Reviewer’s report

Title: Identifying risk of self-injury through longitudinal monitoring of psychological distress in an inpatient psychiatric population

Version: 2 Date: 2 February 2015

Reviewer: Paul L. Plener

Reviewer’s report:

Review for BMC Psychiatry

Identifying risk of self-injury through longitudinal monitoring of psychological distress in an inpatient psychiatric population

The manuscripts focus is on deliberate self harm (both NSSI and suicidal self-injury). The authors discuss the possibilities in which NSSI or suicidal self-injury could serve as risk factor or warning sign for suicidality. The authors put forward the idea, that rapid improvements at early stages in therapy could be used as predictor. One of the strengths of this study is the assessment of DSH by hospital staff not relying on self-report measures. To my knowledge, this approach has been seldom used although it has obvious clinical validity. Data from patients were acquired using computer based technology for repeated assessment (at least thrice within seven days). A latent class approach was used to identify sub-groups sharing patterns of early change within a seven days time frame.

Minor essential revisions:

Authors excluded individuals reporting self-injury before suicidal ideation. It would be interesting to provide more details about this group. Did the five individuals perform NSSI (in which absence of suicidal ideation would be required anyway as per definition)?

I would ask the authors to clarify whether suicidal intention in self-injury differed between groups, e.g. was there more self-injury with suicidal intent in the group of Non-Responders? Did the groups differ in their ratio of NSSI vs. suicidal self-injury?

Discretionary revisions:

Please explain what a “SEIFA score above 5” means? As I’m not familiar with the scaling, it is unclear if this means that the majority lived in areas with good or poor socioeconomic characteristics.

Overall, this is an interesting paper, driven by a clinical meaningful research questions. I would be delighted to see more informations about the NSSI vs. suicidal self-injury relationship and would ask the authors to provide more details. Apart from that I would recommend publication.
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