Reviewer's report

Title: Physical and psychosomatic health outcomes in people bereaved by suicide compared to people bereaved by other modes of death: a systematic review

Version: 1 Date: 23 Sep 2017

Reviewer: Yuan-Pang Wang

Reviewer's report:

This systematic review searched studies to compare the physical and psychosomatic morbidities of people bereaved by a family member's suicide with family members bereaved by other modes of death. The authors have found 24 studies reporting associations between physical health and suicide bereavement (updated on March 2017). Therefore, the bereaved clients are at increased risk of several adverse physical health outcomes.

After a well-tied argument in the Introduction, the study brings a under-researched question. The rigorous methodology of systematic review has been followed, with search strategy, PRISMA flow diagram, supplemented with PRISMA checklist and registration in PROSPERO. Risk of bias was assessed through Newcastle Ottawa Scale in Table 3. I want to commend the authors for the effort in conducting this review. Please find below some suggestions for improving the final text, most of them are formal aspects of the manuscript.

Essential minor comments:

Page 1. Abstract: Rephrase "The final study found an association in the opposite direction, with suicide-bereaved children visiting a GP less frequently than non-suicide bereaved children". This is unclear. Which study is this final one? Please clarify.

The Introduction section may include the rationale of the PICO formulation: P-Population; I-Intervention; C-Comparison; O-Outcome. This formulation also can be more explicit in the Inclusion section (page 8, ln 150).

Page 8, ln 154-155: May the inclusion criterion "(3) authors specified at least one physical or psychosomatic health outcome" selected more biased articles on physical morbidities? Also, explain this in more detail in the Discussion section.
Table 2:

(a) Suggest changing the first headline for some columns to remind the PICO's strategy: cases --> Participants; relevant outcome(s) studied --> Outcome. The Intervention is absent in most of studies.

(b) Add a third column for the study design (currently in the first column).

(c) Recommend organizing the Table, by grouping those [I] cross-sectional/case-control studies; and [II] prospective, cohort studies, in separate sections.

(d) The authors may want summarize the main findings listed. If your purpose was to synthesize, the content is too long for rapid reading/comparison. For example, in the limitation column: "small sample size" is sufficient to tell the idea. Please eliminate details and redundant messages. Do delete unnecessary statistics. Make this Table shorter.

Authors may want to submit as supplementary file, containing the search argument for each electronic data base (with the resulting number of articles) and the complete list of 60 excluded articles (with the reasons of exclusion listed in page 8). Currently, you displayed the Table 1 for Medline (OVID) in the Method section. Do move this Table to the end of article, after the references.

Discussion section: this section contains long and disorganized paragraphs. Although there is no consensus on the presentation of this section, I advise authors to divide this section as following:

First, summarize the general findings in a single paragraph, with the general weaknesses of this systematic review as well the implications. Thereafter,

➢ Strong evidence

➢ Evidence still requiring confirmation

➢ Weak evidence

➢ Paucity or lack of evidence

Following, do discuss how the level of evidence/which factors could influence your interpretation of the results. For example, studies with small sample size are trustworthy?

 Recommend additional linguistic polishing of the text, making it more fluent and readable.
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.

Not relevant to this manuscript

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

Needs some language corrections before being published

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

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