Reviewer's report

Title: Study protocol: The InterHerz project- A web-based psychological treatment for cardiac patients with depression: a randomized controlled trial

Version: 1 Date: 12 November 2012

Reviewer: Tobias Freund

Reviewer's report:

Messerli-Bürgy et al. present the protocol of a RCT to determine the effect of the web-based intervention tool deprexis on patients with cardiac diseases. Research evaluating the effect of low-intensity measures that are offered through the internet is of high interest. The protocol is well-written overall but the authors are asked to respond to the following minor essential revisions:

a) Overall manuscript: Please make a clear statement on the target group throughout the whole manuscript. I was quite confused about the diseases addressed: Do you aim to include patients with CHD (and possible cardiac comorbidities such as chronic heart failure or arrhythmias) or do you aim to target "cardiac patients" no matter which cardiac disease they suffer from. It's essential to make this clear (and to use one consistent abbreviation)

Please state if patient recruitment has already begun (which I assume is the case as the website Interherz offers patients to enrol!). Estimate a date when you expect patient recruitment to be finished.

b) Sample size calculation: Please state numerically which size of effect you assumed (e.g. X points difference on BDI +/- a standard deviation of Y). Which primary statistical test did you calculated the sample size for?

c) Inclusion and exclusion criteria: Please state if you aim to exclude or maintain patients with incurring exclusion criteria through the course of the study (do you aim to exclude patients if their cardiac disease worsens through the course of the study?)

d) Intervention: Please specify the way a psychologist could be contacted by study patients (p 8, last sentence): e.g. by phone, via email...?

e) Assessment: Please clarify who is going to assess eligible patients (e.g. study nurse, psychologist)

f) Measures: Please provide some more details on the assessment of medication and lifestyle changes (last sentence on p9)

g) The very last sentence of the manuscripts needs rewriting: "..will allow to extend (?) knowledge..."

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely
related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I do not have any conflicts of interest.