Reviewer’s report

Title: Do patients prefer optimistic or cautious psychiatrists? An experimental study with new and long-term patients

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Reviewer: Jane Stein-Parbury

Reviewer's report:

This is an interesting paper that focuses on aspects of psychiatric treatment that are often difficult to quantify, the demeanour and psychosocial approach of the therapist in relation to patient preferences. Matching therapeutic approach with the preference of the patient would help to establish the basis for a therapeutic alliance. For this reason, I commend the authors on the aim and design of the study. The paper is clearly laid out and well-written.

Having said that, I was a bit disappointed that there was not a fuller discussion of therapist optimism and its potential to engender hope in patients. I say this because hope is such a vital aspect of recovery-oriented care. The authors could have speculated a bit more as to why those patients with more experience as mental health care consumers had no preference for optimism over cautiousness. I realise that there may not be much in the extant literature on which to draw, so any discussion in relation to this matter may be theoretical. Nonetheless, bringing out the issue of hope in the discussion would enable readers to at least consider its importance in mental health care.

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

Yes

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