Reviewer's report

Title: Chronic pain in multi-traumatized outpatients with a refugee background resettled in Norway: a cross-sectional study

Version: 2 Date: 3 November 2014

Reviewer: Julia Müller

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a) Major Compulsory Revisions
None.

b) Minor Essential Revisions

Abstract:
- Methods: “We conducted a cross-sectional study of sixty-one psychiatric outpatients with a refugee background using structured clinical diagnostic interviews to assess for psychiatric symptoms and chronic pain (LEC, SCID-PTSD, SIDES, and M.I.N.I.).” # be more specific regarding your measures:
  …to assess for traumatic events (LEC), PTSD and DESNOS (SCID-PTSD, SIDES), chronic pain ( ) and psychiatric symptoms (M.I.N.I.).”

Introduction:
- Paragraphs 1 and 2: It is unclear, why you focus on Scandinavia and Scandinavian studies. In case there is a reason for it, please explain if the situation for refugees is different there as compared to other host countries for example in Europe. Another (more favourable) way would be to widen the view and to integrate international studies in the introduction – if you do so, your study will be of more relevance for international readers.

Method:
- Paragraph Participants: How many declined to take part in the study?
- Paragraph Measures:
  o “The first author collected data from patients through a structured clinical interview, followed by the patient’s completion of a self-report Questionnaire”: it was “a set of questionnaires” or “two questionnaires”.

  o Change order of the description of your measures: first, the demographics you assessed, followed by the interviews and the questionnaires. Regarding the interviews: you first describe the basic assessments: LEC and PTSD/DESNOS, than chronic pain and after that the general assessments. After that the questionnaires: first PTSD than HSCL. Use this order throughout the whole manuscript: abstract – results – discussion. This structure helps the reader to keep the focus of your manuscript in mind.
We used a validated Norwegian translation of the Hopkins Symptom Checklist (HSCL-25) to measure psychological distress ....” The HSCL does not assess psychological distress, it only assesses anxiety and depression. (The HSCL is an abbreviation of the comprehensive SCL-90 R that measures different kinds of distress amongst those anxiety and depression). Please rename what you measured “anxiety and depression” instead of “psychological distress” throughout the manuscript.

How did you assess “national origin”, “having friends” etc (interview or questionnaire?)

“We calculated the Total number of current diagnoses by adding all the assessed M.I.N.I. 5 5.0.0. current diagnoses.” This sentence belongs to paragraph MINI.

Statistical procedures:
- Instead of all these t-tests it might have been more interesting to calculate regression models in order to predict chronic pain by different factors.

Results:
- Paragraph “Demographic, social, and trauma characteristics”:
  o add some more general and social sample characteristics first: how many men/women you assessed, how long did they live in Norway, where are the participants from?
- Paragraph “Chronic pain, traumatic experiences, and severity of psychiatric symptomatology”
  o According to table 2 you did not assess the” total number of traumatic experiences”. Instead you counted the number of different traumatic event types. Is that correct? Please specify (in the LEC description) and use the correct wording throughout the manuscript.
  o “Outpatients with chronic pain at clinical levels had significantly more posttraumatic stress” better: “more symptoms of PTSD”.

- Paragraph 4 “Outpatients with chronic pain at clinical levels...” The text is hardly readable with all these numbers in brackets. I suggest to deploy the statistical values (t/chi2, p) in table 3 and to delete them and all other values in the paragraph as they are not that important in this data.

- Paragraph 5 “Chronic pain and genders”
  o Heading: Please correct “genders” to “gender”
  o Again: please deploy the group differences in table 4.

- Paragraph 6 „Chronic pain and PTSD”: please deploy the group differences in table 5 and delete them from the text.

Discussion
- Paragraph: Chronic pain and traumas
  o Heading: better “traumatic experiences” or “traumatic event types”
“This is several times higher”: how much exactly?

“and higher than IN some other studies (Gerritsen et al. 2006; Defrin et al. 2008).

given as a rule rather than as an exception, that they are usually exposed to multiple traumatic events during the migration journey # refugees are not primarily traumatised during their migration but mostly before their migration.

“the four types of torture”: needs explanation.

Paragraph: Chronic pain and psychiatric symptomatology

If you want to report the chronic pain-PTSD-models it is better to do that in the introduction.

Literature:

- Please correct:


- The following articles have been retracted and are not to be cited anymore


Tables:

- All tables lack at least the t/Chi2 values.

c) Discretionary Revisions

None.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

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.