Author’s response to reviews

Title: Brain donation in psychiatry: results of a Dutch prospective donor program among psychiatric cohort participants

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Author’s response to reviews:

Dear dr. Lawn,

Thank you for providing us with the opportunity to resubmit our revised manuscript titled “Brain donation in psychiatry: results of a Dutch prospective donor program among psychiatric cohort participants” for consideration of publication in BMC Psychiatry.

We would like to thank the reviewers for their thorough assessment of our work. They raise a number of important issues that we have assessed and incorporated in the revised manuscript. We hope that our revisions are satisfactory to the reviewers and that you will consider our manuscript for publication.

Please find below our point-by-point response to each of the reviewers’ comments (remarks reviewers in bold blue), together with the changes that we have made in our manuscript.

We look forward receiving your reply.

On behalf of the authors,
Yours sincerely,

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# Reviewer 1

This is an interesting descriptive study regarding the rates of registration for brain donations amongst Psychiatric patient cohorts in the Netherlands.

We thank this reviewer for the kind remark.

It is not clear to me why the relatives of OCD and PTSD patients were not also approached.

Indeed, we have not explained this limitation in the original manuscript. The reason why relatives of OCD and PTSD patients were not also approached is simply that the OCD and PTSD cohorts did not contain any relatives, and for this study we only approached cohort participants. We inserted a sentence in the Methods section, page 5, line 100-101. See also line 257-258 in Discussion section on page 11.

What does next-to first degree relative mean, or is this a typing error?

We agree that this can be confusing. With ‘next to’ we meant ‘also/ furthermore’. We removed the words ‘next to’ in order to avoid any confusion. (Background section, page 3, line 72. Methods section, page 5, line 98).
It may be a personable opinion but I do not like the term 'odds' in a scientific sense when referring to the likelihood of consent for brain donation.

We understand and agree. We have replaced the term odds with likelihood in the Results section, page 8-9, lines 193, 195, 196, 202, 205, 214, 216, 222, and Discussion section page 11, line 247, 253. Abstract page 2, line 35.

The discussion should be edited to remove some minor errors.

We thank the reviewer for noting the errors and we corrected them. Discussion section page 10, line 228: we inserted ‘we’.

Line 229: we replaced ‘their responses’ with ‘the willingness to sign up as brain donor’. The rest of the alinea is for a large part rewritten.

It would be interesting to know how many of the registered participants do become successful brain donors in the future (i.e. do not withdraw consent or have medico-legal issues at time of death that mean donation is unable to go ahead).

We thank the reviewer for this comment. We have not explained in the original manuscript that in the Netherlands, we work with a prospective donor program, so permission for brain donation is arranged while the donor is alive: all the papers are already signed. The Dutch law does not require permission of the next-of-kin. Nevertheless, we ask the living prospective donor to have the papers co-signed by another person, for the practical reason that this increases the chance that someone (the co-signer) will call the Brain Bank at time of death. In case of medico-legal issues at time of death, such as suicide, the body is in most cases released by the District Attorney for brain autopsy. We inserted a paragraph on this specific topic and we added information about the chance of withdrawal of consent in Discussion section: page 11, lines 263-269.

# Reviewer 2

The study by de Lange and colleagues investigates recruitment rates for brain donation among cohorts of patients with psychiatric disorders. The manuscript is well written and the results clearly presented. The major finding that a face-to-face approach yields a greater number of recruits supports experience in the field.
We thank this reviewer for the kind remarks.

What is missing from the manuscript is some contextualization of the findings in relation to current literature. Indeed, the entire discussion cites only one reference. How do the enrollment frequencies compare with other psychiatric cohorts, or neurological cohorts? How do the findings sit with what has been reported on attitudes/decisions to consent.

We understand this comment and agree. As far as we know, we are the first to analyze brain donation recruitment strategies in psychiatric cohorts. However, there are previous studies on brain donation recruitment in neurological cohort studies. We compared our registration rates with the rates found in these studies (Discussion section, page 10, line 231) and added references on the effect of gender (line 251-253). Regarding the face to face versus post strategy, to the best of our knowledge we are the first to analyze the difference in efficiency of these methods. However our finding that face to face is more effective does fit well with other studies in which high rates were reported using a face to face method: Discussion section, page 10, lines 244-246.

The issue of capacity to consent in psychiatric cohorts is not addressed. This has bearing on those that were approached by post.

We appreciate this comment. To prevent someone registering as prospective brain donor when not competent to make such a decision, for example during a psychosis, the NBB always requires co-signing of the informed consent. We inserted Methods section, page 5-6, lines 120-126.

We thank the reviewers for their valuable comments and suggestions. We are hopeful that our adjustments are satisfactory to make publication possible.