Reviewer's report

Title: Internalized stigma among patients with schizophrenia in Ethiopia: a cross-sectional facility-based study

Version: 2 Date: 22 October 2012

Reviewer: Megan Grant

Reviewer's report:

The authors have integrated the suggested changes into a thoughtfully presented summary of their findings with respect to internalized stigma within a population of individuals diagnosed with schizophrenia. The following comments are offered in the interest of improving this manuscript further.

Minor Essential Revisions

1. “Background” section, third paragraph, “The finding suggests that personal experience of stigma may also be high [20].” In this section, it is somewhat unclear whether the authors are referring to internalized stigma when they say “personal experience,” or to some other aspect of stigma mentioned elsewhere in the background section (e.g., discrimination).

2. In the “Participants” section the authors refer to exclusion criteria as a “significant” level of cognitive impairment or substance abuse. While they have added in this revision of the manuscript that these judgments were made by senior psychiatry residents, there is still no indication of the criteria that were used to make these judgments. More information could be provided on how cognitive impairment and the level of substance abuse were assessed.

3. The point the authors make in the “Limitations” section about some outcomes being assessed using single questions could be expanded upon. Such expansion could focus on acknowledging the fact that these questions did not seem to be open ended, particularly the one aimed at addressing whether a participant’s experience of stigma contributed to discontinuing medication.

4. The first sentence in the “Conclusions” states that the results of the study “confirm” the significant burden of stigma in this population. This statement may be too bold given that this is the first study of its kind done in Ethiopia and given the limitations noted by the authors. It may be more appropriate in this section to continue with language similar to that used elsewhere in the manuscript when discussing findings, such as “suggests” or “supports.”

Discretionary Revisions

1. In the “Background” section, second paragraph, in the sentences beginning with “Several studies have emphasized....” and “Clinically, higher depressive symptoms....,” it could be made clearer whether the authors are referring to
internalized stigma or public stigma. The same is true for sections in which the authors simply refer to “stigma,” (e.g., in the section, “Factors associated with stigma”), in which it may be more appropriate to refer to the “internalized stigma” measured in this study, in contrast to the public stigma measured in some of the research mentioned.

Level of interest: An article of importance 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.