Reviewer's report

Title: Olanzapine is superior to lamotrigine in the prevention of bipolar depression: a naturalistic observational study

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Reviewer: Benedikt Lorenz Amann

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Open naturalistic, observational studies in bipolar disorder are important as they provide data on real world bipolar patients (in comparison to RCTs). The authors analyzed data of a sample of bipolar I and II patients comparing the efficacy of olanzapine and lamotrigine in the prevention of affective episodes. After one year they found -surprisingly- a positive effect of olanzapine over lamotrigine in preventing depressive episodes.

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. Where do the patients come from? Which hospital or outpatients clinic?
2. How often were patients visited? Was there a fixed schedule?
3. Do the authors evaluate how many affective episodes had the patients the year before entering the study?
4. Why was the dosage of lamotrigine chosen so low? As stated by the authors, normally and not only in RCTs bipolar patients receive at least 200 mg/d. Did you follow the titration scheme of lamotrigine?
5. Furthermore, the role of an adjunctive use of antidepressants in both groups is not clear either. The lamotrigine group had statistically more frequent adjunctive antidepressants than the olanzpine group which does not fit to the results and not to the existing literature either.
6. The presence of more bipolar I patients in the olanzapine group is a problem as bipolar I patients tend to respond better than bipolar II patients. Any idea?
7. I am also missing a clear description of side effects of both groups, especially weight effects of olanzapine are not described. The authors state that "All other patients could tolerate the common side effects of the two drug, such as weight gain and sedation". Both side effects are typical for olanzapine but not lamotrigine. This is misleading information for the readers.
8. The survival curve of manic episodes is missing.

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

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

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.
Declaration of competing interests:

I have no competing interests.