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.

Minor Essential Revisions

Table 1 needs to be checked thoroughly.
1. Please change ‘risk’ into ‘risk estimate’
2. Please specify the meaning of ‘+’ and ‘++’ in the study from Park et al, 1999
3. Please edit ‘non’ into ‘none’
4. Please check the number of references as they do not match with the numbers in the reference list
5. Please specify the ‘amount’ in the study from Khang et al, 2009. Was it monthly amount, weekly amount, or daily amount?
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.
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’?

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


Discretionary Revisions
None

**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.