Reviewer's report

Title: Factors Associated with Suicide and suicidality in Mainland China A Meta-Analysis

Version: 1 Date: 7 April 2012

Reviewer: Paul Yip

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Review comments

TITLE:
The term “suicidality” is a vague description of what the authors have examined. It is suggested they replace this term with something more specific, for example, “suicidal ideation”, or replace the phrase “suicide and suicidality” with “suicidal behavior”.

ABSTRACT:
The use of article in phrase “risk factors for suicide” at several points in the abstract is incorrect; it needs to be replaced with “risk factors of suicide”.

INTRODUCTION:
1. Second para, line 3 that says “It also has long been recognized that the suicide pattern in China was very different from that in Western countries.” is grammatically incorrect in flow of tenses; it is suggested to be changed to “The suicide patterns of China have long been recognized as different from the West”.

2. Second para, line 4 saying “That is to say, female had higher suicide rate than male in China” needs to be “Female populations have consistently higher suicide rates than males”.

3. line 5 should have an article at the beginning, i.e. “A recent report announced the suicide rate…”

4. line 6 should be “….at the national level it has decreased by 2/3rds”

5. line 7; the expression “contrarily” does not fit the expression of the sentence. Are the authors saying the male-female pattern has reversed over time? If so, the sentence needs to be clearly stating this.

6. Third para, line 1 “Though suicide rate decreased a lot, it still threatened health of youth and the elderly in China.” – the sentence structure needs to be formal and grammatically corrected.
METHODS

1) In ‘Search strategy’ the authors talk about hand-searching journals but do not mention any details. Since the majority readership may not be familiar with CNKI and VIP it would be useful to explain them a little. Were there any other databases/journals available to the authors? Why were these two particularly selected for the review?

2) In search strategy, the authors need to enlist the exact phrases and terms used in searching for the articles.

3) In selection of studies, the authors express inclusion of studies from the ‘general population’. However, there are 2 studies in the review taken from hospital populations.

4) Who rated the quality of the articles? The authors need to explain this.

5) The section on assessment of heterogeneity needs to be worded in a better and clearer way.

RESULTS

1) Figure 1 shows that 38 articles were excluded because full text was not available. What were the difficulties the authors faced in retrieving full text versions?

2) Figures on forest plots of risk factor studies – spelling error for legends of figures 2-4; ‘frost plots’ should be ‘forest plots’

3) Can figures 2-4 be converted to tables for the main article and forest plots be provided as extension files?

DISCUSSION

1) The term ‘suicidality’ needs to be replaced with suicidal behavior or suicidal ideation.

2) Since psychiatric disorders / psychological problems have been shown to be significant contributors to suicide risk in China, the authors need to describe how these disorders were measured in the included studies; what kind of assessments were common and what could be the limitations and future recommendations for Chinese populations.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

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