Reviewer’s report

Title: Prevalence of psychiatric disorders in relation with urbanization in Germany

Version: 1 Date: 2 February 2007

Reviewer: Pierluigi Morosini

Reviewer’s report:

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

I have mixed feeling about the publication of this paper. The results are not new and are difficult to interpret, however they add something. The paper would have benefited from a more careful final revision by the authors and should go now through a extensive new revision.

I think that the authors may profit from the following observations and requests for clarifications and will be glad if they manage to show that some implicit remarks are unfair.

The section on Statistical analysis should be rewritten, adding also part of it that are now in the section results (page 6, lines 8-12 and page 7, lines 9-19). It seem that the author have performed first a multiple logistic regression (method next backward for STATA) and than an other multiple logistic regression including also interaction term, but that is nor clear.

In reporting the result there is too much emphasis on statistical significance. Also non significant results should be reported in order to allow the reader to appraise their size.

The figure of table 1 are plainly wrong. They certainly are not percentages.

The authors are invited to explain:

- Why age and urbanisation were dichotomized and a threshold of 40 was selected for age
- What does it mean “A trend for psychotic disorders” (pag 7, line 7)
- Why the fact that the prevalence of psychiatric disorders is lower in the married persons is particularly interesting (page 9, line 10). The author are invited to comment on the relations between marriage, sex and psychiatric disorders.
- Why the studied “associations” (or perhaps better interactions) were 20 (page 9, line 15)
- What does it mean the expression “there is no accumulation of the well known risk-factors in the most urban cities “and why this is an important finding (by the way “areas” or similar perhaps better than “cities”)
- Why they have decided to write that “Van Os et al did find a relation between psychotic symptoms and urbanisation” while in the quoted paper and elsewhere van Os et al claim also an association between psychotic disorders and urbanisation
- Why they were unable to comment more on the Van Os thesis or the drift hypothesis. In fact they must have also the symptoms, non only the diagnoses, in the records. Was not the information about place of birth available?

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

Some writing suggestions
Please make uniform in test and tables the denominations of urbanisation categories, for instance urban I, highest or extreme

The same for “combined disorders” or “any disorders”

In page 7, line 5, the sentence “Gender was non related to psychotic disorders” is repetitious.

In page 7, line 8 “Elderly are less susceptible to substance abuse”. Perhaps better “The frequency of substance abuse is lower in the elderly” or similar expressions.

In page 8 the words “the most explicit” should be substituted by “the highest” or the “the most marked”
In page 8 instead of “the positive relation between urbanization and prevalence manifested itself again in” perhaps better “the positive relation between urbanization and psychiatric disorders frequency was confirmed by”

Instead of denominating urbanisation as a “risk factor” for the prevalence of psychiatric disorders, the authors are invited to write more often of an “association” between the two.

Keep please always the tense in the past while speaking of results
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: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests