Reviewer’s report

Title: Accumulated coercion and short-term outcome of inpatient psychiatric care

Version: 1 Date: 29 December 2009

Reviewer: H Salize

Reviewer’s report:

Considering the serious nature of involuntary psychiatric treatment and its most controversial public reception, the serious lack of scientific evidence on the effects of coercive treatment measures is still astonishing. So any study likely to contribute empirical findings to this issue is appreciated.

Although the data base is about 10-12 years old, this study shows in a straightforward and efficient way that the interdependence between perceived or actual coercion and treatment outcome in psychiatry is far from being simple.

The question posed by the authors is well defined. Methods are appropriate and well described. The manuscript adheres to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition. Results are thoroughly discussed on the background of the scarce findings from other studies in the field. The discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data. Limitations are clearly stated and the writing is acceptable. So the paper is recommended for publication, although it would benefit from some additional information:

• Particularly, ongoing changes in the psychiatric hospital admission rates or the continuously decreasing mean length of stay in Sweden during the more than ten year gap since the data was assessed and any possible impact on the findings should be discussed more thoroughly.

• The large proportion of involuntary admitted patients suffering not from schizophrenic or bipolar disorders is surprising. It would be good to learn more details on the diagnoses of these patients.

• An additional table with more detailed sociodemographic or disease related data of the patients would be helpful (including e.g the mean length of stay of the hospital episode).