Author’s response to reviews

Title: Changes in the pattern of service utilisation and health problems of women, men and various age groups following a destructive disaster: a matched cohort study with a pre-disaster assessment

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Author’s response to reviews: see over
Dear madam, sir,

The following changes were made in the text.

The text of “Box 1” at the head of page 8 was removed in a former version and in box 1 itself “Table 1” was written in stead of “Box 1”. Still, Table 1 with psychological ICPC codes did not fit in your format. Therefore, table 1 was removed.

The most prevalent ICPC-codes were mentioned in the text under Methods/dependent variables (page 7 and 8). The succeeding table numbers were changed.

“The most prevalent ICPC codes within the pre – disaster psychological cluster represented depressive disorder, sleeping problems, anxious feelings and depressed feelings (constituting 64% of the cluster). By clustering problems and disorders specific information was lost, but we prevent coincidental differences between gender and age groups due to limited numbers. In the ICPC no specific code exists for PTSD. There is one code for all stress reactions, acute, transient as well as PTSD.”

Ethical approval by an ethical committee was not required. In a former accompanying letter in October 2007, I already answered on questions on this subject (1647254549140564, different number!):

*Ethical approval for this study was not required according to Dutch law/WPR (Wet Persoons Registratie=Law Registration of Personal data) because:*

1. No medical intervention was performed.
2. Personal data en medical data were separated. The data for our study were anonymously extracted from general practice and were not traceable to personal data.
3. The patients had a possibility to object explicitly.
I never received a reaction of BMC on this.

Privacy aspects and rules on the data collection of the Firework disaster were registered in a report. All research projects about the disaster had to follow the rules of this report:

NN: Rapport inzake privacy aspecten verbonden aan de gegevens verzameling ten behoeve van de wetenschappelijke onderzoeken in het kader van de gezondheids monitoring van slachtoffers en hulpverleners die betrokken zijn geweest bij de Vuurwerkramp in Enschede [in Dutch].
Utrecht 2001
Kenmerk: 010513/WF/MD

Moreover, two studies on these data were accepted by BMC [1,2].

Under Methods/setting the text is now:
“Patients were informed about their FP’s participation in this study by posters and leaflets in the waiting room and by announcements in the local newspapers. They were entitled to object to the use of their anonymized data, but nobody did. The study was carried out according to Dutch legislation on privacy. The privacy regulation of the study was approved by the Dutch Data Protection Authority [21]. According to Dutch legislation, neither obtaining informed consent, nor approval by a medical ethics committee was obligatory for this observational study.”

The title under additional files (page 28) was changed: “Additional file 1”. Under Age/physical symptoms was introduced: “(see additional file 1)”.

Kind regards,

Rik JH Soeteman

References
