Reviewer’s report

Title: Alcohol consumption and sport: a cross-sectional study of alcohol management practices associated with at-risk alcohol consumption at community football clubs

Version: 1 Date: 27 April 2013

Reviewer: Fotis Kanteres

Reviewer’s report:

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Discretionary Revisions (which are recommendations for improvement but which the author can choose to ignore)

- Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

Results and discussion

Sample section a) – line two “Seventy-two” is written, when 228, is used in previous line – I suggest consistency of terminology, this occurs throughout eg b) Ninety-seven percent, vs. 85% - unnecessary to bounce around.

- Major Compulsory Revisions (which the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

Abstract: “At-risk alcohol harm” this is a confusing term – at risk alcohol consumption, or harmful drinking – please clarify and be consistent.

Background and Methods:

“A literature search by the authors identified just one study that examined the association between the alcohol management practices of community (non-elite) sports clubs and alcohol-related harms or consumption [23].”

Elaborate on the literature search (key terms, results) or at least mention in the methods section.

Design and Setting:

“A cross sectional survey of community football club management representatives and members was conducted in the state of New South Wales, Australia, as part of a larger randomised controlled intervention study [24].”

Elaborate on this larger randomised controlled intervention study– so that one does not have to stop and read the article referenced.

Elaborate on the drinking survey questions:
“Alcohol consumption questions were developed based on validated measures of alcohol consumption [29-31].”

What was used and what wasn’t, why? Is this the same as (although different citations):

“Level of alcohol consumption of club members whilst at their club was assessed using the graduated frequency index, a validated measure widely used in population surveys of alcohol consumption [36-37].”

Did the club members ‘witnessing’ of alcohol served to intoxicated people have any relation to the self report drinking patterns?

“Club members were also asked how often they had witnessed alcohol being served to intoxicated people at the club and how often they had witnessed intoxicated people being admitted to the club (never/rarely/sometimes/frequently/always).”

Results and Discussion

While this is seemingly a subject with limited research, I would also like to see some focus (in the Background or Discussion leading to further research) given to why the (club) athletes are drinking with harmful patterns. What is the connection between (club) athleticism and consumption – why are they drinking at these levels, in this manner? Is the celebratory or recreation component a major factor? What about abstainers, former drinkers, or ‘serious’ health conscious athletes, may they not give care to practice safer drinking practices, and may even be incorporated in administering reduction strategies. I cannot stress enough that the drinker characteristics be expressed clearly. I found it quite difficult to determine the ages, age groups of the athletes, of obvious importance to drinking behavior.

Isn’t part of this study including the drinking characteristics of the club members as well? While I understand the focus is on management practices and consumption, the drinking of the members should also be incorporated – including a table – and the results and discussion should also incorporate this aspect into the management – ie are there patterns of at risk drinking (compared to control, such as a national drinking survey or Global Burden of Disease drinking statistics) amongst the club members – which would in turn validate some of the limited research cited which indicates at risk drinking in sport and/or club settings? I did not find this area given sufficient attention. This could go into Results and Discussion b) Club members, which I think should be expanded and incorporated.

Additional:

Elaborate on the different types of licenses for alcohol (ie Limited licence-single
function vs. Limited licence- multiple function) and how this may effect the alcohol distribution.

While I do not doubt the following statement, per se I suggest making reference to the limited research that exists, with citation or reword.

“To our knowledge, this is the most comprehensive study examining the association between the alcohol management practices of community football clubs and the consumption of alcohol by club members.”

Conclusion

The Conclusion is quite light on content, whereas the Results and Discussion edges into conclusion territory – I suggest incorporating some of the thoughts eg. The state of the literature, that this is the most comprehensive, can lead to more research, guidelines, interventions etc. It may also benefit to give examples for the implementation alcohol harm reduction strategies, for instance would they differ because of the club environment? What are directions for further research?

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

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