Reviewer's report

Title: Does Bright Light Have Anxiolytic Effects? An Open Trial

Version: 2 Date: 4 July 2007

Reviewer: robert D levitan

Reviewer's report:

General

This is a preliminary study intended to demonstrate that bright light might have an anxiolytic effect above and beyond its effect on mood. If light has anxiolytic effects, several clinical applications would merit testing. The paper is well written and the results are fairly straightforward. The way the data were collected is unusual in that this was a sub-study within a larger protocol that involved an experimental sleep-wake schedule. It is unclear to what extent this unique protocol may have influenced the overall results.

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

1. For purposes of replication, a more comprehensive outline of inclusion and exclusion criteria is needed. Was there any screening for psychiatric disorders for example?

2. In the discussion it should be emphasized more strongly that the study population was limited to a very healthy sample of individuals who exercised vigorously on a regular basis and had a lack of cardiac risk factors. Particularly for the older subgroup, this is not representative of the population at large. The lack of a subgroup between 31-58 is also an issue to mention as this is a large subgroup with high rates of anxiety.

3. Another limitation that should be mentioned is the long period of time between baseline and post-treatment assessment of anxiety i.e. greater than 3 hours. It is likely that normal circadian variation in anxious arousal might have contributed to (or masked) some of the effects reported. Some discussion of this is warranted.

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)
Is it known whether the individuals with "clinical levels of anxiety" had formal DSM-defined anxiety disorders?

Why not compare the anxiolytic effects of light to those of exercise?

**What next?:** Accept after minor essential revisions

**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.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

'I declare that I have no competing interests'