Reviewer's report

Title: Use of mental health services among disaster survivors: predisposing factors

Version: 1 Date: 15 September 2006

Reviewer: Hayden Bosworth

Reviewer's report:

General
Often those who experience mental health problems will be seen in the primary care and often problems are displayed as physical symptoms. By only focusing on mental health use, the investigators are likely to be underreporting the potential relationship between mental health problems after a disaster and health serve use.

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

It is unclear what the concept disaster related intrusions and avoidance reactions mean.

The authors imply that combining data obtained from electronic records and supplemented by post-disaster self-reports is beneficial and unique, yet why the combination is important is not made clear.

Further details on why only 339 individuals out of 1008 had both electronic medical record and survey data available. In addition, the implications of approximately two-thirds of the individuals lacking complete data needs to be addressed.

Another important factor that is likely to be relevant is not only whether an individual was injured, but also whether a family member was as well. In addition, details on the operationalization of immigrant status is needed.

In terms of the analyses, consideration needs to be provided for the potential problem of multicollinearity. This partially may explain the high OR, but lack of significance. In general, table 6 is not all the helpful and further thought about what variables are included in the model are required. With longitudinal data, it is not clear why the investigators do not assess change in health care use, etc.

The discussion section does not integrate well the current findings with prior studies. Simply listing what others have found does not provide a helpful context to interpret the current findings.

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

The sentence that begins – However, some of the studies reviewed were based on self-reported data and applied only DESCRIPTIVE/UNADJUSTED STATISTICS WHERE DID NOT . . . .

Further details regarding levels for public insurance need to be discussed.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

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: No

Declaration of competing interests:

'I declare that I have no competing interests'