Reviewer’s report

**Title:** Relationship between Depressive Symptom Severity and Emergency Department Use Among Low-Income, Depressed Homebound Older Adults Aged 50 Years and Older

**Version:** 3  **Date:** 3 November 2012

**Reviewer:** Aaron Salinas

**Reviewer’s report:**

- Discretionary Revisions
  None

- Minor Essential Revisions
  None

- Major Compulsory Revisions
  I appreciate the opportunity to review this paper again. I acknowledge that the authors have made every effort to respond to questions and make the necessary changes. However, there is still a topic to be resolved.

  In the previous review, I asked them why the authors used the cutoff point of 15 or higher on the scale score. Obviously the authors replied this score is "... used to select the subjects with moderately severe and severe depressive symptoms."

  But that's not the problem, the issue is that the authors do not report if this cutoff has been validated (maybe not for these homebound older adults, but at least for the general population of older adults), it is not reported in the references cited by the authors (Depression Rating Scale Standardization Team: GRID-HAMD-17, GRID-HAMD-21 Structured Interview Guide, 2003; Moberg et al, 2001), and I have not been able to identify if it has already been published on another paper. There are two papers that report other cutoffs (Endicott et al., 1981; Kearns et al., 1982), but do not coincide with those reported by the authors.

  This issue is particularly sensitive because the authors have used this cutoff to select older adults in their study (i.e., as an inclusion criterion). Did the authors validated this cutoff or can cite some study where it was validated? Otherwise they would have to use some cutoff already validated. Or maybe the authors are aware that this cutoff has been used in a particular context, if so, it is worth pointing that out. Once this point is clarified, the paper could be published.

**Level of interest:** An article of limited interest

**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