Reviewer’s report

Title: The high burden of interpersonal violence in South Africa

Version: 1 Date: 18 August 2010

Reviewer: Juergen Rehm

Reviewer’s report:

The study in parts seems to be confusing with respect to terminology. It should start out to explain the CRA framework in more detail: what is considered a risk factor, and what the underlying cause.

It seems that the overall burden for interpersonal violence is derived from three parts:
- Interpersonal violence injury
- child sexual abuse (CSA) and
- intimate partner violence (IPV)

I personally have my problem with the conceptualization of interpersonal violence as a risk factor and not an outcome (in general epi terms). Why should this be a risk factor, and not say traffic behavior? As the authors have calculated, most of the risk is actually attributed to the underlying cause of interpersonal violence injury. I have less problems with CSA, but have similar problems with IPV.

Another problem I am having is that the data and the main results (i.e., overall attributed DALYs to risk factor and underlying cause) are pretty old and have been published in SAMJ and World Health Bulletin (for the underlying cause) before. Why this publication now and somewhat not linked at all to the discussions on violence in South Africa (e.g., Jewkes et al., 2010; Silverman, 2010; Seedat et al., 2009; just to name the ones from LANCET)? I realize that the actual work for this publication has been done in 2006, but this does not prevent a more informed discussion.

Minor points:

Where does the difference in % total DALYs between this publication and SAMJ 2007 come from (8.4 vs. 8.5%)?

Formal questions

1. Is the question posed by the authors new and well defined?

See above. The overall figures without details had been published before in 2007 and it is not clear, why the current publication is being launched now. As indicated, it does not include a discussion of newer work, which is a problem.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described, and are sufficient details provided to replicate the work?
I doubt it is possible to provide sufficient details in an article to actually replicate the work. I have some conceptual problems (see above) but these may be only mine.

3. Are the data sound and well controlled? No, but this is not possible on this topic.

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? No (see above)

6. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found? The title is not specific enough.

7. Is the writing acceptable? Yes

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

1. Make much clearer what this study contributes new compared to the studies already published in 2007!

2. Focus the background on these aspects.

3. Include a better link to other studies on the topic both into background and discussion.

4. Include a clearer discussion on limitations and conceptual issues. Why is interpersonal violence treated as a risk factor here, what were the reasons to exclude it in GBD?

**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