Author's response to reviews

Title: Altered cardiac autonomic nervous function in depression

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Melissa Norton
Editor-in-Chief of Journal of BMC Psychiatry

Dear Dr Norton

The authors thank the reviewers for their comments on our manuscript entitled: “Altered cardiac autonomic nervous function in depression”. These comments have been addressed, as summarized below.

Answer questions: highlighted in red in the manuscript.

Reviewer's report
Reviewer: Jess Fiedorowicz

Minor Essential Revisions

1) The following exclusion criteria is not clear: Patients exhibiting a normal sinus rhythm without acute myocardial infarction according to ECG testing. Do the authors intend this to be listed with exclusion criteria? The inclusion criteria of normal sinus rhythm would seem to conflict with some of the reporting on arrhythmias. Presumably this reflects the difference between an initial 12-lead and the 24 hour monitoring, but would be helpful if made explicit for the reader.

Patients with acute myocardial infarction (AMI) should be excluded according to ECG testing, as AMI can induce cardiac autonomic dysfunction as well as depression. The wording of the exclusion criteria (in the Subjects section of the Methods section on page 6) has been revised.

2) The following sentence from the discussion will require rewording for clarity:
Michael Berk  cont’d…

Different design [37], therefore a reduced comparability across studies and explain some of the inconsistencies across studies.

We have revised the contents in Discussion section on page 15. The sentence has been removed and “study design” included in the previous sentence that describes potential sources of variance between studies.

Discretionary Revisions
1) Abstract, Results. Please remove comma before first sentence. Also after first sentence of Background.
These commas have been removed.

Quality of Written English
Additional revisions have been made to improve the clarity of the overall document.

Yours sincerely

Michael Berk
Professor of Psychiatry, Deakin University