Reviewer's report

Title: Efficacy, safety and tolerability of escitalopram in doses up to 50 mg in Major Depressive Disorder (MDD): an open-label, pilot study

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Reviewer: Paul Walters

Reviewer's report:

This is an interesting paper on a surprisingly under-researched area of depression care i.e. is dose escalation of antidepressant medication efficacious in patients that have failed to respond to a standard dose. In this case the authors explored increasing the dose of escitalopram in patients that had failed to respond citalopram. It is a pilot, open label study and therefore the results need to be treated with caution, this is acknowledged by the authors in the discussion.

I have the following minor comments on the paper:

1. The authors do not make it sufficiently clear in the background/methods why they recruited non-responders to citalopram only. Why did they not include non-responders to a standard dose of escitalopram too?

2. It is unclear how participants were recruited into the study. The authors state it was a primary care population but in terms of a pilot it would be useful to know recruitment rates and the size of the population from which the participants were recruited.

3. The authors need to make explicit how participants were diagnosed with MDD. Was this by GP diagnosis, research instrument or other clinician?

4. A brief explanation of why 90% CI (rather than the usual 95% CI) was used would be helpful.

5. Was compliance measured? If not this should be added as a limitation.

6. It would be useful to know the average dose of citalopram participants were on before being switched.

7. The authors reference STAR*D in the background. It would be useful if they could consider their results in the context of those found in STAR*D.

8. As this is a pilot, it would be helpful if the authors could make a few recommendations that researchers should take into consideration if designing a future RCT, in particular on sample size, drop outs and AEs.

9. The first reference needs to be formatted.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely
related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests