Reviewer’s report

Title: The association of ADHD symptoms to self-harm behaviours: A systematic PRISMA review

Version: 1 Date: 16 December 2013

Reviewer: Christopher Bushe

Reviewer’s report:

An excellent well written paper on the important topic of ADHD and Self-harm which raises awareness about the link between the illness and the event without necessarily invoking medication as a cause.

I have a number of compulsory revisions:

I have a number of aspects that should however be included within the introduction and discussion sections to give greater context. The main comments would be these. Data collected retrospectively and then analysed for suicidal related events is open to some confounding bias in studies where for example the CSRS/CCASA have not been used. Mapping any event to a specific code is possible however the potential for error is greater than if the scales were used prospectively.

The ability to separate self-harm as an entity from a suicide attempt is not always easy and again this as a potential confounding bias should be discussed. The use of these scales in trials often is mandatory and should be mentioned.

I would also like further details on the search methodologies and why these databases were chosen.

In the results section there are too many words and these to some extent are replicated in the table. I would make this section much shorter and succinct.

In contrast the discussion needs expanding. I would make specific reference to Barbaresi et al, Paediatrics, 2013 and their findings on increased suicide rates OR 5 in a birth cohort study. I would also consider including a paragraph on the known associations of suicide related events and ADHD medications, Bushe and Savill 2013 meta-analysis atomoxetine and methylphenidate. From the EU SPCs for Methylphenidate it should also be stated that suicidal tendencies are a contraindication for this medication. Although the paper quite rightly focuses on the illness of ADHD and the outcomes, the crossover with medication is important, relevant and the readers will benefit from a short summary of what is known.

I would consider adding more keywords if permitted. Such as suicide-related events.

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:

CB is a full time employee of Eli Lilly who manufacture Atomoxetine a medication for both child and adult ADHD, and holds a small number of stock.

I do not perceive any conflict of interest in reviewing this paper subject to the opinion of the editor.