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

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Reviewer: Johannes Lehtonen

Reviewer's report:

- Problems in sampling, not clearly defined and the most serious cases excluded

- No structural diagnostic procedures. This is not a fully crucial problem, but should be discussed. There were two psychiatric raters. How independent they were and what was the kappa between them?

- Psychosocial background data are given to a very limited extent. More information would be highly desirable, since such a rapid rise in suicide rates clearly suggests a role of psychosocial factors. Were there severe economic failures that were more common at that time than in the long run? Major changes in treatment or in biological variables should be mentioned as theoretical factors, but are unlikely to influence within such a short time period.

- Subjectively perceived causes to depression: economic failure, loss of self-esteem; other losses or changes in intimate relationships?

- Why is psychological autopsy not practised, explain, please

- All in all, the need of data explaining rapid changes in suicide rates is obvious and the report is well motivated. Its methodology and level of discussion and interpretation are, however, rather modest. The report would be more appropriate to be published on a national level. International standards would require more data on the background factors.