Reviewer's report

Title: Psychometric properties and clinical utility of the Scale for Suicidal Ideation (SSI) in an adolescent outpatient population

Version: 1 Date: 2 January 2005

Reviewer: Oivind Ekeberg

Reviewer's report:

General
This is an important study, as the development of appropriate instruments for assessing suicidal adolescents is clinically relevant.

The study population consisted of a) a psychiatric outpatient sample of 218 with depressive mood disorders, and a control sample of 200 school-attending adolescents.

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

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

There are some minor points of concern.
1. The sex and age distribution should be in the material section, it is not an answer to a research question.
2. The Q1-3 figures should be with one decimal at the most.
3. There were nine trained raters involved in the study. This information emerges repeatedly, once is sufficient.
4. Figure 1 needs better quality.
5. The authors state that inter-rater and test-retest reliabilities could not be evaluated. Why was this not possible?
6. Analyzes and discussion about age would be preferable. Most suicidal behaviour in adolescents occurs in the age group 16-19 compared with 13-15. The SSI scores and the psychometric properties in the two age groups would be of interest. If the SSI scores were similar, this could be reported without more comments. If not, the psychometric properties might be even better than reported in the oldest age group.
7. A few more issues may be discussed according to the clinical implications. Comorbidity is common in suicidal adolescents. Depressed adolescents with conduct disorders or personality disorders may be more inclined to act upon suicidal ideations, which may partly explain the lowest SSI scores in the suicide act group (4-5). In addition, it should be clearly stated that a questionnaire is only an adjunct to the clinical evaluation of suicidality.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)
What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

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

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests