Reviewer's report

Title: Reliability and validity of the Thai version of the PHQ-9

Version: 1 Date: 27 November 2007

Reviewer: Janet Williams

Reviewer's report:

General

This manuscript examined the reliability and validity of the Thai version of the PHQ-9. While the manuscript may benefit from additional editing, overall the authors presented their ideas clearly and the study was well designed. Some suggestions and points of clarification are provided below.

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)

On page 6, paragraph two, the authors state “The first of five consecutive patients were invited to complete the PHQ-9…” It would be helpful to clarify if this means that every fifth patient entering the hospital was invited to participate. A subheading for assessments used may also be helpful.

On page 9, the first paragraph under the heading “Reliability and item analysis” would be more appropriate under the methods section as it describes the process and problems encountered during translation.

On page 10, the paragraph under validity analysis is a bit unclear. It appears that this paragraph is referring to the use of the MINI to determine the validity of the PHQ-9. However, this needs to be stated more clearly and in more detail.

On page 11, the paragraph under “PHQ-9 as a severity measure” reports sensitivity, specificity, and predictive values using a cutoff score of > 9. However, when examining the referenced table (Table 2), the reported numbers correspond to a cutoff score of “8/9.” This is a bit confusing and needs to be clarified. The authors should also describe table 3 in more detail. They indicate that the ANOVA revealed a significant difference but do not expand on what this means. An additional sentence or two related to table 3 would be helpful.

On page 14, the last sentence of the first paragraph that begins “this finding demonstrates that in a society…” is awkward and unclear. It seems that the authors are trying to state that their results refute the notion that subjects from
countries that discourage expression of emotional distress report more somatic symptoms than subjects from countries where expression of emotional distress is accepted or even encouraged. Also, in the last paragraph on page 14, the authors indicate that high specificity is more useful due to the high patient load of GPs. The authors do not discuss the potential consequences of missing a case due to this increased specificity. They might discuss the feasibility of perhaps allowing a lower threshold on the PHQ-9 to trigger further assessment by a mental health professional or some other follow up which can refine the patient pool before the GP becomes involved.

On page 15 in the paragraph that begins “Our study had several limitations”, the authors state that the “main objective of the study was to assess the ability of the tool in identifying borderline cases of depression...” This is the first time that this specific objective is mentioned. It seems that this should have been expressed earlier in the paper.

Lastly, on page 16 the second sentence in the paragraph that begins “caution should be exercised...” states, “The results from the review...” Upon first inspection, it is unclear what review is being referred to here. It would be helpful to simply change the sentence to “The results from a review...”

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

Again, overall the study is well designed and presented, but would benefit from some additional editing and clarification of a few points.

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, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I am an author of the PHQ.

Please note that Douglas Osman, PhD, works for me and helped with this review.