Reviewer’s report

Title: Tourette Syndrome and Learning Disabilities

Version: Date: 16 June 2005

Reviewer: Jennifer Saltzman-Benaiah

Reviewer’s report:

General

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

1. It was noted in the previous review that there was a high rate of overlap of MR and LD diagnosed in children in this study. The authors’ response indicated that this type of dual diagnosis is done by many clinicians around the world. For future reference, it should be noted that the DSM-IV specifically states that an LD is not to be diagnosed in conjunction with MR if the delay in academic achievement is commensurate with the IQ level. It is also stated that there may be some (albeit infrequent cases) in which a child with mild MR might have academic difficulties that are much weaker than expected, warranting the additional LD diagnosis. The application of these criteria in this study are still unknown - and this is cited as a limitation by the authors. However, on page 5, the authors state the “the diagnosis [of LD] does not include individuals with mental retardation”. It is unclear what this means, and whether those individuals diagnosed with both MR and LD have been included or excluded. Please clarify this.

2. The authors have clarified that clinicians were instructed to use DSM-IV criteria when determining if a child met criteria for an LD. This is certainly appropriate and has been clarified in the text. However, it remains unclear how the clinicians determined if the criteria were met, since there is no evidence available to the authors to suggest that standardized testing was available in cases reported as LD. A comment to this effect (i.e., there was no verification that standardized testing occurred) should be added directly in the text, in the methods/discussion or both.

3. The first sentence on page 6 regarding LD as a disorder of cognitive power vs. cognitive style is unclear. What is meant by this?

4. page 9, paragraph 1, line 6...Each of the parameters are stated with directionality (i.e., male gender, fewer members, increased rates, increased prevalence) except for age at diagnosis...were they more likely to be younger or older at diagnosis, above a certain age or below a certain age?

5. It might be somewhat inaccurate to state that the discrepancy model is used to determine LD in the US (page 10), as this is not the only accepted model of LD currently used in the US or Canada - indeed, it has been challenged by many experts. The authors’ other description of the limitations should suffice as written.

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)
What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

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

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests.