Reviewer's report

Title: The Level of Recognition of Physical Symptoms in Patients with a Major Depression Episode in the Outpatient Psychiatric Practice in Puerto Rico. An Observational Study.

Version: 2 Date: 18 April 2005

Reviewer: Janet Williams

Reviewer's report:

General

This observational study compared psychiatrists' evaluation of somatic symptoms with patients self-reports in a sample of patients with MDE in Puerto Rico. The authors also examined the impact of somatic symptoms on treatment effectiveness. They found that psychiatrists underrecognize somatic symptoms, and that such symptoms have an important effect on treatment response.

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

If I understand the study method correctly, the psychiatrists recorded patients' somatic symptoms from their own clinical evaluations, without having a checklist, and the patients responded to an actual checklist (the SSI). It is not surprising, therefore, that the number of somatic symptoms reported by the psychiatrists was far less than by the patients. However, one has to question the validity and significance of the somatic symptoms reported by the patients. The fact that 100% of the patients reported at least one somatic symptom certainly raises questions about these symptoms. This should be discussed by the authors.

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

It would be very helpful for the reader if table listing the somatic symptoms included on the SSI were available.

It is not clear what the authors mean by "individual emotional symptoms."

The authors should explain the significance of the distinction between painful and not-painful symptoms, since this is referred to throughout the report.

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions
Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests.