Reviewer's report

Title: Antidepressants in the treatment of depression/depressive symptoms in cancer patients: a systematic review and meta-analysis

Version: 1 Date: 17 October 2012

Reviewer: Rajeshwari S. Punekar

Reviewer's report:

Overall
This is an interesting study, but I cannot say that it is unique or makes any significant contribution to the current literature on antidepressants among cancer patients. In addition, this article requires some editing with good scientific writing skills. The authors should also verify their references listed at the end of article.

Major Compulsory Revisions

Introduction-
1. The whole introduction section should be re-written to give a comprehensive background, including current literature, on following topics (if possibly in the following order)
   a. prevalence of depression among general population and the cancer population
   b. Impact of antidepressants on the treatment of depression among general population and the cancer population.
   c. Factors affecting the impact of antidepressants on the depressive symptoms of cancer patients.
   d. Gaps in the current literature
   e. How does the current study fill this gap?
   f. What are the research questions or aims of this study?
2. The authors have failed to convince why is this study necessary and how does it contribute to the field. So, they have emphasize more on these points
3. Please remove headings for each paragraph in the introduction. Most of the necessary information should be written cohesively and instead of breaking it down in so many parts or paragraph.
4. The introduction has a lot of unnecessary information. Please retain only necessary information in this section

Methods-
5. In the eligibility criteria, the authors need to explain the readers why does it matter whether depression is a primary outcome or a secondar outcome in the articles searched by the authors.
6. My question to authors about searching for studies is why didn't the authors
include antidepressants in their search terms.

7. Statistical analysis is not well described.
   a. What calculations were made using what formulas in MS Excel?
   b. Why was the forest plot used?
   c. If responders/not responders was primary outcome and number of drop outs, the number of patients with adverse effects and the quality of life were the secondary outcomes, what were the predictors used in the meta analysis?
   d. To check the differences between studies, did authors use any homogeneity test? If yes, which one?

Results-

8. Figures, tables and graphs should be sent as a supplement files. But, the authors have embedded figures, tables and graphs. So, I would request authors to follow the instructions.

9. The authors describe heterogeneity in the results section, but they fail to mention about it in the Methods section. So, authors need to make this change.

10. The findings from the funnel plot and forest plot should be mentioned separately from the figures.

11. The writing needs to be more cohesive and flowing smoothly from one topic to the another.

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

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**Statistical review:** Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests