Reviewer's report

Title: Association of alcohol consumption with depression and suicide in Chennai, India: a cross sectional study

Version: 2
Date: 14 March 2015
Reviewer: Dorina Cadar

Reviewer's report:

Dorina Cadar, 14th March 2015

“Association of alcohol consumption with depression and suicide in Chennai, India: a cross sectional study”

The authors evaluated the associations between the levels of drinking in men and the levels of anxiety/depression in both men and female family members (spouses, daughters, etc) in rural and urban Chennai India. A similar association was explored between the levels of drinking in men and suicidal attempts in female family members.

There is a great interest in the multifactorial aspects and mechanisms related to alcohol consumption and depression/suicidal attempts. However, the authors need to unpack further these mechanisms.

Major Compulsory Revisions

The author must respond to these before a decision on publication can be reached. Additional necessary experiments or controls

Please report/compare the scores of PHQ-9 between women living in households with and without abusive drinkers. There is a slight hint to such important findings only in the discussion section, line 189.

Please refer to depression as affective symptoms since the measure used is not a valid diagnostic tool for depression.

The writing of the manuscript should be substantially improved. The title and the abstract are not illustrating well the nature of the analyses performed especially the associations between drinking in men and affective symptoms & suicidal attempts in women living in the same household. The authors missed to state the aim of this study in the abstract and therefore the results section of the abstract is very confusing. The abstract’s conclusion does not reflect the findings of this study.

Could the authors explain why they choose not to control their analyses for the levels of physical activity, since they had this info available and there is a strong evidence suggesting that regular participation in exercise has been shown to decrease overall levels of tension, anxiety and depression, elevate and stabilise mood and improve self-esteem?

There were several cut-off points for the PHQ-9. The authors made a decision to
group mild and severe depression symptoms together. why not have severe symptoms separately grouped?

Please present descriptive statistics by level of anxiety/ depression chosen to be included in the main analyses.

Was suicide attempts measured also for men? if yes, why not reported analysed.

Table 1. page 17 reports alcohol use in terms of weekly consumptions but the manuscript describe the use of AUDIT score 1 to 5. Why is this not reported in the descriptives table?

Minor Essential Revisions

The author can be trusted to make these corrections:
- Replace labels in Table 2 and 3 from “any depression” to “mild depression”
- Change title to reflect the exact associations conducted and replace the first sentence line 56 to be different than the fist line of the abstract page 2, line 30.
- The idea of intra-household mechanisms (how the alcohol affects the spouses of drinkers) should be introduced in the background section.
- Page 9, line 189 repetition
- Page 10, line 212 typo “report on”

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.