Reviewer's report

Title: Psychotropic drug use among people with dementia - a six-month follow-up study

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Reviewer: Daniel O'Connor

Reviewer's report:

This paper describes patterns of use of psychotropic medications over a six month period in 40 specialized dementia care units in northern Sweden.

Major revisions

It should be made clear in the abstract that data were collected in 2005-6. The authors should note in their discussion if there is reason to believe that findings might have changed since then.

The units were selected in the first place because of their higher than average use of physical restraints. The implications of this selection process should be discussed. Did the units care for the most challenging people with dementia in northern Sweden? Or were their care practices unusual for other reasons? Some more information about this is required.

Psychotropic prescription rates were extraordinarily high, even by international standards, and discontinuation rates were low too. The authors imply that this reflects poor care practices but this might not be true in every case. Did the authors collect data on residents’ psychiatric diagnoses? It is possible that some suffered from schizophrenia, bipolar disorder or recurrent severe depressive illness and might therefore have benefited from long-term maintenance antipsychotic and/or antidepressant medications (though these still warrant a review at intervals by suitably qualified clinicians).

Linking medication use with current psychological and behavioural symptoms is problematic. As the authors mention (though only briefly and obliquely in page 12), people taking an antidepressant might have no current depressive symptoms because the medication has proven successful. It is much more worrying if people taking an antidepressant are still depressed. Fewer conclusions can be drawn from an apparently euthymic state and the authors should make this point more clearly.

It is not clear who administered the clinical rating scale, MDDAS. Was it completed by staff members or by the researchers?

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.