Author's response to reviews

Title: Glucosamine and chondroitin sulfate supplementation to treat symptomatic disc degeneration; Biochemical rationale and case report

Authors:

Wim J. van Blitterswijk (w.v.blitterswijk@nki.nl)
Jos C.M. van de Nes (vdnes@planet.nl)
Paul I.J.M. Wuisman (orthop@vumc.nl)

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Dear Editor,

Re: Revised manuscript ID - 9499243671339318
'Glucosamine and chondroitin sulfate supplementation to treat symptomatic disc degeneration; Biochemical rationale and case report' by W.J. van Blitterswijk et al., for publication in BMC Complimentary and Alternative Medicine

Thank you for the editorial decision letter of 9 May 2003 and the comments of the reviewers. We appreciate that both reviewers found our paper scientifically interesting and important. Please find attached the revised version of our manuscript. One figure (PNG file) belonging to the article is attached separately. All authors have read and agreed with this revised version of this manuscript.

Understandably, both reviewers emphasized the limited value of a single case for drawing definite conclusions. Of course, we agree, as had already been quite clearly been noted in the original version of the paper. This point has even more clearly emphasized at several sites in the reversed paper (see also below).

Our point-by-point reply to the comments of the reviewers is as follows:

Reviewer 1:

Under MRI finding (page 5): To exclude possible diurnal variation of the disc water content, MRIs were taken at the same time of the day (in the morning). What argues against variability of the MRI machine is that the very same machine was used for each of the three measurement and that the signal of the affected disc increased gradually with time, while that of the unaffected discs remained unchanged. The detailed MRI sequences have now been included in this section.

Last sentence on page 2 has been rephrased as requested.
The subtitle on page 6 has been changed as suggested.
Resynthesis has been changed in de novo or new synthesis.
Paragraphs on pages 6 and 7 have been integrated and reorganized as requested.

Page 6 First paragraph. We have attenuated as much as possible the suggestion that the nutraceuticals may have caused the recovery. As specifically requested by the reviewer and the editor, we added here: 'Recovery sometimes happens spontaneously and/or concomitant with an improved overall physical condition (although the latter is not true in the present case). Under 'clinical finding' (at page 5) we described that the overall physical condition of the patient remained unchanged. On page 6: 'To boost this argument,' was replaced by 'Usually,... etc
Pag. 10, first paragraph: 'suggesting (but not proving)'
Page 9, concluding sentence added at the end of the biochemical overview: 'At the same time, however, it is fair to say that the biochemical details are still far from understood and need further investigation.'

Reviewer 2.

It is not entirely clear what this reviewer expects from us: to divide the paper in two separate articles? We believe that the strength and the attractive aspect is just the combination of a case and a piece of underlying biochemistry. We have emphasized that the one case is by no means proof but together with the biochemistry encourages a double blind clinical trial (similar as undertaken by NIH on osteoarthritis), as recommended at the end of the paper and as also stressed by both reviewers. So, we prefer to stick to one single article rather than two. Moreover, the case report is a distinct section in the paper.

Written and signed consent was obtained from the patient to publish his case, and was faxed on 16 May to the editorial office.

I hope that we have adequately responded to the reviewers' comments and that the changes made in our manuscript are satisfactorily, so that the paper will now be accepted for publication.

Yours sincerely,

Wim J. van Blitterswijk, PhD
Division of Cellular Biochemistry
The Netherlands Cancer Institute
Plesmanlaan 121
1066 CX Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Tel: +31-20-5121976
Fax: +31-20-5121989
E-mail: w.v.blitterswijk@nki.nl