Reviewer's report

Title: Young people with depression and their experience accessing an enhanced primary care service for youth with emerging mental health problems: a qualitative study

Version: 1 Date: 19 May 2012

Reviewer: Debra Rickwood

Reviewer's report:

This paper addresses an issue of current interest in Australia, and also to some extent internationally, as there is growing interest in the headspace initiative and better ways to provide mental health services for young people. The question posed is clear and appropriate, and the methods are generally sound and well described, with the caveats listed below. The discussion and conclusions drawn are mostly supported by the data and limitations are clearly stated, with the exception of an additional limitation that should be acknowledged. The article is very clearly written.

- Major Compulsory Revisions

1. The main revision required in this paper is some additional rigour to the qualitative methodology. While the IPA approach is well described, it is seems that no coding reliability check was employed and that only one person undertook all the coding. To increase the methodological rigour of qualitative analysis, it is common to have another researcher code a proportion of the transcripts. It is then possible to determine the level of agreement between the coders (for example using a Kappa coefficient), and to reveal what was required for consensus to be reached between the coders.

2. The qualitative results are presented as a narrative, with each of the four themes described and some quotes provided. However, the reader is given no indication how general or variant the themes are. It would be helpful to have some idea of the commonality of the experiences. While phenomenological analysis does not lend itself to counting the endorsement of themes, it is useful to have some sense of how representative themes are. A theme that applies to all or all but one of the cases is general; a typical theme applies to more than half of the cases; a variant theme includes more than two but less than half of all cases; and a theme with only two or three cases is rare (Hill, Thompson, & Williams, 1997.) The results from only one case generally are not reported.


-Minor essential revisions

3. Reference is made to “themes with “thick” description of the data”; a definition
of what ‘thick’ means is required.

4. It would be helpful to know how many of the 22 participants were still at school. A strong theme reported is the role of the school counselor in making young people aware of the service and helping them to access it, but because there is no indication of how many of the 16-25 year-old participants were still at school, it is not clear how common this response is within the sample. This relates to a further concern where in the discussion it is noted that young people “utilise several access pathways to the service”, yet none other than the school counselor is noted in the results. Similarly, the discussion asserts that “the access pathway to the service is more tortuous and uncertain” for those not attending school; however, no supporting data are provided in the results.

5. An important limitation that needs to be added is noting that there is considerable heterogeneity in how the headspace centres are set up and operate, and findings related to access to this particular centre, which is located in a major metropolitan area, may not apply elsewhere. While the headspace initiative is based on implementation of a common model, in practice local factors have a marked impact and there is considerable diversity. In particular, centres in rural, remote and regional areas are very different from those in major urban settings.

6. In the quote on page 9, the name of the suburb where the service is located is accidentally included; this needs to be removed.

**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 declare that I have no competing interests.