Reviewer's report

Title: Alcoholic cirrhosis in Denmark - population-based incidence, prevalence, and hospitalization rates between 1988 and 2005: a descriptive cohort study

Version: 1 Date: 18 October 2007

Reviewer: Mats Ramstedt

Reviewer's report:

General remarks and suggested major revisions

This study address an important issue namely how cirrhosis morbidity (incidence, prevalence, and hospitalisation rates) have developed in Denmark during the past 15-20 years. It shows that the development is different across age groups with increasing rates among those above 65 years, declining rates in the younger population and stable rates in the age group 50-64 years.

My main concern with the paper is the lack of putting the results in a broader context and that there is too little attempt to explain the revealed age-specific patterns:

• Do these age-specific trends mean that alcohol-harm in general has developed differently across age groups, do other harm indicators confirm the pattern or are they only relevant to alcoholic cirrhosis?

• What are the possible explanations for these age-specific differences, for instance the decline in younger age groups? A higher ambition with respect to explaining the results are needed in terms of possible cohort effects (is it really a cohort study as the title suggests?), consequences of policy changes etc..

• I also miss a more comprehensive and detailed description of the survey findings the authors refer to that show a similar age-specific pattern with respect to self-reported alcohol consumption. When were they conducted and in what way too the results match (or not match) the cirrhosis results?

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Minor Essential Revisions

• The difference between incidence, prevalence and hospitalisation rates needs to be more clearly explained.

• The information presented in the graphs are very difficult to follow and I suggest that they must be revised.

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)
Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests