Reviewer’s report

Title: Cardiac patients' perceptions of neighboring patients' risk: Influence on psychological stress in the ED and subsequent posttraumatic stress

Version: 0 Date: 18 Jun 2017

Reviewer: Noa Vilchinsky

Reviewer’s report:

Dear Editor,

I have read the paper: "Association of perceived proximity to high acuity patients during emergency department evaluation for ACS with subsequent posttraumatic stress (EMMD-OOO36)."

This paper continues the line of research assessing the contribution of emergency departments' characteristics (such as crowding) to the development of subsequent PTSD.

The current study focused specifically on patients' perception of the possibility of death of a nearby patient in the emergency department where they are being treated as well. This is an interesting and innovative perspective on a possible mechanism leading to the development of cardiac-induced PTSD.

Interestingly, the final finding, if I understood correctly, was that personal threat perception is the explanatory factor and not perceived risk of other's death. Thus, I wonder if the title shouldn't be changed in order to better capture the actual results (the title is also very long and quite vague). Also, the discussion should follow these results. Since personal threat was measured at the same time as perceived other's risk, the authors cannot infer causality. Indeed, it seems that a personality characteristic which makes the patient both vigilant in regard to the goings-on in the ED and at the same time more susceptible to PTSD (such as insecure attachment, trait anxiety) is a better explanation here, as the results in fact bear out.

The introduction would do well to elaborate more on the theoretical background for the study's assumptions as well as its importance. I suggest bringing in Edmondson's somatic threat model in the introduction, or even as soon as in the abstract.

The authors should provide hypotheses.

The authors should provide the reference for the PCL-S specific for ACS.

Line 301. The authors should provide a reference for the sentence: "like most prior studies of PTSD in cardiac patients..."). They may use Vilchinsky, Ginzburg, Fait & Foa (2017).

A spare t appears in line 71.
Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Does the work include the necessary controls?
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

No

Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

I recommend additional statistical review

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