Reviewer’s report

Title: Mental health consultations in a prison population: a descriptive study

Version: 1 Date: 25 January 2006

Reviewer: henrik steen Steen andersen

Reviewer’s report:

General

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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)

The paper provides a reasonable answer to the questions it poses - given the inborn limitations of the design. A few points could be considered:

The question about remanded vs. sentenced prisoners may be discussed in more detail. The remand phase is normally the very first phase with specific problems and often higher prevalence of serious psychopathology. Likewise the paper may consider the problem of prevalent vs. incident disorders, i.e. psychopathology already present at the time of imprisonment and psychopathology that arises in the prison.

It is noteworthy that the number of psychotic inmates in the sentenced group is so high. Psychotic inmates should not be in prison but diverted to psychiatric institutions.

The "diagnoses" are not not based on standardised diagnostic procedures which is explained but this topic could be discussed in more detail.

The paper rightly points out that the inmates oppinion on the sufficiency of the service provided would be very interesting. On the other hand the psychiatric ressources provided in the prisons are clearly on the higher end internationally.

The paper might be tightened up in some sections.

The references are not covering the field. Papers from Teplin + Teplin et al., Gunn + Gunn et al., Birmingham et al. (1996), Coid, Maden et al. (1990) and Andersen + Andersen et al. are adressing some of the same problems and should be included.

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)
What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests