Reviewer’s report

Title: Is the PANSS used correctly? A systematic review

Version: 1 Date: 13 April 2011

Reviewer: Stefan Leucht

Reviewer’s report:

Obermeier and colleagues present a succint and very important review on the question whether authors calculate “percentage PANSS total score reduction from baseline” correctly. They find that 62% of the included articles did not apply the necessary correction for the 30 minimum points of the PANSS. As it has previously shown that this mistake leads to underestimation of results and can have dramatic consequences on the results and interpretation of clinical trials, the paper is very important. It is necessary to show to the field that there is a problem and that people must think of the correction. It is likely that most researches are simply not aware of it. Therefore, this review is likely to have an important impact on the field.

I have only a few minor revisions:

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).” Which period of time did you search?

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.

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.

Level of interest: An article of outstanding merit and interest in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:
As the paper is about a theoretical question (the correction of a score of the rating scale PANSS) and not directly related to medication I declare that I have not competing interests.