Reviewer’s report

Title: Attitudes towards physical health in people with severe mental illness: a cross-sectional comparative study

Version: 1 Date: 30 March 2011

Reviewer: Prisca Weiser

Reviewer’s report:

Thanks for letting me review this article on attitudes toward physical health in people with severe mental illness: a cross-sectional comparative study.

The manuscript addresses a problem which is still relevant and the topic is of great practical relevance. However, the manuscript is limited by several shortcomings:

Overall comments:
1) The question posed by the authors is not well defined. Generally, the authors do not introduce an explicit study question but rather a collection of research questions. One gets the impression, the study attempts to development of a knowledge base. The reader may therefore find it difficult to grasp the essence of the paper which is explicitly of an “exploratory” nature.

It would be good if the authors could be a bit more explicit about the aims of their work.
What is the study about? e.g.,
Title: “Attitudes towards physical health …”
Abstract: “To compare how patients with and without SMI perceive their global physical health …”
Background: “attitudes towards physical health or locus of control…”
Aims and hypotheses: “explore … prioritise basic everyday needs…”
“subjective barriers to improving physical health…”
“…physical health risk awareness…”

2) The English language is excellent. But the manuscript could be improved by using a more “scientific style” (particularly the method, discussion, and conclusion sections).

Title:
The title is not fitting; the title does not reflect precisely what the manuscript picks out as a central theme as regards content.
Abstract:
There is no background about the topic in the background part. Only objectives/aims are mentioned.

Background:
The background section is very superficial and broadly based.
The concept “locus of control” should be explained in greater detail. In the discussion part, it should be referred to.

Aims and hypotheses:
Hypotheses should be formulated more clearly (“poor awareness”, “relatively less”, “more likely”)

Method:
The section “methods” is not sufficient.
- There are no statements with respect to the diagnostic procedure.
Are the diagnoses based upon ICD-10 or DSM-IV?
Who rated the subjects in terms of diagnosis and severity?
- How were SMI and non-SMI defined? Based on which criteria?
- non-SMI = people with non-psychotic mental illness?

Discussion:
The authors tend to over-interpret their findings and should refrain from speculating.

Stated limitations of the work:
Several limitations are stated. Based on these one gets the impression that the study design was not sufficient thought-out.

Recommendation:
The rather preliminary nature of the manuscript stands in the way of recommending the work in this version. The merit of the work is limited due to the small number of subjects and of the small catchment area (North London). However, given the wealth of the subject, publication is recommended provided the authors are willing and able to carry out suggested revisions.

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.