Reviewer's report

Title: Perspectives on reasons for non-adherence to medication in persons with schizophrenia in Ethiopia: a qualitative study of patients, caregivers and health workers

Version: 3 Date: 11 February 2013

Reviewer: Kelly Buck

Reviewer's report:

Generally this manuscript had some interesting and meaningful findings, but the information needs to be presented in a more organized manner and situated better within the literature. Most of all the changes would be considered to be major compulsory.

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined? Yes, the authors state their intent is to understand reasons for non-compliance to psychotropic medications for those with schizophrenia who live in African settings.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described? The authors seem to presume the reader's understanding of the mental health practices currently in Africa. There needs to be much more description of what services are provided, what the role is of different practitioners, what medications tend to be prescribed, what is "long term care," etc. Also the authors should explain how the cultural influences affect peoples' beliefs about medications, treatment and the need for adherence. In the limitations, they cite that not all participants mentioned non-adherence for them personally and this needs more explanation. Relatedly, there needs to be more attention given to insight, both in the literature review and in discussing the participants' beliefs; it may even need to have its own category. (I would suggest looking at Paul Lysaker’s work on insight, stigma as well as therapeutic alliance for the literature review). Also, please explain what was asked of the participants (i.e. "what was in the topic guide?").

3. Are the data sound? The authors should consider a theme of misinformation or lack of understanding in the Results section, particularly because it seemed to be an important factor and also because their suggested interventions include "alleviating strongly held concerns" which would be addressed through psychoeducation. Also in this category could be a discussion of culturally held beliefs which would be appropriate to address. The authors should consider the possibility of giving Side Effects, and Lack of insight as having their own categories and discussing them more since they seem to be quite important and supported by the literature.

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition? The ms needs to have a more thorough review of literature, including references to insight, stigma, family support, and side effects which all have been found to be related to non-adherence. Also when the authors refer to a paper, they need to explain what it is in the paper that supports their point, instead of
just including the reference. The Discussion points should directly and clearly relate to the categories identified in the Results section. The Results section could be more clearly organized. The Discussion section should clearly inform and direct the Conclusions and recommendations. There should not be new (or not previously discussed) information in the Discussion or Conclusion sections; they should instead build on each other.

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data? See above. Although the issues of poverty seem quite important and in need of being addressed, it does not seem the authors can make the point that more access to food would promote adherence. This link is not substantiated in the literature. Poverty, on the other hand, and lack of access to treatment may be more of a substantiated point in attempting to increase adherence.

6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated? The authors appropriately refer to a problem with generalizability, but also because the reader doesn't know much about the methods, it is hard to know.

7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished? As stated above, there needs to be a stronger review of the literature. This would also be helpful in contrasting what was found in Africa as compared to high-income countries.

8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found? The title is fine. I would suggest rewriting the abstract with the changes suggested above.

9. Is the writing acceptable? Yes, generally. However, often the paragraphs contain statements that don’t relate to the rest of the other statements in the paragraph. Important and meaningful information has been gleaned from this study, but it needs to be more clearly organized and better situated in the literature.

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