Reviewer's report

Title: Narcissism in patients admitted to psychiatric acute wards: its relation to violence, suicidality and other psychopathology

Version: 1 Date: 6 September 2007

Reviewer: joel paris

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This submission is interesting in that it applies a scale of narcissism (an under-investigated personality trait) to psychiatric patients. However there are several problems with the methods.

1) The NPI was validated as a trait measure in the general population. But mental disorders have profound effects on the personality. There were many schizophrenics in this study, and there must also have been some with bipolar disorder. These are conditions that distort personality greatly. What exactly is the scale measuring in people with these conditions?

2) It is also well known that acute mental disorders change personality. The authors have not shown that scores on the NPI are stable over time, i.e., that they are a trait and not a state measure.

3) There were no differences from a general population sample on the scale. This is discussed as needing “further study”. But the failure to find differences from NORM might actually strengthen the study design, rather than as a problem. The explanation in the discussion, of factors canceling each other out, is strained and unconvincing. And I don’t see what Peer Gynt has to do with this study, even if Ibsen comes to mind readily in Norway.

4) The diagnoses among the inpatients are not well characterized (half are described as “other”).

5) Inpatients are more convenient but might it have been more useful to have conducted the study on outpatients? That is the clinical population in which interfaces between personality and diagnosis (other than psychosis) make a difference for treatment planning.

6) I am not sure why the authors chose to do a median split on a scale that measures a continuous variable. Would the results have come out the same with multiple regression?

7) The clinical meaning of the findings is not well explained. For example the observation that patients who are violent are more narcissistic is not really news—one of the factors on Hare’s PCL measures the same trait.

8) I have never heard of a “clinical observation” that people who consider suicide are more narcissistic. The negative correlation found in this study makes more sense.
**What next?:** Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

**Level of interest:** An article of limited interest

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**Statistical review:** Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.