Reviewer’s report

Title: A double-blind, randomized, placebo controlled trial of cognitive-behaviour therapy, alone or co-administered with quetiapine, in refractory depression

Version: 1 Date: 14 December 2007

Reviewer: A Khan

Reviewer's report:

Dr. Chaput and Ms. Magnan have submitted a manuscript detailing the results of their clinical trial evaluating the merits of cognitive behavior therapy with placebo or cognitive behavioral therapy with up to 200 mgs of quetiapine daily in depressed patients who were relatively non-responsive to previous medication therapy.

Even with a small sample of 22 depressed patients, the authors found that second combination treatment was better than the first combination treatment. Although the study was paid for by AstraZeneca pharmaceuticals, it is pretty clear that the authors did design and conducted the trial. Further, it looks they wrote it up themselves and did not have the pharmaceutical company hire professional (vanilla) writers! They deserve to be congratulated.

My only concern that the authors need to seriously address is regarding how they are wording or interpreting their results. Both in the abstract and in discussion section, they state that cognitive behavioral therapy has a role in depressed patients who are relatively treatment resistant is somewhat misleading. First and foremost, the changes seen in the CBT group could be simply due to passage of time, or due to placebo effects. Moreover only 5 of 11 patients completed this treatment arm. Also, the symptom reduction in this group was quite small compared to the quetiapine group. In this regard, it could be misinterpreted by some that CBT is sufficient for somewhat treatment resistant depressed patients.

In short, the authors need to clearly define what they consider the 'role' of CBT in TRD patients with data backing their statement. In my opinion, the 'role' is small to negligible. Arif Khan, MD

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:
I have not received any funding, fees, salary or shares or such other assets in companies that would be of conflict. However, I have been a contracted principal investigator for over 90 depression clinical trials in the past 12 years, including AstraZeneca and forty other pharmaceutical companies.