Reviewer’s report

Title: Mental Illness is Common With Functional Gastrointestinal Disorder (FGID) and is Important to Consider At Patient Consultation

Version: 2 Date: 22 November 2004

Reviewer: Peter Bytzer

Reviewer’s report:

General

This population-based questionnaire study compared health care seeking behaviour and non-GI symptoms in samples of subjects with and without symptoms suggestive of functional GI disorders. The findings are adequately described but not terribly interesting or important. The paper is difficult to read, partly because it is a draft including changes to previous issues of the manuscript and comments by co-authors!

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

My main objection relates to the definitions used. Most importantly, the definition of dyspepsia is very problematic. For example, according to the algorithm on page 9, lines 3-5 a patient reporting reflux episodes and ‘butterflies’ in the left flank was labelled as ‘dyspepsia’. The authors should consider another label in stead of dyspepsia, for example ‘upper GI symptoms’. They should also consider re-doing the analyses applying a more strict definition of dyspepsia. The definition of reflux disease is also problematic. The investigators labelled subjects who reported predominant heartburn and/or retrosternal pain and no abdominal pain or discomfort as having reflux. How was ‘predominant’ defined? Why was ‘reflux episodes’ not part of the definition? I don’t see ‘abdominal discomfort’ in the questionnaire. How was that defined?

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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)

Page 4, line 4: rephrase. GERD is not a symptom.

In Figure 3 it is impossible to tell the difference between the results from the two samples. Consider two drawings or enhance.

Page 15, line 6: ‘incidence of mental illness’. Should probably be ‘prevalence’?

What was the purpose of the medical knowledge questionnaire? No data is presented.

In the abstract the setting should be population-based, rather than general practice.

In the conclusion I think that the last sentence should be rephrased. As it stands it signals causality between mental illness and GI symptoms. The investigators have just shown that it coincides.

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

Which journal?: Appropriate or potentially appropriate for BMC Medicine: an article of importance in its field
What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests