Reviewer's report

Title: Determinants of suicidal ideation: parallel cross-sectional analyses examining geographical location

Version: 2 Date: 14 April 2014

Reviewer: Shane Owens

Reviewer's report:

Major Compulsory Revisions:
None.

Minor Essential Revisions

1. In the first paragraph on page 4, the authors state “that the presence of a mental disorder is likely to be necessary but not sufficient for the development of suicidal behaviours.” While the use of the word “necessary” is tempting, the highest estimate is that 90% of those who die by suicide have a diagnosable mental illness (see Maris, Berman et al, 1992), and there are estimates that range lower. Please consider making the statement less definitive and more in line with available data.

2. In the first paragraph on page 18, “we classified the 634 ARMHS participants into three discrete groups: no lifetime suicidal ideation (76%); lifetime ideation, but not recently (18%); and ideation during the last 12-months (6%).” Please provide a rationale for dividing the sample in this manner.

3. In the second paragraph on page 22, the first sentence is somewhat awkward and appears to indicate—based on its current construction—that death by suicide may vary across regions. The data previously reported indicates that it does vary by region. Please rework the sentence to clarify your point.

4. In the second paragraph on page 22, the authors cite access to firearms as one explanation for the differences in rates between rural and urban areas. If there are data that indicate that death by firearm differ between regions, please include them here. If the data do not exist or are equivocal, please make a statement to that effect and address it in the section on “Strengths and limitations.”

5. In the section on “Strengths and limitations,” it may be useful to add a more specific recommendation regarding the measurement of other individual risk and protective factors to which the authors alluded earlier (e.g., optimism).

6. A general question/comment on the quality of the vital statistics data: Given allusions to the lack of infrastructure in the rural and very rural regions, is there a chance that the data from those areas with regard to cause and manner of death are less reliable? It is understandable that this paper is not the place for a lengthy exposition on this subject, but if the argument rests in part on information
regarding rates, the reliability of those data is important and may need to be addressed.

7. A more robust discussion of other avenues to pursue in terms of explaining the differences in rates between regions would improve the overall quality of the paper. This endeavor is as much about what is not known as about what is known based on these analyses.

Discretionary Revisions

8. Page 3, second paragraph: “Suicide deaths are higher in men, however suicidal ideation and behaviours occur more commonly among females, younger people, those outside the workforce, and those experiencing a mental disorder [10].” Please change “females” to “women” or “men” to “males” in order to make the construction parallel.

**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.