Author's response to reviews

Title: Identifying the determinants of premature mortality in Russia: overcoming a methodological challenge.

Authors:

- Susannah Tomkins (susannah.tomkins@lshtm.ac.uk)
- Vladimir Shkolnikov (shkolnikov@demogr.mpg.de)
- Andreev Evgeni (andreev@demogr.mpg.de)
- Kiryanov Nikolay (kirnik@igma.udm.ru)
- David A. Leon (david.leon@lshtm.ac.uk)
- Martin McKee (martin.mcke@lshtm.ac.uk)
- Lyudmila Saburova (sabur@udm.net)

Version: 4 Date: 1 November 2007

Author's response to reviews: see over
1st November 2007

Dear Dr. Phillips,

Re: MS: 1621476227130896 - Identifying the determinants of premature mortality in Russia: overcoming a methodological challenge.

Thank you for your recent email (29th October), and for your advice over the phone earlier today. We have now incorporated further minor changes into the manuscript. Please see our responses point by point below.

1) Inclusion of additional references.

We are aware of these papers. Thank you for the suggestions. However, as discussed, although these references are all interesting and partially relevant to the study in general, we do not feel that their inclusion would benefit the manuscript. We have in fact cited some of these in other papers and a thesis which deal specifically with the issues they cover - in particular, the reliability and validity of proxy reported data which is a broad an interesting area of research, but not the main focus of this manuscript. Several of the references are included in the literature review which is cited. We feel that other papers are not entirely relevant to this manuscript. We therefore prefer not to include these additional references. I have briefly outlined the reasons for each paper below.

Not entirely relevant – concerned with adolescent (not adult) substance abuse; not included.

Cited in literature review (ref 22)

Not entirely relevant – concerned with sex differences in alcohol involvement; not included.

Not entirely relevant as focusing on very different study population (mentally ill); not included.

Cited in literature review (ref 22)

Cited in literature review (ref 22)

Not entirely relevant – concerned with proxy and self-completion of AUDIT, a self completed standardized assessment of alcohol abuse; not included.

2) Please clarify if the study discussed received ethical approval.
This has now been added to the Methods section

3) Please include a 'Competing interests' section -
This section has now been included at the end of the manuscript, before the references.

4) Please include an 'Authors' contributions' section -
This section has now been included at the end of the manuscript, before the references.

Yours faithfully,

Susannah Tomkins, Vladimir Shkolnikov, Evgueni Andreev, Nikolay Kiryanov, Martin McKee and Lyudmila, Saburova