Author's response to reviews

Title: A preliminary study of aged care facility staff indicates limitations in awareness of the link between depression and physical morbidity

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Reviewer's report and response from authors

The following text has been added at the bottom of page 14/top of page 15:

The instrument has not been subjected to prior testing and it is therefore uncertain whether responses provide an accurate indication of the underlying construct, that is: awareness of the link between physical morbidity and symptoms of depression. In addition, all the awareness questions are unidirectional which could lead to response biases such as social response bias. The wording of the questions needs further consideration as the use of the words ‘lead to’ (e.g. “to what extent does poorer physical health lead to difficulty sleeping) may suggest that one causes the other rather than the two being merely associated with each other.

Title: A preliminary study of aged care facility staff indicates limitations in awareness of the link between depression and physical morbidity
Version: 3 Date: 19 February 2013
Reviewer: Mark Haddad
Reviewer's report:
The authors have addressed key points raised in the initial review. However I remain concerned about the approach to measurement of variables reported in this paper – and hence the confidence that readers may have in the validity of reported findings.
Minor Essential Revisions.
As initially indicated (as a Major Compulsory Revision), an important limitation with this study is the research instrument that is used to examine the key variables of interest. This seems to have been inadequately developed and has not been (sufficiently, if at all, pre-tested).
The authors have rightly noted in their discussion ‘...While it would have been preferable to use a validated instrument none could be found that met the requirements of the current study. Further analysis to establish the validity and reliability of the survey instrument is required.’ But some further consideration and discussion of this issue would be helpful. The authors may consider discussing that - because the measure has not been subjected to prior testing, it is uncertain whether responses provide an accurate indication of the underlying construct (i.e. Awareness of the link between physical morbidity and symptoms of depression). The ‘awareness questions’ are most problematic.
I am not concerned about the visual analogue format.
The wording of these questions together with the direction of response could have benefitted from further consideration.
The wording of the awareness questions implies that poor physical health LEADS to depression (but - the majority of people with poor physical health are NOT depressed; poor physical health does not - for most people - lead to
depression).
Self-report measures may be prone to a range of biases, and the uni-directional format of these ‘awareness’ questions, together with probability of social response bias in the latter items (5 and 6 – related to activities that might benefit mood), may merit some consideration in the discussion section.
In short: this topic is important; this paper merits publication. But, the paper would be improved by clearer and more explicit attention to the weaknesses of design and limitations in methods.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field
**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'