Author's response to reviews

Title: An increased respiratory drive relates to the severity of dyspnea in systemic sclerosis

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear executive editor, dear dr. Cornacchia,

We thank the reviewers for their comments on our work and for the opportunity to submit a revised manuscript. We would like to respond with a point-by-point response.

Reviewer 1:

1. The values of PaO2 are added and units are in kPa (as well as PaCO2). There is no significant difference between the two groups with respect to PaO2.

2. We did not measure the intensity of dyspnea during CO2 rebreathing and recognize this as a limitation to our study. Therefore we added lines 339-343 to our manuscript.

Reviewer 2:

A: We provided additional background information on the sensation of dyspnea and the reason for its understanding in SSc patients. These are added in lines 66-80.

B: Discussion on our findings, in particular the differences between the two groups, is added in lines 244-275 and 282-284.

C: The contributors to an enhanced sensitivity to hypercapnia are added and discussed in lines 307-313 and 319-323.

D: We recognize that the study was not designed to evaluate mouth occlusion pressures as an objective parallel of dyspnea. Therefore we changed the “summary” paragraph (lines 358-369) as well as the conclusion in the abstract and the title of the present manuscript. Furthermore, in this paragraph lines 365-369 add to the foundation and placement of the results.

1. Formatting is corrected to journal style.

2. Screening program is added in lines 120-123.

3. Specific methods for measuring PFTs are added in lines 134-136.

4. The techniques used to calibrate the turbine volume measuring device (including in the setting of hyperoxia) are added in lines 159-167.

5. Further information on administration, instructions to subjects regarding the USCD questionnaire is provided in lines 178-185.

6. The statement that dyspnea is increases is revised (lines 228-236).

7. Conversation on the limitations is further expanded as suggested in lines 289-303.

8. This paragraph is deleted (lines 346-355).
9. PaO$_2$ is presented and units are changed in Table 1.