Reviewer's report

Title: Trauma exposure, PTSD and psychotic-like symptoms in post-conflict Timor Leste: an epidemiological survey

Version: 1 Date: 4 September 2012

Reviewer: Amanda Wickett-Curtis

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Discretionary revisions

This ms explores the associations between psychotic-like symptoms, socioeconomic indices and trauma exposure/PTSD in a large scale, epidemiological sample of low-income, post-conflict residents of Timor Leste. Results offer information about whether PTSD mediates presence of psychotic symptoms. The title and abstract appear to accurately capture the main points of the ms. Overall this seems like an important area of study to further examine the relationships between psychotic symptoms and traumatic stress exposure in a large, well-defined, specific non-traditional sample.

The question seems to be clearly defined although the absence of formal diagnostic assessment of PTSD as a diagnostic category seems to limit the ability to draw conclusions based upon diagnosis (e.g. ptsd) as a SCID was not used.

There is lack of emphasis in discussion about the heterogeneity of psychotic disorders. For example, reference #12 is cited to support examination of these ideas although Scott et al. (2007) examined one facet of psychosis (delusions) versus numerous factors assessed in this study. More attention could be paid to this distinction in the limitations section of the discussion.

A methodological limitation should be noted and involves predisposing factors to PTSD/Complex PTSD and Psychosis involving attachment and early personality variables. There is considerable literature evidencing the idea that those who develop 'complex-type PTSD' symptoms as defined by Herman (and cited in the ms) may have been exposed to prior trauma (e.g. child abuse, neglect) which accounts for the delayed expression when faced with additional trauma (e.g. in adulthood). This seems important given the lack of specificity in diagnosing other mental disorders (e.g. personality disorders and other Axis I disorders) in this study as the SCID was not used. This seems meaningful given the author's conclusions that PTSD partially mediates psychosis and that overall trauma exposure was the best predictor of psychotic sx. The concept of dissociation was not considered although is gaining significant ground and may also be considered a key factor in discussing other potential mediating variables and should be considered (See Moskowitz, AK publications on psychosis and dissociation).
**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**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.