Reviewer's report

**Title:** An evaluation of alcohol attendances to an inner city emergency department before and after the introduction of the UK Licensing Act 2003.

**Version:** 1  **Date:** 17 March 2008

**Reviewer:** Robert Patton

**Reviewer's report:**

**Compulsory Revisions:**

There is a substantial body of evidence that indicates alcohol related attendances to AEDs in the UK account for approximately 25% of all attendances, however in the paper you report attendance of about 3% as alcohol related - how do you explain this discrepancy? I suggest that a lack of quality / consistency of the recording of alcohol related attendances is responsible as you do not indicate if your department engages in formal alcohol screening.

I disagree with your conclusion that blood alcohol screening for all patients is the only way to determine alcohol related attendances. It is one method, but you should consider the use of short screening questionnaires, as are currently being trialed by the SIPS projects.

You have checked a random sample of your data for false negatives, however you have not undertaken such a check for false positives - why?

**Minor Essential Revisions**

I would exercise caution in your use of the term "alcohol related attendances" and might suggest that you adopt "attendances where alcohol was recorded in the notes" as causality is not implicit - and it is clear that the true number of alcohol related attendances is not captured by your data collection method.

**Discretionary Revisions**

Some assessment or exploration of the actual changes in licensing in the local area would be helpful. How many pubs / clubs actually opened later - on what days?

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

**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 declare that I have no competing interests'