Reviewer's report

Title: Response rates and selection problems, with emphasis on mental health variables and DNA-sampling, in large population based cross-sectional and longitudinal studies of adolescents in Norway

Version: 1 Date: 11 March 2010

Reviewer: Denise Daley

Reviewer's report:

Major Compulsory Revision:

1). It is exceptionally difficult to read this manuscript as there are numerous grammar and spelling errors, combined with problems in sentence structure/construction and inappropriate use of tenses that combined to make this paper difficult to read and understand.

I have provided a couple of examples below.

“Each epidemiology study should therefore be planned in a way that opens for a judgement of strength and direction of errors due to selection.”

Another example “In the present study, it is not possible to directly assess if the task of providing DNA in addition to answer questionnaires has affected the rate of lost to follow-up among the 18/19 year olds.”

2) the limitations were not clearly stated and it would be nice to have a brief paragraph in the conclusions on the limitations and whether these findings can be generalized to other studies and populations.

Minor/Discretionary Revisions

There are a couple of questionable statements which the authors may wish to restate. For example “In addition we have found the following predictors of lost to follow-up, which have, as far as the authors are aware of, not previously been reported: postal survey compared with school-based; lower education plans than University/higher education; and low perceived economy in the family.”

While there may be no formal previous comparison of school based vs. survey based studies, I did not do a lit search to find out, there is certainly ample evidence from response and participation ratio’s to make this conclusion. I don’t see this as a novel finding. A similar comment applies to the lower education finding- we know that education level is associated with differential participation from many studies.

Another example would be the statement “In general, however, we conclude that the estimated prevalence ratios in the present study were only marginally influenced by loss to follow-up”. This statement is the last sentence first paragraph of the conclusions and further research section and thus paragraph does not include a discussion of loss to follow-up, making the statement
unsubstantiated.

Discretionary Revisions:

Methods are appropriate although there is extensive description of the instruments used to address participant’s mental and physical health that could be moved to supplementary material.

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

**Quality of written English:** Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

**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