Author's response to reviews

Title: The Transeurope Footrace Project: Longitudinal data acquisition in a cluster randomized mobile MRI field study of a 64-stage 4,486km transcontinental ultra-marathon; pre-race status vs. performance analysis on 44 endurance runners.

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Version: 4 Date: 14 June 2011

Author's response to reviews:

Covering letter

Ulm, June 9th, 2011

Dear editors,

our manuscript describes a unique field study on ultraendurance running. It is unique in many respects: First, an exceptional high number of subjects of the worldwide longest multistage ultramarathon participated voluntary at this project. Second, the researchers followed the runners from stage to stage with a mobile MRI truck with all the technical equipment necessary to keep a modern MRI scanner running for 10 weeks, non-stop. This imputed many risks and pitfalls not really being calculable in the beginning. The whole system had to be build up and down every day, not knowing if the material resists the enormous strain of such a trip through whole Europe. Third, the daily physical and mental workload was very high for all (only) 4 staff members, because a huge amount of interdisciplinary research topics got implemented in the project. The main author drives the 40 tonnes truck on his own.

So this project as a unique longitudinal observation of long distance runners under their “natural” conditions on their route across whole Europe with a mobile MRI was both challenge and risk together and ended successfully for nearly all implemented research topics.

In our opinion this setting is innovative fulfils the editorial policies of the Journal “BMC Medical Research Methodology”. This setting is research at its basic,
unpredictable, demanding, adventurous and exciting. Not only for us, for the readers also.

This article is mentioned to be the basic manuscript for contemporary following result reports on the different scientific topics of the TEFR-project, which may reveal additional new knowledge in physiological and pathological processes of the functional systems on organ, cellular and subcellular level at the limit of ultraendurance running.

There are no financing or non-financing competing interests of other people or organizations influencing our interpretation of data or presentation of information.

It is an interdisciplinary project and the setting of the field study is new regarding the circumstances. So therefore, it is difficult for us to name any expert being able to an objective assessment of the manuscript's quality.

With kind regards,

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