and elsewhere.

As regards Minor Language Polishing, please see our reply to Reviewer 1.

ABBREVIATIONS

We have checked that the use of abbreviations in the paper conforms with the requirements of the journal, and that the Running Title is no more than 6 words.

EDITORIAL OFFICE'S COMMENTS

Please see comments in upper case against the relevant comments.

(1) Science editor:

The manuscript analyzed multiple studies done in US and Scandinavia on smokeless tobacco and analyzed the risk of COPD, IHD, Stroke and lung cancer and concluded that risks of smokeless tobacco as used in the United States exist, but are much lower than those from cigarette smoking, while risks from Swedish snus are lower still, and not clearly demonstrated. This is an interesting study but it needs several major revisions before it can be deemed fit for publication.

1. The structure and content of the article need to be further improved. AS NOTED ABOVE WE HAVE GONE THROUGH THE PAPER BOTH TO MAKE IT CLEARER THAT THE STUDY IS LIMITED TO DATA FROM THREE AREAS, AND TO FOUR DISEASES, AND NOT TO MAKE CLAIMS OUTSIDE THESE LIMITATIONS, AND ALSO TO IMPROVE THE ENGLISH. WITHOUT BEING SUPPLIED WITH

SPECIFIC DETAILS AS TO WHERE THE SCIENCE EDITOR THOUGHT IMPROVEMENT WAS NECESSARY, IT IS NOT CLEAR WHETHER WE SHOULD HAVE DONE MORE.

2. Self-citation rate is too high in this paper. According to the requirements of the publisher, the self-referencing rate should be less than 3%. WHILE ONE COULD ARGUE THAT IS BETTER TO CITE THE MOST RELEVANT PAPERS, WHEREVER THEY COME FROM, WE HAVE REMOVED MOST OF THE SELF-CITATIONS. PNL IS NOW CITED FOUR TIMES, KJC ONCE AND JSH ONCE. WE HOPE THIS IS ENOUGH

It is also unacceptable to have more than 3 references from the same journal. To resolve this issue and move forward in the publication process, please revise your reference list accordingly. AGAIN ONE MIGHT WELL ARGUE THAT THIS IS A STRANGE RESTRICTION, WHEN ONE CLEARLY WISHES TO CITE THE MOST RELEVANT PAPERS. FURTHERMORE MOST OF THE REFERENCES WERE THOSE RELATING TO THE PAPERS DERIVED FROM THE LITERATURE SEARCHES, WHERE ONE HAS NO CONTROL OVER THE NUMBER OF TIMES A JOURNAL IS CITED. HOWEVER I NOTE THAT THE REFERENCES COME FROM A WIDE RANGE OF JOURNALS, WITH PROBABLY NONE APPEARING MORE THAN FOUR OR FIVE TIMES.

3. Too many tables and two separate portions of references included, which might confuse readers. PLEASE SEE REPLY TO REVIEWER 2 ABOVE.

4. The use of smokeless tobacco is maximum in Asian countries and the studies from these countries were not included in the study. PLEASE SEE REPLY TO REVIEWER 1 ABOVE.

5. Systematic reviews and meta-analysis manuscripts should follow the PRISMA guidelines. THIS ONE DID.

Please also provide documents following the requirements in the journal's Guidelines for manuscript type and related ethics: 1) Conflict-of-Interest Disclosure Form; (2) Copyright License Agreement; (3) PRISMA 2009 Checklist; (4) Biostatistics Review Certificate. VERSIONS OF THESE DOCUMENTS WERE PREVIOUSLY PROVIDED. THESE HAVE NOW BEEN UPDATED TO TAKE THE REVISED TITLE OF THE PAPER INTO ACCOUNT.

Scientific Quality: C Language Quality: B Recommendation: General accept
Language Quality: Grade B (Minor language polishing)
Scientific Quality: Grade C (Good)

(2) Company editor-in-chief:

I have reviewed the Peer-Review Report, the full text of the manuscript, and the relevant ethics documents, all of which have met the basic publishing requirements of the World Journal of Meta-Analysis, and the manuscript is conditionally accepted.

GOOD

I have sent the manuscript to the author(s) for its revision according to the Peer-Review Report, Editorial Office's comments and the Criteria for Manuscript Revision by Authors. Before final acceptance, the author(s) must add a figure of PRISMA to the manuscript. WE WOULD ARGUE THAT THIS IS NOT REALLY NECESSARY, AS AT BEST THE FIGURE COULD ONLY BE A SUPERFICIAL SUMMARY OF WHAT IS IN THE TEXT. IF WE WERE TO TRY TO PRODUCE SOMETHING, WE WOULD NEED THE ASISTANCE OF ONE OF OUR AUTHORS CURRENTLYAWAY FOR A WEEK, SO IT WOULD TAKE SOME TIME. WE WOULD BE GRATEFUL IF YOU COULD FORGET THIS DEMAND.

Authors are required to provide standard three-line tables, that is, only the top line, bottom line, and column line are displayed, while other table lines are hidden. The contents of each cell in the table should conform to the editing specifications, and the

lines of each row or column of the table should be aligned. Do not use carriage returns or spaces to replace lines or vertical lines and do not segment cell content.

ALL THE TABLES SATISFY THE CRITERIA STATED AS FAR AS WE ARE AWARE.

SUBMITTING THE REVISED MANUSCRIPT

WE BELIEVE THAT WE HAVE SUBMITTED EVERYTHING AS REQUIRED, BUT PLEASE LET US KNOW IF ANYTHING IS MISSING.

BELOW WE COMMENT ON A FEW POINTS.

References

THE REFERENCES SHOULD ALL BE IN THE CORRECT FORMAT. AS ALREADY NOTE ONE CANNOT CONTROL THE NUMBER OF REFERENCES FROM THE SAME JOURNAL WHEN MOST OF THE REFERENCES ARE DERIVED FROM THE LITERATURE SEARCHES REQUIRED FOR THE WORK.

Tables

WE HAVE PRODUCED A SEPARATE FILE WITH THE FIVE TABLES IN. HOWEVER, GIVEN THAT THE TABLES ARE IN THE PAPER ANYWAY, THE POINT OF THIS IS NOT CLEAR TO US.

Files

WE BELIEVE THAT WE HAVE INCLUDED ALL THE RELEVANT FILES IN THE FOLLOWING LIST EXCEPT THAT WE WILL PROVIDE THE AUDIO CORE TIP LATER, WHEN ONE OF THE AUTHORS RETURNS FROM HOLIDAY.

- (1) 75545-Answering Reviewers
- (2) 75545-Audio Core Tip
- (3) 75545-Biostatistics Review Certificate
- (4) 75545-Conflict-of-Interest Disclosure Form

(5) 75545-Copyright License Agreement

(6) 75545-Approved Grant Application Form(s) or Funding Agency Copy of any Approval Document(s)

(10) 75545-Table File

(11) 75545-PRISMA 2009 Checklist

(12) 75545-Supplementary Material

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9 CONFLICT-OF-INTEREST DISCLOSURE FORM

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