Reviewer's report

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

Version: 2 Date: 8 April 2010

Reviewer: Arun Karlamangla

Reviewer's report:

The authors have done a very nice job of revising the manuscript to address the concerns that were raised. This paper will add much to the literature and contribute to our understanding and to future research in public health in many ways.

I have a few outstanding concerns, most of which are minor.

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. The authors do not appear to have adequately accounted for clustering in the data, resulting from the complex survey design (selection of PSUs, SSUs within PSUs, households within SSUs). While the use of weights can make the sample representative and the point estimates unbiased, weights on their own would not correct any deflation of confidence intervals resulting from data correlations within clusters.

Minor Essential Revisions

1. If the use of weights (meant to make the sample nationally representative) did not change the results (as stated in the response letter), please say so in the manuscript text.

Discretionary Revisions

1. In the abstract first paragraph, add 1998 Rouble crisis as a period during which you want to examine changes in alcohol consumption and changes in beverage type.

2. In the abstract last paragraph, explicitly state that links between alcohol and mortality were seen only in disadvantaged men, instead of saying links were inconsistent - which is vague and open to different interpretations.

3. Page 5, first paragraph - Not clear what is meant by 'analyses were based on alcohol-related mortality', so not obvious why this is bad.

4. Page 11, 2nd paragraph, last sentence - Explicitly say you examined correlations with 1-year lagged mortality.

5. Page 14, 2nd line - Education and urban-rural gradients in what?

6. Table 2 - Not clear that the numbers reported are percentages. Please change title to 'Trends in prevalence (%) of heavy and ...'

7. Table 3 - Not stated if the reported numbers are odds ratios or risk ratios or
something else.

8. Figure 1 - Title of figure not sufficiently informative. Please try something like 'Trends in percentage of Russian men and women consuming alcohol beverages, by beverage type, 1999-2004'

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**Statistical review:** Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests