Reviewer's report

Title: Managing depression in primary care: A meta-synthesis of qualitative and quantitative research to identify barriers and facilitators.

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Reviewer: David Pilgrim

Reviewer's report:

This is a useful and well written review of a contested field. I have only four brief suggestions for revision. The first is that given that the authors concede in their discussion that the very notion of depression is considered problematic for some with an interest in the field (and comes out strongly amongst GPs who focus on misery as an intelligible producy of life circumstances) why is the opening sentence of the introduction a standard epidemiological statement? This reifies a concept that the authors concede is contested. Should more caution be used in using the naive realist paradigm of psychiatric positivism and epidemiology? This leads to my second point. It is not just doubting GPs who express their doubts, there is much academic debate and pre-empirical critical scrutiny about the validity of the diagnosis. For example see Pilgrim, D. and Bentall, R.P. (1999) The medicalisation of misery: a critical realist analysis of the concept of depression. Journal of Mental Health 8, 3, 261-274. If we cannot agree on the conceptual validity in order to separate it from anxiety and normality then how can we reasonably make judgments about whether or not it is 'under-diagnosed' or 'optimally treated' in primary care? These sorts of claims have been made by naive realists in psychiatry and are highly challengable. Third, more could have been said about the cross-cultural challenge of understanding human misery- see for example Kokanovic, R. (2010) The diagnosis of depression in an international context. In D. Pilgrim, A. Rogers and B. Pescosolido (eds) The Sage Handbook of Mental Health and Illness London Sage. Fourth, if we cannot agree on the diagnosis then the legitimacy of treatment is also rendered problematic by the meta-analyses suggesting that anti-depressants are no better than placebo (no surprise there!)- I could not see where this treatment data was discussed or the role of the drug companies in maintaining reified bio-medical categories about the complexities of human misery in context. Hope this helps.

Level of interest: An article of outstanding merit and interest in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:
'I declare that I have no competing interests'