Reviewer's report

Title: Systematic Review: A Single Item Measure of Self-Rated Mental Health

Version: 2
Date: 26 May 2014

Reviewer: Eric K. H. Chan

Reviewer's report:

Major Compulsory Revisions:

1. The title of the paper is “Systematic review: A single item measure of self-rated mental health.” A systematic review aims at answering a specific research/clinical question by synthesizing empirical evidence that meets a priori specified eligibility and inclusion criteria (see for example Cook et al. (1997) Systematic reviews: Synthesis of best evidence for clinical decisions. Ann Intern Med;126:376-380 [page 377 and 378], or the Cochrane Collaboration). The research question posed by the authors was not well-defined. The objective of the study as stated on page 5 (“The goal of this review …”) appears to be a synthesis of the psychometric properties (reliability and validity) of the SRMH. However, the way the eligibility criteria was established, the way the data synthesis was done, and the way the results were presented all seem to be a scoping review (please see Arksey, H. and O'Malley, L. (2005) Scoping studies: towards a methodological framework, International Journal of Social Research Methodology, 8,1,19-32). A scoping review is conducted to explore and summarize empirical knowledge in a diverse or heterogeneous area of research. Its primary objective is to produce a descriptive overview of research findings. I think the authors need to clarify whether it was a systematic or scoping review.

2. Quality evaluation of the studies included should normally be part of a systematic review.

3. Consider using the EMPRO or COSMIN (or other relevant) approach to reviewing and synthesizing the SRMH evidence (if the purpose of the study was to review the psychometrics of SRMH).

4. The reporting of the methods and results between a systematic review and scoping review are not the same. I suggest following the PRISMA guidelines (or other relevant guidelines) for systematic review reporting.

5. It is not clear to me if the authors only included published articles or both published and unpublished (grey literature) articles.

6. Please report the full search strategy for at least one electronic database. In addition to the keywords, please report any limits used, and please report if the keywords were subject headings or free terms. This would allow replication of search results.

7. In my opinion, the Title of the paper does not clearly convey the purpose of the study.
Minor Essential Revisions:

1. On page 8, first paragraph, the two citations should be in numbers, not the authors' last names. On page 10, lines 184 and 198, same issue.
2. On page 10, line 200, should it be CCHS, not CCHC?
3. On page 23, reference #6, I think it should be “substance use-related disorders.”

Discretionary Revisions:

None.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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.