Reviewer’s report

Title: Treating Medically Unexplained Symptoms via Improving Access to Psychological Therapy (IAPT): Major Limitations Identified

Version: 0 Date: 26 Jul 2019

Reviewer: Helen L. Payne

Reviewer's report:

This is a refreshing submission of a critical overview of CBT as an intervention, via IAPT, for people suffering MUS, specifically ME/CFS but could apply to all such conditions. Apart from a few typos and some unsupported claims the manuscript is well written and offers interesting perspectives, including from a patient's point of view. The argument is logically constructed with plenty of evidence showing how IAPT is an unsuitable service for people with MUS. The limitations of the cognitive behavioural model for understanding MUS are clear as well as the research and practice-based outcomes. Other alternative interventions need to be offered.

There are rhetorical questions in several places which need to be amended.

Add page numbers for quotations.

Edit some typos e.g.

Supporting references required for the following:

...'but has more recently become a popular treatment for many other mental health conditions.'
'Second, IAPT retains the services of a number of advisors, academics and clinicians; many of whom promote CBT as a treatment of MUS'.
'All forms of medical care, such as physiotherapy for back pain or analgesics for chronic pain, give way to CBT'.
...'there is a vast body of literature on both disorders'.
'Yet ME/CFS do not receive anything like the type of medical care MS or cancer patients receive.'

Typos:
...'essentially some studies find no benefits and were studies.' - replace 'were' with 'where'.

Other:

should this citation (5) be (4)?
...'calls 'evidence-based psychological therapies' (5)'.

Clarify this sentence: 'There is no clear line to demarcate the MUS patient IAPT appears to want to treat from the medical patient'.

You might consider the research on the burn out rates of IAPT practitioners here - 'and chronically ill patients in modern clinical medicine'.

Give as a percentage to compare with later figure provided as a percentage: 'Collin et al. found that
while approximately 1/3rd of ME/CFS patients report some benefits from CBT, only 5.7% of patients'

Or is it Kellet et al who do not provide the data? -We also do not know what conditions these MUS (should there be the word 'patients' in here?) had, as IAPT does not give this data or record correctly.

**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.

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.

Not relevant to this manuscript

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

Acceptable
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