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

Version: 3 Date: 4 June 2012

Reviewer: Tai Pong Lam

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The purpose of this review is to comment on the qualitative methodology only.

This manuscript is on the minimum unit price policy of alcohol in the UK. The authors attempted to investigate ‘public opinion’ using focus group methodology. Despite the large number of participants of 218 in 28 focus groups and the huge amount of work involved, it is an inappropriate method to address the research question.

Because of the way participants are sampled and the limited number of them, focus groups can be useful in public opinion study by providing ‘selected’ in-depth understanding of ‘selected’ opinions. For a topic like minimum unit price for alcohol, certain groups e.g. sixth form students and university students are likely to have sets of opinions influenced by their own circumstances. It therefore would not allow the authors to come to the conclusion that ‘little evidence to suggest that people would support the introduction of a minimum price per unit of alcohol policy’. Such a conclusion would have to come from a quantitative survey. The same point stated by the authors, ‘This meant that any generalization made on the basis of the present findings should be viewed as speculative because of the comparatively small sample and the investigative approach...’

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’