Reviewer's report

Title: The short-term effect on alliance and satisfaction of using patient feedback scales in mental health out-patient treatment. A randomised controlled trial.

Version: 1 Date: 15 February 2012

Reviewer: Bernd Puschner

Reviewer's report:

This paper tested via a RCT whether the use of two brief feedback scales in mental health outpatient treatment results in improved treatment alliance and patient satisfaction six weeks after starting treatment. In the following some comments on specific parts of the manuscript:

1) Abstract
a) The abstract gives a clear and concise summary of the content of the paper.

2) Introduction
a) Background and scope of the work have been comprehensively described.
b) The section “Aim and hypotheses” should be complemented by adding that, in addition to the primary endpoints, secondary outcomes (mental health symptoms/functioning, patient activation/coping, quality of life, patient motivation and patient participation) were analyzed.
c) The source of the definition of treatment alliance used in this paper (p. 8) should be cited.

3) Methods
a) Methods of the trial should be reported in line with current recommendations (Zwarenstein et al., 2008). E.g. fully describe inclusion and exclusion criteria.
b) p. 9, section “Recruitment”, 1st paragraph: Please correct: “[...] written information was given [...]”.
c) 1st paragraph: Although a participant flow chart is provided (Fig. 1), it would be helpful if the text would contain the basic information of how many patients were invited/screened for inclusion, and how many could be enrolled (cf.3a).
d) 5th paragraph: Although it is stated that the treatment approaches in intervention and TAU groups were chosen freely by the therapists, please at least indicate the range of therapies provided applied in the outpatient unit (e.g. pharmacotherapy, psychotherapy, occupational therapy). Did you check for systematic differences in treatment provided by allocation to intervention or TAU groups?

4) Results:
a) p. 16, section “Baseline data”, 1st paragraph: Please correct: “In the total
sample 63% were female [...]”.

b) p. 16, 2nd paragraph 2: Did you test for differences (SES etc.) between study participants and non-participants? It is not conclusive that tests were performed for therapists (and p-values are shown in table 2), but where are the test results for patient differences?

5) Discussion
   a) p. 23, section “Treatment outcome”, last sentence: please correct: “A longer follow up time is needed to make a more exact comparisons […]”

6) Conclusion
   a) Last sentence: Please divide in two sentences by starting a new sentence after “effect sizes”. (p. 24)

   I recommend to enlist the aid of an English native speaker to improve style of writing.

Reference:


**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**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.