Reviewer’s report

Title: Depression as a psychosocial consequence of occupational injury in the US working population: findings from the Medical Expenditure Panel Survey

Version: 1 Date: 7 February 2013

Reviewer: David Coggon

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This report contains useful new information, but the presentation could be much clearer.

Minor essential revisions

1. The abstract does not clearly convey the most important features of the study design (e.g. that the report of injury at baseline related to the previous four or five months and that only incident depression was assessed).

2. There are multiple minor linguistic errors (e.g. page 2, line 7 – “with following up about” should be “with follow-up for about”; last line of page 4 – “occupational injury have” should be “occupational injury has”). Also, the wording of page 11, paragraph 1 is rather clumsy and potentially confusing (“were also less likely ... to have less accessible healthcare”). It would be good to have the whole manuscript checked by a native English speaker.

3. Page 7, line 4. It is unclear what is meant by failure to complete due to “new birth”.

4. Page 8, paragraph 3. It should be made clear when covariates were assessed. Was it at baseline (Round 2) or at Round 1?

5. Page 9, para 2, line 2. Between which injured workers?

6. Page 10, line 4. Listed in what order?

7. Page 12, para 2 refers to cognitive function impairment, but I cannot see mention of this in Table 3. Nor can I find any reference in the methods to how it was defined or how and when it was measured. Have I missed something?

8. Page 12, last line. I think the lower confidence limit should be 1.27, not 1.72.

9. Page 13, paragraph 2, line 4. Looking at Table 4, I cannot see where the odds ratio of 1.5 for workplace injury v non-occupational injury comes from.

10. Page 14, line 13. This says “even if the injuries are equally severe”, but severity of injury was only classified dichotomously (Table 4). Might there be important residual confounding by severity of injury?

11. Pager 15, paragraph 1. I presume it is possible that depression at Round 2,
even though not present at Round 1, could still have pre-dated injury that occurred between Rounds 1 and 2. Does this possibility need to be discussed (this is also relevant to Page 16, lines 1-2)? Also, I do not understand why there is a concern about healthy worker selection, since individuals with depression at Round 1 were excluded from the study and only newly incident depression was assessed.

12. Table 1. The symbols for the footnotes appear not to match those in the body of the table.

13. Table 2. The left-hand column for hours of working and personal wage has “(mean±se), but it is unclear how this ties up with the pairs of numbers in the other two columns. Nor is it clear to what all the other numbers in brackets refer. Are they %prevalence?

14. Table 3. The labelling of this table is unsatisfactory. The title should be something like “Associations of injury with depression according to factors of adjustment”, and the left-hand column should be headed “Factors of adjustment”. In the first footnote, I think a factor of 100 is missing, and it should be clarified that the “unadjusted” OR is actually the OR with base adjustment for age, sex and time. Furthermore, it is unclear in footnotes b-f, what is meant by “adjusted for age in model1”.

Discretionary revisions

15. Page 20, last line. Is there a danger that compensating psychosocial consequences of occupational injury may generate additional psychological illness that would not otherwise occur? There is evidence that availability of compensation has previously led to illness and disability that did not occur in other workers carrying out the same tasks who did not have access to such compensation (e.g. the epidemic of upper limb disorders among office workers in Australia in the early 1980s).

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

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

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

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests