Reviewer's report

Title: Influence of Gender, Sexual Orientation, and Need on Treatment Utilization for Substance Use and Mental Disorders: Findings from a Population-Based Survey in California

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Reviewer: Wouter Vanderplasschen

Reviewer's report:

This is a very interesting and well-documented paper concerning a very relevant research question on service utilization. The authors have described their research questions well and have formulated clear hypotheses. Methods are described in an appropriate way, but some information about the reliability and validity of the questionnaire (in particular concerning the items analyzed) is missing. The data contribute greatly to our understanding of treatment utilization and sexual minority groups, but the relatively low or equal utilization of alcohol and drug agencies by homosexual men and women remains undiscussed. The discussion and conclusions are adequately supported by the data. Limitations of the work are shortly mentioned. Title and abstract cover the content and main findings of the article.

Minor Essential Revisions

- Page 10: Analyses are based on the CHIS, but few information is provided on the reliability and validity of this instrument. In particular, I wonder what is the reliability of the items on sexual partners and sexual orientation when asked for in a telephone interview.

- It is further mentioned that a sample of 4165 individuals was selected from the total sample. Was this just based on the eligibility criteria mentioned? If not, how representative was this sample for the total sample. Ultimately, 2322 persons were successfully interviewed. Were there any significant differences between the clients who were interviewed and those who were not (n=1843), besides age (p. 19).

- Service utilization has been operationalized as any treatment utilization during the past year. Can the authors provide any information on the type of treatment followed (in- or outpatient) or on the duration or intensity of this treatment? If not included in the survey, could they insert some recommendations on how to address this topic in future research.

- I found it quite striking that homosexual men and women are greater service users of any type of services, except homosexual men and women with AOD or MH disorders. Could the authors reflect on this finding in the discussion? How do they match this finding with the explanations they have mentioned for higher treatment utilization among homo- and bisexual men and women.
- The greater propensity for treatment use among persons from minority groups is explained by various social and sociological factors, but this may also have to do with individual and psychological factors, such as personality traits and differences in personality traits between e.g. homo- and heterosexual women (e.g. being an assertive, extravert person).

Discretionary revisions

- Page 5: type of substance consumed: could the authors be more specific on this, which substances they mean?

- Page 16: the authors start their discussion with the observation that ethnic/racial minorities are less likely to utilize AOD or MH services. I found it a bit confusing that the authors start with this observation after talking almost exclusively about sexual minorities. Maybe it is better to switch the first and second paragraph of the discussion, as the second paragraph addresses the core findings from this study.

- Page 19: “… beyond the influence of both type (and presence) of a diagnosable disorder …” This sentence is grammatically not correct.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**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'