Reviewer's report

Title: Validity of self-reported criminal behaviour in substance abusing women at five-year follow-up

Version: 1 Date: 18 September 2007

Reviewer: Daryl G Kroner

Reviewer's report:

General

The authors are to be commended for conducting this type of research with such an understudied sample. The results have implications for the general assessment of substance abuse among women.

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

A potential alternate explanation for longer-term recall is that the recall may be more a result of memory and therefore have less to do with a psychometric issue, such as the validity of self-report. It is recommended that the data be split, not according to each year, but by combining the current and previous year, and then comparing this grouping to the previous 3 years. This should help tease out the psychometric vs. memory issue.

It was not clearly stated what was the binary outcome for the logistic analyses. What happened if there were more than one count of an event in a 6-month time period? In this case, logistic regression would not be appropriate. Count based statistics would be more appropriate.

The Discussion should contain explanations of why there are differences among the types of outcome. Is there less congruence with violence among these women because of how much a threat it is to admit to violence? Or is it because this behaviour is not normative for this group, whereas, with a criminal sample such behaviour will be more normative, and therefore more likely to be reported.

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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)

For ease of reading, the description of what a false-positive/negative are should be covered in the introduction. In the discussion, the coverage of false positive
and false-negative needs to be placed in the context of previous research. Is this research similar to that of other research? Are the results a function of a women sample?

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

Statistically, the authors may want to consider ROC analyses. This statistic is less sensitive to base-rates.

Having the term "women" in the concluding sentence of the abstract would be helpful.

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 importance in its field

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

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