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Answering reviewers

Reviewer 00225366:

The authors should carefully mention how they justify the clinical outcome and how they quantify the therapist's attitude. The clinical outcome should also depend on the patient's attitude as well. The authors should therefore discuss all noises and uncertainties in this study.

Reply:

We have taken note of the reviewer's annotation. As our study focused on the therapist's attitude, we additionally listed other possible factors of placebo effects within the limitation section. Some of these other factors, e.g. auto-suggestion, have already been discussed.

From our point of view, the post-procedural conversation with open-ended questions cannot be quantified in a classic way. The only measurable part of the conversation are the four demonstrated standardized CT images (see Figure 1).

Reviewer 02577402:

Results: In this part, the authors did not use specific values to express the demographic data or the pain scores. What the authors did is to let the readers read the tables themselves. This is not good. Please use your own words to describe the demographic data demonstrated in Table 1. Also please use your own words to describe the pain scores, the score decrease range or extent at 1 week, 1 month, 3 and 6 months after treatment. I did not see any pain relief scores in number in the results. The readers will not analyze the tables for the score reduction. Please give the specific data here in the RESULTS.

Reply:

Thank you very much for your comment! According to your advice, the RESULTS have been extended.

Tables: Table 1: Please give the age range for the patients in EG and CG groups. Table 3: Please give the range of the pain scores for every time point in both groups. Do not just give the median data for the pain score. The reader will want to know the range of the



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pain score.

Reply:

The tables have been modified according to your suggestions.

The authors stated that the patients were randomly divided into two groups. The method of randomization is not clear and should be given in the text. Whether it is a blinded trial is not clear. Before the RESULTS part, the authors should also point out the primary end point and the second end point. Also, if it is a randomized controlled trial, it should be registered online. These data are not clear. Please add some more data regarding the study design.

Reply:

Additional data about the study design have been added.