Author's response to reviews

Title: The Effect of Verbalization Strategy on Wisconsin Card Sorting Test Performance in Schizophrenic Patients Receiving Classical or Atypical Antipsychotics

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Version: Date: 27 October 2005

Author's response to reviews:

Editorial Office
BioMed Central

Re: Manuscript "WISCONSIN CARD SORTING TEST PERFORMANCE AMONG SCHIZOPHRENIC PATIENTS ON CLASSICAL AND ATYPICAL ANTIPSYCHOTICS: POSSIBLE CONTRIBUTION FROM A REMEDIATION STRATEGY"

Dear Editor,
We are writing to submit the revised manuscript with the suggested modifications.

Reviewer Marie-Cristine Hardy-Bayle
2. Possible limitations of the study have been incorporated in the Discussion section (pg. 8).
3. The study shows cross-sectional evaluation only. Because this is not a perspective study, we do not have baseline neuropsychological evaluation. The criteria leading to the choice of the AP treatment have been discussed (pg. 8, second and third paragraphs).
4. The background regarding the impact of APs on cognition has been mentioned with 2 general reviews (references ndegrees 1, 13) and with a recent Editorial (Lancet, 2004, reference ndegrees 12) (pg. 4, first paragraph).
5. We acknowledge the lack of examination of potentially confounding variables but this is due to the choice of clinically stabilized and well functioning subjects. Nevertheless these represent a quite comparable groups. We now reported the total PANSS score of the 2 groups with non significant differences (pg. 6, second paragraph).
Comment is reported in Discussion section (pg. 8, second paragraph). We decided to study a population with stable treatment (i.e. patients living in community with monotherapy and no dose change in the last year). We acknowledge that this is biased group, nevertheless other types of patients would have received more complex treatment regime with frequent dose adjustment and would have introduced other sources of biases.

Reviewer Janusz K Rybakowski
1. In our department DSM III-R criteria was used at the beginning of the study.
2. Total PANSS score of the 2 groups have been reported (section Results ,2nd prg).
3. Subjects were in monotherapy as stated in the Method section (pg. 5 line 2).
4. Literature references for the cut-off criteria are reported in the Method section (pg. 5 line 16, references
5. Description of remediation procedure: the only modification to the Heaton (1981) administration is that "the subjects were also required to 'verbally express' the matching criterion before the card sorting". The subject verbalize and the feedback is the same of the Heaton administration, as reported in the Method section, Procedure paragraph (pg. 5, Procedure section).

6. The term unique error is reported in the Heaton manual and in literature. We report the more used WCST variables. Adding more variables could reduce statistical power.

7. References of papers measuring effect of atypical and classical APs have been reported and discussed, the references reported have been limited to general reviews only (references ndegrees 1, 13) and a recent Editorial (Lancet, 2004, reference ndegrees 12).

Minor essential revisions
1. We acknowledge the issue raised and the title has been changed as suggested.
2. The reference to cognitive enhancement therapy (CET) is not related to our study but to literature data.
3. Limits of the study have been now better described (pg. 8).
4. Discussion and conclusions have been revised (pg. 7-9).
5. References mentioned do correspond to those reported in the text.
6. Table 2 is busy but if divided in more tables it could be even more difficult to read.

Discretionary revisions
1. The suggestion has been acknowledged.
2. This is clearly reported in the 1st paragraph of the Discussion
3. This could a good idea. We will accept the indication of the Editorial Office.

We hope that the paper is now more clear and fluent, so that could be accepted for publication.
Yours faithfully,
Prof. Alessandro Rossi