Reviewer’s report

Title: Assessing the efficacy of a modified assertive community-based treatment programme in a developing country.

Version: 1 Date: 21 May 2010

Reviewer: Derrick Silove

Reviewer’s report:

This is a well-written and laudable study undertaken in difficult circumstances in South Africa. It demonstrates the superiority of assertive community-based treatment over standard care for patients with high frequency use psychotic conditions.

The author rightly point out the ongoing controversy in the literature about this issue and how recent data showing no differences may relate to improvements in care in standard intervention models in developed countries. This may not apply in developing countries.

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. All measures and assessments need to be located in one section including follow-up indices.
2. More detail needs to be given about the DACT, its scoring and its interpretation.
3. Some indication of how much utilizaton of allied health services and other agencies eventuated.
4. As acknowledged, the sample size is small. It may be that the low power only allows t-tests to be conducted but statistical advice is needed from a statistician since this is a controlled follow-up study with two data points, generally requiring a more sophisticated analysis.
5. Flowchart 1: Is there an error in the first box (n=52)?
6. Can the relevant author assure us that there could be no inadvertent bias in his managing the data? Were there any checks done by someone not directly involved in the research?

Minor Essential Revisions

Some punctuation errors at various points

Discretionary Revisions

7. In the discussion, the authors point out the opportunity costs of forming the ACT in a context where resources are so low. Can they put some flesh on the bones of this and calculate even roughly what the actual cost differential would be per patient? For example, how many patients would be able to get standard
care for the cost of the care that the ACT group received? Even if the calculation was based on professional time, this would be helpful.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance 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 Derrick Silove