Reviewer's report

**Title:** Psychiatry out-of-hours: a focus group study of GPs' experiences in Norwegian casualty clinics.

**Version:** 1  **Date:** 17 February 2011

**Reviewer:** Jair Mari

**Reviewer's report:**

This is a qualitative study to assess the Norwegian General Practitioners exposure to out-of-hours working with emergency psychiatry in a course of one year. Although it is recognized a rather low rate of psychiatric cases in the period, most of the GPs are expected to see severe psychiatric patients (under intoxication, with personality disorders, and risk of suicide, for instance). The study was based on 2 individual interviews and 6 focus groups interviews (16 men and 27 women). Three principal themes emerged from all interviews: preconditions for the encounter with psychiatric patients, safety and uncertainty. One of the main frustrations of GPs was the absence of a psychiatric supervision when in doubt about treatment decisions. The GPs regarded as great improvement on working conditions when there was access to a second opinion. Regarding to safety GPS described worries about unpredictable behavior when dealing with patients intoxicated, feeling physically threatened in some situations. The third theme emerging from the qualitative assessment was uncertainty when dealing with psychiatric and particularly drug abuse patients. This is a study where a local question was approached by a qualitative methodology which raised proper recommendations to help in the planning of a better care for patients (better preconditions for the patient encounter, alternatives to emergency admissions and access to support in decision making). These changes are paramount to improving conditions for the working of GPs. There are two suggestions to be addressed by the authors:

1) The study needs to have a paragraph on the limitations of the study (representativeness of the sample, lack of triangulation, the level of exposure of the interviewer);

2) Table 2 can be incorporated in the text.

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined? Yes  
2. Are the methods appropriate and well described? Yes  
3. Are the data sound? Yes  
4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition? Yes  
5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data? Yes
6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated? No, it needs to be addressed
7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished? Yes
8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found? Yes
9. Is the writing acceptable? Yes

**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:**

No conflict of interest.