Reviewer’s report

Title: Global mental health and neuroethics

Version: 2 Date: 6 July 2014

Reviewer: Solvig Ekblad

Reviewer’s report:

Comment from a reviewer: Major compulsory revisions

As far as I understand this discussion manuscript fits the format of the journal: “BMC Medicine is the flagship medical journal of the BMC series, publishing original research, commentaries and reviews that are either of significant interest to all areas of medicine and clinical practice, or provide key translational or clinical advances in a specific field.” As the impact factor of the journal is quite high, I had that in my mind when I read the manuscript.

It would have been easier to read the manuscript if I had known if the authors are clinicians and their theoretical preconceptions, how it has influenced their writings and reasons to write it now. Examples from their own work would have “nourished” the manuscript.

In the “Summary” (page 11) the authors write that global mental health has its focus in the low and middle income world, while neuroethics has its roots in high income countries …..”Global mental health is focused on implementation science – often adapting well-studied interventions to new contexts, while neuroethics is focused on novel neurotechnologies” …. “Global mental health has emphasized the value of task shifting to community health workers, while neuroethics has explored highly specialized medical procedures such as functional brain imaging and deep brain stimulation.” From my horizon, globalization influence the clinical work in the west also, due to increasing numbers of immigrants coming of different reasons.

A further key word is immigrant psychiatry/refugee psychiatry

1. Is the question posed original, important and well defined?

The aim of the discussion paper is to “briefly consider some the intersections between the important fields of global mental health and neuroethics” ….and “we will discuss in turn how both global mental health and neuroethics have an emphasis on a naturalistic and empirical approach, on both disease and wellness, on human rights in neuropsychiatric care, and on the value of social inclusion and patient empowerment” (page 4). However, the question is not easily identifiable and understood. And I have not learnt something new after reading it several times.

The research question posed by the authors should be easily identifiable and understood.

2. Are the data sound and well controlled?
This is irrelevant as it is not an original paper. I agree with the two authors that “global mental health is a relatively new field that has focused on disparities in mental health services across different settings and on innovative ways to provide feasible, acceptable and effective services in poorly-resource settings” (page 2) but have significant limitations…… and neuroscience has proposed as providing tools…..however from my perspective there are further limitations which need to be considered and raises questions for neuroethics and the four disciplines which are discussed.

In the “Background” the authors start with the definition of mental health as a multidimensional concept (biological, psychological and social factors) but is a bit too general and old fashion. My experience is that it is of significance also to include spiritual and trauma as well as social determinants of health as well as gender and other diversity factors.

In the second paragraph in the background, some adding factors are needed. Global mental health has also emerged from immigrant/refugee psychiatry and empathy training for students who will work as clinicians in the future and most probably meet patients with diversity.

3. Is the interpretation (discussion and conclusion) well balanced and supported by the data?

This question is also irrelevant as the manuscript is a discussion paper.

4. Are the methods appropriate and well described, and are sufficient details provided to allow others to evaluate and/or replicate the work?

I would have suggested to do the review by a meta analysis.

5. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the methods?

See above

6. Can the writing, organization, tables and figures be improved?

See above regarding type of paper

7. When revisions are requested.

A better justification is needed for the arguments based on existing data.

8. Are there any ethical or competing interests issues you would like to raise?

There is no need for an ethical approval since it is a discussion paper. However, I find a very important ethical issue; discrimination of diversity perspective (eg gender, immigrants, refugees)

9. Reviewers are reminded of the importance of timely reviews.

I have sent an email, delay a few days.

10. Confidentiality

Any manuscript sent for peer review is a confidential document and should remain so until it is formally published.

11. Are the included additional files (supplementary materials) appropriate?
Quality of written English: Acceptable

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.