Reviewer’s report

Title: Weight management in a cohort of Irish inpatients with serious mental illness (SMI) using a modular behavioural programme. A preliminary report.

Version: 1 Date: 23 March 2008

Reviewer: Ursula Werneke

Reviewer’s report:

This study deals with an important clinical problem of prevention of weight gain in patients admitted to hospital with acute mental health problems. Thus the study is highly relevant. The authors assert that their study is a preliminary report which may account for some of its limitations. However, a case for significance testing using non-parametric methods could be made. Obviously, the follow up time for the intervention is quite short and it remains unclear whether the authors plan to submit further data with a longer time perspective at a later stage.

However, the main problem of the study at this stage may lie in the heterogeneity of the patient population. It would have been helpful if the authors had included a table with the detailed general characteristics of patients studied including age, sex, ethnicity, first on-set of mental illness or length of illness before admission, type of drug received etc. Particularly, it would be important to know how many patients had been drug naïve since in those patients the intervention would target to prevent weight gain. On the other hand, in patients already treated for mental illness prior to admission the intervention would be directed towards treating existing weight gain. Only if this categorization was adopted it would be actually possible to judge whether a mean weight change of 0.26 and medium change of 0 kg could be rated as a treatment success. If such a result was achieved in treatment naive patients this may indeed point towards success, whereas in treated patients it would not. Thus, it is important to stratify the sample according to treatment status and present the results for both groups separately.

The discussion does not seem to be based on a comprehensive literature review, e.g. the results of Faulkner’s systematic Cochrane review published in 2006 should be referred to. Equally, it is recommended to discuss the evidence derived from interventions studies without control groups compared to findings derived from randomized controlled trials. The question whether non-significant positive results can really be taken as evidence that an intervention is effective also warrants further critical exploration.

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 have in the past received consultancy and speakers fees from Eli Lilly Ltd and was a member of the advisory board of Lilly's "Physical Wellbeing" programme in the UK. I subsequently withdrew from this advisory board.