Reviewer's report

Title: An Approach to Measure Compliance to Clinical Guidelines in Psychiatric Care.

Version: 3 Date: 20 May 2008

Reviewer: James Rohrer

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Overall
This is a nice example of mixed-methods evaluation. However, the investigators have not used the comparison group for the statistical tests.

Major Compulsory Revisions

Abstract
In results, report means and P, not t and df. However, the paper reports very low means, suggesting that these really are not means but percent overall adherence. If so, report percents before and after with p value, not t and df. In addition, statistics pertaining to differences between the implementation and comparison groups should be reported.

Methods
Measures, p. 7: explain how the overall adherence measures were computed. Is this a mean or a yes-no with yes meaning meeting all GLs? A mean score might be more realistic. A paragraph on page 10 calls it a total score, but how 6.3 constitutes a total is not clear.

P9 This paragraph states that differences before and after were assessed using the chi square test but actually a means tests must have been used if overall compliance was measured as a mean. Pearson r’s should not have to used to assess association between confounders and adherence. Instead adjusted odds ratios and the chi square test are more appropriate. The critical issue is how differences between the implementation and the comparison groups were tested. If overall adherence is measured with a dichotomous variable, then an odds ratio adjusted for baseline scores and age should have been computed. If overall adherence was measured with a mean score or additive score, then dummy variable OLS regression or ANCOVA would be more appropriate.

Results
P10 first paragraph- A couple of important points should be mentioned.
1. Compliance was significantly better in the implementation group than the comparison group on 4 out of 11 depression GLs.
2. Overall guideline adherence was low in both groups (only 6.3% in the implementation group and only 5.2% in the comparison group).

P10 second paragraph. Adherence on all 11 depression GLs improved after implementation. This is quite impressive. However, you should acknowledge that overall GL adherence remained less than ten (is this a percent or a mean?). If it is a mean, report means and mean differences, not t and df.

P11 mention that overall suicide GL adherence was low and though improvements were significant in the implementation group, overall adherence remained low.

Limitations of the study. Some of the limitations addressed in the cover letter have been omitted from the limitations section of the paper. These should be added to the manuscript.

Also, the interesting finding that implementation sites were performing better at baseline suggests the possibility of some selection bias.

P14 you said that a strength of a study is that it is a ‘controlled experiment’. Yet, your ORs did not compare adherence between groups. You can make the statement correct by modifying your analyses as described above.

Tables 2 and 3: show ORs for the comparison between groups, not before and after. This will reduce the number of columns by one, thus improving clarity as well as showing more relevant information. Consider adjusting for baseline differences. For overall adherence, report means and p, not t and df, (if this is a mean score).

Minor Essential Revisions

Abstract - Add ‘process’ to the end of the last sentence of the Conclusion.
P3 last sentence change ‘to’ to ‘on’.
P4 change ‘acts states’ to ‘act states’.
P7 change ‘For e.g.’ to ‘For example’
P10 Subject-verb agreement: percentages are, not percentages is.
P11 Subject-verb agreement: Odds are, not odds is. None of the OR’s were significant, not was significant

Discretionary Revisions

None

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

Quality of written English: Acceptable
**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

'I declare that I have no competing interests'