Reviewer's report

Title: The Adolescent Depression Rating Scale (ADRS): A validation study

Version: 1 Date: 20 July 2006

Reviewer: Janet Williams

Reviewer's report:

General
This manuscript describes the initial validation of a French version of the newly-developed Adolescent Depression Rating Scale (ADRS). The report presents a generally well-written description of the development and testing of this new scale, which has both clinician-administered and self-report versions. The new scale is very timely, given the recent increase in interest in assessing mental health in adolescents. A considerable benefit is that both versions of the scale are actually included in the manuscript. (It would be useful to also have the guide for a semi-structured interview.)

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)
The authors validated the scale by having clinicians administer it to adolescents, along with the HDRS-17. Then the clinicians were asked about the severity of the depression in the subject, and the diagnosis. Unfortunately, this clinical judgment was used as part of the validator of the scale. This confounds the data. Since the clinician is administering the ADRS after the HDRS, and making a DSM diagnosis after both, the ADRS ratings cannot be assumed to be independent. If this was, in fact, the way the validation was done, it is problematic.
A particular problem is that the scales have not yet been tested in English. The wording of many of the items is not common usage in English, and some of the words are, in fact, too complicated for an English-speaker with little education. Without the semi-structured interview guide, it is impossible to tell if these words are simplified or not when they are presented to the patient. One cannot assume that these scales would operate as well in English as they appear to in French. This issue should be addressed.

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

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

Under Methods, the authors describe qualitative studies on research interviews. It would be useful to have more detail on this step in the process.

The authors should add a note about how long the ADRS takes to administer.

The ADRS has only a True/False response set. The authors should discuss why this approach was chosen, instead of a more dimensional response set.

It would be helpful if the authors discussed the relationship between the clinician and self-report versions—do they recommend that both versions be used together, or that each version has its use in a particular setting?

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published
Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:

I am a co-author on the PHQ-A (Patient Health Questionnaire for Adolescents), but do not derive any income from the instrument.