Reviewer’s report

Title: Characteristics of attempted self-poisoning in Sri Lanka; a systematic review

Version: 4 Date: 27 December 2012

Reviewer: Flemming Konradsen

Reviewer’s report:

Overall comments:

The paper deals with an important public health area.

Minor essential revisions:

The paper does only to a very limited extent review the methodological strengths and weaknesses of the separate studies included in the paper and this may have influenced the conclusions drawn.

The significant differences in year of study for the studies included into the review may have influenced the relevance of the findings presented as it relate to current preventive strategies. This could have been further discussed.

The presentation of inclusion criteria is still not easy to follow. The section under the heading “inclusion criteria” seem to present “exclusion criteria” also. As far as I can understand the only studies that were excluded were studies that focused exclusively on deaths following self-harm and studies focusing exclusively on clinical management of poisoning cases? I think the method section and results section should be viewed again to make sure that the inclusion / exclusion criteria are clear.

Does the term “attempted self-poisoning” make sense? Does “attempted” mean that the individual did not actually self-poison? Why not just use “self-poisoning”

Not sure the reviewed papers (with the limitations of the methods applied in the different studies) full support the stated conclusion “The rates of attempted self-poisoning in Sri Lanka have increased in recent years, despite a clear decrease in the rate of completed suicides since 1995”

Minor comments:

Not sure the presentation in the methods section on ”degree of suicidal intent” is needed

Sometimes the term “agro-chemicals” is used. Is this the same as pesticides?

Check manuscript to make sure the epidemiological terms are used correct.

Surprised that no study identified that reported cases had obtained pesticides
from private vendors

“This main aim of this review” .. should be “The main aim of this review

I believe the reference below is incomplete


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

**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'