Author's response to reviews

Title: Clinical validity of a population database definition of remission in patients with major depression

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Author's response to reviews: see over
AUTHORS - REPLY

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Clinical validity of remission in patients with major depression in population databases

Editorial team

Question 1
- Abstract: please provide some background context in your abstract in addition to the aims.
Reply:
- Included in the text: “Major depression (MD) is one of the most frequent diagnoses in Primary Care. It is disabling illnesses that increase in the use of health resources”.

Question 2
- Experimental research that is reported in the manuscript must have been performed with the approval of an appropriate ethics committee.
Reply:
- Included in the text: “Data confidentiality was respected at all times, according to the Personal Data Protection Act (Ley de protección de Datos de Carácter Personal [LOPD]); this study was approved by the Ethics Committee of Gol i Gurina Foundation”.

Question 3
- Acknowledgements. We strongly encourage you to include an Acknowledgements section between the Authors Contributions Section and Reference list.
Reply:
- Included in the text: “Acknowledgements: Thanks to the different professionals of the centres for their constant input of data on a daily basis. Without their contribution, this study could not have been conducted”.

Question 4
- Please also ensure that your revised manuscript conforms to the journal style (http://www.biomedcentral.com/info/ifora/medicine_journals). It is important that your files are correctly formatted.
Reply:
- The manuscript format has been revised.
Reviewer report 1: Sandra Saldivia

Question
The design of the paper is not adequate to deal with an interesting area. The focus of the study: the concordance between two criteria to assess depression remission is not well supported by literature; the remission depends on other important variables as well (mental health organisation services, resources, accessibility, treatment adherence, etc). There are important problems about some definitions: How is the absence of depression assessed during the previous 6 months? Some “screening/diagnostic” tools are mentioned but none of them assesses depression diagnosis.

Reply:
We thank the reviewer commentaries, but we consider that she has not comprehended the sense of the investigation or she has realized a quick reading. The fact that exist few works in retrospective studies valuating clinical concordance versus available in the databases is the contribution of this study, relevant circumstance in the clinical practice. The questions that establish the reviewer are detailed in the limitations title of the discussion study and in the inclusion/exclusion criteria of the methods post (see references 11 and 13).
Reviewer report 2: John Houston

This manuscript is an analysis of the validity of an approach to assessing remission in major depression using information from a population database vs. remission based on clinical description and records. This is an important step in the use of this information appropriately. There are a number of areas in the paper which would benefit from clarification in order to make the manuscript easier to read and to comprehend.

Major Compulsory Revisions

Question 1
- In METHODS Design and population under study:
  a) Clarify how rating scales were used for screening/diagnostics and what is meant by selection criterion,
  Reply:
  - Included in the text: “Since the records do not contain specific data of the scale results to indicate remission (Hamilton Depression < 7 points) it was used a definition for approximation.”
  b) In the term "initiated a new MD episode", eg how that is determined (diagnosis of treating clinician?)
  Reply:
  - Included in the text: “Determined for diagnosis of treating clinician according to the ICPC-2”.

Question 2
- In METHODS: Definition of remission by approximation . . . : Describe what is meant by "simple random sampling"-was a specific method of random selection used? More detail is needed on how review of patient history was used to establish remission based on reference criteria.
  Reply:
  - Included in the text: “To select patients it has been used this random selection stratified for age and gender”.
  Reply:
  - Modified in the text: “It was defined as a remission patient when it was in the text in the database clinical course, according to the criteria of a psychiatry specialist (MB)”.

Question 3
- DISCUSSION paragraph 3 - clarify what is meant by axial vs dimensional.
  Reply:
  - Modified in the text: “categorical perspective”.

Minor Essential Revisions

Question 1
- Probably revision of the title to something like "Clinical validity of a population database definition of remission in patients with major depression” would make the focus of the paper clearer.
  Reply
  - Title has been modified.

Question 2
- Clarify what the term "reformed" in the abstract means.
  Reply:
  - Word "reformed" in the abstract has been deleted to be confused.
Question 3
- Clarify what is mean by "clinical criteria" in the abstract.
Reply
- Included in the text: "ICPC-2 criteria"

Question 4
- The last sentence of the second paragraph of BACKGROUND "This can be interpreted as remission." probably needs to be changed to something like "This can be used in a model for remission."
Reply
- Modified in the text

Question 5
- Change "type of measurements" in the first sentence of the fourth paragraph to something more like "construct" or "definition".
Reply
- Modified in the text: changed by “construct”.

Question 6
- METHODS Validity and utility measure indicators: I think that definitions of S and Sp are the opposite of the way they are stated, ie that "reference criteria" should be "approximation definition" - Please check this.
Reply
- Revised and modified in the text.

Question 7
- RESULTS: Sentence 1: Change "database" to "database criteria". Sentence 2 should be changed from "revised" to "reviewed", and "According to clinical criteria" should be moved to the end of the sentence.
Reply
- Revised and modified in the text.
- Last sentence: Move parenthetic material to after "wrongly classified" and delete "as they presented previous episodes of depression". Eleven patients showed discrepancies between remission by approximation and remission according to reference criteria.
Reply
- Revised and modified in the text: "Eleven patients showed discrepancies between remission by approximation and remission according to reference criteria. In five cases (false positives), review of the clinical course revealed they did not meet the clinical criteria for remission, the cause of this discrepancy was either incorrect initial diagnostic classification or on later occurrence of stress factors (dysthymia: 2; recurrent depression: 1; adaptive disorder: 1; and vital occurrence: 1). Six patients (false negatives) were not considered in remission according to the remission by approximation variable when the clinical course revealed a complete resolution of the episode. These patients were wrongly classified (dysthymia: 4; adaptive disorder: 1; recurrent depression: 1) and required treatment to prevent recurrence for a longer period of time."