Reviewer’s report

Title: Guideline use among different healthcare professionals in diagnosing Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder in Dutch children; who cares?

Version: 2 Date: 05 Dec 2018

Reviewer: Nora McIntyre

Reviewer's report:

This manuscript provides a simple report of whether and how ADHD guidelines are used by health practitioners. I can think of how this research is interesting. However, authors have yet to convey this: in particular, their introduction and discussion sections in require quite some work before this manuscript should be considered for publication.

ABSTRACT

Please rephrase for better clarity: These findings provide opportunities to improve care through increasing familiarity with ADHD guidelines and the use of standardized interviews. Otherwise, I found the abstract helpful and easy to follow.

INTRODUCTION

The Introduction seems rather short. I only see a description of the way the Dutch system works for ADHD diagnosis and a summary of the existing literature seems to be missing completely. Finally, the objectives are described without a convincing rationale. I am yet to be convinced that a description of the use of ADHD guidelines (objective 1) is so important: I can think of my own reasons for why I might do such a thing, but the authors have not been explicit or detailed enough on this matter. I have the same issue with objective 2. It would help greatly if authors are explicit as to why ADHD in particular is an important disorder to focus on other than its (apparently rather low) prevalence.

METHOD

- In addition to referring to difficulty in identifying whether ADHD was handled as being the reason for randomly sampling GPs, positive reasons should be given for the use of a random sample.
On p. 7-8, your diagnostic questionnaire would be more convincing if you provide evidence of construct validity via citations of comparable questionnaires. The minimum is for authors to justify the key components of the questionnaire in terms of how they each meet the research objectives: this can be done in the Introduction or in Method with the content on p. 7-8.

It is essential to provide statistics regarding the validity and reliability of all your questionnaire via CFA and alphas.

'To gain insight into the diagnostic process the second part of the survey consisted of questions evaluating the diagnostic elements used by the respondents.' Which research objective does this meet?

The use of Qualtrics should be in the Apparatus and Procedure sections, not Analysis.

In Analysis, you need to be completely precise regarding the statistical technique you used beyond 'univariate and bivariate analyses'.

Authors explain their use of absolute numbers and frequencies by describing their sample size as small. However, they then reported percentages which are a form of proportion measure. I suggest that authors explore beta regression models for parametric inferential statistical analyses of their data. That way, their results will have greater clarity through beta and p values. Alternatively, consider using nonparametric tests.

RESULTS

Where are the univariate/bivariate results? None are reported in the Results section.

It is not informative to describe percentages of guideline use. Yet this is how authors treat the data for two entire paragraphs (the first and the last in Results). How were the guidelines used? How did authors control for differences in participants' interpretations of guideline use? Moreover, authors should quickly remind readers of their definition of 'guideline use' at the start of that section (p. 10).

'The majority of professionals used a type of guideline (64.5%).' I do not understand this sentence.

'Of professionals using the AVL, respectively 51%, 71% and 7% also used the SDQ, CBCL and CRS. Of the professionals using the SDQ, respectively 48% and 6% also used the CBCL and CRS.' Authors should refrain from taking this approach ('respectively') to reporting results. It is not clear. Please report each metric one at a time. As an aside, 6 or 7 per cent does not mean anything in real terms and you will see that when you conduct proper inferential statistics.
'Additional examinations, like laboratory screening, electrocardiograms and X-rays were only used in specific cases by psychiatrists, paediatricians and GPs.' Suddenly, authors have not provided percentages or frequencies. Please do so.

**DISCUSSION**

Please start this section with a reminder of the problem and the goals of this study, plus how you went about meeting these goals.

'This gave the impression that guidelines from individual institutions, in terms of important items, were actually based upon national guidelines.' Please show how you know that this was the impression—and for whom.

The first paragraph of the Discussion uses citations and also gives percentages: I am therefore confused when the authors are referring to their own findings and when/whether they are reminding readers of the problem that their study addresses. I suggest that authors make themselves explicit when they are referring to findings from their own study versus when they are citing others' research.

It seems that authors are simply re-reporting the findings in the Discussion. This is not the purpose of the Discussion. Please summarise your MAIN findings one at a time, explain its importance, explain how it relates to existing research, and surmise the implications/conclusions of this collective research (yours and others').

'The Dutch government wants a prominent role for GPs in the diagnostic process of ADHD.' Please support with evidence and/or citations.

'Based on this explorative quantitative study no statements can be made about the quality of the ADHD diagnosis or the possible impact on the increased demand for ADHD care.' This is damning of your own study objectives. I suggest you replace this with a suggestion of these, however tentatively, rather than highlighting this 'failure'.

Why are standardized interviews particularly useful and important compared with other diagnostic approaches?

**Are the methods appropriate and well described?**

If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

No
Does the work include the necessary controls?
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

No

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

No

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

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