Author's response to reviews

Title: Comparison of pain, cortisol levels, and psychological distress in women undergoing surgical termination of pregnancy under local anaesthesia versus intravenous sedation

Authors:

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Ms Lee,

**Re: MS # 1444412788119574**

**Manuscript title:** Comparison of pain, cortisol levels, and psychological distress in women undergoing surgical termination of pregnancy under local anesthesia versus intravenous sedation

**Authors:** Sharain Suliman, Todd Ericksen, Peter W Labuschgne, Renee de Wit, Dan J Stein and Soraya Seedat

Thank you for reviewing the above-named manuscript and for the helpful comments of the reviewer (Oivind Ekeberg). We have once again revised our manuscript, addressing the remaining issues raised by the second review. We outline these issues and our changes below. In addition to responding to the spirit and letter of the reviewers’ comments, we have also gone over the paper very carefully ourselves, updating arguments wherever possible and clarifying matters that seemed unclear.

1. Table 1: The reviewer has suggested that the variable names in the table should reflect what is measured. The variable names have been changed to do so.

2. The reviewer has noted that the SDs (as seen in Table 1) are so wide that the distributions cannot be normal, and as such non-parametric tests should be used. While the SDs were large, the variables themselves do not need to be normally distributed, only the standardised residuals (these were normally distributed according to the Shapiro-Wilk test).

3. The reviewer has requested that repeated measurements should be made in order to show whether there are any statistical differences according to time and between groups. We included this at the bottom of pg 15 (and continued on 16).
4. The reviewer states that the linear regression is not satisfactory. We therefore computed a correlation matrix with all T1 totals, T2 totals, and T4 CAPS. The significant variables were then entered into a stepwise regression which produced 3 models. The semi-partial correlation coefficients and betas were computed in order see the unique contribution of each predictor variable (see pg 17, paragraph 3 & Table 3).

5. The reviewer notes that possible associations between IS/LA and the 3 month CAPS score has not been analysed. We did this analysis and included the results on pg 14 at the end of paragraph 3.

6. The reviewer suggests that in the conclusion of the abstract we include actual figures of the number of women with PTSD. This had been included on pg 3.

7. The reviewer correctly notes that the percentage of high STAI scores at 1 and 3 months must be wrong as presented in the results section. The erroneous figures have been corrected in paragraph 2 on pg 15.

8. The reviewer suggests that Table 2 might be easier to read if there were 2 columns: PTSD and No PTSD. We have modifies the table as such.

9. The reviewer has queried the relationship between cortisol and self-esteem. We have corrected the figures on pg 16, third line from the bottom.

10. The reviewer feels that Table 3 is not necessary. We have modified it to include the beta-variables and semi-partial correlations.

11. We have moved the results of the relationship between cortisol and PTSD symptoms to the end of the results section as requested.

We believe that these changes have improved the quality of the manuscript. We look forward to hearing further from you. Thank you for your time and your consideration of this work.

Yours sincerely,

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