Reviewer's report

Title: Alcohol consumption and the risk of morbidity and mortality for different stroke types - A systematic review and meta-analysis

Version: 1 Date: 27 November 2009

Reviewer: Annie Britton

Reviewer's report:

- Minor Essential Revisions

1. I would like to read a bit more about how this paper furthers our understanding. It updates several other meta-analyses and reproduces previous findings. It does separate fatal and non-fatal strokes, but the “what is new” is not clear in the abstract.

2. I think the paper would be improved if the authors developed the public health message a bit further. To state that “Preventive measures should be initiated” is a bit weak. Do the authors think that abstention is best for health? Given that there are reputed cardioprotective benefits from moderate drinking (mentioned on p14) would it be better from a total public health perspective for all to become moderate drinkers? Further reference to the other health consequences (positive and negative) from drinking alcohol would be useful to set this in context.

3. P3 last sentence in background is not clear

4. The authors state (p5) that “For those studies that did not report measures of association separately by sex, the estimates were used for men as well as women.” Could the authors clarify in the text how many studies this involved as there is quite an emphasis on sex differences in the associations in this paper.

- Discretionary Revisions

5. In recent years, a drink in the UK can be considered to be at least 10 grams of pure alcohol, not 8. This may not be a problem for this meta-analysis if there are no recent UK papers included.

6. Can the authors comment on whether it may be acute drinking, or chronic heavy drinking over the life-course that matters to stroke risk?

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

Quality of written English: Acceptable
Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

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