Reviewer's report

Title: Moderate and heavy alcohol consumption is associated with less inflammation and better health-related quality of life in female rheumatoid arthritis patients in Sweden. Data from BARFOT, a multicenter study on early RA.

Version: 1 Date: 4 February 2013

Reviewer: Michael J Nissen

Reviewer's report:

This manuscript is interesting and well written. It adds to the knowledge of the effect of alcohol on disease activity in RA. The strengths of the study include the evaluation of the type of alcohol use and a validated alcohol questionnaire.

Minor essential revisions:

1) I have some reservations with the author’s definition of “heavy drinking” in this study as a single drink on 4 days of the week for a woman would qualify as “heavy drinking” which in my view is debatable. Similarly, a “moderated drinker” could represent somebody who drinks half a glass of alcohol once per week. This should be addressed in the discussion. Did you perform the analyses with other drinking “cut-offs”?

2) Regarding “disease activity”, when this term is used I was unsure which measure was being used (NSJ, NTJ, VAS, etc). This needs to be clarified. The absence of a “physician measured” DAS28 measurement needs to be mentioned as a limitation. The significant differences between male and female responses highlights the subjective nature of these “patient-reported” variables.

3) DMARD and biologic use is presented “grouped” together in Table 2, but discussed “separately” in the text. This should be clarified.

4) In the multivariate analyses did you try controlling for rheumatoid factor status (+/- ACPAs), DAS28, HAQ and steroid use?

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests