Reviewer’s report

Title: Characterizing the experience of agitation in patients with bipolar disorder and schizophrenia

Version: 1 Date: 21 Dec 2017

Reviewer: Mirko Manchia

Reviewer's report:

RE: BPSY-D-17-00775R1

Using a multi-country survey based approach in 583 patients, Roberts et al. sought to explore the patient's perspective for patients with schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. Specifically, the focus of this work is on the patient's perspective and specifically with regard to the way in which patients describe agitation, the frequency with which this symptom is experienced and the steps patients take to try and manage this symptom. The survey found that agitation was a relatively high frequent symptom and that the manifestation of internal feelings was more common that that of overt behaviours. The study is informative in that it provides data on the perception of agitation from patients with severe mental disorders. This might be clinically relevant particularly in terms of setting-up proper monitoring approaches for agitation in outpatients settings. The paper is well written and has some limitations, some of them listed correctly by the authors.

I have some comments:

- Inclusion criteria should be reported under a separate subheading. Were there any exclusion criteria?
- I wonder whether this survey instrument has been previously validated? This is a crucial methodological step in this filed of research. If this has not been previously done, I think the authors should report on face validity, internal consistency and so on.
- The authors state that no formal hypothesis was tested, which is correct; however, again, the reader should be aware of the sensitivity of the instrument used to detect what is investigating.
Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.
No

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.
Yes

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.
I am able to assess the statistics

Quality of written English
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:
Acceptable

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