Reviewer's report

Title: A multi-centre cohort study of short term outcomes of hospital treatment for anorexia nervosa in the UK

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Reviewer: Angela Wagner

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The manuscript reports on a cross-section of severely ill patients with anorexia nervosa at admission and discharge from specialist hospital treatment including 14 UK centers. Physical improvement seemed moderate with a large increase in BMI, although most patients continued to have a clinical level of eating disorder symptoms at discharge. Carer behavior contributed to the response to inpatient care as did social functioning and confidence to change.

The manuscript is well organized and uses state of the art methods to address a topic of considerable clinical relevance in the field of eating disorders. In particular, it is unique that the study involves 14 treatment centers. However, some issues should be addressed.

Although the overall sample size is moderate the sample sizes within one center side is relatively small. In addition, the percentage of adolescent inpatients and day treatment patients is also small in comparison to the adult inpatient sample size which limits the overall outcome interpretation. Some rational should be added why hospitals using a step down procedure (gradually moving to less intensive treatment forms) were compared with those of inpatient treatment only. It would be interesting to learn whether the analysis of the adult inpatient treatment group only would come to different conclusions and whether the add on might “bias” the results.

Inpatient treatment improved physical health but lead to less improvement of eating disorder and mood symptoms. Physical health is a priority in inpatient treatment, also from a legal perspective. Psychotherapy sometimes needs a certain physical health to work in depth on psychological symptoms. As the discharge weight of the group seemed often still be within the pathological ED criteria, the results (less other ED symptoms/ mood ) seem expected.

As stated the authors mention that weight at discharge has often been still within the pathological ED criteria range and reasons for discharge are not part of the analysis. It would be of interest to distangle whether the outcome of patients regularly discharged differed from those who took their own discharge and did not complete the program.

As the study included only patients whose carers also consented, it would be valuable to get some ideas on how that might have influenced the patient group and outcome.
Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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.