Reviewer's report

Title: Health care utilization, somatic and mental health distress, and well-being among widowed and non-widowed female survivors of war

Version: 1 Date: 18 October 2011

Reviewer: Devon Hinton

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Title: Health care utilization, somatic and mental health distress, and well-being among widowed and non-widowed female survivors of war

Major Compulsory Revision
The authors should describe in more detail the fact that the widowed lone mothers had far more severe trauma. In addition, only the widowed lone mothers had lost more than one relative in the war! This a major methodological issue. Just controlling for number of trauma events will not eliminate this across-group difference. For example, trauma scales are imperfect measures of trauma and hence certain trauma differences between the groups will not be controlled for even taking into account trauma events. When one has such radically different groups just controlling for trauma events is not sufficient to eliminate this issue. This problems needs to be far more described and addressed.

Major Compulsory Revision
The authors should describe whether the instruments were given by the interviewer or self-report. If by the interviewer, was the interviewer aware of the study hypotheses? This would effects that results.

Major Compulsory Revision
I think that the three groups should be named in a way that is less confusing. The terms for these three groups should be better outlined.

Major Compulsory Revision
The authors should better describe what is meant by specialist health care. It is confusing. The logical thing would be to predict number of visits to non-mental health care providers, perhaps also looking at just primary care.

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