Reviewer's report

Title: Treatment needs and acknowledgement of illness. Importance for satisfaction with psychiatric inpatient treatment

Version: 1 Date: 5 March 2008

Reviewer: Scott Patten

Reviewer's report:

The role of satisfaction in the evaluation of psychiatric services is, as the authors point out, controversial. This paper is interesting because instead of attempting to use satisfaction ratings as an evaluative mechanism, the paper explores the role of two rarely examined variables (acknowledgement of illness and treatment needs) as determinants of satisfaction. This exploration leads to some solid endpoints. The authors recommend qualitative studies to explore why negative experiences may come out as neutral ratings. The also recommend that future research examine the strong age effects observed in this analysis.

Another clear message from the paper is that positive clinical outcomes do not become evident in positive satisfaction ratings, whereas negative clinical changes do lead to negative satisfaction ratings.

I feel that the authors have done an excellent job of interpreting their results. They offer the interesting interpretation, based on a correlation pattern, that neutral scores are really understated negative evaluations. This perhaps explains why the NoNOS Social Subscale score predicted the number of neutral ratings. The response rate is not very good, but the issue is carefully discussed in the paper.

Discretionary Revisions

I do not find it easy to understand the focus on extreme scores. If I am interpreting things correctly, it would appear that extreme positive and extreme negative scores are combined. Doing so would appear to require some theoretical justification.

With a BMC journal, the decision tree data in the current figures (which appear to represent the outcome of a statistical program) can be included as an additional file. I believe that the paper could be improved by producing some more user-friendly graphics for inclusion in the actual manuscript.

Since not all readers will be familiar with decision tree analyses, a paragraph providing a description of this would be a positive addition to the paper.

The abstract seems to present mostly results in the conclusion section. The conclusions section of the paper, on the other hand, is very strong. I would
suggest removing the results and presenting the key conclusions in the conclusions section of the abstract instead.

It appears that diagnosis has no relationship to satisfaction. If this is correct, it probably deserves comment.

The methods section seems to say that 0 ratings (which appear to sometimes mean no information) are sometimes treated as negative ratings currently, the reader is puzzled after reading the brief discussion on page 6 expanded explanation would be helpful.

Minor Essential Revisions

There are a few typographical errors. A sentence in the results section of the abstract ends in negative scores by. Another sentence in the conclusions part of the abstract starts with Few such needacknowledgement. This appears to be a typographical error. On page 4, acknowledge should be acknowledgement. In the first sentence of the Discussion section, there is a missing from the word operationalisation. On page 11, the word confirms is misspelled conform. Later in the same paragraph, indicate should be indicates.

Major Compulsory Revisions

None

What next?: Accept after discretionary revisions

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