Reviewer's report

Title: Assessments of mental capacity in psychiatric inpatients: a retrospective cohort study

Version: 1 Date: 9 March 2013

Reviewer: Fedza Mujic

Reviewer's report:

This is a very interesting and clinically relevant study of a comprehensive database regarding the effects of introducing Mental Capacity Act 2005 in England and Wales in 2007 with a clear aim of promoting a good clinical practice. The questions raised by the authors and aims of the study are well defined and clear in the "Background" section. The authors adequately and clearly described setting, population studied, inclusion criteria, methods used, statistical analysis, and variables and outcomes analysed.

The authors used an appropriate and approved dataset for secondary analysis - Clinical Record Interactive Search (CRIS), which produced anonymised, in-depth information derived from electronic medical records of the Trust relating to secondary mental health care, which includes all specialist care for hospitalization. The search criteria and difficulties are clearly described by the authors.

The data were derived from records of 17,744 psychiatric admissions who satisfied inclusion criteria identified 1,732 cases where capacity was documented. This large number of cases added to the power the analysis and this seems to be one of the main strengths of this descriptive study.

The data in this study are presented and interpreted adequately. The discussion and conclusions are quite comprehensive and reasonably clear. The authors adequately discuss results and compare them with available literature drawing logical conclusions and suggesting questions for future research.

The authors have clearly outlined the methodological and other limitation of the study. This was included in discussion section in paragraphs (pages 14-16).

The paper includes a comprehensive list of relevant publications which are appropriately cited throughout the publication. It is obvious that this group of authors they have proven record of publishing in this field.

The title and abstract are clear and accurately reflect type of the study, findings and conclusions. The writing in this paper is acceptable.

Discretionary Revisions

* Page 5, last paragraph, from the second sentence - Rather that explaining what is done in the study, I would suggest clearly outlining the aims of the study, e.g.
"The aims of this study are: ......." (possibly as bullet points.

Minor Essential Revisions

• Page 3, first paragraph, last sentence - end of sentence / paragraph should end with a full stop not with comma.
• Page 3, second paragraph, second and third sentences - In both sentences "However" needs to be followed by comma.
• Commas after "However" needs to be put in several places in Discussion and Conclusion sections.
• Page 16, seventh line of the second paragraph - Readers might not know what "MC" stands for.
• Year of publication is missing for references 18, 29 and 30 in the list at the end

Major Compulsory Revisions - none

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.