Reviewer's report

**Title:** Adolescent School Absenteeism and Service Use in a Population-Based Study

**Version:** 1  **Date:** 18 March 2015

**Reviewer:** Christopher Kearney

**Reviewer’s report:**

This article addresses problematic absenteeism and use of services among adolescents. The authors surveyed thousands of adolescents to determine mental health issues and service use. Absenteeism was divided into high and low based on a 15% cutoff. A better strategy would have been to examine the absenteeism data dimensionally instead of categorically. Knowing, for example, that youths with more severe absenteeism use more services than youths with less severe absenteeism is not particularly new or noteworthy. A better strategy would be to identify the point at which the adolescents began to use services (e.g., at 10% absenteeism, 12% absenteeism, etc.). In essence, such an approach would allow for some information on when families tend to seek services.

The authors also refer to normal absence as less than 15%, but even 14% absenteeism translates to 1/7 days missed and is quite substantial and can lead to many problems. Less severe absenteeism would seem to be a better description. In addition, the authors should exclude youths with no or very little absenteeism, perhaps including a less severe group that has 3-15% absenteeism.

Among adolescents who had no services, specific characteristics of this group would be interesting to target dissemination of services. What type of adolescents are most likely to never receive services and why?

**Level of interest:** An article of limited interest

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**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'