Reviewer's report

Title: Alcohol use and extramarital sex among men in Cameroon

Version: 1 Date: 23 April 2007

Reviewer: Ron Stall

Reviewer's report:

General
This is an interesting secondary analysis of an important data set from Cameroon. As such, it counts as one of the few attempts from within sub-Saharan Africa to test the relationship between alcohol consumption and high risk sexual behavior.

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

The problematic areas of the analysis have to do with the measure of unsafe sex as well as the inclusion criteria for entry into the analysis. The measure of unsafe sex for this analysis was sex with a secondary partner by married men. While such sex may be risky from the point of view of marital stability or happiness, it is not a generally-used measure of high risk sex for HIV transmission. The analysis would be improved by the addition of a measure of condom use while having sex with secondary partners. Similarly, the inclusion criteria of married men only is odd in that single men have multiple sex partners, too, and so are at equivalent risk for HIV transmission to married men with multiple partners. The analysis would be improved by the use of a measure of high risk sex with is based on non-condom use with secondary partners by married and non-married men alike.

The alcohol measure is similarly flawed: the measure asked about drinking before last sex. The analysis would have been strengthened further by comparison of sex risk between sex under the influence compared to last sober sexual even within the same men. The comparison as conducted here amounts to a comparison of sexual risk between men who drink as part of sex and men who don’t. This comparison cannot weigh the independent effects of alcohol, as it may be the preference for inebriated sex that drives risk, not just the alcohol itself.

It would be interesting to know if the data set has additional measures of condom use during sex and comparative measures of sex while drinking and not within the same men to know best how to review this paper.

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

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: Needs some language corrections before being published

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