Author’s response to reviews

Title: Traumatic brain injury among people who are homeless: A systematic review

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Author’s response to reviews: see over
Dear Prof. Steinsbekk:

Thank you for your letter regarding our submission to *BMC Public Health*. It is clear that the reviewers went through great care in reviewing our manuscript and have provided very valuable suggestions and feedback which we believe has strengthened the paper. As you will see, we have made revisions to the manuscript based on the reviewers’ comments and hope that our revisions satisfactorily address their concerns.

Our detailed responses to the reviewers’ comments are listed below (using a different font from the reviewers’ comments).

Thank you for your consideration of our manuscript. We look forward to your response.

Regards,

*Jane Topolovec-Vranic*

**Responses to the Reviewers' Comments:**

**Reviewer: Lisa Brenner**

1. This is an important area of research. The results highlight the lack of previous work in this area and the need for further research.

   Thank you for taking the time to review this paper and providing valuable feedback.

2. Throughout the document the authors use the terms “traumatic brain injury” and “head injury” interchangeably. The preferred term is “traumatic brain injury”.

   We have changed the phrase “head injury” to “traumatic brain injury” throughout the paper.

3. This reviewer also wonders about the use of the word “prevalence” – it is likely that “rate” may be more appropriate for at least some of the articles reviewed.

   We agree that the term “rate” is likely more appropriate for the articles reviewed. The term “rate” has replaced “prevalence” throughout the paper.
Abstract

4. Conclusions do not seem to flow from findings – would suggest that first rates or actual prevalence/incidence using psychometrically sound measures need to be established prior to next steps. Would be helpful if authors would provide guidance re: which measures could/should be used (in conclusions).

We appreciate this important point. We have revised the conclusions section of the abstract to illustrate that psychometrically sound measures should be established prior to next steps. In the conclusions of the body of the paper, we have suggested that the OSU and the BISQ might be considered for use in the future.

5. Please include databases searched.

We have listed the databases searched.

Background

6. Would suggest reorganizing first several paragraphs in order to highlight societal as well as personal cost of TBI.

We attempted to reorganize the introduction as suggested by the reviewer but found it to be disruptive to the overall flow of the paper. Accordingly we have left the order paragraphs as they were originally.

7. The definition of TBI is as provided – this is more correct than saying TBI is…

We have changed the sentence and it now reads, “TBI is defined as…”

8. Page 6 – chronic impairments are most often noted in those with more severe TBI

We have revised this section to highlight that chronic impairments are most often noted with more severe TBI.

9. Cognitive impairment is a common among the homeless however it is not clear that the etiology is a history of TBI – this needs to be clarified.

We have clarified that the etiology of cognitive impairment among people who are homeless remains unclear and uncertainty exists whether it is a direct outcome of TBI in this population.

10. Would suggest that more accurate measurement of rates and impairments would be necessary prior to tailoring prevention and intervention programs.

We agree with this comment and have revised the background of the paper to reflect this.
Results

11. Please further describe the measure used in citation 22.

   We have added in a more in depth description of the HELPS screening tool used in citation 22.

12. Authors do not seem to sufficiently address the quality of the data presented (e.g. methodological rating of included articles).

   To address the reviewer's important point we have completed quality ratings on each article using the Downs and Black Checklist. Two raters individually scored each article and met to discuss discrepancies. An explanation of how the ratings were done is provided in the methods section and a description of ratings achieved is provided in the results section and table 1.

13. Is there a reason that Embase was not searched?

   Thank you for this suggestion. We searched Embase on Oct. 1 and it yielded one more study that we have included in the review (Kim et al., 2007).

Conclusions

14. Some of the conclusions presented do not seem to flow from the data presented including:

   o Page 11 – TBI may be a perpetuating factor for homelessness

       We realize that this conclusion does not flow from the results and have taken out that TBI may be a perpetuating factor for homelessness.

   o Hypofrontality hypothesis

       We have removed the hypofrontality hypothesis but have kept the hypothesis regarding impulse control as a possible other factor. The impulse control hypothesis is supported by findings from Hwang et al (2008) and we have noted this in the paper.

15. Issue of multiple mild injuries and potential impact is not sufficiently addressed.

   We have expanded upon this issue and have made greater reference to the articles from which these findings came.

Table

15. Would suggest including gender

   Gender is already included in the manuscript in the "Sample" column (% male) in table 1.
16. Would suggest including details re: TBI

   We have created a new table (table 2) which expands upon the findings of the articles that discussed details related to TBI.

17. Can self report be further described?

   We have added additional information regarding "self-report" where available. In two articles (Solliday- McRoy et al., 2004 and Cotman and Sadman, 1997) self-report was not described. Rather, the authors simply state that a history of TBI was deduced from self-report.

18. Provide more information re: HELP

   We have provided greater detail regarding this tool.

   **Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field  
   **Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

   We have made comprehensive language corrections and have changed the term “prevalence” to “rate” and “head injury” to “traumatic brain injury” throughout the paper.

   **Reviewer: Mike Loosemore**

   **Reviewer’s report:**
   The interest in this paper appears to lie in the fact that there is almost no research looking at traumatic brain injury in the population of homeless people. The authors argue that this is an important subject to be studied, in this regard the paper is successful, as a systematic review it cannot draw many conclusions about TBI in the homeless population. From this the call by the authors for further studies is valid.

   Thank you for taking the time to review this paper and for providing valuable feedback.

   **Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests  
   **Quality of written English:** Acceptable