Author’s response to reviews

Title: Continuous intraoperative monitoring of pelvic autonomic nerves during TME to prevent urogenital and anorectal dysfunction in rectal cancer patients (NEUROS): a randomized controlled trial

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Point by Point Reply

1a. Ethical and Funding Approval Documentation

Before we can proceed with your submission, can you please forward copies of all ethical approval and funding approval for our records. These documents should be sent as email attachments to the following email address, BMCeriesEditorial@biomedcentral.com. Please DO NOT upload these documents as additional files in the submission system. If your documents are not in English, please could you provide translated versions of the relevant parts. These should be endorsed and signed by a contactable person at the institution. Please also include the original documents. Can you please confirm in your cover letter that you have forwarded the requested documentation to BMCeriesEditorial@biomedcentral.com.

- Copies of ethical and funding approval have been sent to BMCeriesEditorial@biomedcentral.com. We provided translated versions of the relevant parts in English as desired.
1b. Funding

A study is considered to be externally funded if the authors have been awarded a grant for the study by a major funding body (e.g. governmental funding/award from a charitable foundation). If a study has not received external funding, then the study protocol will be sent for peer-review with a member of our Editorial Board. If a study has received funding/assistance from a commercial organization, this should be clearly stated in the 'competing interests' section of your manuscript, and the study protocol will be sent for peer-review by a member of our Editorial Board. Can you please confirm whether your study protocol has undergone peer-review by the funding body.

- The project is funded by grant from the German Research Foundation (DFG, Grand number: KN 930/1-1) (please see also manuscript, under heading “funding”). Therefore, the study underwent peer-review by the funding body as a prerequisite for approval.

1c. Study status

The protocol must be for a study that is ongoing. An ‘ongoing’ study is defined as one where the investigators are still collecting, or analyzing data. Can you please confirm what stage your study is currently at.

- The trial is in the recruiting phase (please see also manuscript, under heading “trial status”). We confirm that the study is ongoing.

1d. Related Articles

Can you please clarify whether any publications containing the results of this study have already been published or submitted to any journal. If so, can you please provide a list of the related articles.

- No publications containing the results of this study have been published or submitted to any journal.

2. Please confirm whether approval has been obtained from all centers which will participate in the study, or whether you are hoping to include more centers beyond the ones listed in the manuscript as currently participating.

- All centers listed in the manuscript have signed a contract for participating in this study and are currently recruiting patients. However, we hope to include further centers beyond the ones listed in the near future in order to accelerate recruitment.

3. Title page: Kindly provide email addresses of all authors.
- According to your suggestion email addresses of all authors were listed on the title page.

All changes in the manuscript are highlighted in yellow. We have additionally added an actually published retrospective study to the references in the manuscript. The sentence “An actual retrospective investigation supports these findings by demonstrating superior urogenital function in patients undergoing rectal cancer surgery with electrophysiological control [9].” was added to the introduction section.

Thank you very much.

With kind regards

Werner Kneist