Author’s response to reviews

Title: Problem drinking among Flemish students: beverage type, early drinking onset and negative personal & social consequences

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Author’s response to reviews:

Dear editor and reviewers,

We would like to thank you for potentially accepting our publication in BMC Public Health. We made the final revisions as you requested.

Please find below our responses to the comments.

Kind regards,

The authors.
Your manuscript "Problem drinking among Flemish students: beverage type, early drinking onset and negative personal & social consequences" (PUBH-D-17-01234R2) has been assessed by our reviewers. Based on these reports, and my own assessment as Editor, I am pleased to inform you that it is potentially acceptable for publication in BMC Public Health, once you have carried out some essential revisions, below.

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1. Please clarify if this is a retrospective study, in which the data used was generated for a previous study (by yourselves or other researchers) and either publicly available or available to researchers upon request, and was not generated by you specifically for this study.

**response to editor:**

See response to remark 2.

2. If point 1 is true (this is a retrospective study), please clarify your 'consent to participate' statement by adding a statement that consent to participate in this study is not applicable as the study is a secondary analysis of existing public data. If any administrative permission was required or granted to access this data, please provide details in the Ethics and Consent to Participate section.

**response to editor:**

Thank you for these remarks. This study is indeed retrospective. One of the co-authors of this publication, Prof. Guido Van Hal, is a core member of the task force who gathered the data, which were specifically generated to understand alcohol use among students. This study is thus not a secondary analysis of existing public data. The fact that some of the co-authors have gathered the data was already described in the previous version of the article (7. Declarations - Author’s contributions, page 16, lines 381-384). In this final version we included that this is a retrospective study (2.1 Procedure, page 5, line 117):

“This retrospective study is based on a substance use data collection among university and college students in Flanders (Belgium) in 2013, entitled ‘Head in the clouds?’.”

We also included an additional section concerning the consent to participate (7. Declarations – Ethics approval and consent to participate, page 16, lines 368-369):

“Participants could freely decide whether or not they wanted to participate in the survey. Anonymity was guaranteed.”
3. Please remove the following supplementary attached files: Cover Letter; Responses to Reviewers.

**Response to editor:**

This has now been done.

4. Please add a Conclusions heading and section to the main text of your manuscript.

**Response to editor:**

Thank you for this remark. We deleted the final paragraph of the discussion section and converted this into a separate conclusion (Page 15, lines 346-354):

“The results of this study draw attention to the numerous risks related to excessive beer and spirits drinking as well as early drinking onset. To the best of our knowledge, this study is the first to incorporate detailed information on both beverage type and drinking onset and its associated negative consequences in a large student population in a European (Flemish) context. These results are especially important for both micro- (e.g. social work) and macro-level (e.g. legislative) interventions which should focus on reducing alcohol intake and delaying drinking onset age among young people as these factors are significantly related to both personal and social negative alcohol-related consequences.”

5. Please provide, after the References, a section titled “Additional files” where you list the following information about each of your supplementary files: * File name (e.g. Additional file 1), * Title of data, * Description of data. Please ensure also that all additional files have been cited in the main manuscript.

**Response to editor:**

We have included this section in the manuscript (Page 20, lines 529-533):

“Additional file 1

Title: Supplemental Table A. Core Alcohol and Drug Survey – Consequences scale

Description: This table represents the complete CADS scale, consisting of 19 negative consequences of alcohol use.”
Final comment

In the previous version of the manuscript, we referred to our paper which was accepted for publication at that time. This paper has been published in the meantime, so we added this reference in the manuscript (Page 7, line 158).