Reviewer’s report

Title: Shelter-based intermediate care for homeless adults in Amsterdam: characteristics and dynamics in the user profile between 2001-2008

Version: 2 Date: 14 June 2009

Reviewer: Ellen L Bassuk

Reviewer’s report:

Major Revisions:
This is an important and timely article about shelter-based intermediate care for homeless adults with medical, mental health and substance use problems. Despite the complexity of the problems reported, the increasing lengths of stay, high mortality rates, and the development of individual care plans, almost two-thirds of the clients "went back to previous circumstances,” a finding that requires further explanation. The authors might discuss the program and policy implications of these findings at the end of the article.

Similarly, the authors do not discuss the relative role of addictions, mental health and medical problems in their course as well as the contribution of these difficulties (e.g., addictions) to the high mortality rate. What programs/services might be put into place to address some of these disturbing findings?

The authors should also discuss how they determined if someone has a personality disorder and how this relates to the high rates of addictions.

With such a high mortality rate among these homeless people, what more can be done?

Another suggestion is that the tables be revised so they are presented in a more readable and accessible format. I am unclear about the use of the term "underlying medical problem and thie distinction that the authors are making. This should be clarified.

I would suggest combining Tables 2 and 3 into a more readable format and omitting some of the unnecessary detail (e.g., male and female rates of hypertension or BMI). since addictions seem to be the major driver of some of these difficulties, they should be featured in the findings. In Table 1 and 4 some of the categories should be collapsed to make the tables more accessible.

In Table 5 you might also omit some of the findings in the service data category and put into the text.

Minor Essential Revisions:
On p. 7 the paragraph describing homeless people using these facilities does not include any mention of their medical, mental health and addictions problems nor any discussion of their course into intermediate care.
Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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.