Reviewer's report

Title: Trajectories of maternal symptoms of anxiety and depression. A 13-year longitudinal study of a population-based sample.

Version: 1 Date: 27 July 2010

Reviewer: Christopher Dowrick

Reviewer's report:

This is an interesting and informative paper which sheds new light on the long term trajectory of anxiety and depressive symptoms amongst women with young children in community settings, and the interaction between these symptoms and common sociodemographic factors.

The authors have gathered 13 year follow-up data (at 6 time points) from an established Norwegian cohort of some 1000 families, using a reasonable set of items including the HSCL for symptomatology and age, cohabitation status, numbers of children and workforce participation as sociodemographic variables. Using latent profile analysis they have identified six discrete mental health trajectories. They identify one group (high-chronic) as having a particularly problematic trajectory, and are able to link this with several relevant risk factors. Their reasonable conclusion is that this group may be in greater need of healthcare intervention than others.

The authors have set their study within the context of existing related research, and have clearly explained how their work adds to and differs from this research. They identify and discuss strengths and limitations (including attrition) of their method, and propose relevant future research including the need to define mediating factors between sociodemographic factors and outcomes.

Minor essential revisions:
1. In the description of sociodemographic variables it is not clear whether cohabitation status was measured at each time point. From the results I think it was - this needs clarifying.
2. In discussion/conclusion, it would be interesting to know whether the authors think that the high risk group can be reliably identified at Time 1: if so, that might have substantial implications for early interventions.
3. Figure 1 explanatory text is present, but the figure itself is missing from my copy of the paper.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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