Author’s response to reviews

Title: Are volunteering and caregiving associated with suicide risk? A Census-based longitudinal study

Authors:

Michael Rosato (mg.rosato@ulster.ac.uk)
Foteini Tseliou (ftseliou01@qub.ac.uk)
David Wright (d.wright@qub.ac.uk)
Aideen Maguire (a.maguire@qub.ac.uk)
Dermot O’Reilly (D.Oreilly@qub.ac.uk)

Version: 1 Date: 01 Mar 2019

Author’s response to reviews:

Response to Assistant Editor’s comments

Assistant Editor comments:

1. Overlap: We note that the current submission contains some textual overlap with other previously published works, in particular:


This overlap mainly exists in the methods and discussion sections. While we understand that you may wish to express some of the same ideas contained in this publication, please be aware that we cannot condone the use of text from previously published work. If there is overlap in the Methods section, please ensure to summarize the methods and cite the source. Please re-phrase these sections to minimise overlap.

Response: We acknowledge that the description of the Northern Ireland Mortality Study (NIMS) within the Methods section might overlap with the highlighted paper previously published in the International Journal of Epidemiology. The academic paper identified by the first source draws data from the same data linkage project within NIMS and was published by the same research team. However, the subject area of this paper is different with the focus of this paper being set on the link between prosocial activities and suicide risk rather than caregiving status and mortality risk; which is the focus of the published paper. For this purpose the volunteering status has been added as a positive prosocial activity to allow for a comparison with caregiving status while a
different follow-up in terms of mortality has also been used. Although this is a very rich set of variables, the description of the initial cohort description is similar to the previously published submission for consistency purposes. We have significantly amended the text throughout the Methods and Discussion section to minimise any issues of textual overlap.

The second identified source is a conference abstract that was presented by the research team in the context of European Congress of Psychiatry in 2017 and it describes preliminary results of our work. As that source does not refer to a journal article but rather a conference abstract which has not been peer-reviewed, this was considered as an inappropriate reference for our study. Following the conference presentation, these results were published as a supplement within the European Psychiatry journal. These findings have been since amended and expanded upon, resulting in the academic paper that has been submitted to BMC Psychiatry.

2. Ethics: If the need for consent was waived by an IRB or is deemed unnecessary according to national regulations, please clearly state this, including the name of the IRB or a reference to the relevant legislation.

Response: This study was implemented using an anonymised dataset within a safe setting. Approval for the linkage of the included datasets (Census and mortality records) was granted but there was no use of personal information that could be identifiable; requiring no need of consent from the sample. The statement on ethics within the Methods section has been amended and now reads as: “The use of the NIMS for research was approved by the Office for Research Ethics Committees Northern Ireland (ORECNI), while no formal consent was required.”