Reviewer's report

Title: Treatment of bipolar disorder in the Netherlands and concordance with treatment guidelines. An observational, longitudinal study on naturalistic treatment of bipolar disorder in everyday clinical practice.

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Reviewer: Jens M. Langosch

Reviewer's report:

The authors describe an ongoing study to get general information on treatment of bipolar disorders in the Netherlands and to proof concordance of this treatment with national guidelines for this disorder.

Although these naturalistic data may be of substantial interest there are some concerns:

Major

1.) In my opinion, it may be difficult to achieve the desired outcome because only a quarter of the psychiatrists contacted (24.4%) agreed to take part in this survey. If one assumes that the distribution of bipolar patients is nearly equal over all contacted psychiatrists and that only every second patient agrees to participate in the study (which is very optimistic) - the authors will include a maximum of 10% of the bipolar population in the Netherlands. This seems far from representative. The authors are encouraged to seek other ways of recruiting the bipolar patients.

2.) First survey among psychiatrist was held between Dec 09 and Feb 10 - why not give a reasonable timeline for the whole study in the ms? Which parts of the study are ongoing, which completed? Are changes in the study protocol possible?

3.) Authors are encouraged to point out in the ms what, apart from collecting huge amounts of data, the innovative character of the study is. Furthermore, what is the importance for the readers of BMC Psychiatry?

Minor

What will be the consequences if the study shows that concordance of treatment with treatment guidelines is high or low? Will authors consider national guidelines as superfluous? (In my opinion the guidelines in the Netherlands are quit reasonable, especially the scheme for introducing mood stabilizers). Are lots of different national guidelines useful at all? Instead of investigating concordance with guidelines it might be better to investigate how to improve compliance/adherence to these guidelines, why not use techniques like Motivational Interviewing (this is because I speculate that concordance is quite low)?
Misspelling on page 12, line 6: it probably should read change not chance.

**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.