Author's response to reviews

Title: Three Years of Pulmonary Rehabilitation: Inhibit the Decline in Airflow Obstruction, Improve Exercise endurance Time, and Body-Mass Index, in Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease

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Author's response to reviews:

Dear Dr. Norton
Chief Editor
BMC Pulmonary Medicine

Reply to comments made by reviewer to our paper entitled “three years of pulmonary rehabilitation …”

A. Dr. Eric Derom

Major comments:

1. Regarding the discrepancy between abstract and Methods section, dyspnea evaluation was not included and therefore deleted from the abstract. b. “standard care” was explained few lines above this statement.

2. Calculation made as described, primary outcome was the change in value of FEV1.

3. Analysis of data was per protocol. Intention to treat is very difficult in long term studies as described by the authors of THORCH and UPLIFT studies (seretide, spiriva). The only measurable was death, which was not a parameter in our study.

4. Again the section of methods starts with description of drug treatment. Patient recruited if they were ex-smokers who quit smoking at least 2 years prior the study. This information was already in the submitted paper.

5. Regarding drop outs, three years is long time to follow study especially in COPD patients. Comparable study for length TORCH and UPLIFT showed higher percentage of drop outs.

6. Salbutamol was given without spacer, all patients were familiar with inhalation technique.

B. Mauro Carone:

1) Regarding intention to treat it was already answered.

2) Regarding ATS/ERS statement and citation 7. I made the changes in the text
and in the reference section.
3) FEV% changed to FEV1%

C. Marc Decramer:
1. I believe that Prof. Decramer would like to see studies such as TORCH and UPLIFT, unfortunately to conduct huge rehabilitation study is almost impossible and require a huge financial support. These days such support is possible to achieve from pharmaceutical companies as the above mentioned. In this case their interest in rehabilitation is nil. Also Decramer and his group published results of study that included 50 treated and 50 controls.

2. I agree that a randomized study is superior to match control. I included a paper by D’agostino who described the advantage of match study.

3. I believe the statistics is sufficient although not sophisticated.

Editorial comments –
The study duration was almost 6 years, and was approved by institutional review board about 8 years ago. The head of this board was Prof. Gerald Baum, a well known person in the field of pulmonology. He retired few years ago.

Sincerely Yours
David Stav MD 11/3/2009