Reviewer’s report

Title: Social inhibition as a mediator of neuroticism and depression in the elderly

Version: 3 Date: 21 March 2012

Reviewer: Jennifer Morse

Reviewer’s report:

Though the authors have added text to both the introduction and to the discussion, the rationale for this analysis is still not clearly presented.

Major Compulsory Revisions:

Though the authors have added information about previous findings documenting mediation between neuroticism and depression, they still do not clearly state a rationale for why social inhibition could mediate the relation between neuroticism and depression. The 3rd paragraph of the introduction (top of page 4) simply presents a list of findings – rumination and worry, empathy and alexithymia, daily hassles, physical activity and cognitive reactivity – with no additional text arguing for this analysis. Also, it is unclear whether Oddone et al's finding is for mediation or not. And it is unclear which if any of the studies reported are on older adults.

The additional text about introversion (second paragraph of introduction, page 3) seems to make things less clear as it adds information about low extroversion (introversion) rather than focusing on neuroticism.

The first sentence of paragraph 4 (page 4) does not present Alden & Bieling’s findings completely – the sentence is incomplete. The phrases “by the similar items of the questionnaires” and “according to the items used” in this paragraph are still unclear.

The abstract “Background” section does not mention social inhibition and should.

The discussion section suggests that social inhibition confers additional risk for depression, above and beyond that conferred by neuroticism. My understanding of mediation, particularly partial mediation, is that the mediator explains (or partially explains) the mechanism by which the predictor impacts the outcome, not that the mediator confers additional risk (page 11 end of first paragraph and second paragraph). This should be clarified.

The additional text suggesting clinical implications is very unclear because it refers to introversion. Depressed patients with neuroticism should be phrased differently – depressed patients with high neuroticism scores. It seems like one clinical implication that the authors are suggesting but do not state is that clinicians might focus on interpersonal behaviors related to social inhibition because even though they may not change as quickly as depressive symptoms, they are likely to change faster than personality traits like neuroticism.
Discretionary Revisions:
It is traditional to list the IIP octants by name starting with domineering and moving counterclockwise (page 6).

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

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**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.