Reviewer’s report

Title: Nightmare experience and family relationships in healthy volunteers and nightmare disorder patients

Version: 1 Date: 30 Aug 2019

Reviewer: Michelle Carr

Reviewer's report:

Thank you to the authors for addressing my prior comments with such goodwill. The manuscript in my opinion is now acceptable for publication.

I made minor edits to some of the new sections, which I've pasted below. Many of these edits were just to remove the word 'the' where it was unnecessary, in order to improve ease of reading. These are minor edits which the authors can choose whether or not to incorporate. I have no further required revisions.

One of the more comprehensive models to date is the neurocognitive model [7], which highlights the roles of both affect load and affect distress in producing nightmares. Affect load is the combined influence of stressful and emotionally negative events on an individual's capacity to regulate emotions, and nightmares occur when affect load is elevated by daytime emotional and memory demands. Affect distress is a long-standing disposition to experience heightened distress and negative affect in response to emotional stimuli, and this distress is correlated with prior abuse, neglect, insecure attachment, and trauma.

Family relationships include parental bonding styles and attachment to family members, both of which play an important role in the psychological development and function of an individual [8, 9].

Recent literature shows that family relationships can be measured by the Family Relationship Questionnaire (FRQ) [20], which covers the following factors: General attachment assessing the affectionate dependence of a child to family members and family environment; Encouragement assessing the parental love, care and support; Abuse describing the physical or spiritual maltreatment, or criticism from parents; Freedom release describing the liberty of decision-making or daily behavior given by parents; and Dominance reflecting the machismo and patriarchal authority from parents. On the other hand, the measurement of nightmare experience, such as in the Nightmare Experience Questionnaire (NEQ) [21], covers Physical Effect describing the adverse effects of physical health, appetite, and other daily activities after nightmares; Negative Emotion denoting the frightened, scared, or helpless emotions during nightmares; Meaning Interpretation describing an effort to interpret the nightmares or to value the information they might convey; and Horrible Stimulation assessing the scenes of terrifying activity or adventure, violence, or terror incidence in nightmares.

Indeed, inappropriate parenting has a negative impact on emotional management strategies in children [40], which might influence the capacity to cope with nightmares and the distress caused by nightmares.

Our study thus supports the neurocognitive model of nightmare etiopathology on one hand, and provides implications for using family therapy in nightmare disorder on the other, as a means to decrease harsh and increase harmonious relationships within the family.
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.

Yes

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 am able to assess the statistics

Quality of written English
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Acceptable

Declaration of competing interests
Please complete a declaration of competing interests, considering the following questions:

1. Have you in the past five years received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

2. Do you hold any stocks or shares in an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

3. Do you hold or are you currently applying for any patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

4. Have you received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organization that holds or has applied for patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

5. Do you have any other financial competing interests?

6. Do you have any non-financial competing interests in relation to this paper?

If you can answer no to all of the above, write 'I declare that I have no competing interests' below. If your reply is yes to any, please give details below.
I declare that I have no competing interests.

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal. I understand that my name will be included on my report to the authors and, if the manuscript is accepted for publication, my named report including any attachments I upload will be posted on the website along with the authors' responses. I agree for my report to be made available under an Open Access Creative Commons CC-BY license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/). I understand that any comments which I do not wish to be included in my named report can be included as confidential comments to the editors, which will not be published.

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal