Author's response to reviews

Title: The relationship between mild alcohol consumption and mortality in Koreans: A systematic review and meta-analysis

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Version: 4 Date: 28 May 2015

Author's response to reviews: see over
Reviewer's report

Title: The relationship between mild alcohol consumption and mortality in Koreans: A systematic review and meta-analysis

Version: 3 Date: 5 May 2015

Reviewer: Yaoyue Hu

Reviewer's report:

Major Compulsory Revisions

Information provided in Table 1 makes this paper much clearer. This meta-analysis was to examine the association between mild drinking and mortality. Since mild drinkers were the exposure group in this paper, it is not methodologically sound to treat current drinkers (as in studies measured drinking status only) and infrequent drinkers (as in studies measured drinking frequency) as the same as mild drinkers. This introduces a misclassification error in the exposure group of mild drinkers (detailed in the 3rd point of previous major compulsory revisions), and therefore may lead to misleading results. For these reasons, please remove the studies which measured drinking status or drinking frequency from the meta-analysis. Removing these studies will leave 5 studies for all-cause mortality and 7 studies for cancer mortality, the numbers of which will be fine for conducting a meta-analysis (may not be enough to perform a meta-analysis in subgroups). In terms of the CVD mortality, there is another option to do a meta-analysis comparing non-drinkers and current drinkers, instead of comparing non-drinkers and mild drinkers (by doing this, the meta-analysis for CVD mortality can only be called as a meta-analysis of current drinking and CVD mortality, rather than ‘mild’ drinking and CVD mortality). It is more important to conduct a meta-analysis properly rather than adding more studies into the meta-analysis.

The aim of this study was assessing the risk of ‘mild’ drinking for mortality. So, as recommended, we included only the studies measuring alcohol consumption by drinking amount in meta-analysis. We modified the results and figures based on those results. Thank you for your comments.

Minor Essential Revisions

Table 1 needs to be checked thoroughly.

1. Please change ‘risk’ into ‘risk estimate’

We modified the expression as recommended.
2. Please specify the meaning of ‘+’ and ‘++’ in the study from Park et al, 1999
   Ł We added the explanation to be clear.

3. Please edit ‘non’ into ‘none’
   Ł We modified the expression as recommended.

4. Please check the number of references as they do not match with the numbers in the reference list.
   Ł We checked and modified the number of reference. Thank you for your review.

5. Please specify the ‘amount’ in the study from Khang et al, 2009. Was it monthly amount, weekly amount, or daily amount?
   Ł We modified the expression to be clear.

6. Please check the criterion of ‘mild’ drinking in women (<12 g/week) in the study from Yi et al, 2010. No more than 12 g of alcohol per week is a very small amount.
   Ł Yi et al. divided female drinking group by the median (12g/week) into low and high alcohol consumption group.

7. Please specify the exact numbers of ‘few times a month’ and ‘few times a week’ in the study from Sull et al, 2009. Does ‘few times a month’= ‘<1 time/week’? ‘few times a week’= ‘# 1 time/week’?
   Ł We added the explanation below the table 1.

8. Please make sure that all risk estimates and their 95% CIs are accurate to two decimal places.
   Ł We checked and modified risk estimates and 95% Cis.

   Ł We edited as recommended.
Thank you for all valuable comments.