Reviewer's report

Title: Anxiety and depression amongst patients enrolled in a public sector antiretroviral treatment programme in South Africa: a cross sectional study

Version: 4 Date: 1 December 2011

Reviewer: Judith Rabkin

Reviewer's report:

First, I would like to thank the authors for their thoughtful and detailed responses to the initial reviews. I especially like the thorough literature citations, including many African studies not so widely cited in American journals.

1. All of my concerns were addressed with one exception: in Methods, I noted that the chosen cut-off of >7 on the HAD is an extremely low and therefore non-specific cut-off. I was hoping that the authors would see what happens to their findings if they used a cut-off of 12+ (signifying severe mood disturbance), since only severe depression has been found associated with medication non-adherence (Wagner et al. 2011). Besides, the current analyses looked at 46 variables (Tables 1 and 2) and found only 4 predictors - very possibly because such a heterogeneous sample of "depressed" patients were studied.

However, it may be impractical at this point to conduct another round of data analyses and if the editors agree, it would at least be important for you to acknowledge the above in Discussion.

Minor points:

2. In Abstract, report HAD cut-off of >7 used to define "depression."

3. Both in the literature review and in reporting your results, you do not talk about protective factors, only risk factors. Even when you find some, you report the converse - e.g. social support and widowhood are associated with less depression. It might be more useful to directly describe protective factors (buffers).

4. Speaking of the protective effects of social support and widowhood on anxiety - you only discuss the former. How do you think widowhood protects against depression? Do widows more often join support groups? Any conjectures? It seems initially inconsistent that these 2 variables should both be protective factors.

5. Discussion: I did not understand the sentence (p. 10 last 3 lines), "Mild toxicity which may be treated symptomatically was the main reason for adverse side effects."

6. Conclusion: You found that avoidant coping was associated with anxiety, but I don't think it warranted to generalize to "coping strategies" in general. As noted
above, you might want to separate risk and protective factors in your summary. The revision shows thoughtfulness and diligence, and is appreciated.

**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 I have no competing interests.