Author’s response to reviews

Title: The Quality of Postgraduate Medical Training in Integrative Medicine within the Public Health Care Systems of Germany and Switzerland. The Example of Anthroposophic Hospitals

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Author’s response to reviews: see over
MS: 1219602511546790, BMC Complementary and Alternative Medicine, your Email letter of December 15, 2013 concerning our manuscript:

Peter Heusser, Sabine Eberhard, Bettina Berger, Johannes Weinzirl, Pascale Orlow: *The Quality of Postgraduate Medical Training in Integrative Medicine within the Public Health Care Systems of Germany and Switzerland. The Example of Anthroposophic Hospitals*

Dear Editor,

Thank you for reminding us of missing details in our submission. Herewith I quote your comments and answer them point for point:

**Comment 1:** “Research involving human subjects (including human material or human data) that are reported in the manuscript must have been performed with the approval of an appropriate ethics committee. Research carried out on humans must be in compliance with the Helsinki Declaration [...]. A statement to this effect must appear in the Methods section of the manuscript, including the name of the body which gave approval, with a reference number where appropriate.”

**Answer:** Please note that the Helsinki Declaration covers medical research on human subjects and materials, but not sociological or educational research such as the official national postgraduate medical training (PGMT) quality assessments of the Swiss Institute of
Technology (ETHZ), carried out in cooperation with the Swiss Federation of Physicians and the German Federal Physicians Chamber regularly, i.e. year per year. It is national standard and norm that for these quality assessments an ethics approval by an ethics committee and a written informed consent of the participants has not to be obtained. Filling out an anonymous questionnaire whose purpose is explicitly explained is viewed as a written informed consent. How to deal with this? Other than that the investigation fully complies with the Declaration of Helsinki. Therefore we propose the addition of the following text at the end of the Methods section “Survey and Institutions” and inserted it on page 5: “The investigation was carried out in compliance with the Helsinki Declaration. However, as in all the other national and regular surveys on the quality of PGMT in Swiss and German hospitals carried out by the ETHZ in cooperation with the Swiss Federation of Physicians and the German Federal Physicians Chamber and in accord with German and Swiss national standards, an ethics approval by an ethics committee and a written informed consent of the participants prior to the assessment had not to be obtained for this study, its focus being sociological and educational, but not medical in character.”

Comment 2: -“Please state in the Methods section whether written informed consent for participation in the study was obtained from participants or, where participants are children, a parent or guardian”.

Answer 2: this has already been answered in Answer 1.

Comment 3: - “Please include Acknowledgement sections in your manuscript”.

Answer 3: We added an Acknowledgment section at the very end of the manuscript on page 14: “We thank Dr Friedrich Edelhäuser and Dr Christian Scheffer of the Integrated Curriculum for Anthroposophic Medicine (ICURAM) of Witten/Herdecke University for their comments on the assessment plan in the early phase of protocol development, Prof Michael Siegrist of the Swiss Institute of Technology Zürich (ETHZ) for advice in design and statistics, Rebecca Leins (ETHZ) for support in statistics, and Lisa Bossmann of Witten/Herdecke University for carefully checking the manuscripts for typing errors and formal correctness.”

With these alterations I submit the revision of our manuscript. The figure and the tables remain the same and are not re-submitted. In case of further questions please don’t hesitate to contact us again.

Kind regards

Univ.-Prof. Dr. med. Peter Heusser, MME (Unibe)