Reviewer’s report

Title: Deaths of infants subject to forensic autopsy in Estonia in 2001-2005: What can we learn from additional information?

Version: 1 Date: 27 April 2010

Reviewer: Sanna Tiikkaja

Reviewer’s report:

General
Thank you for the opportunity to review this manuscript. It is well written, interesting and of importance to the field. The research questions posed by the authors are well defined and the authors have published extensively within the field. The data appears sound and well controlled, including information from autopsies, registries and GP/health personnel interviews. The paper adds additional information of death causes and circumstances around deaths of which previous Estonian studies have only been able to speculate about. I would like to encourage the authors to consider the following comments.

Major Compulsory Revisions

What is the proportion of infant injury deaths that are subject to forensic autopsy?
I think that it is important to add this information to your paper.

I think that it is important that you state in the conclusions that about 60% of the deaths had elements of child abuse as you do in the abstract. I find this being the main message of your paper.

I think it may be useful to add some sentences about the Estonian child health care in the introduction. How and how often are the infants followed up by the GP?

Have you considered adding a frequency table on the background parental characteristics as parental education and unemployment, alcohol/drug abuse and infant deaths, both for injury and disease?

Do you think that other social characteristics, as place of residence or the child’s birth order, are of importance for infant deaths or child abuse in Estonia? See e.g. Tiikkaja et al. 2009.

Do you think that social support, as help from grandparents, are of importance for infant deaths or child abuse?

What about the mothers? Are there currently some action by the GP:s targeted e.g. at mothers suffering from postnatal depression?
Have you used the Health for All Database to calculate the crude death rates from external causes of injury and poisoning among infants? (Background, second paragraph).

I might be mistaking, but my impression of the eligible year groups for external causes of injury and poisoning among children in the Health for All Database is 0-4 years and 5-19 years.

In the results you state that 24.4% of families had documented alcohol abuse, and that 24.4% of families had poor living conditions. Are these the same families? Does this mean that 75% of all deaths were not from socially deprived families?

Minor Essential Revisions

Please specify the socio-demographic groups referred by reference 11, (Background, fifth paragraph).

Please check the reference list.

There are different formats for e.g. reference 1, 3, 11.

What about access dates for online references?

The reference number 14 (wikipedia) cites the following book.


This manuscript has no page numbers, but I'll do my best to describe some errors. A space is missing in Results, 3 lines below insert figure one here “3 and 5 months”.

Discussion, 2nd paragraph, line 3 reads PG, should this be GP?

**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.