This paper addresses an important area of forensic mental health. It exploits a natural experiment to investigate whether 2 new tools can predict the decision making of a newly constructed review board. Particularly, it is a test of whether the new tools, the DUNDRUM 3 and the DUNDRUM 4 can predict the behaviour of the review board. It is presumed that if so it may provide a basis to organize and construct recommendations to such boards in making release decisions. It compares the new tools with a range of other structured professional judgement tools.

The study is not blinded. Extensive results are presented using AUC as a measure of the various tools and their elements ability to predict who given a conditional discharge. The numbers are however, small. There were 56 eligible participants, of whom 7 were discharged. The study therefore is of the tools’ ability to predict these 7 release decisions from the other 49 rejections of release.

Major Compulsory Revisions

The study slightly misleadingly suggests that this is a study of 98 persons. However only 56 were eligible for release, so reference to the larger number is somewhat misleading and should be removed. Further, of the 56, 8 were unfit to stand trial. It is not clear [on page 10, see also page 15 and page 18 where they state the new legislation only covers those NGRI] whether the issues considered by the Board for those persons unfit to stand trial are the same as for the other 48 NGRI persons. Thus should this really be a study of just 48 persons? The authors need to clarify this point.

Responses to this issue is essential as this is a small study of a natural experiment. The authors further acknowledge that it may be atypical as the release of some of these persons was delayed by the new legislation, and thus may not be typical in the future of persons being considered for release.

Minor Essential Revisions

There are some minor typographical errors. Further, the authors need to be a
little tighter with their use of language of what they studying: the ability to predict review board decisions, and the factors that appear to predict those decisions. They at times suggest it is a study of clinicians, which it is not.

Discretionary Revisions

The authors present a large amount of data about the ability of the tools, which are strongly inter-correlated, to predict conditional release. This has value given the preliminary nature of this work, but either being clear about which ones are the greatest value or have the largest contribution would be of value. It is important to emphasise that this is only predicting the community release decision, not successful community tenure or re-offending.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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