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: 2 Date: 29 December 2011

Reviewer: Angela Nickerson

Reviewer's report:

Review of Health Care Utilization, somatic and mental health distress, and well-being among widowed and non-widowed female survivors of war

The authors have thoroughly addressed the reviewers’ comments, and I find the present paper greatly improved. The authors integrated the two lines of research well, and this paper represents an important contribution to the literature. I have the following further comments that the authors may wish to consider:

Discretionary revisions
1. I would suggest providing a bit more detail in some parts of the methods: specifically,
   a. I would like to see more information about the trauma events checklist used in this study
   b. The authors state that the PGD-I was modified to address the proposed criteria for PGD. Was this modified by the authors for the present study, or by the authors of the citation provided?
   c. When referring to the PANAS, I would suggest further clarification for those not familiar with the scale, specifying that there are two subscales investigating the two types of emotions, each consisting of five items
   d. Note typographical errors where “affect” is spelled as “effect”
   e. I would like to see more information about the Client Service Receipt Inventory
   f. The authors state that the PGD-I and CSRI were given by the interviewer. Were the other scales not given by the interviewer?

2. I have one major comment in relation to the statistical analyses in the present paper. It appears that the authors used t-tests to compare widowed mothers with the other sub-groups. I would suggest using between-groups ANOVAs with post-hoc comparisons as this will greatly decrease the likelihood of Type I error. It appears that ANCOVA was used for the analyses reported in Table 2, so I was unsure as to why ANOVA was not used for those reported in Table 1.

3. The authors should also clarify whether the linear regressions encompassed all participants

4. I would suggest that, when referring to “blocks”, the authors should specify that these are independent variables
5. Results - I support the authors’ decision to remove the table comparing traumatic events between the groups, however I would suggest that more information be provided on the nature of the traumatic experiences in the text so the reader can get a feel for what the sample has experienced.

6. The discussion was excellent. One possible aspect of the present paper that the authors may wish to discuss is the role of the nature of the death in contributing to psychopathology. The widowed mothers all lost their husbands in the war, ostensibly under traumatic circumstances. The bereaved married mothers, in contrast, lost family members after the war. Is it possible that the differences between these two groups in psychopathology may be partly related to the traumatic context of the deaths for the widowed mothers? I’m not sure if the authors have any data that would allow them to look at this. If not, I would suggest raising this point for further research.

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

**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