Reviewer's report

Title: Do 'alternative' help-seeking strategies deter people from using primary care? A survey of help-seeking for mental distress

Version: 3 Date: 21 February 2008

Reviewer: Peter Verhaak

Reviewer's report:

In general my comments have been incorporated satisfactorily. Results have become clearer and are presented more conveniently arranged. Nevertheless, I would like to call for more attention to a striking characteristic of the checklist (BEMI-C) used, compared with the answers on the open ended question in BEMI: I.

Major compulsory revisions

From table 2 I understand that only one third of all themes included in your checklist, was mentioned spontaneously by the respondents.

Firstly, about one quarter of the respondents answered 'no idea, don't know' on the question how distressing experiences should be solved. Another one sixth preferred solutions in their social circumstances rather than action by themselves. And nearly another one sixth thought no solution existed. I think these 'nihilistic' answers by more than half of the respondents are remarkable and should be mentioned and elaborated in the discussion.

Secondly, the fact that only one third of the items from the checklist is mentioned spontaneously, at least raises some doubts about the checklist's validity. This aspect should be discussed among the possible limitations of the study.

Discretionary remarks

Especially the discussion could be improved by some editing. It is rather long-winded (the paper can do without sentences like 'the survey found answers to all our research questions which are summed up in the first paragraph of this discussion') and sometimes I am not quite sure about the right use of English grammar.

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory 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'