Reviewer’s report

Title: Sensitivity and specificity of the Major Depression Inventory in outpatients

Version: 1 Date: 30 March 2007

Reviewer: Yvonne Forsell

Reviewer’s report:

General
This is a clinically interesting study evaluating the use of the Major Depression Inventory in psychiatric outpatients. The study examined the possibility to use MDI in order to differentiate between subjects with MDD and other mental disorders.

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)
The main problem with the study is that the psychiatrists, whose diagnosis of depression was the gold standard, used no diagnostic instruments.
How many psychiatrists were involved? Did they have any consensus meetings? How about inter rater reliability?

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)
Subjects and procedure: I do not fully understand the sampling of the subjects. First it is stated that 465 subjects were used, of those 99 did not have a diagnosis and 108 did not have sufficient MDI data. That makes 258 patients. After this it is stated that the subjects that were removed did not show up at the first appointment etc.
Table 1 presents the characteristics of the included sample not outpatients in mental health care in general. How could gender and age be unknown?

In the text below table 1 the diagnosis are listed. This seems to be made twice, the authors must choose which one they would like to present. (One includes all codes the other is shortened).

Results
In table 2 it is interesting to see that several patients with the other diagnosis reached a score over 26. How many patients? Did false positives had something in common?
In figure 1 it is stated that the diagnosis of MDD was the gold standard. Does that mean according to the psychiatrists? Again there is no documentation of the used instrument.
Table 4 could be deleted since it only concludes that MDI cannot be used to differentiate between subjects with MDD and other mental disorders. This could be stated in the text

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: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

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