

Review of: "Mortality Risk for Individuals With Cocaine Use Disorders: Clients and Non-Clients of Public Treatment Centres for Drug Addiction"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

Overall, this study is well planned and conducted. It has public health significance too. However, the following observations should be addressed effectively in the revised manuscript.

Abstract

- The geographical regions are specified slightly differently in the abstract. Suggest uniformity and avoidance of duplication.
- In the results section of the abstract, the term multivariate needs to be replaced with multivariable. Such distinctions are based on the nature of the dependent variable (multivariate: more than two levels of the considered outcome, or two or more dependent variables at a time) being modeled and not with reference to the independent variable.

• Methods

- Under the methods section, the sampling mechanism is not clear. The word 'selection' appears on quite a few occasions, but we are not clear as to how they were selected. Probably, the authors are clear about what they intended to do, but that should be stated explicitly for greater clarity.
- How the status of non-PATS was ascertained needs to be specified.

◦ Statistical Analysis

- The mortality risk experienced in the setting (Emilia-Romagna) considered as the reference for the estimation of SMR should be mentioned comprehensively. Such data acquisition is a cumbersome task due to the lack of systematic information. Hence, a detailed account of data acquisition would be beneficial to readers, especially from developing countries.
- In the model developing strategies, the choice of the Poisson regression, its rationale, and model fitting should also be mentioned. We need fit indices (coefficient of determination, cross tabulation for the observed status of mortality (0-no, 1-yes), and a test of goodness of fit.

• Results

- For a few of the variables, the observed cell counts are less than five, which makes the validity of the Chi-square

questionable. Hence, suggest Fisher's exact test for assessing the level of significance for such variables (observed cell counts <5).

- What was the rationale for categorizing the age at a cut-off of 35 years? Was 35 the median value of age? There should be a proper justification for this.