Reviewer's report

Title: Predictors of the effectiveness of an early medication change strategy in patients with Major Depressive Disorder

Version: 3 Date: 25 Nov 2018

Reviewer: Heather A. MacPherson MacPherson

Reviewer's report:

This study examined predictors of the effectiveness of an early medication change strategy in patients with major depressive disorder (MDD). Primary outcomes from this trial demonstrated that remission rates in an early medication change (EMC) group versus treatment as usual (TAU) were not significantly different. The current paper similarly reports statistically negative results after correction for multiple comparisons. However, recurrent MDD, prior medication at study entry, and lack of atypical depression showed promise as potential predictors of higher remission rates in EMC vs. TAU.

The authors were generally very responsive to comments and suggestions made by reviewers. Though, in line with the comments made by Reviewer #1, it seems that secondary chi-square analyses should not have been pursued after non-significant regression findings. As I mentioned in my prior review, though this is certainly an important and understudied topic, the publication of a second paper with null findings from the same sample offers limited value above and beyond the initial publication, and therefore limits the conclusions that can be drawn. In the authors' response, they provided statistics and citations on the importance of reporting null findings, and I wholeheartedly agree. My issue is not with the fact that the findings are null, but rather that these null findings have, for the most part, already been covered in the primary outcomes paper. Thus, I feel that a second paper also reporting on similar null findings offers minimal utility. I would express similar concern if findings were statistically significant, but seemed to replicate primary outcomes and/or not add much new information above and beyond previously published findings.

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

Yes

Does the work include the necessary controls?
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

No

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.
No

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:

Needs some language corrections before being published

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