Reviewer's report

Title: Enthusiasm for homework and improvement in depression during cognitive-behavior therapy: Secondary analysis of data from a randomized controlled trial

Version: 1 Date: 18 March 2014

Reviewer: Bridianne O'Dea

Reviewer's report:

Thank you for the offer of reviewing this manuscript. I understand the importance of homework to CBT outcomes and believe this an area of relevance. The authors clearly acknowledge the work of others, and the previous research on which they are building. However, I have a number of suggestions for the paper and some areas which require clarification.

Major Compulsory Revisions

I feel that the research question (thus, the aims and methods) are somewhat unclear. This is mainly because the title states 'depression' which implies that depression diagnosis (or symptom level) is to be the primary outcome. However, upon reading it, the outcome appears to be psychological distress. Conceptually, these differ significantly and I feel that the paper would be better defined if you focused on either one or the other (i.e. psychological distress in depressed people) I feel you would need to give greater justification for why psychological distress is the outcome for a CBT homework intervention etc or how it is linked to enthusiasm (has the linke between distress and homework completion been explored in past literature?) I feel that further clarification of the research question would help to tighten the introduction of the paper (which some details better placed in the methods section). Please review your use of the term depression in this context.

Although the methods has been outlined previously, I feel that the paper could benefit from a flow chart highlighting recruitment. This could be referred to in the sample (or recruitment section) and attached as an appendix. You had a much higher rate of males in the current study, which is interesting, and worthy of an explanation in the discussion.

It would also be very beneficial if you could include other variables which may have been potentially impacting homework completion (and thus controlled for). I am not certain what these variables may be (gender, age, demographics, caring roles, other time constraints? literacy?) A literature search may help with this as you outlined some in the introduction, but did not address these here.

It was not clear to me if the same therapist completed all the CBT sessions, and thus, asked the enthusiasm questions in the same way - is this the case? Furthermore, I feel some further clarification around how the questions were
asked (e.g. examples of Socratic questions used etc) to help with replication of methods.

I believe the data is sound, however, I feel it could be outlined clearer in the results. Given the number of sessions, it may be helpful to put these initial results in a table of some sort.

Overall, it was difficult to get a sense of what characteristics really were the greatest predictors of homework completion, other than psychological distress. It would be helpful to control for some of the variables that impact this, and given psychological distress refers to the past 30 days, I am wondering of the sensitivity of this measure for such a project and whether another variable may be more suitable for detecting change.

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

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

**Statistical review:** Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare I have no competing interests