Reviewer's report

**Title:** The DUNDRUM-1 structured professional judgment for triage to appropriate levels of therapeutic security: retrospective-prospective validation study.

**Version:** 1  **Date:** 15 September 2010

**Reviewer:** Birgit Vollm

**Reviewer's report:**

This manuscript addresses the important issue of assessment of level of security required for the management of mentally disordered offenders. As the authors rightly point out, there is a lack of clarity as to how best to determine the required level of security. The authors set out to remedy this situation through the development of a new tool, the DUNDRUM-1, part of which assesses level of security. The instrument is assessed in two cohorts by blind ratings based on file review and comparison with the eventual outcome in these cases. There are some concerns, particularly with regards to description of questionnaire development and clarity of description of methods as described in more detail below.

**Major Compulsory**

**Background**

- It was not clear to me what the advantage of the new measure is over those identified as already developed from the literature; this has to be made clearer.
- The process by which the DUNDRUM-1 measure was developed is not described in sufficient detail. The authors state they have “collated all of these” (other questionnaires) “combined with a review of existing custom and practice”.
  - Does this mean all questions from the other identified questionnaires were included in this measure? Or were the themes identified and new questions formulated on these themes?
  - If questions were taken from other questionnaires, it is essential that copyright issues are respected and I would suggest the authors obtain consent from the authors of these other measures.
  - Also the process of identifying “existing custom and practice” has to be explained in more detail.

**Methods**

- Statistics: There are a number of tests which appear to have been conducted but are not described in the methods section, including inter-rater reliability, internal consistency, factor analysis.
- How were the cases included in the inter-rater reliability testing selected.
Discussion
I felt the paper warranted a more in-depth discussion making more reference to other literature and alternative assessment instruments.

Minor Essential

• I did not understand how the authors arrived at the number of 316 for total assessment as there seemed to be two samples of 100 and 246, totalling 346. Is this due to overlapping samples, i.e. those appearing in the 100 and the 246 were excluded (as indeed they should be).
• Please describe briefly relevant content of the “criminal law insanity act” – e.g. does this mean only those found to be insane can be detained in a forensic hospital?
• Page 5, line 1: “X local” – replace X with appropriate number.
• Page 5, line 7: Full stop required at end of sentence.
• Page 10, end of first para: Delete one full stop.
• Table 3 – “Medium secure”: Should this be high/medium secure?
• Additional material: Psychopathic disorder does not exist anymore in E&W mental health legislation.

There are a number of typos, etc. in the Additional material:
• Inconsistencies:
  o In second column of coding descriptions sometimes start with capital letters, sometimes small letters.
  o End of description in the above sometimes with, sometimes without full stop.
  o Provide full names at first mention of all abbreviations, e.g. DASA, LSI and provide references for all other instruments referred to.
  o OR and AND sometimes in capital letters, sometimes not.
  o Before OR and AND sometimes , sometimes space, sometimes ; - please be consistent.
• Item 1: Commas after “Kathan” and “offence”. “and” before “convictions” in 4. line from bottom. Second para from bottom: “however” between commas.
• Item 2: Delete one full stop at end of first paragraph. Sentence “NB If there is no current...” is printed twice.
• Item 6: Comma before “e.g.” in second paragraph.
• Item 7: “persons” instead of “person”.

Discretionary Revisions

• There is no mention of missing data. Given that the assessment was performed on the basis of file reviews, one would expect there to be some missing data. Maybe the authors would like to comment on this.
• Page 5, first line after Heading “Rating scale...” Reformulate to read “The appropriate level of therapeutic security...”.
• Under same heading: “prevent access” – to what?
• Page 6, second line from bottom: comma after “Alpha”
• Additional material: Pre-admission assessment should always be carried out by admitting services: This is not the case in all jurisdictions with some requiring independent assessments only.

**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’