Reviewer's report

Title: Older Adults with Acquired Brain Injury: A Population Based Study

Version: 2 Date: 12 February 2013

Reviewer: Carlos Jaramillo

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Major Compulsory Revisions

Conclusions of the abstract:

1. While the authors have added some content to the conclusion section of the abstract, they have not provided a succinct conclusion of their findings, but instead have extrapolated to what should be done in the future to address their findings. This is more appropriate for the discussion section and it does not help the reader interpret the findings presented in the abstract. For example, the last two sentences state where resources should be allocated to address what they have found, but it is not clearly stated what they have found. I suggest the authors write the conclusion section as an extension of the results section with an emphasis on the implications of their study and how it relates to the motivations spelled out in the introduction section.

2. In the first sentence of the conclusions, the authors mention “cognitive disability”, but they do not have any data in this study assessing cognitive function. This is somewhat confusing as their study looks at older adults at risk for “ABI” which in turn can lead to cognitive disability. Do they mean “…older adults at risk for ABI”? An extrapolation to cognitive disability after ABI is best saved for the discussion section.

3. In the second sentence of the conclusions, the authors mention an “increased need for falls prevention”. This relates only to the author’s findings on TBI patients since falls were not the major mechanism of injury for those with nTBI, the other half of the study. Falls were only one mechanism evaluated in this study and fall prevention, while important, would not prevent the major causes of nTBI. It is unclear what the authors mean by the last portion of this second sentence. How would a fall prevention program take into account the “…persistent effects of brain injury in subsequent care”?

4. The third sentence is also problematic and does not provide insight into what they found in this study. There are only three sentences in this conclusion and it is not possible to understand what they have found from this study by reading these three sentences. I do not recommend they expand the conclusions, but instead re-write the section and avoid excessive extrapolation.

5. This reviewer previously indicated that “The first sentence of the discussion section is not completely accurate given the overlap in data published from this
same group in reference 15 (Chen et al. in 2012) and should be modified to highlight how this study is unique.

The authors responded, however, the prior study (Chen et al. 2012) included individuals 19 -75+ with much overlap in information including mechanism of injury for nTBI and TBI, Charlson Comorbidity Index, discharge destination with a focus on individuals 65-85+. I suggest the authors delineate in the body of the text how this is an extension of the prior literature.

Minor Essential Revisions

6. The authors should clearly delineate the age ranges evaluated in this study. Stating 65 and older does not explain the approach used for this study. For example, the inclusion of a statement of the three age groups analyzed to the methods section of the abstract may improve understanding.

7. The last sentence of Non-Traumatic Brain Injury section of the Results section has an additional definite article “the”. Please re-word, e.g. remove the first definite article.

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.