Reviewer's report

Title: Reasons for illicit drug use in people with schizophrenia: Qualitative study

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Reviewer: Morten Hesse

Reviewer's report:

This qualitative study of reasons for using drugs in a population with schizophrenia is relevant and sound within its methodological framework, carried out according to a specified method, theme-structured qualitative interviews analysed through grounded theory.

Discretionary revisions

Although not necessary in order to be published, I feel that the authors should take advantage of the fact that the BMC journals do not have word limits and expand considerably on the results section. The reason for this is that when reading through the results, I get a feeling that complex realities are summarized in brief statements of a very descriptive nature, and that the interview excerpts are in most places not really adding much to my understanding of what has already been said. I also feel that the contradictions and conflicts within the material are summarized very briefly and some of them are hardly developed at all.

To improve the manuscript for me as a reader, I would like to see three things happening:

The first is that the authors should expand the results so that citations are given context. When a patient says something, can you give a little context? Why would he or she say this? Is this a man or a woman? Is something going on in his life that would be important for appreciating the meaning of the statement? Indeed, in the discussion, the authors state that seen in the context of the patients' lives, it is understandable that they would want to use drugs. I would like to get a feel for this as well, but I do not really feel that I do.

The contradictions in the material are many - this is living people experiencing dilemmas, so they would be. For instance, the contradiction between feeling as experts and having a hard time adjusting doses; the contradiction between having high ambitions and living a very impoverished life; the contradiction between wanting to "cope" with voices and not feeling mentally ill. These contradictions should not be developed to show pathological ambivalence, but to further expand on the basic understanding of these patients as people who handle situations, try to make sense of them, and pursue the goals that they see as important for themselves.

Finally, I would like to see some reflections about how the different questions
may have had an impact on the description of the use of drugs. As we well know from research into motivational interviewing, the questions that an interviewer asks have a huge impact on the attitude that the interviewee forms during the conversation. It is possible that the different questions may have provoked different shifts in attitude or perception that are important for understanding the information that was obtained from these interviews.

**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.