Reviewer's report

Title: Service Suspension for Mental Disorders in Armed Forces Draftees in the Penghu Area

Version: 3 Date: 25 September 2011

Reviewer: Abigail Wilson

Reviewer's report:

Major Compulsory Revisions

Original comment: Methods, first paragraph: Were the controls randomly selected?
This needs to be stated.

“Author's reply: The control group (CG) consisted of 152 draftees who were matched from the same draft round and serving in the same units as the study group. The participants were selected by the unit. This is stated.”

I believe here that you misinterpreted my question. I understand that the controls were selected from the same pool as the cases, but how was the matching done? Was it random? "The participants were selected by the unit" sounds like they could have been hand-picked, therefore adding bias to your study.

“Author’s reply: The participants were selected for the control group based on age and marital status, which we thought were the most important demographic features to be matched. Participants also had no apparent mental disorder. Each of the draftees in the control group was followed for at least 6 months of normal adjustment and no control subject became a study subject. Thus, the participants were NOT randomly selected by officers in their military units but were selected purposely by the researchers. This information has been added.”

I am sorry, but researchers cannot purposefully select controls or the study will be biased. You can match on age and marital status but then need to choose controls randomly. I cannot accept this paper until the controls are selected appropriately and results retabulated.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

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

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.
Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.