

PEER REVIEW HISTORY

BMJ Open publishes all reviews undertaken for accepted manuscripts. Reviewers are asked to complete a checklist review form (<http://bmjopen.bmj.com/site/about/resources/checklist.pdf>) and are provided with free text boxes to elaborate on their assessment. These free text comments are reproduced below.

ARTICLE DETAILS

TITLE (PROVISIONAL)	Experts' Consensus on Use of Electronic Cigarettes: A Delphi Survey from Switzerland
AUTHORS	Blaser, Jeremie; Cornuz, Jacques

VERSION 1 - REVIEW

REVIEWER	Ellen J. Hahn University of Kentucky, USA
REVIEW RETURNED	29-Dec-2014

GENERAL COMMENTS	<p>Authors addressed several of my concerns. However, in this revision, the authors continue to assume readers understand the Delphi Method. There are no citations of the method upfront in the Methods section. I would suggest a few sentences describing this as a scientific methods, along with how the data are analyzed to assess consensus.</p> <p>There remain 'holes' in the Methods/Results. It would be helpful if the authors give a few examples of the statements they included in the original 14 (one without consensus), and one additional one in each round. This could be added in a Table. Tables 2-4 are organized around constructs of regulation, sale, use, but it is unclear how many of each of these constructs were included in the original statements.</p> <p>Table 1 is confusing and is not consistent with the information in Tables 2-4. By the end of the survey it shows 10 statements that were accepted (assume consensus), but there are far more statements in Tables 2-4. It is very interesting that there were 12 with no consensus by the end of the survey. Those would be just as interesting to know. I would reconfigure Table 2-4 to show the 10 that yielded consensus and the 12 without. The Discussion should focus on these.</p>
-------------------------	---

REVIEWER	Neal Benowitz Universit of California San Francisco USA Consultant to several pharmaceutical companies that market smoking cessation medications
REVIEW RETURNED	29-Dec-2014

GENERAL COMMENTS	The authors have responded adequately to the reviewers' comments.
-------------------------	---

	<p>One editorial question:</p> <p>p10, line 54: do the authors intend "restricting the sale of ECs to adults..."? should this be to children?</p>
--	---

VERSION 1 – AUTHOR RESPONSE

Reviewer: 1

Reviewer Name Ellen J. Hahn

Institution and Country University of Kentucky, USA

Please state any competing interests or state 'None declared': None declared

1) Authors addressed several of my concerns. However, in this revision, the authors continue to assume readers understand the Delphi Method. There are no citations of the method upfront in the Methods section. I would suggest a few sentences describing this as a scientific methods, along with how the data are analyzed to assess consensus.

Answer: We agree that more information about the Delphi method could be useful for the readers. In the revised version, we have addressed this point in the method section, and have added more explanations about this design.

2) There remain 'holes' in the Methods/Results. It would be helpful if the authors give a few examples of the statements they included in the original 14 (one without consensus), and one additional one in each round. This could be added in a Table. Tables 2-4 are organized around constructs of regulation, sale, use, but it is unclear how many of each of these constructs were included in the original statements.

Answer: We agree that information about the original statements and recommendations should be available to the readers. We therefore provide the original questionnaires to the editor as supplementary files. We leave the choice to the editor to publish them as Appendix. They are also available on the website Dryad.org, following the DOI 10.5061/dryad.pd790.

We also agree that an example of a recommendation can be helpful. We included one in the method section. However, we fear that more examples would not be helpful for the reader and might make the article unnecessarily longer.

3) Table 1 is confusing and is not consistent with the information in Tables 2-4. By the end of the survey it shows 10 statements that were accepted (assume consensus), but there are far more statements in Tables 2-4. It is very interesting that there were 12 with no consensus by the end of the survey. Those would be just as interesting to know. I would reconfigure Table 2-4 to show the 10 that yielded consensus and the 12 without. The Discussion should focus on these.

Answer: We agree that Table 1 is confusing. As some recommendations were divided into subquestions, the final number of recommendations does not match with the number of questions.

For example, for the question labeled number 2.1 in the 1st questionnaire (cf supplementary file):
 "2.1. Sale restrictions should be proposed for:

- Non-smokers
- Pregnant women
- Minors"

There were 3 subquestions that could be accepted independently (restrictions for non-smokers, pregnant women and/or minors). For this reason, we included all consensual subquestions in the tables 2-4, whereas only the recommendations or statements that were entirely accepted or rejected were included in table 1. The recommendations and statements were combined to make the tables 2-4 more easily understandable.

If we try to match the numbers from Table 1 with the number of recommendations/statements that were accepted or rejected in Tables 2-4, it brings redundant information in the Tables 2-4. An example is given as supplementary file ("Table 1 revised"), in which we counted every independent statements or recommendations in Table 1. As we did not find a simpler way to present the number of accepted or rejected items matching with the result tables, we propose to the editor to suppress the table 1 to avoid confusion (it has already been suppressed in the present revised version).

We agree that the statements and recommendations that did not reach a consensus could also be interesting for the readers. Our concern about not making the article too long or confusing for the readers let us decide not to include them in the article. However, we provide a summary of all the results as supplementary file (appendix). We leave the choice to the editor to publish it as an Appendix.

Reviewer: 2

Reviewer Name Neal Benowitz

Institution and Country University of California San Francisco

USA

Please state any competing interests or state 'None declared': Consultant to several pharmaceutical companies that market smoking cessation medications

The authors have responded adequately to the reviewers' comments.

One editorial question:

1) p10, line 54: do the authors intend "restricting the sale of ECs to adults..."? should this be to children ?

Answer: To avoid any possible confusion for the reader, we modified the sentence with "... by only selling e-cigarettes to adults...".

VERSION 2 – REVIEW

REVIEWER	Ellen J. Hahn University of Kentucky College of Nursing, USA
REVIEW RETURNED	17-Feb-2015

GENERAL COMMENTS	The paper is much improved. However, there are multiple sentence structure and grammatical errors that need to be fixed. While they decided not to summarize the issues where consensus did not occur in the Results, they still mention a few of those areas in the Discussion. Either mention the areas of non-consensus in the Findings and the Discussion, or omit from the Discussion.
-------------------------	---

VERSION 2 – AUTHOR RESPONSE

As suggested by the reviewers, we had the article proofread and we corrected the grammatical errors. Please let us know if more corrections are needed.

Finally, as proposed by the reviewers, we suppressed the areas about the recommendations that didn't reach a consensus from the discussion.