Reviewer's report

Title: The Physician's Unique Role in Preventing Violence: A Overview of Aetiology and Treatment from a Neurobiological Perspective

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Reviewer: Gabriella Gobbi

Reviewer's report:

The present manuscript is a “debate” article. The manuscript is a kind of recommendation-review concerning the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of violence by physicians. The topic is interesting “hot-topic”, in fact the prevention and management of violence is a common clinical problem, but unfortunately underestimated by clinicians and researchers because it implicates several political issues.

Generally speaking the manuscript is well written, but it needs Major Compulsory Revisions and a revision of the bibliography.

Abstract: please cancel the adjective “astute” clinician. Regarding violence prevention it should no exist “astute” vs “non-astute ” clinician, but a medical-evidences science and a knowledgeable physician.

Page 3. The framework and definition of violence is not very well defined at the beginning of the chapter, indeed in the first paragraph, they report :“ intermittent explosive disorder”, and later about “violence”. I understand that there is no a clinical definition of violence or aggression. I suggest to use the definition of World Health organization (http://www.who.int/topics/violence/en/) as well as the DSM-IV definition of explosive disorders.

Page 4-5: “limbic System” and “cortex” are very generic words for a scientific and medical paper. The authors should be more precise about the brain circuits implicated in aggression. Please cite the following articles:


Comai S, Tau M, Gobbi G.

Davidson RJ, Putnam KM, Larson CL. Dysfunction in the neural circuitry of emotion regulationVe possible prelude to violence.

This article being for a large broad of scientists and clinicians, it would be interesting to add a figure representing brain areas implicated in the aggression and how these areas are affected by the pathologies described in Table I.

Page 7: There are a lot of serious scientific mistakes.

"In other studies, anticonvulsants such as carbamazepine have been shown to reduce impulsive violence. Beta-blockers can reduce the autonomic activity which accompanies explosive rage, and they are often used to treat violence after head injury." This paragraph lacks of citations. The use of anticonvulsants in the treatment of violence is more complex and requires more appropriate analysis and citations (see Comai et al., The psychopharmacology of aggressive behavior: a translational approach: part 2: clinical studies using atypical antipsychotics, anticonvulsants, and lithium. J Clin Psychopharmacol. 2012 Apr;32(2):23 7-60.).

"Antipsychotic agents can be used when psychotic disorders are present". Please delete this statement. Antipsychotics are used in patients with violence without psychotic disorders, as PTSD, autism, mental retardation, etc.

"Nutritional factors, especially the essential omega-3 fatty acids, docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) and eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA)…". Even if in the last years several researches have claimed the use of omega-3 in psychiatric disorders, other studies were negative. It is important to be more critical concerning this naturalistic approach, without giving false expectations.

"Omega-3 fatty acid (i.e. fish oil) has the benefit that it can be readily accepted by patients who see nutritional supplements as a more “natural” type of therapy with no stigma and few side effects". This statement should create false expectations since severe aggressive behavior cannot be solved with nutritional factors, the authors should rephrase this sentence.

Page 8-9: “Alcohol treatment as therapy for aggressive behavior".

This paragraph is very appropriate. However, since cocaine is also a factor for violence, cocaine addiction treatment should also be cited.

Page 9. “Treatments specifically for domestic violence include feminist psycho-educational men's groups, men's CBT groups, anger management and couples therapy." It is not clear what “feminist psycho-education men’s group” means. This paragraph has no appropriate citations.


This last paragraph seems an anecdotal/ case report section, completely
different from the rest of the article. It should be more “scientific” with appropriate citations of the literature.

**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