Author's response to reviews

Title: A 4q35.2 subtelomeric deletion identified in a screen of patients with co-morbid psychiatric illness and mental retardation

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PDF covering letter
Note reviewer NRD referred to as ‘R1’ & reviewer SD-W referred to as ‘R2’.

1. Title changed (R1 discretionary revision) to remove ‘defined’ and to include full cytogenetic locus.
2. R1 points 1&2: the deletion patient’s parents could not be followed up cytogenetically because no consent was obtained. No psychiatric illness has been diagnosed in other family members – these explanations added to text on page 9. See materials and methods for description of how many probands are of sufficient age to make parental samples unavailable.
3. R1 point 3: We would argue that changes to fig.1 with respect to MNRT1A and BC012432 are not required. MNTR1A exists as two splice forms and both were displayed in fig.1. Neither MNTR1A nor BC012432 are present within the deleted region on 4q and were therefore not included in table2. Regarding DUX4, reviewer 1 was correct to suggest it was missing from fig.1. This omission has been rectified.
4. R1 point 4: FISH was not carried out on the deletion patient because, historically, not all patients had blood samples taken for short-term cultures. Text on pages 6 and 7 altered to detail this.
5. R1 point 5: two of the ‘confident’ and one of the ‘possible’ copy number changes, as diagnosed by MAPH, correspond to the individuals removed from the final cohort for the reasons described in the ‘patient cohort’ section of the materials and methods. Explanation on page 6 has been clarified so that quoted figures only refer to results from the final cohort of 69 subjects.
7. R1 discretionary revision points 2/3: patient cohort ascertainment section and page 10 patient description expanded.
8. R2 point 1: we feel that the scope of this paper is definitely in the application of MAPH rather than its methodological description. The authors cited references 21-23 as the key papers detailing the MAPH protocol and would suggest that these are sufficiently detailed source materials for those wishing to duplicate the MAPH procedure in their own lab.
9. R2 point 2: Discussion section, page 10. Additional sentence added to state lack of causative evidence.
10. One source of funding added to acknowledgements section.

Ben Pickard, 17th June 2004