Reviewer's report

Title: Comparison of the rhythm control treatment strategy versus the rate control strategy in patients with permanent or long-standing persistent atrial fibrillation and heart failure treated with cardiac resynchronization therapy - rationale and design of a pilot study of the randomized controlled Cardiac Resynchronization in Atrial Fibrillation Trial (Pilot-CRAfT).

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Reviewer: Thais Nascimento

Reviewer's report:

Major Compulsory Revisions

The authors propose a pilot trial to evaluate in patients with long persistent atrial fibrillation and heart failure with CRT implant the strategies of rate control versus rhythm control. The idea is original and well written. Some points should be clarified. They mention at the introduction that the AV node ablation is already proved to be effective in rate control, but as a “dangerous situation”. However, there are no comments about how “dangerous” the amiodarone could be to any patients, including this specific population.

The end point of % of BIV pacing does not seem to be adequate once the rate control arm will have 100% pacing, if the AV node ablation is performed. It should be one clinical measurement.

The PABA-CHF study showed no difference in mortality and higher number of hospitalizations (in the rhythm control group) when comparing the rate x rhythm control with antiarrhythmic drugs. This study did not allow long persistent or permanent atrial fibrillation and the atrial fibrillation ablation and CRT were not included. However, the use of amiodarone (82%) was not effective as a drug strategy.

Minor Essential Revisions

At the Statistic analysis the term chi2 should be changed for X2 or chi-square.

Discretionary Revisions

The allowance of atrial fibrillation ablation in the rhythm control group is potential confounder factor.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable
Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests