Reviewer’s report

Title: Subjective Experiences of Neurocognitive Functioning in Young People with Major Depression

Version: 1 Date: 25 Apr 2019

Reviewer: Erin Morgan

Reviewer's report:

1. The authors should expand on their rationale for examining the subjective experience of neurocognitive deficits in their specific population. They have provided a brief, broad rationale for using a qualitative approach and gave a short example of how this approach might be useful in the mental health context in general, but how does using this approach increase our understanding of neurocognitive consequences of MDD in young adults? The authors seem to be saying the associations between the perception of deficits and real world outcomes like quality of life, psychosocial functioning, and mental health engagement might be different from that of adults, and so the benefit of the qualitative approach is to help us understand that better. However, this should be stated more directly…e.g., "this is especially useful for understanding these relationships in young adults because…"

2. It is understandable that the authors chose to have minimal exclusion criteria given that this was an exploratory study, but can they comment at all about major potential confounders for cognitive impairment? The study aims to describe cognitive impairment due to MDD, but did these participants have histories of head injuries or seizure disorders, etc? Otherwise, the type of cognitive impairment they are describing might be due to a non-psychiatric etiology.

3. Examples of the interview questions and prompts would be informative. How specific and directive were the questions? Were they broad and open-ended questions that use phrases like "changes in your thinking" or were there any specific examples offered like "difficulty remembering things or doing new things."

4. Descriptions of the themes was very interesting and informative, especially the multiple quotes!

5. The Discussion is well written and does provide a nice focus on how these themes can inform clinical practice and spark future research. However, the limitation of having a small number of participants who may have comorbidities that contribute to neurocognitive deficits (objective or perceived) is significant…however the authors have been transparent about this limitation and the intention is to provide a jumping off point for future work. I might change the title to be similarly transparent - it should be clear that the article describes the subjective experience of neurocognitive complaints (not demonstrated deficits) among young people with MDD, and somehow point out the important aspect of the study which is that the focus is on the perception of how these
perceived deficits impact psychosocial or real world outcomes, since this is the novel aspect of the study.

**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.

Unable to assess

**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 recommend additional statistical review

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

Acceptable

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