Reviewer’s report

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

Version: 3 Date: 15 January 2013

Reviewer: Rajeshwari S. Punekar

Reviewer’s report:

This is an interesting study, but, even after the revision, I cannot see how the current study makes any significant contribution to the current literature. In addition, this article requires editing, especially with regard to usage of punctuation marks and articles. The authors need to verify their results listed in the body of the article and references listed at the end of article.

Major Compulsory Revisions

Introduction-
• Page 3 Line 8 to Line 12- If there are many studies who have tried to evaluate the efficacy of pharmacological interventions among patients with depression, why are the authors conducting the current study? Just explain it in 2-3 sentences without providing lot of details.
• Page 3 Line 18 to Line 20- I disagree with the authors because in my doctoral thesis, titled "Mental Health and Mental Health Services Utilization of US Cancer Survivors and Their Spouses,” I have compared prevalence of depression between general population and cancer population. These are national estimates and well matched population. So, I would suggest authors to change their statement.
• Page 4, line 34 until page 5, line 17- This paragraph gives me an idea that the current literature is limited in quantity and quality. But, it doesn't convince me how the current study is going to address these limitations. So, authors need to work on that.
• Page 5 Line 19- How do you define “depressiveness”?

Methods-
• Page 6 Line 1 to Line 3- Why have authors not included the limits described here in the inclusion criteria list itself?
• Page 6 Line 12 to line 15. This information should be moved to Analysis section
• Page 6 Line 29- The authors need to briefly explain the roles of forest plot and funnel plot.

Results-
• Page 6 Line 34- Can authors categorize these 29 articles into groups that depict the reasons for rejections? I think that would be helpful for reader to see why you
reject them.

• Page 7 Line 4 to line 8- This paragraph is confusing. It makes you think that authors rejected 3 trials from 9 trials that were finally selected. So, I would suggest authors to rearrange them.

• Page 9 Line 4- I would suggest authors to state the comparison groups.

• Page 9- Discussion should be titled Conclusion and vice versa.

• Page 11 Line 12- Is it 10% or 15%? In the results section, authors mention that heterogeneity fell to 10% and here they mention that it fell to 15%. Please verify and be consistent.

References-

• Page 33 Reference #10- There is a typo in the title and the year should be 1984.

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