Reviewer’s report

Title: Memories of paternal relations are associated with coping and defense mechanisms in breast cancer patients: an observational study

Version: 1 Date: 10 Jul 2017

Reviewer: Vicky Lehmann

Reviewer's report:

I think the authors have done a wonderful job addressing my previous comments; especially the introduction seems much improved. The authors are to applaud for that. However, I still have concerns about the Methods and Results, and still think they are confusing (while the authors' reply did not clarify these issues unfortunately).

Major concerns (in chronological order):

Introduction

1) I very much appreciate the addition of this piece:

Criteria that differentiate between defense and coping processes include the conscious/unconscious status and the intentional/nonintentional nature of the processes. Criteria based on the dispositional or situational status of the process, and on the conceptualization of the processes as hierarchical, are demonstrated to be more a matter of overlap than of difference [6].

However, I think this might need some more explanation or examples. I'm not sure if readers will readily understand what the authors mean/ it's a little too abstract.

2) Page 7, line 3: the authors state that early parental relations can influence interaction with healthcare professionals. Please explain how/ give examples that are relevant here.

Methods:

3) Page 8, line 18: please just mention what the actual cut-off score is

4) Page 9, line 7: instead of just saying that the PBI is solid, the authors should mention more specifically that the PBI has adequate/good psychometric properties (i.e. reliability? validity?)

5) Page 10, line 14: Please make sure to indicate that the reported alphas are from another study (that only becomes clear in the statistical analysis section now); and also report your own alphas for the subscales (i.e. not in the Results)

Methods vs. Results:

6) I think the presentation of analyses and results is still confusing.

The authors mention Wilcoxon tests and ANCOVAs in the methods, but none are reported in the results section. Instead regression analyses are mentioned (but Table 3 mentions ANCOVA). As far as I understand, the ANCOVAs were done to select variables for the regressions. Is this correct? Please state this step in the Results and mention which variables were selected!

7) Where are the results from the Wilcoxon tests? And what is the reason these tests were run anyways? They sound very similar to the ANCOVAs (?), i.e. you use cut-off scores and compare two groups on defenses/coping (Wilcoxon) and then you do the same, but adjust for other factors (ANCOVA)? -->this seems redundant;

OR did you do the Wilcoxon to select for the ANCOVAs? (that's how the table looks like, but not what is reported in the Methods; and the other question that comes along with it: why the regressions and where are they reported?)

-->overall, please better explain and justify your approach in the methods and results.

[the replies that the authors had provided related to these concerns previously, did not clarify these issues unfortunately.]

8) I also think it is odd, that correlations are reported at the end of the Results. Given that you use both coping and defense mechanism in the ANCOVAs/regressions it would make sense to check their correlations first

Minor points:

Page 4, line 15: symptom levels (delete 's' from symptoms)

Page 5, line 15: may change to "considered a normative function of the mind"

Page 5, line 17: may change to "a rigid use"
Page 5, line 17: please explain (or delete) "the low hierarchical level of defense" this doesn't seem self-explanatory/ it's unclear what you mean (it only becomes clearer toward the end of this paragraph; so you could also think about re-ordering it)

**Are the methods appropriate and well described?**
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

No

**Does the work include the necessary controls?**
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Unable to assess

**Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?**
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

Unable to assess

**Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?**
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

I am able to assess the statistics

**Quality of written English**
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Acceptable

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