Reviewer's report

Title: Barriers and facilitators to mental health help-seeking for young elite athletes. A qualitative study

Version: 2 Date: 16 June 2012

Reviewer: Monnica Williams

Reviewer's report:

There is some limited evidence that there may be unique social pressures that prevent young elite athletes from availing themselves of mental health services when needed. The authors conducted focus groups of 15 high-level Australian athletes to determine what factors inhibited or facilitated help-seeking for mental health needs. This was a qualitative study that utilized verbal responses that were transcribed and analyzed thematically, as well as responses to a written questionnaire. Most of the barriers identified were not unique to elite athletes, such as stigma and lack of knowledge. However, the perception among participants that athletes are subject to different rules than others, which can be an additional stressor, is an interesting and important finding. One major weakness of the study is the small sample size (N=15), however I do believe the study is of value.

Discretionary Revisions:

None.

Minor Essential Revisions:

Authors should define what they mean by “elite” athletes earlier in the manuscript.

The last sentence on page 6, “For example, it has been reported…” is confusing.

Generally, the paper was well-written and clear. However, many parts of the introduction and discussion were wordy and repetitive. For example, the entire first paragraph of the discussion section is unnecessary. The writing can be tightened up throughout the paper.

Major Compulsory Revisions:

The authors need to provide more description surrounding the rationale for the specific qualitative methods employed for extracting the relevant information from the focus groups. The methods section should also describe the nature and procedure for the written data collected.

Some of the supplementary material appeared to emphasize the question of whether or not a website dedicated to this issue would be useful. The authors should indicate if this is one of the research questions, or why so many prompts
for this, relative to other issues, were included.

**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.