Reviewer's report

Title: The performance of the K10, K6 and GHQ-12 to screen for present state DSM-IV disorders among disability claimants

Version: 1 Date: 19 September 2012

Reviewer: Genevieve Gariepy

Reviewer's report:

This study investigates the psychometric properties of 3 commonly used screening instruments of mental health (K10, K6, GHQ-12) in a sample of disability claimants in the Netherlands. Results indicate overall good internal consistency and criterion validity. Psychometric properties of tests may vary between specific sub-populations: this study demonstrates that commonly used screening instruments of mental disorders are valid within the subpopulation of disability claimants in the Netherlands. The study is overall well executed. The appropriate methods are used to evaluate the psychometric properties of the test. Some suggestions for improvement are listed below.

Minor Essential Revisions

Introduction

1. The introduction mainly provides general information on mental disorders and disability. However, the objective of the study is to investigate psychometric properties of the K6, K10 and GHQ-12; it is not to study the association between mental health and disability. Therefore, the introduction needs to make a stronger case for why it is important to investigate psychometric properties specifically in the population of disability claimants, particularly since the validity of the K10, K6 and GHQ-12 has already been studied extensively (see references 20-29 in the paper). For instance, do the authors hypothesize that individuals with disability have different cut-offs on screening scales of mental disorders than those from the general population? Is it thought that the validity of the instruments is different in disability claimants than in the general population?

2. Although under-recognition and under-diagnosis of mental disorders are highlighted in the introduction, it is not clear if this is because IPs fail to assess mental disorders or because screening instruments (K6, K10 or GHQ-12) are not adequately used. Perhaps providing readers with some background information on how disability claimants are routinely assessed by IPs would be relevant to provide context.

Methods

3. Please provide more information on participant selection. It is not clear how the 1544 eligible disability claimants were selected. Please indicate whether they are the complete sample of eligible disability claimants in the province, a random
sample of claimants or a non-random sample/other selection scheme. It is also not clear how participants were contacted to be invited into the study.

4. In the original GHQ-12, the four-point responses are: less than usual OR not at all, same as usual, rather more than usual, much more than usual. However, the manuscript suggests that the first response category is limited to “not at all” in this study. If this is the case, than the instrument is a different test than the GHQ-12. The authors should justify why they changed the response categories and express caution when comparing their results to those of other studies that have used the original GHQ-12.

Results

5. In table 1 and in the text, it is stated that 25.9% of the sample has any mental disorder. However, 39.5% of the sample has anxiety disorders, therefore implying that at least 39.5% of the sample has any mental disorder. Please correct.

6. If the number of people with “any mood disorder” is calculated by adding the number of people with each type of mood disorders, than the proportion should be 17.7% instead of 25.9%. Please check and correct.

7. The category “adult separation anxiety disorder” should be dropped from the study since it is not a DSM-IV disorder.

Discussion

8. The discussion could be significantly shortened. Discussion on the selection of cut-offs (bottom of p.10- top of p.11) from different economic perspectives is beyond the scope of the paper. The authors should instead report and discuss on how their results, such as cut-offs values, compare to others found in the literature.

9. P.13, please define RTW

Discretionary Revision

10. The first three lines of the introduction do little to sale the study and could be dropped.

11. Table 3 may be dropped since results are already written in the manuscript.

12. It is not clear how specific phobia, such as spider phobia, is relevant to work disability. Perhaps distinguishing between types of phobia was not possible. This may be a limitation of the study.

13. The strengths and potential limitations of the study are well described. Another potential limitation: since the K6 was embedded within the K10, it is possible that results could be different had the K6 been administered alone, as neighbouring questions of a questionnaire item may influence the way individuals response to the item.
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 declare that I have no competing interests.