

Author's response to reviews

Title: Anthroposophic therapy for children with chronic disease: a two-year prospective cohort study in routine outpatient settings

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Author's response to reviews: see over

MS: 4889730426970677 Anthroposophic therapy for children with chronic disease. Response to comments

Harald J. Hamre, 4 June 2009

Reviewer Tom Whitmarsh	Our response + manuscript changes
Many are not familiar with 'ergotherapy' and you might want to add a note.	We have substituted the more widely used term 'occupational therapy' for 'ergotherapy' as translation of the German term 'Ergotherapie'.
You might want to go into more detail about the lack of a control group and the role of outcome studies in assessing treatments and treatment systems.	Regarding the lack of control group, we have already commented on this limitation and assessed other causes of the pre-post improvement in a 14-line long section of the Discussion. Furthermore, we restate this limitation in the Conclusions section. So it is hard to see how this topic could be expanded without become repetitive. Regarding the role of outcome studies, we have inserted the following comment at the end of the Discussion section: "This study also underlines the role of naturalistic outcome studies in the evaluation of complementary therapies and other complex therapy systems [1,2]. For such outcome studies, several features are called for [1-5], which are found in the present study: primary assessment of the whole therapy complex and secondary assessment of therapy components; recruitment of patients in the setting where they are usually treated (here: predominantly primary care); documentation of routine therapy practice while minimising distortion from experimental study conditions; widely used outcomes (here: numerical rating scales); long-term follow-up; and, especially in the case of single-arm studies, a systematic approach to assess and minimise bias."
Editor Nina Titmus	
We ... request that you go through the manuscript formatting checklist one more time and ensure that your revised manuscript conforms	We have checked and revised the manuscript to confirm to the formatting checklist. We have also carefully read through the whole manuscript and corrected some small typographical errors, irregularities etc.

to all of the points.	
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Literature

1. Heusser P: **Kriterien zur Beurteilung des Nutzens von komplementärmedizinischen Methoden.** *Forsch Komplementarmed Klass Naturheilkd* 2001, **8**: 14-23.
2. Walach H, Jonas WB, Lewith GT: **The role of outcomes research in evaluating complementary and alternative medicine.** *Altern Ther Health Med* 2002, **8**: 88-95.
3. Shadish WR, Cook TD, Campbell DT: *Experimental and quasi-experimental designs for generalized causal inference.* Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company; 2002.
4. Boon H, MacPherson H, Fleishman S, Grimsgaard S, Koithan M, Norheim AJ *et al.*: **Evaluating complex healthcare systems: a critique of four approaches.** *eCAM* 2007, **4**: 279-285.
5. Fonnebø V, Grimsgaard S, Walach H, Ritenbaugh C, Norheim AJ, MacPherson H *et al.*: **Researching complementary and alternative treatments - the gatekeepers are not at home.** *BMC Med Res Methodol* 2007, **7**: 7.