Reviewer's report

Title: Concerned significant others of people with gambling problems in Finland: a cross-sectional population study

Version: 1 Date: 14 January 2014

Reviewer: David Hodgins

Reviewer's report:

Minor Essential Revisions
- In general, revisions are needed for wording errors, grammar, and clerical errors (e.g., first paragraph under Measurements, end quotes are missing; third paragraph under the same section, 'gambles' should be 'gambled'; fourth paragraph of the Background section, last sentence is confusing)
- Methods (participant contact and interviewers) could benefit from more detail.
  o Interviews were conducted by a market research company –how many interviewers were used/training of interviewers?
  o Only 40% of the group with contact info participated in the current study. Brief inclusion of information on those not included (e.g., unable to contact, declined to participate, etc.) would be helpful.
- Measurements section could also benefit from more detail re: psychometric properties of validated measures used, sample item(s) from less-known or author-compiled measures, or if assessed using a single item (see point below)
  o Notes on translation and pilot testing are briefly included in the Discussion section, but this information would be more helpful in the Methods section
- Unclear how general health and loneliness were assessed (single item? Or were scores on a separate measure recoded into the groups listed?)
- Groupings in method section unclear - fourth paragraph under Measurements, states that loneliness was recoded into two groups yet three group labels are listed
- Adjustments to the critical alpha level used for multiple tests are not described (if used)

Major Compulsory Revisions
- Variables were recoded into categorical variables for analysis and no explanation for the recoding or justification is given (e.g., using clinically significant cut points for recoding; simplifying analysis/results presentation). Since the recoding of variables in this manner is often associated with negative consequences (such as loss of information about individual differences and issues is comparing or aggregating data across studies), the approach should be properly justified by the authors or a different approach to analysis considered.
  - For example, types of gambling (past year) was recoded into 0-2, 3-4, 5+
games, but the authors do not state their rationale for this categorization, nor is it based on a clinically significant cut point (e.g., SOGS or MHI-5). The inclusion of 0 games (i.e., no past-year gambling at all) in the same category as 1-2 games does not seem appropriate. This may be better considered as a continuous variable or, if sufficient justification/explanation can be provided for the particular cut points.

Discretionary Revisions
- Sample demographics are included in Table 2, but including a brief description of the sample in-text could be valuable for the reader

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

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

'We declare that I have no competing interests'