Reviewer's report

Title: Contacts with mental health services of individuals seen by the police for mental health crises

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Reviewer: Gordon Strauss

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Contacts with mental health services of individuals seen by the police for mental health crises Rob H.S. van den Brink, Jan Broer, Alfons J. Tholen, Wim H. Winthorst, Ellen Visser and Durk Wiersma

General comments

The strength of research which this manuscript reports is that it deals with the interaction of mentally ill citizens and the police as it actually happens; the principal limitation is the same: because the authors could not control a number of factors, such as whether diagnoses were recorded at the time of the police-patient interaction, classification of patients was idiosyncratic (though reasonable). The work reported represents a modest but useful addition to the growing literature on police as agents of the public mental health system.

Major Compulsory Revision

1) The major limitation of the design is the short timeframe the authors use for the follow-up to the police intervention. While there is a nice symmetry to comparing the amount of contact with the mental health system in the month before and the month after the police intervention, this result is almost meaningless unless the short-term increase in contact with the mental health system leads to some sustained contact. Since the study reported was for the year from April 2003 to April 2004, this information may well be available. Some indication about whether increased contact was sustained at three or six months would elevate the value of this report substantially.

Minor essential revisions: None

Discretionary revisions: None

Abstract: Results: “The police was…” should be “were.” Later in same section, it is unclear what “21% of those disengaged from the service” refers to. It is also not clear what the “49%” refers to later in the same sentence.

Results: 1st paragraph, 4th sentence: The sentence is awkward and not grammatically correct because of the phrase “…the person self…” It should either be “the person him- or herself who contacted…” or “…the mentally ill person who contacted…” In the next sentence, after the parenthesis, the word “rather” or the word “more” should be inserted before the word “than.” And in that
same sentence the problematic “person self” phrase is used again; it should be “…the person him- or her-self…”

Results: 2nd paragraph, last sentence: The verb is incorrect. It should read, “Sixty per cent were male and 18% were homeless.”

Results: Police response to mental health crises subheading: 2nd sentence: The word “crisis” at the end of the sentence should be plural (“crises”).

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

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.