Reviewer's report

Title: The effects of alcohol consumption, psychological distress and smoking status on emergency department presentations in New South Wales, Australia

Version: 1 Date: 2 January 2007

Reviewer: Brenda M Booth

Reviewer’s report:

General. This is an important paper regarding the epidemiology of emergency room visits from a population perspective in a large sample of almost 35,000 residents of New South Wales. There are almost no data from a community perspective to understand the risk factors associated with ER use, especially for both alcohol and mental health risks. The results are clearly addressed and well displayed and there is thoughtful delineation by gender and age. The only disadvantage to this report is that it's cross-sectional and retrospective in nature rather than prospective. The authors present a good limitations paragraph that point to these issues.

My only concern is with the low response rate (66%). Even though the data were weighted to the population, it would be important to provide as much information as possible about the potential biases.

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

Information about potential bias associated with 66% response rate. Also I am unfamiliar with the use of Cox Proportional Hazard models in this context (i.e., a cross-sectional dataset) so this should be explained in more detail why this technique was used rather than logistic regression.

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

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

none

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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 I have no competing interests