Author’s response to reviews

Title: The health-related social costs of alcohol in Belgium

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Version: 2 Date: 29 Nov 2017

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Manuscript ‘The health-related social costs of alcohol in Belgium

Dear editor,

First of all, thank you for considering our manuscript for publication in BMC Public Health. Please find below our point-by-point response letter with the answers to your comments:

1. Please note that all manuscripts must contain all the following sections under the heading 'Declarations'. The Declarations should follow the Conclusions section, and be before the References.

Abbreviations

Ethics approval and consent to participate

Consent for publication

Availability of data and material

Competing interests
Funding

Authors' contributions

Acknowledgements

If any of the sections are not relevant to your manuscript, please include the heading and write 'Not applicable' for that section.

The above mentioned sections are now all included into the manuscript: pages 19-20 (lines 394-419). ‘Ethics approval and consent to participate’ and ‘consent for publication’ are labelled as ‘not applicable’. The different statements are included as follows:

Abbreviations

AAF: alcohol-attributable fraction; CI: confidence interval; DALY: disability-adjusted life year; GDP: gross domestic product; GP: general practitioner; HRQOL: health-related quality of life; ICD: International Classification of Diseases; NA: not applicable; RR: relative risk

Ethics approval and consent to participate

Not applicable

Consent for publication

Not applicable

Availability of data and material

Datasets used for the analyses are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request
Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests

Funding

The study was funded by the Federal Public Planning Service Science Policy (BELSPO-DR/00/065)

Authors’ contributions

All authors contributed to the development of the concept and design of the study. NV, DL, KP performed the data collection. NV wrote the first draft of the manuscript and revised it with input from all other authors. All authors read and approved the final version of the manuscript

Acknowledgements

The researchers would like to thank everyone who cooperated in this research, in particular the respondents of the various departments who answered our requests on gathering the information. Furthermore, we would like to thank Aziz Naji and the members of the research project steering committee for the professional guidance and important feedback throughout the research project. Special thanks also goes to prof. dr. Jonathan Caulkins for his constructive and critical remarks.

2. Please add a “Conclusions” section after the “Discussion” section. This should state clearly the main conclusions of the research article and give a clear explanation of their importance and relevance.

The following conclusion section is now added to the manuscript on the pages 18-19 (lines 379-392):
The results of the study demonstrate the substantial economic impact of alcohol to the Belgian society and can be considered as the most comprehensive analysis of the alcohol-attributable costs in Belgium so far. Future studies examining the social costs of alcohol or other addictive substances should ideally deal with the limitations identified in the current study. Further, social cost studies should include subgroup analyses to assess the impact of socioeconomic variables on cost outcomes. By doing that, it will be possible to formulate specific policy recommendations for different target groups. In the current study, subgroup analysis was not possible due to limitations in availability and accessibility of data necessary for such analyses. This necessitates the development of more accurate data collection systems so that they can serve as reliable information sources facilitating the calculation of more robust cost estimates. The study estimated the resources that alcohol makes unavailable for other purposes. From an economic policy perspective, it may also be relevant to determine the feasible minimum cost, i.e. the fraction of total attributable costs that may potentially be averted by reducing exposure of alcohol (mis)use by policy interventions.

3. Please have the text edited by a professional language editing service or a native English speaking colleague. There are some minor issues with grammar, wording, spelling, and/or punctuation that need to be addressed before acceptance for publication.

The text has been edited by a native English speaking individual and several adjustments to the text have been made.

4. At this stage, please upload your manuscript as a single, final, clean version that does not contain any tracked changes, comments, highlights, strikethroughs or text in different colours. All relevant tables/figures/additional files should also be clean versions. Figures (and additional files) should remain uploaded as separate files.

A single, final, clean version of the manuscript is uploaded. All tables are included into the main text and are also clean versions. The figures is uploaded as a separate file.
Kind regards,

Nick Verhaeghe

On behalf of all authors