Reviewer's report

Title: Alcohol consumption, cigarette smoking and the risk of subtypes of head-neck cancer: results from the Netherlands Cohort Study

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Reviewer: Shu-Chun Chuang

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The study investigated the association between alcohol consumption and cigarette smoking and risk of head and neck cancer (HNC) in a case-cohort study. The authors concluded that alcohol consumption and cigarette smoking were independently associated with risk of HNC overall, with a positive, multiplicative interaction. The associations by subtype of HNC were also evaluated. The study design is, in general, well and the conclusions are also reflected by the results reported here.

A few minor essential comments:

1. It seems that the second hypothesis, “these risks are different for OCC, OPHC, and LC” was not tested (p for heterogeneity).

2. The subcohort was randomly selected from the entire cohort; the subcohort must be representative of the entire cohort. Such information can be presented as a supplementary table.

3. P6, data analysis: “Person-years at risk were calculated from baseline until diagnosis of HNC, death, emigration, loss to follow-up or end of follow-up, whichever occurred first”. When is the end of follow-up?

4. It seems that there were a few associations that were not constant over time. What could be the reasons for the interaction with time?

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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