Author's response to reviews

Title: Antibodies against phosphorylcholine are not altered in plasma of patients with Alzheimer's disease

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Editor,

We thank you for giving us the opportunity to clarify the ethics statement and to re-submit our manuscript “Antibodies against phosphorylcholine are not altered in plasma of patients with Alzheimer’s disease”.

Please find our clarification below.

Thank you for your consideration and we look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Edina Silajdžić (on behalf of Oskar Hansson and Maria Björkqvist)
Editor’s comments

- Requesting consent statement:
  Please state in the Methods section whether written informed consent for participation in the study was obtained from participants or, where participants are children, a parent or guardian.

As stated in the manuscript, we only obtained written consent for controls. Oral consent was obtained for patients. No participants are children. If the statement in the manuscript is not clear on this point, please advise whether we should write this part to clarify.

“All controls gave written informed consent. The patients underwent plasma sampling as part of the clinical routine investigation and in conjunction with this procedure they gave oral informed consent for future use of their banked plasma samples for research. This was documented in the patients’ medical records. Moreover, all individuals were later on instructed to retract their permission, if they had changed their minds, as instructed in local press advertisements.”

- Please ensure that format follows BMC guidelines
  (http://www.biomedcentral.com/bmcneurol/authors/instructions/researcharticle)

We followed the format outlined in the BMC guidelines. If this is not the case, please advise on what we may have missed.

- Before proceeding we require clarification regarding the patient consent obtained.
  We note that it is mentioned within the paper that ‘All controls gave written informed consent.’ This statement only covers the ‘control’ participants. Please confirm whether written informed consent was obtained from all participants of this study including patient with Alzheimer’s disease, vascular dementia, and other dementias etc.

Written informed consent was not obtained for the patients. As stated in the manuscript, oral consent was obtained from the patients. If the statement in the manuscript is not clear on this point, please advise whether we should we-write this part to clarify.

“All patients underwent plasma sampling as part of the clinical routine investigation and in conjunction with this procedure they gave oral informed consent for future use of their banked plasma samples for research. This was documented in the patients’ medical records. Moreover, all individuals were later on instructed to retract their permission, if they had changed their minds, as instructed in local press advertisements.”
- We would also like clarification as to why only oral consent was obtained regarding future use of the participant samples. Was this means of consent approved by the ethics committee?

This is a procedure often used in Sweden before storing samples in biobanks. The ethical committee approved the use of the samples after we had advertised in Swedish local newspapers that the study was going to be performed using the already obtained and stored samples. The manuscript states:

“...all individuals were later on instructed to retract their permission, if they had changed their minds, as instructed in local press advertisements.”

- Please include the reference number for the ethics approval where appropriate.

We have added the following sentence to the methods section of the manuscript: 
*The procedure for use of plasma samples obtained in clinical routine after oral consent was approved by the ethical committee (reference number “Dnr 289/2008”)*

- Please ensure that clear statements addressing these points are included.

We feel that the ethics statement already states that controls gave written consent, whereas patients gave oral consent. However, if you feel that this is not clearly stated, we are happy to re-write the statement.