Reviewer’s report

Title: Homelessness, residential mobility and length of stay after acute psychiatric admission: a cross-sectional study

Version: 1 Date: 19 May 2012

Reviewer: Yael Caspi

Reviewer’s report:

This is a very well-written and concisely presented paper, addressing a very important and relevant issue and highlighting a variable often absent from studies on the factors affecting psychiatric inpatient length of stay (LOS). As well described by the authors in the introduction and discussion, the issue of homelessness and residential mobility is very central to the wellbeing and relapse prevention of patients suffering from severe mental illnesses. Explaining the variance in LOS by this variable is an important step in better managing the continuation of care between inpatient and community providers and addressing the problem of homelessness.

There is no need for major revisions, just a few points the authors may wish to address:

1. The issue of repeated admissions, or the ‘revolving door’ phenomena, so often associated with severe mental illness, especially schizophrenia, was not discussed in the description of the sample. The longest admission within the preceding 2 years was taken into consideration, but what about total number of previous admissions?

2. Does LOS of 1 day constitute a hospitalization of any clinical value?

3. The meaning of LOS is not necessarily uniform across patients or even across hospitalizations. It is quite clear that for some patients, re-hospitalization may not be simply a sign of deterioration or relapse but also of the movement along the winding road of recovery. The possible implications of the non-linear finding regarding the relationship of length of previous admission to the LOS of the index admission is not mentioned in the discussion.

Level of interest: An article of outstanding merit and interest 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.