Reviewer's report

Title: Perception and Beliefs about Mental Illness among Adults in Karfi Village, Northern Nigeria

Version: 1 Date: 28 June 2004

Reviewer: Christoph Lauber

Reviewer's report:

General

Nigeria has been neglected so far when thinking about attitudes and beliefs about as well as stigma caused by mental illness. Thus, this is a wonderful paper shedding light on this important issue. The results – which are not far away from those found in other cultural areas – must be seen and interpreted before the cultural background.

The question is not new. However, it is important and deals with attitudes and beliefs about mental disorders, a question that can only be studied in a culturally defined context. Thus, this paper is one of the first to report about attitudinal research from Africa. We hope that the authors could include other papers from the same geographical area, e.g. Adebowale & Ogunlesi, Afr J Med Med Sci. 1999;28:35-41.

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

1. The authors should say some words about the uniqueness of their study.

2. Methods and statistics are appropriately described. However, a description of the sample (socio-demographics etc.) is needed. Moreover, the source of the questions used in this study must be acknowledged.

3. Tables: the authors should describe what symptoms they considered to be 'psychotic' (Tbl. 1). Additionally, the numbers of responses and the percentage are not corresponding, i.e. the numbers refer to responses and the percentage to the sample - if I got it right - what is somewhat confusing.

4. The conclusion that there is a need to fully implement the national policy on mental health etc. must be better derived from the results, e.g. by introducing and explaining the topic in the introduction section already.

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

1. Compare your results with other findings from, e.g., Western and Asian countries.

2. Add some references from others than African studies on attitudes and beliefs about mental illnesses.

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)
What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:

Have you in the past five years received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this paper? No.

Do you hold any stocks or shares in an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this paper? No.

Do you have any other financial competing interests? No.

Are there any non-financial competing interests you would like to declare in relation to this paper? The only interest that I could mention here is, that I'm working in the field of research on attitudes about people with mental illness, too. Thus, I'm interested in publications from various settings and countries. However, I do not know the authors of this paper (yet) and my papers are not mentioned in their manuscript, thus, I cannot declare others than scientific interests in a good and important paper of my research field.