Reviewer's report

Title: The personal and national costs of mental health conditions: impacts on income, taxes, government support payments due to lost labour force participation

Version: 1 Date: 29 January 2011

Reviewer: Michael D. Stensland

Reviewer's report:

This is an interesting paper that is well written. The paper examines the indirect costs of depression and other mental illnesses in Australia for individuals aged 45-65. The focus on the cost to the state in terms of lost taxation, increased payments, and decreased GDP represent an important contribution to the literature.

The writing is reasonably clear and the methods appear adequate to answer the question.

Major Compulsory Revisions:

1. Given that the conclusions are based on the outputs from a model and not based on observations of longitudinally followed patients, it is important to highlight some of the assumptions made to create the data. In the paper there is no limitations sections and one needs to be added to address the assumptions, which have the potential to threaten the validity of the results.

2. The Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers data contained only 43 individuals with depression and 54 with other mental illnesses this data was weighted up to ~60,000 individuals. This seems like an important limitation that needs to be discussed.

3. To what degree is there double counting of costs? Are the lost wages based on pre-tax dollars and therefore include the lost taxation dollars? Are the wages already counted in the lost GDP.

4. There are assumptions made with the synthetic matching process – how might these affect the outcomes.

Discretionary Revisions:

5. Please give the rationale for separating the results into depression and the very broad category of disparate disorders called: “other mental health disorder.”

Minor Revisions

6. Middle of the 3rd line down on page 4, there is an extra space in front of the comma.
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 have in the past five years received reimbursements and salary from Eli Lilly and Company. However, I do not see in any direct benefit to Lilly in the publishing of this paper.