Author's response to reviews

Title: Concurrent crack and powder cocaine users from Sao Paulo. Do they represent a different group?

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Author's response to reviews: see over
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Re: 'Clinical differences in form of use and route of administration in Cocaine Users from Sao Paulo' (MS: 1449006603680345)

Dear Dr Christian Haasen,

We wish to thank you for your constructive comments and suggestions. We have edited the text according to the points you have raised.

Please find attached the revised manuscript and our responses and changes in light of the comments are summarized on following pages.

Yours truly,
Reviewer’s comments:

**a. The paper does not hold up to what the title promises**

We thank the reviewer for this comment and acknowledge that the previous title of the paper addressed items not described in the text. Therefore, we decided to entitle the manuscript:

“Concurrent crack and powder cocaine users from Sao Paulo. Do they represent a different group?”

**b. Introduction:**

1. “In the introduction the literature cited is mainly books and is generally older”

   We have included in the Introduction and in the discussion new references as suggested by the referee:


c. Methods:

1. “Why was a standardized instrument (such as the ASI or MAP) not used?”

The questionnaire used in this project was developed specially for the Brazilian population, aiming to be a culturally adjusted structured interview protocol in Portuguese to evaluate the drug history and HIV risk behaviors of cocaine/crack users in Brazil. This questionnaire has been subjected to an extensive piloting process using a relatively large and heterogeneous sample of cocaine users and it was chosen since includes questions which are more relevant and better characterize the patterns of drug use in the Brazilian reality.

2. “The division of the sample into three groups seems rather arbitrary and does not really make sense. As the main group (dual users) is 10 times as large as the crack group, it really may make more sense to divide the dual users group into other subgroups. The criteria for inclusion in the dual users group is not very clear: if anyone having used both routes of administration, regardless of frequency, is included, then we are talking about a very inhomogeneous group. Then you are comparing an inhomogeneous group with two very homogeneous groups. It may make more sense to divide the cocaine users into severity groups, rather than into these three groups.”

We acknowledge that the reasons for the division of the sample in three groups were not very clear in the manuscript. The fact that the Dual Users group, which included individuals reporting use of the two routes of administration concurrently, is 10 times as large as the crack group is the fact that caught our attention. However in these studies, this group tended to be neglected and individuals reporting more than one route (who seem to be the most common in Brazil) were counted per route, with usually only two theoretically inhomogeneous groups remaining to be compared.

In order to make our objective clearer, we changed our Introduction and aim to concentrate only in the investigation of socio-demographic characteristics and history of drug use of Dual Users group in comparison to the other two homogenous groups.
d. Results:

1. “It is stated, that powder cocaine users were older than crack cocaine users, but there was no significance (p>0.05). If there is no statistical difference, the group cannot be seen as older.”

   This comparison was excluded from the text.

2. “There are no results on: severity of cocaine dependence; on binge use; on comorbid psychiatric or somatic disorders. Therefore, there are important factors missing that would give us a better clinical picture, which is what the title promises.”

   We agree with the reviewer and as stated above, the title of the manuscript was modified to better summarize what we decided to focus on: socio-demographic characteristics and history of drug use.

e. Discussion:

1. There is no discussion on the added value of this study in comparison to previous studies.

   We have added the sentence below to the text:

   *In summary, we show for the first time that interesting differences exist between Powdered, Crack and Dual Cocaine Users, a separate group, usually not considered in previous studies. The findings suggest that the Dual Users group differs from the mono users in several of the variables tested and appeared to be a distinct and more severe group regarding history of illicit drug abuse and rates of criminal history.*