Reviewer’s report

Title: The parent-child relationship and adolescent alcohol use: a systematic review of longitudinal studies

Version: 1 Date: 5 September 2012

Reviewer: Conor Gilligan

Reviewer’s report:

The authors explore an important issue but I question what this paper adds to existing knowledge. The limitations of previous reviews are given brief mention but it need to be made more clear how this review fills a knowledge gap in the area.

It seems that the key premise for the review is that previous ones did not assess methodological quality. It should be explained more specifically that while Ryan et al did review longitudinal studies they did not assess methodological quality and used a somewhat questionable statistical approach of combing p values. In order to make the case that the present paper adds to the field, the authors should more extensively describe and justify the methodological rigour of their approaches.

For example, the domains of bias assessed are given only brief mention but could be described more fully with some justification for why these domains cover the key factors associate with methodological rigor and the interpretability of results. More could also be made of the best evidence synthesis process – this is a strength of the review ad could be described more fully.

Some general improvements could also be made to the writing.

Some specific comments:
1. I notice there is no abstract included
2. Paragraph 2 – sentence 1 needs a reference
3. Paragraph 2 sentence 3 is unclear – I assume you are referring to negative PCR but please clarify. In the same sentence ‘frequently’ should be changed to ‘frequent’
4. Paragraph 3 – this is clumsily written. The two reviews exploring negative PCR could be easily covered in one sentence. The authors interchange between referring to a negative relationship with PCR and negative PCR. I think these terms have the same meaning and one should be used consistently throughout.
5. Page 3 paragraph 1, sentence 2 – this should refer to the results of primary studies as well as systematic reviews.

Methods
6. The search strategy could be described simply in a couple of sentences rather than Figure 1.

7. Quality assessment – the details relating to criterion K, C, E and F could be included as subscripts to the table OR the criteria should be included in the text rather than the reference numbers alone.

Results and Discussion

8. It would be helpful to include some description of the amount of ‘overlap’ with previous reviews. That is – how many of the included papers were also reviewed by Ryan et al, Foxcroft et al etc?

9. Study quality – page 8. How were the disagreements between assessors dealt with?

10. Some of the writing in the results is unclear. For example the sentence starting ‘However, Gutman et al..’ (page 9) does not indicate whether the Gutman paper is one of the five mentioned in the previous sentence or an additional one. Such poor clarity is found throughout.

11. The authors refer on page 9 and page 10 to Table 4. I do not have a table 4 and assume they mean Table 2??

12. The discussion needs some work based on my general comments above. The authors seem to suggest that improve PCR could potentially be detrimental. There is no evidence for this and it does not seem to be a logical argument following from the results.

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests