Reviewer's report

Title: Challenges to be Overcome using Population-Based Sampling Methods to Recruit Veterans for a Study of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Traumatic Brain Injury

Version: 1 Date: 4 February 2014

Reviewer: Erin Abner

Reviewer's report:

Discretionary Revisions
1. On page 18, first sentence, the wording is unclear: “to travel and accommodate these individuals”—does it refer to travel by study staff or travel by participants?

Minor Essential Revisions
1. The New Generation Study (NGS) is described as “ongoing” on page 6, but this raises the question of why the contact information for participants was out of date. Are NGS participants never re-contacted once they complete the survey?
2. On page 6 it says that participants in the NGS were veterans of OEF and OIF, but Table 4 states that some MIND-screened participants were ineligible because they were not veterans of OEF or OIF. Please clarify.
3. The MIND study is mentioned three times before it is referred to as a pilot study. Please clarify.
4. The text refers to 24 participants who enrolled in the MIND study, but Figure 1 and Table 5 indicate that 1 participant withdrew consent and provide a sample size of 23. Please clarify in the text.
5. The header for Table 2 says “one of the 80 individuals screened did not have a [NGS] diagnosis”—should it say “one of the 80 individuals contacted but not screened”?
6. Table 2 refers to “initial contact only” as a reason for not screening a participant. On page 11, it says that “once contact had been established, the screening call began.” Please clarify the role of the “initial contact” in the screening procedures.

Major Compulsory Revisions
1. The stated primary objective of the current study was “to demonstrate that adequate numbers of individuals from the [NGS] could be contacted and successfully recruited [using population-based sampling].” Please state what sample size was targeted and whether the objective was met. Is the final enrolled sample representative of the NGS study? What do the authors conclude about the relative success of population-based sampling for this study?
2. Statistical comparisons are limited to comparing the contacted but not
screened and screened groups. Were there any important differences between
the contacted and not contacted groups (based on demographic and clinical
information from NGS)? Was the portion of the NGS study whose best address
indicated they likely lived within 60 miles of a WRIISC site representative of the
NGS study as a whole?

**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.