Answer to the Letter to the Editor of K. Shubhakaran et al. entitled “Backache and infection” concerning “Antibiotic treatment in patients with chronic low back pain and vertebral bone edema (Modic type 1 changes): a double-blind randomized controlled trial of efficacy” by Albert H.B. et al., Eur Spine J (2013) 22:697–707

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We thank the authors of the Letter to the Editor for pointing out the interesting fact that in Third World countries, such as India and Middle Eastern countries different strains of bacteria may well be the cause of infection. It needs to be investigated if *Brucella* is the most frequent culprit among the infectious causes, and if bacteria are indeed a cause of Modic changes in these countries.

We do agree with the authors that there are many causes of back pain and multiple examination skills and techniques are needed to arrive at a proper diagnosis. As pointed out in the paper, antibiotic treatment is recommended only for a small and very specific subgroup of patients with low back pain.

Conflict of interest None.

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