Reviewer's report

Title: A systematic review of the incidence of schizophrenia: the distribution of rates and the influence of sex, urbanicity, migrant status and methodology.

Version: 6 Date: 17 February 2004

Reviewer: William Eaton

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I think this one is ready to go.

I continue to be impressed and gratified by the huge amount of careful work represented in the manuscript; but also, continue to find myself less impressed, and certainly not "inevitably drawn" to inferential analyses, as in my last critique. However, these inferential analyses form a smaller part of the total in this version and I guess that is acceptable.

I was disappointed that the methodologic aspect concerning comparison of face to face versus administrative diagnoses was put in the supplement, since a very common criticism of the administrative data, which form the bulk of the epidemiologic data on schizophrenia, is that they lack this aspect.

It is pretty hard to comprehend the paragraph on page 13 under "Sex ratio," without actually being able to see the data. On page 13, the last sentence of the third paragraph starting on that page (beginning "Figure 3 ..."), is hard to follow because the reader may not quite understand the relationship of variation to correlation. As noted above, these final two sentences with statistical inferential analyses could be omitted- the precision of results is overdrawn, in my opinion.

On page 15, the failure of age adjustment or age range to affect the rates is indeed surprising; but the same kind of result can be observed in Yolles and Kramer's piece, in 1969- possibly this could be cited because it is similar in some ways, albeit much cruder- the similarity is in the comprehensiveness.

On page 18, the term "cumulative incidence" is used, and I think it's precision could be improved by adding the word "proportion" i.e., "cumulative incidence proportion." This is in line with standard usage (e.g., Kleinbaum, K, and M), and I think this is what the authors mean.

Reference List