Author's response to reviews

Title: Mortality and causes of death among violent offenders and victims - a Swedish population based longitudinal study

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Response to Reviewers Comments

The authors would like to thank the Reviewers for a careful review of our manuscript and providing us with their comments and suggestions to improve the quality of the manuscript.

The following responses have been prepared to address all Reviewers’ comments in a point-by-point fashion, with our responses below (in **bold** type). The page (P) numbers refer to our revised manuscript submitted November 18, 2011.

**Reviewer #1 Jessica G Burke:**

1. The background section is very brief and does not provide adequate information to justify the research questions addressed in this paper. What is the rationale for looking at both offenders and victims? What are the known early risk factors referenced in research question 2 and how do those vary by offenders versus victims?

**Response 1.1:**

The background section is rewritten with focus on adequate information concerning the research questions. The rationale for looking at both offenders and victims is clarified. As both the violent offending and victimization are at least to some part associated behaviors/phenomena, we found it important to study both groups as well as the overlapping group. There is paucity of epidemiological research concerning mortality pattern in subjects with a history of violent victimisation.

2. The use of a conceptual figure would help illustrate the proposed relationships between violence, victimization, substance use, psychiatric disorders and mortality. Associated text should be included to explain the relationships and how the approach of this analysis.

**Response 1.2:**

We have added a conceptual figure and explaining text. See page 8, 7 lines from the top “The early covariates are measured at the time of conscription….. (see Fig.1).

3. Why was the sample limited to those born in 1949-1951?

**Response 1.3:**

In order to get as homogenous sample as possible we included conscripts born in 1949-1951. This is now more clearly formulated in method-section p 5. 3 lines from the top: “Most of the conscripts were born in 1949 (6%), 1950 (18%) and 1951 (75%) …..them until 2004.

4. It is unclear how the “Recidivist of violent offences” variable was constructed.

**Response 1.4:**

Recidivist of violent offences was defined being sentenced for two or more convictions, page 7, ‘Criminal records’ 6 lines from the bottom: “Violent offenses were categorized as ….two or more convictions vs. none).
5. How was the date of the violence and date of death handled in the analysis and how does that affect the interpretation of results?

Response 1.5:
See “Statistica methods” page 7: 1 line from the bottom. “The person times were calculated for all persons as mentioned above, including those with violent crime episodes and those with treatment episodes of injuries caused by violence during the time period. The HR:s for mortality could be somewhat lower than the HR:s in the tables because one or more violent convictions or hospitalizations were not usually reached at 1970, the starting point of the time period.”

6. A great deal of data is presented and the use of subheadings might help the reader follow the main take home messages being conveyed. In addition, the inclusion of summary sentences in the results section would be useful.

Response 1.6.
Subheadings have been added in the Result section.

7. The research and practice implications of these results are underdeveloped. The authors should expand upon this in the conclusions section.

Response 1.7.
The research and practice implications of these results are discussed more in detail in the discussion part of the revised version of the manuscript.

8. The authors might consider using the term “participant” instead of “subject”

Response 1.8.
Changes made as requested.

Reviewer #2 Hannu Lauerma:

1. The conclusion "... prevention of violent behavior would have an effect on overall mortality and suicide rates" is somewhat bold, and I think that "might have an effect" would be more suitable.

Response 2.1.
Changes made as requested.

2. I would like to see some discussion concerning the fact that persons with antisocial or paranoid tendencies may be especially prone to deny their use of illicit drugs in non-anonymous questionnaires, i. e. more prone to this than other subjects.
Response 2.2.
We have made changes as requested.