Author's response to reviews

Title: Is the PANSS used correctly? A systematic review

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Version: 2 Date: 30 May 2011

Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear editors,

Thank you very much for considering our article “Is the PANSS used correctly? A systematic review” for publication in *BMC Psychiatry*. We highly appreciate the helpful comments suggested by the editors and reviewers. We have carefully revised the paper including many changes and modifications in order to significantly improve the manuscript taking into account all recommendations of the reviewers.

According to the comments we conducted the following revisions:

Editors:

Thank you for this important request. We actually followed the PRISMA statement. An accordant remark has now been added in the Abstract and the Method section.

*Please include a 'Competing interests' section between the Conclusions and Authors' contributions. If there are none to declare, please write 'The authors declare that they have no competing interests'.*

An accordant “Competing Interests” section has now been included.

Reviewer 1:

1. **Methods:** "All articles in this review were found by a systematic literature research in the highest ranked psychiatric journals using Pubmed ([http://www.pubmed.com](http://www.pubmed.com))." Which period of time did you search?

No time restrictions were made in the Pubmed query. An accordant remark was added in the Method section.

2. **Method:** “A classification was performed independently by two practiced researchers into articles with PC as primary and such with PC as secondary outcome, in which also articles with PC as inclusion criteria were included.” Please indicate the names.

We followed this helpful comment and indicated the names in the Method section.

3. **Discussion:** *It could be that your search was not complete as not all authors may have used the term response in the abstracts (you might also have handsearched a couple of years of these journals) and you might briefly mention this. But the results are so clear and I have*
no doubt that the lack of correction is a frequent problem (I asked senior statisticians from pharmaceutical companies at some stage who were not aware of it) that this is a minor point.

We agree with this absolutely correct and very helpful point and refereed to it in a short comment in the Discussion.

Reviewer 2:

Abstract
1. Background section: “Even though there seems to be still unclarity in the psychiatric community about its correct statistical application.” Is a sentence fragment and “unclarity” does not seem to be a word.
2. Abstract Background: Punctuation errors and grammatical mistakes ( "as e.g. the widely accepted response"

We are thankful for these helpful notes. In order to improve the whole manuscript a language revision was made by a native speaker. An accordant remark was added in the Acknowledgements.

3. Abstract Methods section and throughout the manuscript: “relevance” should be “prevalence” since the author are attempting to determine how widely spread the problem is. The relevance of the manuscript is clear; uncorrected scores introduce error in determining the percent change that may lead to invalid conclusions about the data.

We absolutely agree with this point and therefore replaced the word “relevance” by “prevalence”.

Introduction
4. The authors comment that there is “profound confusion” about the “correct statistical application” of the PANSS when, in fact, it seems that they are discussing its mathematical properties, scoring and interpretation, not statistical properties.

Again this comment is absolutely correct: the problem has an effect on the statistical analysis of PANSS data, but it is itself of mathematical nature. We changed “statistical” by “mathematical”.

5. Inclusion of studies demonstrating the severity of not correcting the PANSS percent change or situations in which it is particularly problematic would be helpful. The problem may be prevalent but the magnitude of the effect in inconsequential.

To follow this helpful note we emphasized the corresponding findings of the previous article in the Discussion: even in the results of an approval study wrong calculations have been found. Additionally up to 50% of the simulated study results in this research show erroneous conclusions.

Methods
6. It would be helpful to know how many articles were arbitrated by a third person.

We added this information in the Results part.

Minor Revisions
Figures and Tables
7. Table 1. No impact factor is included for the journal “Neurpsychopharmacology”

The indication of the Impact Factor got lost by formatting the table. We added it again.

8. Figure 1. Adds little to the manuscript. Stating the number and percent of studies in each category in the text would adequately convey the information.
9. Figure 1. It is not clear why the two studies with the unknown determination of percent change are included in the primary outcome column.

The figure indeed provides redundant information. We deleted it and presented the results only in the text.
Moreover an itemisation of insufficient method descriptions was added, i.e. how many authors had to be contacted to find out about the method of calculation.

We do hope that our revisions are in agreement with the suggestions and recommendations of the reviewer and the editors, and that the paper is now acceptable for publication in *BMC Psychiatry*.

On behalf of all authors yours sincerely

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