Reviewer's report

Title: Forty years of increasing suicide mortality in Poland: Undercounting amidst a hanging epidemic?

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Reviewer: Augustine J Kposowa

Reviewer's report:

(1) This is a generally well written report on suicides in Poland. The aim and objectives of the study need to be clearly stated. At the beginning of the study, the reader is led to believe that the authors would present the role that changes in ICD classifications may have had on the reliability of suicide reporting in Poland. However, in the text, there is a lot of information on trends, a cross-sectional analysis, and statements about the impact of the fall of the Former Soviet Union. Basically, the authors promised something a bit vague, and then appear to have added a lot more information. In the end, the reader is confused as to what the paper was all about. A clearer focus and maybe a less wordy report would do more good than a paper that tries to achieve so much.

(2) I would like more emphasis on the specific contribution of the study. What do we know after reading this research that we did not know before about suicides in Poland? The excess male to female pattern was already known. One way forward is to try and explain the much lower reliability of female suicide data relative to males. Could it be due to methods selected? This insinuation appears earlier in the text, but it is not well tied to the section where the actual numbers are provided for females (r=0.55, p < .01).

(3) In the Abstract, please include what the Hungarian Pattern is. Given that the Abstract enters into databases (e.g. MEDLINE), and researchers depend on the abstract do determine whether or not to obtain the full paper, it is important for the Abstract to be as concise, but also as inclusive as possible.

(4) Spearman Rank Order correlations were used. At the start of the study, the authors promised to test for time trends. Yet, in reporting the observed Spearman Rank Order correlation coefficients, it is unclear whether the reliability estimates reported are part of the trends. Are the authors talking about reliability across ICD publications, or reliability in some other sense? Would they be more specific?

(5) The study as a whole appears to be largely descriptive. Bivariate correlations do not tell us a whole lot, especially when there are no other potentially confounding variables included. We may observe trends in the form of correlations, but we are left wondering what are the reasons for the trends. Do authors intend to publish another paper on this topic, and have thus decided to withhold some of their information? Sociologist Emile Durkheim (1897) argued
that social integration conceptualized in two separate terms as religious and family integration---reduce suicides. Poland is a heavily Catholic country, and one would thus expect lower levels of suicide. What is the role of social integration in the observed high suicide rates?

On the whole, this is a very well written paper. There are typographical errors in places in the manuscript, e.g. words left out. Hopefully, the copy editors will be able to pick these out before publication.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**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