

## PEER REVIEW HISTORY

BMJ Open publishes all reviews undertaken for accepted manuscripts. Reviewers are asked to complete a checklist review form ([see an example](#)) and are provided with free text boxes to elaborate on their assessment. These free text comments are reproduced below. Some articles will have been accepted based in part or entirely on reviews undertaken for other BMJ Group journals. These will be reproduced where possible.

### ARTICLE DETAILS

<b>TITLE (PROVISIONAL)</b>	Suicides by persons reported as missing prior to death: a retrospective cohort study
<b>AUTHORS</b>	Jerneja Sveticic, Lay San Too & Diego De Leo

### VERSION 1 - REVIEW

<b>REVIEWER</b>	Ping Qin, Associate Professor at the National Centre for Register-based Research, Aarhus University, Denmark.  I have no conflict of interest to declare.
<b>REVIEW RETURNED</b>	16/01/2012

<b>THE STUDY</b>	it is unclear if the 'missing' status refers to the time until being found dead or a history of being reported as missing, in which case the person could be found alive and then committed suicide some time later. This should be clarified in the method.
<b>GENERAL COMMENTS</b>	This is a well-conducted study addressing a very interesting issue. However, it is a surprise to me that mental illness was not a significant factor in the final logistic analysis. Although some of its effect might be accounted for by the effect of institution, I would expect a remaining effect because the proportion of subjects under institution was not that high. I am wondering how mental illness was defined in the logistic model, as I can see that there are 3 variables about mental illness or problems in Table 1. It would be good if the authors can clarify this in the text.

<b>REVIEWER</b>	Dr Nicola Swinson Consultant Forensic Psychiatrist and Honorary Clinical Research Fellow Centre for Suicide Prevention, University of Manchester, UK.
<b>REVIEW RETURNED</b>	05/02/2012

<b>THE STUDY</b>	Minor revision of text with respect to grammar and phraseology required.
<b>GENERAL COMMENTS</b>	This is an interesting initial contribution to a field where there is a relative lack of published research. The methodology is robust and yields results which are of utility in a clinical context and relevant from a public health perspective.

### VERSION 1 – AUTHOR RESPONSE

Reviewer 1

1) it is unclear if the 'missing' status refers to the time until being found dead or a history of being

reported as missing, in which case the person could be found alive and then committed suicide some time later. This should be clarified in the method.

The 'missing status' refers to them being reported as missing sometime prior to being found dead and when it was determined that death was due to suicide. A sentence has been added to Methods to provide clarification of this issue.

2) it is a surprise to me that mental illness was not a significant factor in the final logistic analysis. Although some of its effect might be accounted for by the effect of institution, I would expect a remaining effect because the proportion of subjects under institution was not that high. I am wondering how mental illness was defined in the logistic model, as I can see that there are 3 variables about mental illness or problems in Table 1. It would be good if the authors can clarify this in the text.

Results of logistic regression showed that mental illness was not a significant factor in differentiating between 'missing' and 'non-missing' group. This does not mean that ill-mental health did not play a significant role in suicidality of members of both groups, but rather that having a history of mental illness does not increase (or lower) the odds of that person disappearing before committing suicide. Variables relating to mental health that were included in the model were: Contact with mental health professional (last 3 months) and Diagnosed mental illness (at least one) – these two were chosen because they significantly differentiated between the two groups in bivariate analysis (Table 1). To provide further clarification of how logistic regression was conducted, we modified the paragraph in Methods describing statistical analyses used.

Reviewer 2

1) Minor revision of text with respect to grammar and phraseology required.

We have thoroughly read the manuscript and corrected some grammatical errors and rephrased certain sentences, which hopefully improved its readability (marked in Track changes).