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 April 2008

Reviewer: V Sivarajasingam

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This is a topical issue both in terms of public interest and government policy. The paper seeks to examine alcohol related attendances to an inner city ED before and after the introduction of the UK Licensing Act 2003. There are a number of significant concerns regarding methodology and interpretation.

1. The authors do not provide any data on whether any licensed premises with in the city had changed their opening hours following the implementation of The Act in November 2005. This is clearly important in evaluating alcohol-related A&E attendances in a before-after study design. The reader has no idea of whether any changes reported in this study are in fact related to extended opening hours.

2. Clinical detection of alcohol consumption is notoriously difficult. As the authors suggest they would have underestimated the number of alcohol-related A&E attendances during the two weeks of the study.

3. The authors provide no data on major events within the city during the period of the study for e.g. sporting or musical events. This would be expected to have an influence on alcohol-related A&E attendances.

Given the above it is not possible to draw any conclusions about the impact of The Act on alcohol-related ED attendances. This is potentially interesting data but the methods employed and the lack of detail given falls short of what would be required to draw such conclusions.