Reviewer’s report

Title: Mortality and potential years of life lost attributable to alcohol consumption in Canada in 2005

Version: 2 Date: 24 August 2011

Reviewer: Joanna Stewart

Reviewer’s report:

The authors have made what are probably the best assumptions they can with the available data to estimate the effect of alcohol on the Canadian population. However these assumptions will be very influential. It is therefore important that they make it very clear in the discussion what these assumptions were and the likely effect on the results.

Major

1. In the limitations of the study the limitations of AF’s where RR’s have been estimated from observational studies rather than RCT’s need to be discussed. It is misleading to imply that the RR is reflecting a totally causal effect.

2. The limitations should also discuss the fact that the very substantial upshifting that was done to the estimates of alcohol consumption within each age/sex group assumed uniform underreporting across these subgroups and across the drinking distribution within them. This is in conflict with the discussion about why there is discrepancy between reported alcohol use and alcohol sold where reference is made to high consumption in specific portions of the population not sampled. This would imply the under representation of a relatively small number of very high consumers rather than everyone consuming much more than they report. The influence of this needs to be discussed. Because of the very major difference the upshifting will have made to estimates of the effects of alcohol perhaps it would have been useful to produce the net attributable deaths based on the unadjusted survey data as well, as a bottom limit.

Minor

1. Results p15 4th line from the bottom. Is the 2008 meant to be 2005?

2. Some of the tables have footnotes that don’t appear to have a corresponding * in the table.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

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

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests