Reviewer's report

Title: Psychiatric and psychosocial assessment of suicide attempters in Japan: a pilot study at a critical emergency unit in an urban city

Version: 1 Date: 25 May 2007

Reviewer: Cameron Stark

Reviewer's report:

General

This was an interesting paper from one centre that made use of clinical information in a structured and useful way. It adds to the information available on suicide in Japan.

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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 proportion of people who have 'self-harmed' or 'attempted suicide' are given and compared. These two terms are used in different ways in different studies, and need to be defined. It seemed likely that attempted suicide was being defined as an event where there was thought to have been an intent to die, but this should be stated explicitly. The authors may wish to include a comment on the difficulty of gauging intent.

The discussion stated that the majority of people who overdosed used psychotropic drugs that were prescribed. I was unable to find this information in the main text or the tables. This needs to be stated in the results or tables if it not currently included.

There is no mention in the discussion of the individuals who were not included in the study. If it is not possible to include any information in the paper on those who were not assessed, it would still seem appropriate to mention in the discussion the possible biases their absence might introduce.

Reference three, dated '1997' was listed as 'forthcoming'. Is this correct? It seemed odd.

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

Means and standard deviations were given for ages. The group did not appear to be normally distributed, so providing medians, range and inter-quartile range might prove more useful for readers.

It would be useful to say if there was any information on inter-rater agreement between the two psychiatrists.

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, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

'I declare that I have no competing interests'