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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Author's response to reviews:

Covering letter

Ulm, March 1st, 2012

Dear editors, dear reviewers,

according to the concerns of the two reviewers a major revision was performed ending in an extensively edited version of our manuscript. As we got the choice by the editors, we did not divide our manuscript. The main concern in our point of view was the remark of reviewer 2 to focus on the methods and design of the project and not on results, as this is relevant for the BMC Journal “Medical Research Methodology”. According to this main aspect, we are not following the offer to present two manuscripts after revision as reviewer 1 proposed and decided to remove presentations of research results.

We totally reconstructed the manuscript and focused on presentation of the methods to be complete and detailed in the text (reviewer 2, editors). Data on presentation of age and gender effects and body composition (BMI) and their relationship to performance were totally removed in results, discussion and figures, because not relevant here (reviewer 2). Therefore the statistical procedures are reduced to descriptive analysis which made another review by a statistician not necessary (reviewer 1). Data on environment, race conditions and baseline characteristics of study population (AROM, alignment, age, drop-out,
and performance) are presented in tables and figures as appropriate for this topic now. Figures 4, 8, 9, 10, and 12 were removed (reviewer 2). Each method is presented with relevant references, aims, reliability data if known and examples and details are presented in a pictorial way in specific new figures (reviewer 2). In addition images that show typical injury patterns in long-distance runners are included (reviewer 1); with exclusion of worsening of previous injuries during the foot-race (reviewer 1). This ended in a complete revised presentation of the figures. The data collected in the project are described in relation to our hypotheses in background and discussion sections (reviewer 2).

We totally agree with the concerns of reviewer 1 regarding our initial concise presentation of results. Therefore presentation of specific results in the different topics of the project such as cardiovascular, brain or musculoskeletal system, and so on and their relations to influencing factors, will be done in separate papers in the nearby future when detailed data analysis is completed. But this is not relevant for “BMC Medical Research Methodology” (reviewer 2).

The revised manuscript was copyedited by a native speaker additionally (editors).

As the article has an outstanding merit and interest in its field and with amending the article for focusing on the methods used and emphasizing the technical challenges encountered, we hope that the article would suit for “BMC Medical Research Methodology” now, as other unique field studies did in the past.

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

With kind regards,

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