Reviewer’s report

**Title:** Exploring the nature of stigmatising beliefs about depression and help-seeking: Implications for reducing stigma

**Version:** 1  **Date:** 3 July 2008

**Reviewer:** Andre Tylee

**Reviewer’s report:**

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined? **YES**

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described?

It is a small qualitative study that used a thematic approach to understanding focus group discussions with 23 adults with personal experience of depression. They did not choose individual interviews which may allow more personal disclosure and need to justify this in my opinion. Focus groups even if small can inhibit some people particularly if depressed. I am not qualified to comment on whether a more appropriate qualitative analysis could have been used but thematic analysis seems appropriate. I do note however that they predetermined the dimensions from previous work and adapted them for depression instead of psychotic illness. This does mean that they were not starting from a blank page to see what came up and then developed themes from that using a more grounded approach. It is possible that other themes of interest never came up.

3. Are the data sound? **YES**

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition? **YES**

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data? **YES** but I do wonder what may have come up if there had been no predetermined dimensions which then influenced the themes in turn. In addition, the sample was obtained via advert or membership of a depression support group. In the case of the support group, such patients are often a self select group with chronic depression often severe and therefore not representative of people with depression in the community. Also do we know how representative are people who respond to adverts. This needs more discussion.

6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated? Yes regarding the possibility that respondents perceptions of stigmatising behaviour by others may be coloured by the depression itself. They need to comment also on the small number of respondents although they may be able to justify this if saturation of views were achieved. They had no or very few young people. See above about potential difficulties regarding representativeness.

7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished? **YES**

8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found? **YES**
9. Is the writing acceptable? YES