Reviewer's report

Title: Broad and narrow personality traits as markers of one-time and repeated suicide attempts: a population-based study

Version: 1 Date: 8 October 2007

Reviewer: Paul S. Links

Reviewer's report:

Re: 'Broad and narrow personality traits as markers of one-time and repeated suicide attempts: a population-based study'

Jelena Brezo, Joel Paris, Richard Tremblay, Frank Vitaro, Martine Hebert and Gustavo Turecki

BMC Psychiatry

This report addresses whether broad versus narrow personality dimensions were higher amongst multiple versus one-time attempters and non-attempters. The findings add to our understanding; particularly, of those features that characterize multiple attempters. However, this paper should attend to the following issues:

Minor Essential Revisions

1. “Qualitative” differences referred to on page 4 may have many different meanings to different readers and the authors should be more specific about their meaning of this term in the current analyses.

2. On page 5, more information should be provided about sample loss including the numbers excluded for the various listed reasons. A weighted analysis is done to account for missing data based on SES and gender but the reader is unaware of whether any other characteristics were related to attrition.

3. Given the emphasis on measures of trauma, why wasn’t PTSD included as a psychiatric diagnosis of interest?

4. More details are needed to understand the three-level variable defining suicide attempt status. Does this variable include self-harm behavior without intent to die? Does the DISC-2 have a screening question for depression that may have omitted subjects who are not feeling depressed yet may have suicidal behavior? These details are also needed because of the questionable psychometric properties of the suicidal intent and ideation scales.

5. The version of the Barratt Impulsiveness Scale utilized should be included.

Discretionary Revisions

1. Is the relationship between Compulsivity and attempter status explained because this broad trait captures aspects of perfectionism that is known to be related to suicide ideation and behavior?
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