Reviewer's report

Title: Access to the US Department of Veterans Affairs Health System: Self-reported Barriers to Care among Returnees of Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom

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Reviewer: Matthias Schützwohl

Reviewer's report:

The paper is dealing with an interesting and important research question. The introduction is well written and clearly focussing on the paper’s topic. The research question is clearly defined; methods are appropriate and well described.

Information about the number of potential study participants that refused participation, however, is missing and should be provided within a revised version of the paper, although authors refer to an unpublished report to VA Health Services Research and Development Service.

On page 9, it is mentioned that “each respondent could have up to three barriers coded”. This limitation should be justified and it should be explained which three barriers were coded if a participant noted more than three barriers.

On page 13, it is written that “participants in the PNS group were more likely to report (…) distance to the VA facility as barriers to VA care.” This statement seems not to be supported by the data shown in table 1 (12.6% vs. 11.5%; no significant p-value mentioned.)

The number of tables could be limited given that the first three models in Table 2, Table 3, and Table 4 show the same data. In addition, Table 5 only shows data that have already been shown in Table 2, Table 3 or Table 4.

What is somewhat surprising is that the data shown in Table 2, Model 4 do not differ from the data shown in Table 3, Model 4. As different variables are entered into the model (“experienced any barriers to using VA care” vs. “experienced distance barrier”), data for the variables already included in the model should change differently.

On page 15, 1st paragraph of the discussion, there are again differences between OEF-OIF group and PNS group mentioned that might not really exist (see above).

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.