Reviewer's report

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

Version: 4 Date: 30 October 2009

Reviewer: John Houston

Reviewer's report:

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

1. In METHODS Design and population under study: Clarify how rating scales were used for screening/diagnostics and what is meant by dselection criterion b) in the term "initiated a new MD episode", eg how that is determined (diagnosis of treating clinician?)

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.

3. DISCUSSION paragraph 3 - clarify what is meant by axial vs dimensional.

Minor Essential Revisions

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.

2. Clarify what the term "reformed" in the abstract means.

3. Clarify what is mean by "clinical criteria" in the abstract.

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."

5. Change "type of measurements" in the first sentence of the fourth paragraph to something more like "construct" or "definition".

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.

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. Last sentence: Move parenthetic material to after "wrongly classified" and delete "as they presented previous episodes of depression"

Discretionary Revisions

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**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.