Author's response to reviews

Title: Methamphetamine Use Is Associated with High Levels of Depressive Symptoms in Adolescents and Young Adults in Rural Chiang Mai Province, Thailand

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Version: 2  
Date: 6 May 2015

Author's response to reviews: see over
May 6, 2015

Dr. Diana Marshall
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Dear Dr. Diana Marshall,

My name is Lauren DiMiceli, and I am a fairly recent DrPH graduate from the Department of Epidemiology of the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. During December of 2013, I successfully defended my dissertation whereby I independently designed a mixed methods research study and independently conducted epidemiological research to assess the associations between substance use and depressive symptoms among adolescents and young adults in Chiang Mai Province, Thailand. The work I have submitted is original research conducted to fulfill dissertation requirements at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. I currently work as an epidemiologist in a public health practice-based setting within the Tuberculosis Epidemiology Section of the Tuberculosis Control Program at the Georgia Department of Public Health. As a DrPH, I aim to gain an understanding of public health practice in state and federal settings, specifically in infectious disease epidemiology and particularly as it relates to populations that are most susceptible to tuberculosis and HIV, in order to complement my skills and knowledge of epidemiological research methods. Ultimately, I aim to conduct research which focuses on mental health and HIV among youth and to conduct research pertaining to TB among marginalized populations by conducting both epidemiological and qualitative research. Thus, I am submitting this manuscript for review to BMC Public Health.

The study described in this manuscript was conducted to describe the association between methamphetamine use and high levels of depressive symptoms among Thais aged 14 – 29 in Chiang Mai Province, Thailand. It is entitled, “Recent Methamphetamine Use is Associated with High Levels of Depressive Symptoms in Adolescents and Young Adults in Rural Chiang Mai Province, Thailand.” Given the ubiquity of methamphetamine (MA) use among Thai youth, we sought to quantify and compare the prevalence of high levels of depressive symptoms among MA users and nonusers and to understand whether reported lifetime or recent MA use was associated with high levels of depressive symptoms in a general population. This research used data obtained from a baseline survey administered before the initiation of a randomized community-clustered community mobilization trial which involved systematic random sampling by districts, sub-districts, households, and individuals of the specified age. Logistic regression modeling was implemented to yield prevalence odds ratios and assess the association between methamphetamine use and high levels of depressive symptoms using ≥ 22 as the recommended
Thai cutoff determined from the literature. We hypothesized that high levels of depressive symptoms would be associated with both lifetime and recent methamphetamine use and our hypothesis was supported by the proposed methods.

This research was one of the first studies to assess the association between methamphetamine use and depressive symptoms in a general Thai population. The positive association suggests a need to formulate interventions which target this comorbidity among adolescents and young adults in rural Northern Thailand and serves as a basis for the research needed to determine effective and culturally-appropriate treatment of these conditions in Thailand. This topic discussed in this original manuscript is suitable to publication in BMC Public Health due to the study’s focus on multi-disciplinary areas of public health and the correlates of health and disease.

We suggest the following scientists as possible reviewers for this manuscript: 1) Patricia Kissinger, PhD; email: kissing@tulane.edu; Professor at Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine, Department of Epidemiology, 1440 Canal Street, Suite 2000, New Orleans, LA 70112; Phone: (504) 988-7320; Fax: (504) 988-1568 2) Frederick Altice, M.D.; email: frederick.altice@yale.edu; Professor of Epidemiology and Public Health, Division of Epidemiology of Microbial Diseases, Yale University; Phone: (203) 737-2883 and 3) Vikram Patel, PhD; Professor of International Mental Health & Wellcome Trust Senior Research Fellow, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, Faculty of Epidemiology and Population Health, phone: +919822132038; email: vikram.patel@lshtm.ac.uk.

No authors have any financial or non-financial competing interests to disclose. All suggested revisions have been accounted for prior to a second submission to determine eligibility for peer review. This includes submitting a title page, including line numbering, and including sections on competing interests, author contributions, acknowledgements, a conclusion, informed consent and IRB names. Thank you very much for your time and for your consideration of this manuscript submitted for publication.

Sincerely,

Lauren DiMiceli, DrPH, MSPH