Reviewer's report

Title: Increases in alcohol consumption in women and elderly groups: Evidence from an epidemiological study

Version: 2 Date: 8 October 2012

Reviewer: Caryl M Beynon

Reviewer's report:

Major compulsory revisions:
• The paper presents a lot data but lacks focus. The paper would benefit from having better defined aims.
• Related to this, the introduction describes in detail drinking habits in the Dutch population according to age and sex. As such, what does this paper add to our understanding?
• I am not convinced that the study can be called ‘population based’ as the sample is drawn from the Netherlands Twin Register. Please add more detail on the NTR, for example, are all twins born in the Netherlands registered? Which relatives are included and how are these selected? Are there implications of using the NTR as the sampling frame? Does the weighting mean that the findings are generalisable to the general population?
• Please define higher-order multiples.
• The quantity of alcohol consumed is based on the number of drinks. It is usual to discuss alcohol consumption in relation to units rather than drinks because the number of units in a drink varies (for example, a large or small glass of wine; a self-poured spirit compared with a standard measure). I believe the threshold for excessive alcohol use is over 14 units for women and 21 units for men. Please consider this point and the implications of this on your results/discussion.
• The discussion is somewhat superficial, does not cover some of the major findings and could be developed further. For example:
  o What are the public health implications of your findings? Why is drinking among older adults problematic (age related changes in the way alcohol is metabolised and the concurrent use of prescription drugs as people get older). Do older adults perceive their consumption acceptable because they are more likely to drink with dinner?
  o You show that initiation of smoking and cannabis is strongly related to many aspects of alcohol use as well as early alcohol initiation and age at first intoxication but you do develop this in the discussion despite mentioning it in the abstract.
• The discussion should be related to your research questions or aims/objectives. Once you have defined the aims of this work I believe the discussion will be given more focus.
• Please add a section on limitations to the discussion.
• I suggest re-phrasing the final sentence of the conclusions so it is not simply repetitious of the discussion.

**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.