Reviewer's report

Title: Family structure and risk factors of schizophrenia: case-sibling study
Version: 1 Date: 2 August 2004
Reviewer: Gil L'Italien

Reviewer's report:

General
This study uses two analytical methods to describe associations between unique and shared family related variables on risk for schizophrenia. The study does address a need, since 1) published data are inconclusive regarding familial risk factors, and 2) the contribution of certain highly correlated family related variables to schizophrenia risk can best be determined using the case sibling design. Many published studies reporting the influence of these factors lacked this design. The study appropriately ascribed the case-sibling design to variables unique to each person and the traditional analyses to a model containing variables shared by more than one person.

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

The manuscript contains numerous spelling and grammatical errors. This is typically not a major issue, but the frequency of such errors in this manuscript warrants serious attention.

The abstract should be more quantitative, providing the most relevant odds ratios and confidence bands.

Results and Discussion sections should be separate.

Page 10: the issue of birth weight among adolescent mothers might explain the observed results; perhaps the authors can provide corroborative data implicating (or not) low birth weight among adolescent mothers as a possible risk factor.

Table 2: give the total number of patients with schizophrenia and without schizophrenia, then calculate the percentage of patients with/without the basic characteristic and report these in the table. This provides the reader with information on univariate associations between risk factor and events.

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)
Table 3: define/specify the relative estimate (odd ratio?) and level of confidence band (95%?)

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions
Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:
Employee of a Pharmaceutical company