Reviewer's report

Title: ""Is it menopause or bipolar?": A qualitative study of the experience of menopause for women with bipolar disorder

Version: 1 Date: 27 Aug 2017

Reviewer: Simone Vigod

Reviewer's report:

This is a qualitative study of the experience of women with bipolar disorder and their experience of menopause/peri-menopause. While there is quantitative research that highlights the high risk time period of peri-menopause for women with bipolar disorder, there is little qualitative data that adds to the understanding of their experience. I have some questions/clarifications:

1. The authors should specify some additional characteristics about their participants - basic sociodemographics, age of onset of bipolar disorder (including whether primary onset was in perimenopause), number of hospitalizations, medications, that would help contextualize the themes that emerged. This is important because bipolar disorder is such a heterogenous disorder.

2. Given that the authors report in the introduction that other mental disorders are frequently comorbid, especially anxiety, it is of interest that women with comorbid disorders were excluded from participating in the study. It would be helpful for the authors to expand on the rationale for this exclusion, and the implications for the generalizability of the findings.

3. It was unclear whether the women participating in the study were euthymic, depressed or hypomanic/manic at the time of the interview. This should be specified, as it may have implications that are relevant to the findings. It may also be relevant whether women had a relapse of their bipolar disorder at the perimenopause or not (i.e. did they stratify participation by women who suffered a severe psychiatric episode related to menopause or not? that might have resulted in very different experiences)?

4. I think that the discussion could be strengthened with more emphasis on how the experience of women with bipolar disorder differs from or is similar to that of women with other psychiatric disorders around the perimenopause (i.e. are there special considerations here?)

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.

Yes

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
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Yes

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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

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