Author's response to reviews

Title: Mediterranean diet and extended fasting's influence on changing the intestinal microflora, immunoglobulin A secretion and clinical outcome in patients with rheumatoid arthritis and fibromyalgia. An observational study

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Dr. Pemberton,

Ladies and gentlemen,

we now have completed the revision of the manuscript according to the helpful comments of the reviewer. Please find attached the revised manuscript.

The comments of the reviewer were addressed in the manuscript:

1. **Major compulsory revisions:**

   We now provide information on dietary intakes of our study participants as assessed by a semiquantitative food frequency questionnaire. We have included the description of the questionnaire in the *Methods* section (page 9, line 6ff.) and present the data in the *Results* section (page 10, lines 10-12) and in the extended table 1. We agree with the reviewer that patients with rheumatic disease frequently alter their diet. In fact, our studied patients (rheumatoid arthritis and fibromyalgia) already showed some healthy eating patterns on study entry, and the rheumatoid arthritis patients consumed less meat products and sausage, an important food item in Germany. We added the resulting limitation in the *Discussion* (page 14, lines 5-11).

   2. Information on medication and other treatments is given in the extended table 1 and in the *Results* section (page 10, lines 13-16). Information on any Complementary treatments is given in the *Methods* section (page 5, lines 4-5 and page 7, lines 14-16).

2. **Minor essential revision:**

   1. We agree that within a 2-week period not the full benefit of a dietary treatment (Mediterranean diet) and subsequent changes in fecal flora may have been seen. We now
included this important limitation in the Discussion (page 14, third paragraph, lines (16-22).
2. A standardised protocol was used and is now described in the Methods section (page 9, lines 3-5).
3. Within-group weight loss is included in the Results section (page 10, third paragraph, lines 22-24).
4. The reviewer rightly points to baseline clinical differences between the fasting RA and Mediterranean diet RA patients and its potential influence on intervention. We acknowledged and discussed this issue in the Discussion section (page 14, lines 12-15 (second paragraph)).
5. We corrected the columns in table 1.
6. The legends were changed to “Fasting” and Mediterranean diet”.
7. The references for the diagnostic criteria for both RA and FM are given.
8. We agree that small sample size is more correct than moderate sample size. Accordingly, we changed the sentence.

Discretionary revisions
1. We changed the title according to the reviewer’s suggestion.
2. Author affiliation was corrected.
3-5. We corrected the manuscript according to the suggestions.
6. We amended the reference 13.
7.”vegetarian” was omitted.
8. The actual length of the hospital day is now given in the Methods section (page 5, the last but one line).
9. “specialising” was changed to ”specialised”.
10. The last sentence was changed (page, 8, lines 8-9).
11. The reference for SAS/software is given in the text (Methods, Page 10, lines 1-2)
12. “neglectable” was changed to “negligible”.
13. Throughout the text abbreviations for RA and FM after first explanation are used.
14. Attention was given to punctuation.
15. We omitted “intensified”.

Sincerely,

Andreas Michalsen, for the authors