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Editor's note The letter recently published online by the *Journal of Medicine and the Person* has elicited a response by Prof Paolo Bellavite on behalf of a group of investigators of the University of Verona. Professor Bellavite felt that some of the claims contained in the letter were misleading and unwarranted and as such they impugned his personal integrity as well as that of his associates. We are happy to publish Bellavite's response to Chirumbolo and to provide the readership with the opportunity to be aware of all aspects of this important controversy.

Controversy is a manifestation of life, that is of the person and as such it is welcome in a journal focused on the person. At the meantime, the Journal regrets publishing any expression that may be constructed as a personal attack and wishes to apologize to the individuals that might have taken offense from its printing. The journal welcomes controversy and disagreement, but does not condone any form of verbal assault and does not wish to become a venue for personal confrontation.

Dear Editor,

A lengthy letter from Chirumbolo [1] raises a series of criticisms of our experimental studies on *Gelsemium sempervirens* [2–4] and argues that previously advanced critical comments “did not elicit any serious reappraisal”. Considering the language and the concepts presented, it is difficult to escape the impression that this dissertation was a direct attack on our group and our research project. On behalf of the group of scientists working on behavioral

models at the University of Verona, I feel obliged to briefly defend the integrity and reliability of our work. Readers should know that this is the third letter from the same author on the same topic and actually all the critical issues—except those which are manifestly unfounded and/or represent offensive aggressions that do not deserve reply—have been discussed and clarified in a series of recent papers, which are freely available online [5–8]. Contrary to the letter's statement, the concerns related to the mouse anxiety models were thoroughly addressed. As a matter of fact, we did adopt a fully critical approach in our experiments, and an unbiased perusal of them should be enough to confirm the validity of our findings and interpretations. Reference 50 of the letter is wrongly referred, being indeed a pooled-data analysis of the subject [6], proving the validity of our methods and results. Chirumbolo then reiterates the critical points raised by another commentary (reference 4 of his letter), a complete rebuttal of which was published in 2011 [8]. We disagree with the criticisms of the testing methods adopted: in the specific experiments hereby quoted we had decided to use the same investigator in the conduct of the whole experiment—blinded to drug treatment—to reduce the variability of the experimental conditions and the basal anxiety of mice, an approach adopted by most investigators and legitimized by the prestigious journals where we published our research. In cited references [2–8], we already provided evidence of reproducibility, absence of alcohol interference, rationale of test employed, power of statistics; we discussed toxicity and placebo issues, animal housing, physico-chemical theories on highly diluted remedies, including nanosciences and hormesis. So, a further technical reply to out-of-date and redundant objections is not necessary. The section on the dark times of the Middle Ages is out of place and incoherent, given that homeopathy developed in the

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nineteenth century and a growing number of research works, including ours, are published in peer-reviewed journals during the twenty-first century! We are confident that readers will have better opportunities to appreciate the contributions of our group to scientific and humanistic advancements in the fields of homeopathy and integrative medicine. I thank you very much for your hospitality.

Conflict of interest The author declares that he has no conflict of interest.

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