Reviewer’s report

Title: The Association of Psychiatric Comorbidity and Use of the Emergency Department among Persons with Substance Use Disorders: An Observational Cohort Study

Version: 1 Date: 15 April 2008

Reviewer: Ian Rockett

Reviewer’s report:

Some colloquialisms aside, this is a very well written report and represents an important extension of the literature on substance use and abuse/dependence among ED patients. Physical disease comorbidity would also be worth exploring.

Minor Revisions

The authors have been candid and appropriate in acknowledging research limitations. However, affecting generalizability, their study is not population-based. To back up the statement on P. 4 that "the hospital handles most of the city's trauma and virtually all acutely ill indigent patients" it would be informative for readers to indicate how many other hospitals serve the city/county and estimate their collective patient share. Moreover, class variation could introduce selection bias and confounding - related to the extent to which the non-indigent receive care in other area EDs and the differential likelihood that patients will be referred from the study ED (or taken directly) to the psychiatric ED. Data on insurance status could serve as a proxy for class in the absence of personal income, education and occupation data.

Please estimate how many patients visited the ED in the study period as distinct from number of visits. Then the percentage of users with a primary substance use disorder diagnosis can be calculated. The likely low prevalence will warrant a comment.

Are their any interactions between psychiatric comorbidity and race, gender, and age, respectively?

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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.