Reviewer's report

Title: Predictors of onset of cannabis and other drug use in male young adults: Results from a longitudinal study

Version: 3 Date: 11 September 2014

Reviewer: Peter Gates

Reviewer's report:

I thank the authors for addressing my previous concerns and submitting an improved manuscript. I have only a few remaining comments.

- No Major Compulsory Revisions

Minor Essential Revisions

1) The importance of the gateway and common liability models is lost in the abstract and may help promotion of the results if these terms are used in the title or abstract.

2) The validity and/or reliability of the included measures is not provided. We are provided with references for some measures but it would be helpful if some information was provided in regards to the current study - at least test/retest reliability. Some measures are simply referred to as "a previously developed instrument". Overall I would hope for some greater information on the choice of the included measures (other than that they are what is used in the C-SURF) or information on the measure's ability to accurately assess the chosen predictors.

3) In the methods, participants, section the authors should include the time periods of recruitment.

4) In the discussion section the authors need to make greater effort to express the importance of this study. As it stands all the reader is presented with is a repetition of the results and single lines on how the results are in line with previous study. Important information on how the results do and don't reflect the gateway and common liability models is lost and only very briefly mentioned. Which model is best? Why? Maybe neither cover it?

5) Simarly, the discussion must make more of the predictive factors common to both cannabis and other illicit drug use and those which were individual to one or the other. This warrants some discussion other than the provided listing of results.

6) The authors should provide information on which predictor variables were most impacted by a loss of statistical power.

7) Along with points 4 and 5, the authors should provide some discussion on available preventive measures for drug use and how these do or do not currently address the identified predictors. The brevity of the provided reference in the conclusions section undermines the importance of the study.
Discretionary Revisions

1) The common liability model is said to emphasise psychological and lifestyle characteristics but yet the authors mention that the framework has "no bearing on identifying youths who are at risk for drug consumption". How can this be?

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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