Reviewer's report

Title: Identifying Persistent Negative Symptoms in First Episode Psychosis

Version: 2 Date: 22 July 2012

Reviewer: Young Chul Chung

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The authors investigated PNS in first episode psychosis using different definitions.

This issue is so critical in deciding treatment strategies to improve residual symptoms in first episode psychosis after positive symptoms remission. As deficit syndrome is a concept derived from chronic schizophrenia, PNS could be more an appropriate term for first or recent onset psychosis. In this aspect, this study has touched on critical issue and worthy of publication. However, several points should be addressed to improve clear communication and the quality of the paper.

1) Why did authors consider 3 months as a stabilization point? This is a very important issue. Though one relevant paper (44) was cited, please add more rationale or references. In the APA guideline, stabilization usually indicate 6 month after acute episode.

2) On page 11, please clarify further the definition of “clinically relevant negative symptoms on the SANS scale”. Global score or total score and at least one or two items ---??

3) Was this study cross-sectional design? Describe clearly how this study was designed in the Method.

4) For the reference 67, this is a review paper. Please cite more specific paper which investigated effect of rTMS on the 2ndary negative symptoms.

5) In page 23, in the section of limitation, what does “REF” indicate?

6) In page 9, please cite the reference for CORS. The number 42 is not the right reference for the CORS.

7) You cited 42 as a definition for prodromal symptoms. However, in that paper, it reads that “the prodromal period is the time between onset of any psychiatric symptoms and the onset of psychosis. In other words, it does not contain “—contiguous with —“ which was used in your study. Whether contiguous or not is very important. So, please cite more correct one.

8) When you conduct the repeated measure ANOVA, how did you handle the missing data? (Because only 140 patients obtained a SOFAS score at month 12 in page 16.). LOCF or observed case analysis?
Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

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