Reviewer’s report

Title: A qualitative study on older primary care patients' perspectives on depression and its treatments - Potential barriers to and opportunities for managing depression

Version: 0 Date: 07 Feb 2017

Reviewer: Tom Kingstone

Reviewer's report:

Dear authors,

I have conducted a thorough review of your article and enjoyed reading it. I must admit that had you taken a more in-depth approach to analysis and moved beyond content analysis, I feel this article would have been the better for it - the short extracts of quotes imply the data is very rich.

I have suggested that your article requires major revisions in order for it to be accepted for publication in this journal. I make the following comments, in order to be constructive and to help the authorship team improve the article.

Title

The title is too long and could be made clearer. Suggest rewording this by removing 'depression in old age' and integrating this better. Suggest the term 'opportunities' is more appropriate than 'chances' (change throughout).

Background/Literature Review

The background literature review is of an appropriate length and provides a very good synopsis of up to date research and establishes a clear rationale for the article. I could not identify an article that considered over 75s experience of depression and so this article covers an important gap. To further improve this section of the article I would suggest the following changes:

- Focus is on 'depressive disorders' but no definition is provided and then depressed/depression/ dimensional depression are used interchangeably; suggest paying closer attention to this and make reference to clinical definitions to clarify why 'depressive disorders'.
- Use of the term 'elderly' may imply frailty. Suggest changing this throughout to older people/persons

- Ln 76 could be made clearer, what population does this relate to? What is 'dimensional depression'

- Ln 91 implies that demographic ageing only applies to western countries (it is a global phenomenon). Suggest retaining focus on Germany populations and make a passing reference to wider/global ageing.

- Ln 96 suggest changing 'chances' to 'opportunities'

- Ln 100 suggest changing the wording e.g. 'A few qualitative studies (refs) have investigated the views…'

Aim

The aim is clearly stated (investigating the views about depression among 75 and over primary care patients in Germany). However, I would question whether the term 'comprehensive' is an accurate one given only 12 interviews were conducted. Suggest removing this word. I would also like to suggest the following alterations:

- Ln 108 suggest removing the term 'elderly'

- Ln 109 'We aimed at the detailed description' suggest rewording this e.g. The aim of this study was to explore/investigate… based on the description of the patients' view and experiences'

Methods

The methods are well described. I assume that as part of the consent procedures for the larger cohort study participants agreed to be contacted about future research; could you clarify this. The use of the term 'deductive' does not seem to be appropriate (it confuses the process) as it implies working from specific theory/concept/construct which I do not feel you do.

- Ln 115-6 is multi-centric the correct term? Suggest: 'Multi-centre'

- It is difficult to determine whether participants are currently depressed, 'recent' ranged from <1 - 9 months.

- Ln 128 Suggest 'purposively' selected not purposely, as this will better reflect the sampling strategy
- Ln 129 using the terms younger and older when talking about people aged 75+ years can be confusing. Suggest rewording this e.g. …based on age to achieve a diverse range of ages 75 years and over.

- Table 1 includes a column 'personal experiences with depression' what does this mean? Those that answered 'No' scored relatively high on the scale. Does this mean that they have not received a diagnosis?

- Ln 148 Suggest 'designed based upon' or 'developed based upon' instead of 'built'

- Ln 150 Working group? Of academics/clinicians? Did patients or members of the public have any input on the design?

- Ln 153 Suggest altering the wording from 'depressed people' to 'people with depression' (consider throughout)

- Ln 157 Description of the interview setting is not clear, missing 'each' e.g. Four interviews were conducted in each of the cities of Hamburg, Mannheim and Bonn.

- P8 I would not consider a semi-structured topic guide to infer deductive reasoning only that the selection of questions/topics frames the interview. What is said during the interview, the data, is analysed in an inductive manner, as described. Suggest the following e.g. 'The topics included within the topic guide provided a frame for the analysis, which was inductive based on the interview data'

- Ln 173 'Discussed regularly' were there any disagreements/alternative interpretations considered? How were these overcome?

The results

The results are reported as four themes and 14 sub-themes, however you described the process of analysis as occurring in categories and sub-categories. Please clarify this. The approach to analysis has led to a rather formulaic and surface-level set of themes/sub-themes e.g. medications, psychotherapy.

I would like to suggest the following specific points:

- Ln 176 Suggest altering 'built' to 'constructed' or 'identified'

- 'Themes' are described, however in the description of analytic process categories and sub-categories, coding frame were described. Consistency is needed here. The development of themes implies thematic analysis.
- Ln 177-180 is unnecessary and raises questions about whether the analysis is based on the interview data or predominantly whether the researchers simply selected data to support their own pre-conceived notions.

- Depression in the elderly, suggest rewording to 'in later life'.

- Ln 226 Check wording: 'would not tell their social environment'

- Ln 259 is 'crazy' a quote from a participant or not?

- There is a powerful interview extract on page 12 regarding suicide of a participant's niece and what this means to them now during their own depression; it is a shame that the meaning and implication of these words is limited by the sub-theme title of 'patients' attitudes towards depressed people'.

General points: Depression is described in the article as 'a depression' or 'depressions' as if an acute event which is a confusing term. Very limited presentation of interview data to support interpretation of themes/sub-themes means the voice of participants is missing. There are some really interesting phrases used such as: lacking courage to live, depression is something between heaven and earth - it is a shame a more in-depth analysis was not undertaken to explore these further.

Discussion/implications

The discussion section seems a bit too long. However, it is well constructed and provides a thorough comparison/contrast with existing research. I do not agree that the analysis supports the claim that views of patients were comprehensively explored. The results are presented at a descriptive level, as befitting content analysis I therefore do not think the discussion is supported by the data analysis. I think some more work is needed to develop the themes/sub-categories.

To label older adults' perception of depression as 'outdated' could potentially be considered condescending. Does their perception not simply differ from current medical definitions? The limitations neglect the fact that only 12 interviews were completed.

The English requires some attention (nothing major), particularly in the results section.

As I have said, I have tried to be thorough in order to be helpful. I trust that you have taken my comments in the manner in which they were intended.

Best wishes
Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.
Yes

Does the work include the necessary controls?
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.
Yes

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.
No

Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.
Not relevant to this manuscript

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Needs some language corrections before being published

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