Reply to the comment re: “Traumatic brain injuries in illustrated literature: experience from a series of over 700 head injuries in the Asterix comic books” by Nikolas Lloyd

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Dear Editor,

Thank you very much for giving us the opportunity to reply to the comment on our article by Nikolas Lloyd.

We really appreciate such comments—especially those which make an effort to improve the standard of science. Thus, the study design and the follow-up were criticized by Nikolas Lloyd, and it was suggested to make control examinations at 1 and 3 months as well as 2 years. Further, a double-blinded test was recommended to test effects of the magic potion (magic potion vs placebo). Indeed, the limitations of the study about traumatic brain injuries (TBIs) in the Asterix comic books arise from its retrospective study design and the insufficient follow-up, as emphasized in the “Discussion” of the article [1]. Undoubtedly, prospective double-blinded studies are commonly believed to have greater scientific impact than retrospective studies with an inconsistent follow-up. Therefore, even medical “Christmas articles” were designed as meta-analyses [2]. However, characters analysed in the present paper took drugs (the magic potion) in the year 50 B.C. and suffered from TBIs in the same year. For us, it was very difficult to design a study analysing those patients

with follow-up examinations (at 1 and 3 months as well as 2 years) in the year 2011 A.D.

However, our article about TBIs in the Asterix comic books was meant as a Christmas article, even though it was actually published by *Acta Neurochirurgica* at Easter. Christmas articles have a tradition in medicine and are frequently published, e.g. by the *British Medical Journal* [2]. Therefore, our study about TBIs in Asterix comic books was meant neither seriously nor purely as a joke. Besides, our study might help to focus public attention on TBIs as an important field of our daily activities and a leading cause of morbidity and mortality. Further studies on TBI might not only lead to a better understanding of TBI in Asterix comics but—more importantly—might lead to new insights and perhaps subsequently to new therapeutic opportunities for patients suffering from TBIs.

Conflicts of interest None.

References

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