Reviewer's report

**Title:** Early identification of adult offenders in high risk child psychiatric in-patients: A 30 years follow-up study using official crime records.

**Version:** 2  **Date:** 14 December 2010

**Reviewer:** Mickey Kongerslev

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Title: Early identification of adult offenders in high risk child psychiatric in-patients: A 30 years follow-up study using official crime records

Version: 1

Reviewer: Mickey Kongerslev

The aim of this important study is to explore associations between adult criminal behavior and childhood psychiatric disorders in general, and ADHD and mixed conduct and emotional disorders more specifically, in a population of Norwegian child psychiatric in-patients. The authors did a follow-up (19-41 years after hospitalization) of former Norwegian child psychiatric in-patients (n=541). Based on hospital records all former patients were re-diagnosed, on the basis of hospital records, according to current ICD-10 criteria. To measure adult criminal behavior, a search was done in the National Register of Criminality to check for court convictions. Main findings include: (1) conduct disorder alone or in combination with hyperactivity in childhood was associated with significant increased risk of convictions for crime in adulthood, whereas (2) ADHD without conduct disorder was not associated with higher risk for criminal convictions in adulthood. Overall, study design and methodology is acceptable, apart from the following:

**Major compulsory revisions**

Please provide more detailed information regarding the procedure for re-diagnosing based on hospital records, so readers are better able to assess its validity. This should include references to studies on the validity of file-based diagnosis in psychiatric research.

**Minor essential revisions**

None.

**Discretionary revisions**

The authors might consider doing a statistical analysis looking for interactional
effects between some of the major variables of interest (e.g. ADHD, CD, Family Disturbance)

Although personality disorders and/or traits are not included in this study, it might be relevant to mention research on psychopathic (callous-unemotional) traits as another possible mediator between childhood CD and/or ADHD and later crime. Especially since Callous-Unemotional traits are considered as subtyping-candidates for CD in the upcoming DSM-V system (see e.g. McMahon, R. J., Witkiewitz, K., & Kotler, J. S. (2010). Predictive Validity of Callous–Unemotional Traits Measured in Early Adolescence With Respect to Multiple Antisocial Outcomes. Journal of Abnormal Psychology).

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests