Reviewer's report

Title: Sub-threshold depression and antidepressants use in a community sample: searching anxiety and finding bipolar disorder!

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Reviewer: sachin gandotra

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Reviewers’ comments for the manuscript entitled “Sub-threshold depression and antidepressants use in a community sample: searching anxiety and finding bipolar disorder!”

The authors have attempted to assess the amount of use of antidepressant medications in subjects with sub threshold depression in a community sample in Italy.

The authors have tried to explain the findings of the quantum of antidepressant use in their sample with sub threshold depression, there are certain issues which would require further clarification:

1. Major compulsory revisions:
   • The hypotheses posed by the authors are well defined but the subsequent clarification in the results and discussion appears to be lacking. The authors also propose to assess life time prevalence of hypomania in these subjects. The text of the manuscript does not appear to mention anything regarding this observation. The tables do not highlight any figures for this finding.
   • The methodology is sound and data acquisition has been adequate. Yet if we see the relatively wide confidence intervals for the findings on the sub threshold depression, the strength of the finding still appears relatively weak.
   • The manuscript appears to have focused too abruptly on the STD itself without providing the details of the large sample from which the STD was derived. It appears from the Table 2 that many subjects of the total sample happened to use antidepressants of all classes even when they were not found to have either a DE or STD. It is unclear as to for what reason they were on antidepressants. The co morbidity data on these subjects is also lacking and appears confusing.
   • The data on the use of antidepressants reveals the use of all categories of antidepressants (TCA, SSRI, bupropion, MAOI and also benzamides and psychotherapies). The authors conclude that there needs to be a caution in the use of antidepressants in subjects with STD. The caution is appropriate in line with the recent literature but however, it is questionable if it is so broad to include the benzamides, quetiapine, psychotherapies, and hypericum etc. The findings would have been better highlighted for the use of core antidepressant class of drugs alone.
• The authors do not cite any limitations of the study.

2. Minor Essential revisions:
• There are some grammatical errors in the manuscript. The first line of the introduction “Patients with mild-to-moderate, chronic or episodic dysthymia and anxiety may are not benefit greatly from antidepressant treatments”. Dysthymia on pg 6 is misspelt. Line on pg 7 reads as “thus the real factor for assuming antidepressants is the anxiety disorder and MDQ positivity is probably occurring as a confounding factor”.
• Overall the study is adequately planned and the results would be better appreciated if the above mentioned queries are adequately addressed.

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

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

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

No competing interests