Reviewer's report

**Title:** The Effect of Major Depression on Participation in Preventive Health Care Activities

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**Reviewer:** Sven-Olof Isacsson

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The effect of Major Depression on Participation in Preventive Health Care Activities

This paper comes from a very experienced research group.

The question posed is very well defined and of great importance. People with mental disorders are often in a state when they are not seeking care until friends or relatives succeed in helping them to get contact with health services. Therefore it should be quite reasonable that they should be less interested in different preventive activities. Why participate in preventive activities in order to prolong life when perhaps I prefer to die?

In order to get an answer to the question if depressed persons are less interested in prevention than non-depressed the authors have used the NHPS study, a longitudinal cohort including 17 276 individuals followed from 1994 to 2004 with repeated investigations. The present study is restricted to those expected to have their blood pressure controlled, their mammograms or pap-smears taken (in all 15917 individuals).

The methods they have used (initially interviews, later telephone) are well described and appropriate. They are well aware of the problem with recall bias and social desirability. They refer to studies showing good correlation between medically recorded mammogram and pap-smears and self-reported data. How it is with blood-pressure is not mentioned but what I know the correlation should be as high as for the the other two other measures.

The data seem to be very sound and the limitations of the work is very well described. It is difficult to determine if the preventive activities were for preventive purposes or for treatment, especially regarding blood-pressure. This could be discussed a little more in detail. I am sure that blood pressure is much more often measured for treatment purposes than pap-smears or mammograms.

It is obvious that the first investigation have increased the interest for blood-pressure control during the following years in both the MDE and the non-MDE groups. Regarding pap-smear there is a quite stable but low participating rate and no differences between the two groups. Mammograms: As reported, probably difficult to draw any conclusions because of few individuals in this group and hard to interpret the statistics.
The authors conclude that the analyses failed to find evidence that MDE is an important determinant of participation in three preventive health care activities. I agree. This seems also to be in agreement with existing literature which means that it is no news. But still I partly agree with the last part of the paper:... “the results cannot exclude the possibility that MDE is a determinant of screening participation”. Maybe this is true but the results from this investigation do not show this with evidence.

**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' below.