Reviewer's report

Title: Impact of different pack sizes of paracetamol in the United Kingdom and Ireland on intentional overdoses: a comparative study

Version: 1 Date: 2 April 2011

Reviewer: Merete Nordentoft

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The aim of this study is to evaluate whether more strict restrictions in paracetamol packet size in Ireland compared to England has resulted in lower average number of tablets used for self-poisoning in Ireland compared to England.

All patients admitted after paracetamol self-poisoning as sole medical compound to six general hospitals in England and all hospital in Ireland were compared. Number of tablet taken were based on patients self-reports. Some patients had to be excluded from the study due to lack of information about number of tablet taken, or other important missing data. The statistics were very simple and relevant. However it could be considered to carry out analysis of variance using number of tablets as dependent variable and age, gender and country as independent variables. This approach would allow an evaluation of the variable country across different age and gender groups.

Analyses were stratified in different age groups, which allows comparisons between the two countries as Irish patients were younger and a higher proportion were women.

Results are relatively well presented, but the suggested analysis above might simplify the presentation of results.

The discussion and conclusion is relevant.

Overall evaluation: This is a relevant study, conducted with a sufficiently large sample which will allow safe conclusions regarding the possible effect of even smaller packet size in England.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.