Reviewer's report

Title: Estimation of cancer incidence and mortality attributable to alcohol drinking in China

Version: 1 Date: 3 September 2010

Reviewer: Leda Semyonov

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Major Compulsory Revisions
1) Methods, 5th line: In your study most of the cancers causally associated with alcohol drinking are take into consideration “(…) oral cavity, larynx, pharynx, esophagus, liver, female breast as well as colorectum”, except that pancreas cancer. I think that also data about pancreas cancer should be analyzed, since it’s strongly related with alcohol consumption.

2) Methods, 2th paragraph: In your study you define alcohol consumption as “drinking alcohol on at least 12 occasions during the past 12 months”, moreover you do not take in account neither the type of alcohol nor the drinking patterns: in my opinion this is a questionable parameter; this parameter is not selective since most of the population all over the world could be considered an alcohol drinker according to this standard, and ,in this way it would lead to an overestimate of the effect of alcohol.

3) Discussion,55th line: In your paper you affirm: “With respect to head and neck cancers (oral cavity, pharynx, and larynx), although there is strong evidence of a causal association with alcohol drinking, the low incidence of these cancers in China resulted in a relatively small number of cancers attributable to alcohol”: why do you think it could be possible? Maybe other risk factors (probably linked to the Chinese culture and traditions) are involved in the pathogenesis of these kind of cancers? Please give elucidations.

4) Discussion,59th line: You state that “Our results have several limitations”. Your limits lead to an important overestimation of the role of alcohol in the cancers pathogenesis: is it possible to modify some parameter in order to reduce the overestimation?

5) Discussion,80th line: Your discussion ends with the affirmation “(…) low and moderate (1-2 drinks/day) alcohol consumption might reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease. Particular attention needs to be paid regarding the potential harms of alcohol as well as its potential benefits when making public health recommendations on alcohol drinking and cancer surveillance”. Which are your own recommendations about this problem? Since you state that 12 drinks/year could cause a cancer, it would better to explain to the reader how you think it would be better to behave regarding alcohol consumption, not only recommending “…particular attention…”.

Discretionary Revisions
1) Discussion, 8th line: In the discussion you state that there is an “increased prevalence of drinking during the last years in China, particularly among women”: this is a serious public health problem: have you any suggestion to try to contrast this trend?

2) I think that in your paper a conclusive message is missing: on the strength of your results, which are your proposal? How it would be better to act with the Chinese population?

**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