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.

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Reviewer: Rohan Ganguli

Reviewer's report:

1. The authors of this study point out that there is little good scientific evidence on techniques to control or prevent weight gain in patients getting antipsychotics. They report on the outcome of implementing a behavioral program developed with funding from Eli Lilly pharmaceuticals. They reference an unpublished reference to the program, but do not make it clear whether that presentation was using some or all of this same data.

2. A major weakness of their study design is the absence of any comparison group, let alone a randomized control group. For example, they might have at least computed the mean weight gain on a group of patients in the same unit who had not participated in the program.

3. The duration of the study, just three weeks, is another limitation on the relevance of this data for routine clinical practice.

4. There have been several randomized clinical trials of behavioral treatments for weight reduction in schizophrenia, published in peer-reviewed journals. The authors need to make a better case for the relevance of their data in light of the available evidence.

5. The paper reports that ethical approval "was not sought" because the program and its evaluation was "deemed to be part of routine clinical practice". In the US, at least, it is customary to let an IRB make the determination as to whether a study is "exempt" from IRB review or not. Alternatively, in some institutions, there is an alternative committee which oversees quality improvement studies which has written authorization from the IRB to review quality improvement studies and ensure that those which do need IRB review, get sent to the IRB. In this case, it is not clear if there was any review by a hospital committee, or whether the authors made the determination that the study did not need IRB review, themselves.

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 received research grant funding from Bristol Myers Squibb, and Lilly within the past 5 years.

I have received consulting fees and honoraria for CME-approved talks from BMS, and Janssen