Reviewer’s report

Title: Drinking in transition: trends in alcohol consumption in Russia 1994-2004

Version: 1 Date: 21 January 2010

Reviewer: Mandy Stahre

Reviewer’s report:

Overall, I feel the report “Drinking in transition: trends in alcohol consumption in Russia 1994-2004” is a thoughtful piece examining an important public health topic. However, in the current state, the article is difficult to follow due to the jumping from 1994-2004 data and 1996-1998 data in the results. In addition, the paper feels as though it contains more information than necessary to answer the hypotheses (i.e., additional information regarding demographics and location). I think the overall structure of the paper can be improved and focusing the results will help to guide the reader specifically to the case the author is trying to make.

Discretionary Revisions:

1. For Table 1, it would be nice to note the years that differ significantly from the base year of 1994 or if at least the 2004 information is significantly different from 1994.

2. The mortality information for one of the main hypotheses is only included in one figure (Figure 2) and only examined for males. An expansion of the analysis on mortality would provide more to the paper.
   a. In addition, if the study author is examining the effect of alcohol consumption on mortality measures, I feel there should be an examination of mortality giving credit to those conditions that are chronic in nature (i.e., liver cirrhosis) versus those that are acute in nature (i.e., motor-vehicle traffic crashes) and more likely to respond to a sudden increase or decrease in consumption.

Major Compulsory Revisions:

1. There should be a discussion regarding how the per capita alcohol consumption data is collected, GDP and male death rates. Simply giving citations is not enough here.

2. Please restructure the discussion section. Take out the summary of findings and move the “Discussion of findings” to the beginning of this section.

Minor Compulsory Revisions:

1. The definition of frequency, heavy spirit drinking is not clear in the Methods section of the abstract.

2. The definition of frequent, heavy (binge) drinking is not clear on Page 9. The author states “…defined here as consuming at least 80g spirits per occasion (vodka and/or samogon), and drinking more than once a week”. Does the author
mean that drinking 80g of spirits on more than one drinking occasion per week is defined as binge drinking?

3. The author flips between using the term “binge” drinking and “frequent, heavy” drinking, please be consistent in the text.

4. The title for Figure 3 is missing

5. Figure 2 is incorrect in the first citation in the text on page 12 after the first sentence.

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’