Reviewer’s report

Title: Pregnant women’s attitudes towards alcohol consumption: qualitative study

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Reviewer: Astrid Alvik

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Comments to the authors
Re: Pregnant women`s attitudes towards alcohol consumption: qualitative study
This manuscript addresses an important problem. How will new knowledge, or advice concerning health, be understood or appreciated. Although this problem should be very suitable for a qualitative study, so far, to my knowledge, no such study has been published. Qualitative studies within this field are needed and will be welcomed.

This interesting article was well structured and well written.

My knowledge concerning the qualitative method used is limited, and will not be further commented.

Major revisions
The aim of the study was (Abstract, Background:) “...to explore pregnant women`s attitudes towards drinking alcohol in pregnancy and their awareness of and attitudes towards sources of information about drinking in pregnancy following recent changes in UK government guidance.”

There is no discussion concerning the author’s attitudes towards drinking alcohol in pregnancy, or their attitudes towards the guidance given. There has been conflicting advices to the pregnant women in the UK. Do the authors have an opinion about what advice in the UK is to be preferred? How could an opinion of the authors affect their analyses in this study?

The first line in the abstract: “There is uncertainty as to whether there is a safe threshold for drinking alcohol during pregnancy”. Conclusions, last sentence: "Pregnant women require clear and consistent advice about safe levels of drinking from policy makers and health professionals.” In addition, the first paragraph in Background, page 3. Most research within this field have found a dose-response relationship with no lower level (some studies in children and many animal studies). This is not the impression left when reading this draft.

In Background, there is a reference to a systematic review (Henderson et al 2002) finding no association between light drinking and adverse outcomes “across a range of outcomes”. As none of these outcomes (miscarriage, stillbirth, intrauterine growth restriction, prematurity, birthweight, small for gestational age at birth and birth defects including fetal alcohol syndrome) are expected to be affected after light drinking, this should be mentioned in the discussion concerning affects of light drinking.
On page 16, this article (Henderson et al 2002) is again referred: “...found no evidence for adverse outcomes from light drinking during pregnancy”. As the outcomes chosen in this article were not the outcomes expected to be affected after light drinking, this article should not be used as evidence whether light drinking causes adverse outcomes. If the point is that this article have been commented in the media in Britain, this should be discussed.

Eight themes emerged. In the discussions concerning advice about abstinence during pregnancy, a main theme has been that information could induce anxiety or bad conscience, because many pregnant women have already consumed alcohol when receiving the information. Anxiety or bad conscience did not emerge as a theme in this study, which is interesting. This should be discussed by the authors.

Page 21, last three lines: “...women may have been more open in a relatively anonymous telephone interview” (compared to an interview setting): Research concerning sensitive questions have found the opposite: Less unwanted behaviour have been reported in telephone interviews compared to face-to-face interviews (Aquilino WS 1992 Telephone versus face-to-face interviewing...).

Minor Essential Revisions:
In the first line on page 8: Themes identified "inductively" and “deductively”. Could the difference be further explained?
Page 9 Second paragraph:
First sentence: “..from no alcohol ....to binge”. The authors should specify whether 4 or 5 units were defined as binge.
Third sentence: --“some women mentioned”. Is it possible for the authors to specify how many women were given written information? The same concerning the other questions, for instance: How many were advised to abstain?
Page 10, second line: “..none of these women were confident” which probably is "None of the eight women" I suggest a new sentence after “changed” and draw together second and third sentence to avoid misunderstandings.
Page 10, middle: “Many women felt that detailed information...”. Is there a possibility to match such statements to whether they were abstainers or not?
Page 11: Two last statements: Both are from interview nr 14, but the text in between gives the impression that these are different women (confusing to the reader).
Page 21, middle: "Only six women......the consumption of alcohol is not influenced by government guidance”. Is there evidence to draw this conclusion? If so, this should be better explained.

Further research:
There have been more conflicting advices about this topic in England compared to most or all other countries. Thus, a similar study from another country as a comparison would be most interesting.