Reviewer’s report

Title: Perceived stigma and barriers to care in UK Armed Forces personnel and veterans with and without probable mental disorders

Version: 0 Date: 25 Aug 2019

Reviewer: Ellie Lawrence-Wood

Reviewer's report:

This was a well written and succinct paper. Findings are consistent with our recently released Transition and Wellbeing Research Programme Pathways to Care report, which is interesting (Australian context - similar challenges regarding treatment seeking in military population). I don't have a lot of feedback - just a few potential discussion points and ideas I had while reading it.

Couple of typos throughout (p.12, line 34; p.3, line 29 - spell out in full before abbreviation. Assume AF refers to Armed Forces?)

p.11 end of line 22: explain why the findings reflect that the sample was comprised of those who had mental health or emotional problems in the last 3 years.

Regarding the Alcohol misuse findings, I expect these reflect that they don't perceive their drinking as a 'mental health' problem.

The concerns endorsed regarding PTSD may reflect the perceived extensive time commitment for PTSD treatment (e.g., exposure = regular weekly sessions over an extended period).

The PTSD specific findings regarding internal stigma may reflect the preponderance of information and focus on this disorder more specifically within the Armed Forces. While the information is provided in order to educate and reduce stigma, it's possible that it inadvertently increases self-stigma.

Overall, the different patterns of findings for common mental disorders, PTSD and alcohol misuse across the different types of stigma are interesting, and may reflect the differing levels of understanding and available about the conditions and what they represent. The stigma for PTSD appears to relate more to being 'unwell', while stigma for other disorders appears to relate more to being seen as weak/not coping, and in the case of alcohol misuse, shame. While PTSD is somewhat legitimised as a serious service related condition, things like depression and anxiety may be less so. Alcohol misuse may not be considered a legitimate mental health condition at all.
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.

I am able to assess the statistics

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

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