Reviewer's report

Title: Understanding Psychiatric Institutionalization: A Conceptual Review

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Reviewer: Per Bernhard Pedersen

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“Deinstitutionalization” has become a leading term in the psychiatric debate. According to the authors, there is, however, a lack of clarity on what exactly this concept means in present-day health care. In the paper the authors reports the results of a conceptual review of literature aiming to identify the meaning of psychiatric institutionalization since the early 1960s to present-day. The authors identify four main themes in conceptualizing institutionalization:

1. Bricks and mortar of care institutions
2. Policy and legal frameworks regulating care
3. Clinical responsibility and paternalism in clinician-patient relationships, and
4. Patients’ adaptive behaviour to institutionalized care

All of these themes have relevance for the contemporary debate on how psychiatric care should develop and the role of institutional care in mental health care.

The purpose of the paper is clearly stated and the review of the literature is well conducted. The discussion is well performed and the conclusions have obvious relevance for policy-making in the field of mental health services. I have only a few minor comments, and will recommend the paper for publication in your journal.

Discretionary Revisions

1. The criteria for inclusion of articles in the review are somewhat unclear, and perhaps a bit narrow. To exemplify: None of the articles on the deinstitutionalization process mentioned in the background section (references 4 to 8) are included in the review. An elaboration on the criteria used for inclusion would improve the article.

2. It is my impression that the articles selected come mainly from the field of medicine, psychology and psychiatry. There is also a wide body of literature on de-institutionalization in the social sciences that seems to have been excluded. This is perhaps due to the selection of data-bases included in the search. If so, this should be mentioned in the methods section and/or the limitations section.

3. On top of page 4 the authors state that “Motivated by the civil rights movement and the right to receive treatment in the least restrictive environment possible, deinstitutionalization became widespread”. This is only one of several factors
contributing to the deinstitutionalisation process; others factors include advances in medicine (new drugs), the cost of providing in-patient care, development of the welfare state, introducing services and social benefits making life outside of the hospital possible for chronic patients.

**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