Reviewer’s report

Title: Cost-effectiveness of Problem-Solving Treatment in comparison with usual care for primary care patients with mental health problems: a randomized trial

Version: 1 Date: 1 May 2012

Reviewer: Gerry Richardson

Reviewer’s report:

I have several concerns about the reporting and quality of this economic evaluation

Major compulsory revisions

1) The base case presented in the article includes productivity losses and then goes on to estimate these in different ways. Due to the limited evidence for the intervention impacting on these (and the fact that the groups were very imbalanced at baseline), I would like to see productivity losses excluded as an analysis (and my preference would be for the MAIN analysis to be excluding these costs, they could be included in separate sensitivity analysis). This point is re-inforced by the fact that the results are driven in large part by 3 outliers with large productivity losses.

2) EQ5D scores at baseline and follow-up need to be presented, this would help to work out which arm is better (see point 3 below).

3) Usual care performs better than PST on HADS. However, it is not clear which direction the QALYs go after the adjustment. The section in "clinical effects" needs to state in which direction the effect goes AFTER baseline adjustment.

4) It seems to me that a trial is presented with a very short follow up of 9 months and that from this the authors conclude that UC is not cost-effective. They must consider some form of extrapolation; this is a patient population that would see the benefit of the intervention over possibly many years; a 9 month time horizon is too short.

Minor revisions

5) HADS and QALYs need explanatory note saying which direction is better in table 4 (ie higher QALYs better, lower HADS better)

Discretionary revisions

6) The reference list appear light on recent clinical references and the costing date of 2004 make the study appear dated.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable
Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

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