Reviewer's report

Title: Problem drinking and exceeding guidelines for 'sensible' alcohol consumption in men: associations with life course socioeconomic disadvantage in a population-based study

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Reviewer: Rudolf Moos

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BioMed Central – BMC Public Health

Title: Problem drinking and exceeding guidelines for “sensible” alcohol consumption in Men

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This manuscript uses data from a representative cohort study of 576 men drawn from the west of Scotland. It identifies an association between the men’s reported socioeconomic adversity in early life and adulthood and an increased risk of exceeding “sensible” alcohol consumption guidelines and of experiencing alcohol-related problems. This is a generally clear and well written paper and I have only a few suggested revisions.

Minor Essential Revisions

1. Given that the entire empirical focus of the study is on men, it would seem reasonable to provide information about the completion rate of the initial and second wave of interviews only for men rather than for the entire sample (page 5). It also would be useful to clarify at this point in the methods that lifelong abstainers were excluded.

2. The results for adult income appear to run counter to the general trend that socioeconomic adversity is associated with heavier drinking. This is a potentially interesting finding and might be clarified. Thus, the finding for income does not seem to be “similar” (page 9) to the finding for social class, but rather “in contrast” to it. In addition, it would be useful to explain how adult income was handled in the development of the relative index of inequality (RII).

Discretionary Revisions

1. Perhaps most important, the term “predictive” that is used in the abstract and discussion probably should be removed in favor of a term like “association”. Because participants were remembering childhood adversity and because their heavy drinking and drinking problems may have (and probably did) precede the initial interview in which information was obtained on adult adversity, it cannot be
assumed that the adversity necessarily predated the drinking. Even in childhood, for example, it may be that youngsters who began drinking heavily at an early age “therefore” left school sooner. In addition, drinking problems as identified by the CAGE, are as likely (or perhaps in this age group even more likely) to be past rather than present problems.

2. In the introduction (page 4) it would be of interest to describe more precisely how the magnitude and especially the direction of findings vary by country.

3. The results section now describes both statistically significant and trend findings. The N is large enough that perhaps the focus could be entirely on the significant findings.

Recommendation: Accept after minor essential and discretionary revisions.

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

Declaration of Competing Interests: None

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

**Quality of written English**: Acceptable

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

**Declaration of competing interests**: I have no competing interests