Reviewer's report

Title: Quality of life, depression, anxiety and suicidal ideation among men who inject drugs in Delhi, India

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Reviewer: K.S. Jacob

Reviewer's report:

The authors study an important problem. The methodology has been discussed in detail and is appropriate. The following suggestions will improve the manuscript:

1. An analysis of the differences (e.g. age and other details, if available) between those who participated in the study and those who refused will allow for generalisation of the findings to the larger community of injectable drug users. If data is not available, then this issue should be mentioned as a limitation.

2. The paper describes the data collected. Alternate additional analysis, which compares those with severe conditions with those without, will add to the paper:
   a. The PHQ9 score can be considered as a continuous variable, which reflects severity, and analysed.
   b. The PHQ9 data can be used to identify those with major depression, using the suggested norms, and analysed.
   c. People with suicidal attempts can be compared with those who did not attempt.

   This will allow for the identification of socio-demographic and clinical characteristics of those at risk for severe problems, which may require intervention.

3. An attempt at multivariate analysis to exclude confounders will be useful. The study has the necessary sample size and has already collected the data.

4. The study starts with a biomedical framework (e.g. screening instruments, sensitivity and specificity of psychiatric diagnosis, etc) for its data collection and analysis. However, the discussion brings in relevant issues related to the cross-sectional design and brief screening assessment: psychiatric disorder (disease)/distress divide, associations vs. causes, risk factors vs. consequences. It also highlights issues related to psychiatric treatment for severe conditions and argues for public health approaches for milder distress. While psychiatrists would argue that screening questionnaire elicit depression and anxiety, general practitioners would contend that they identify those who are distressed. In the absence of a syndrome diagnosis, one can only conclude that the probability of depression/anxiety in the population identified is high. The paper should approach these issues from a nuanced framework and be consistent throughout the paper.
**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**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'