Reviewer's report

Title: Child and adolescent psychiatric patients and later criminality.

Version: 2  Date: 29 May 2007

Reviewer: Ellen Kjelsberg

Reviewer's report:

Revised manuscript

General

The manuscript is greatly improved. Even so, I have a number of comments and suggestions.

Major Compulsory Revisions

None

Minor Essential Revisions

1. As I understand Table 1, only 534 patients (38 % of 1400) were given diagnoses within group F, mental and behavioural disorders, and a further 4 were diagnosed with disorders within groups G and E. In my opinion, Z and X diagnoses cannot be counted as psychiatric diagnoses, at least not without a proper discussion of the issue. Hence, the statement (p. 5) “In a third of the cases a psychiatric diagnosis was not given” should be corrected to “In two-thirds of the cases a psychiatric diagnosis was not given”.

2. At least for a person not familiar with Swedish legislation it is hard to understand the two first paragraphs under the heading ‘Information on crimes’ (p. 5). Please clarify.

3. In Statistical methods (p. 6) the authors use the term ‘rate ratio – RR’. RR usually means Relative Risk in these contexts. Could the authors please expand?

4. Under the heading ‘Criminality and admission to…’ (p. 8), I would be very interested in knowing the actual number of patients in the various sub-populations, not only p-values, particularly as only a fraction of the 1400 had indeed been diagnosed in childhood. This makes me question the representativity of the results.

5. In Table 1 the last 2 lines are confusing. Did 23 % of all CAP patients end up with a criminal record (in that case: what was the % for boys?), or did 23 % of boys and 3 % of girls become criminals? Please specify.

6. Table 6 needs some additional explanations, even seen in conjunction with Statistical methods (p. 6).

Discretionary Revisions

1. The hypotheses should be stated in the past tense.

2. The abbreviation GenP is used only a few times. It could be dropped. At least, the abbreviation should be explained only once. Now the explanation re-appears in the first paragraph describing the study sample (p. 4).

3. In the same paragraph: “ 12 had emigrated”.

4. P. 3: The number of inpatient beds has been reduced by nearly 90 %…”

5. On p. 4 it is stated that every fifth patient had been in inpatient treatment. I would like to know the mean duration of these hospitalisations. And does the age 12.1 years pertain to the whole group (1400) or only to those that had been hospitalised?

6. The paragraph ‘Although a protocol…’ on p. 5 should be moved to the Discussion. And it is ‘…a limitation of the study’.

7. Under the same heading, the sentence ‘In this study a total of more…’ should be moved to the Results section. The rest of the paragraph should remain where it is.

8. The info in the sentence ‘Criminal code crimes are…’ in the first paragraph on p. 6 has already appeared in paragraph 7 on p. 5: ‘With legal categorisation…”

9. 315 is 59 % of 530, not 63 %, as stated at the bottom of page 6.
10. And in the last part of the same paragraph: ‘58 % re-offended within one year’. 58 % of the 315, I presume? A bit confusing, as it is stated along with another percentage based on the 530. And this is only ‘one down’ from the total percentage of re-offenders, 59 %.
11. In the middle of p. 7 it would be better to substitute ‘….when it comes to sex…’ with ‘….regarding gender…’.
12. The statement ‘17 % of the females were involved in violent crimes’ in the 9th paragraph on p. 7, is superfluous, as it has already been stated in the 3rd paragraph on the same page. Moreover, the sentence in question does not, as the heading of the paragraph announces, compare males versus females.
13. In the 2nd paragraph on p. 8 you write ‘double sided p-value: 0’. The test may be double sided, not the p value. And the p value is never zero.
14. I propose that in the ‘Discussion’ you begin with a comparison of the results from your study with those from the Stockholm study (and other relevant Swedish studies) and then move on to studies from abroad.
15. In the 2nd paragraph of the ‘Discussion’, the authors state that 44 % of all in-patients had a criminal record at follow-up. This information should be given in the Results section.
16. The last sentence in the 1st paragraph on p. 9 does not make sense.
17. In the 3rd complete paragraph on p. 10, the parenthesis should start with (and co-morbid…). In the same paragraph, the last part of the last sentence, ‘using sophisticated analyses’, may as well be dropped.
18. The first sentence after the heading ‘Possible mechanisms…’ on p. 12 is awkward.
19. The next paragraph should be in the past tense.
20. The first sentence in the paragraph preceding ‘Limitations’ is long and confusing.
21. Table 3 should supply information about the total number of males and females.
22. Table 4 could also give information on males convicted versus males not convicted, in line with what is provided for females.
23. Table 7: Age at end of follow-up should read ‘31.6 years or above’ or something like that.

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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

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