Reviewer's report

Title: Psychotropic medication in the French child and adolescent population: prevalence estimation from social security data and results from a national self-report study

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Reviewer: Carl D'Arcy

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The authors pose fairly straightforward questions which are ‘what is the prevalence of psychotropic medication prescription/use among French children and adolescents?’ ‘How do those rates compare to other population studies?’ And ‘How do they compare to national self-report survey data?’

Since France does not have a single payer health care system they use several health insurance databases, including some for a specific region of France, to estimate national prevalence rates. They also compare the results of that analyses to national self-report survey data. The data and the analyses are appropriate.

The discussion is reasonably balanced but the issue of what physical health problems psychotropic drugs may also be used to treat is not addressed. How large an issue is this? (see suggested revisions). I was surprised that the authors did not attempt to compare their study data to data on the relatively large Francophone population in the Province of Quebec Canada.

The title needs to be revised.

The writing is largely acceptable but there are a few words and phrases that need to be changed for a more correct English reading.

Suggested revisions

Discussion comments

I would like some acknowledgement that psychotropic medications may be used to treat physical health problems as well. In the adult population, anti-depressants and anxiolytics are used to treat problems such as incontinence and chronic nerve pain. Are there physical health problems among adolescents that may be treated by psychotropic medications? What is the estimate of this use?

With the self-report survey data how reliable are the answers given by the adolescents to the survey? Are the adolescents potentially “putting-on” adults when they answer these survey questions in this setting?

Are there useful comparisons that could be made to data on psychotropic medication use among the Francophone population of Quebec?

Specific changes
Title. The term social security in English usually refers to income supplements, for this reason I would suggest something like the following revision to the title. “Psychotropic medication use among French children and adolescents: national prevalence estimates from health insurance data and national self-report survey data”.

Word/phrase changes
Introduction, paragraph 2, 2nd last line word - “largest” should be replaced by the word "highest"
Data management, 1st line - replace the words ‘…the social security,” with the words “… the health insurance providers,”
Heading “Declarative data collected by ESCAPAD”, should be replaced by the wording “Self-report data collected by ESCAPAD”.

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.