Reviewer's report

Title: A minimum price per unit of alcohol: A focus group study to investigate public opinion concerning UK government proposals to introduce of new price controls to curb alcohol consumption

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Reviewer: Nick Heather

Reviewer's report:

This paper reports the findings of focus groups among the general public concerning the introduction of a minimum unit price (MUP) for alcoholic beverages. As such it is very topical and of much interest to the alcohol research and policy community. It will be especially valuable in giving an impression of the opposition that would likely be generated by an attempt to introduce such a policy and also in describing specific misunderstandings that government would need to dispel if MUP were to become acceptable to the public, together with ways in which this might be done (although it seems there are a great many misunderstandings here which would pose a difficult problem for mass communication education).

The design and methods of the study seem adequate and necessary improvements to the paper are few.

Minor essential revisions:

1) In the Abstract and elsewhere it is stated that the first objection to MUP is 'scepticism of minimum pricing as an effective means to reduce alcohol consumption'. Although it has been estimated by the Sheffield group that MUP would lead to a small overall decrease in per capita consumption, the focus group participants were surely right when they interpreted it as a targeted policy. To avoid misunderstanding among readers, I suggest '... to reduce harmful alcohol consumption'.

2) The Introduction could be updated to take into account developments since the paper was written. These are: (i) Andrew Lansley, the Health Secretary's recent rejection of MUP (see, eg, Independent on Sunday, 18-12-11); (ii) the latest progress on the MUP bill in Scotland; (iii) the development of the Government's policy on banning below cost alcohol sales.

3) At several places the authors say that there as been little in-depth investigation of the attitudes and beliefs of the general public regarding MUP. However, the refer to no work of this kind whatever and at other places say there has been no comparable work. Which is it? Please clarify.

4) The title of the paper is strangely ungrammatical; presumably the 2nd 'of' should be deleted. There are other places where the paper has been carelessly
prepared, eg. typographical errors, ungrammatical sentences and missing parts of references in the list.

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

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

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I am a Trustee of the body that funded this research (Alcohol Research UK). However, I took no part in the assessment of the application for funding and I do not believe that my present review of this paper has been biassed by this connection.