Reviewer's report

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

Version: 2 Date: 30 May 2014

Reviewer: Lisa Burke

Reviewer's report:

Thank you for the opportunity to review this re-submitted manuscript investigating relationships between enthusiasm for homework and distress across a course of CBT in workers with sub-threshold depression. The authors are to be commended for their approach in revising the manuscript, with the paper improved in my opinion by the changes.

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. The paper now provides clearer descriptions of the research aims and methods and I appreciate the authors additional justifications regarding analysis, however I would recommend the paper be reviewed by a statistician to ensure its suitability for publication re SEM and effect sizes.

Minor Essential Revisions

1. The flow chart on participant recruitment is an improvement, thank you. One element of the Results section still confuses me (eg., Under ‘Patient Characteristics’, it says 71 adults met the eligibility criteria, but later after describing participant attrition, it still states the final sample same as 71…?).

2. A minor point I acknowledge, however I’d like to see the final sentence in the manuscript reflect not only what clinicians can achieve, but what clinicians and clients together can achieve. After all, it is the client enthusiastically completing the homework!

3. Editorial corrections:
   - Spell out numbers at beginning of sentences in Methods section
   - Use past tense when describing the CBT program (eg first paragraph in Treatment section)
   - Use formal expression (eg “large” rather than “big” in final paragraph of Data Analysis section, and “complete” rather than “do” in final paragraph of Background)
   - Spelling error on gender in first paragraph of Patient Characteristics section

Discretionary Revisions
1. In terms of relevance, I think practitioners reading this journal would find the difference in effect sizes between the BT sessions and the CT sessions most interesting. This is described adequately in the Data Analysis section, and then referenced as a limitation in the Discussion section, but the authors have missed the opportunity to reflect on this interesting and quite unique finding. Why do the authors believe that distress responded more strongly to BT than CT?

2. I am not convinced by the final paragraph ‘Conclusions’ in the abstract. Perhaps it simply would benefit from re-wording, as it doesn’t seem a strong conclusion that reflects the unique findings of this research. Instead, it seems to essentially repeat the statement from the Background that ‘homework has been shown to facilitate improvement in depression, anxiety, or other client problems’.

**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 that I have no competing interests