Reviewer's report

Title: Mental health first aid responses of the public: results from an Australian national survey

Version: 1 Date: 17 December 2004

Reviewer: Wulf Roessler

Reviewer's report:

General
This is an interesting paper dealing with a specified question in the broad field of attitude research namely the question how people respond to others with a mental disorder when asked for advice where to seek help. This question is of special importance as confidants play an important role when affected person seek help.

The analysis is based on a popultaion based survey among 4000 respondents. Although sampling was complex, it is not quite clear from the description how representative the sample is. 1000 respondents at a time were confronted with one out of four case vignettes each describing a DSM diagnosis. The respondent could give open answers. Descriptive and analytical statistics were computed according to the usual standards. The results show that the respondents' proposals were to a remarkable extent not adequate at least from a professional point of view.

As such the authors present an interesting analysis though the results are not very surprising considering the mental health illiteracy of the general public. The methods chosen are appropriate and the results well described. The discussion is supported by the data. There is one minor critique to be mentioned. Although shortly discussed by the authors should give more emphasis on the fact that case vignettes after all are not a really realistic stimulus for the respondents. On the other side I rather consider it a strength of the paper that the respondents were forced to provide open answers compared to given answers as commonly used in such surveys. Using open answers forces the respondents actively to produce an answer which is more realistic than given answers.

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

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct) according to my general review

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable
Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests