Review 1

Application data

Project Title	Positive Emotions Program for Schizophrenia (PEPS): a randomized controlled study on improving pleasure and motivation in schizophrenia
Project title in English	Positive Emotions Program for Schizophrenia (PEPS): a randomized controlled study on improving pleasure and motivation in schizophrenia
Project number	105319_163355
Instrument	Humanities and social sciences (Division I)
Research Field	Medicine
Main Discipline	10105 Psychology
Main Applicant	Jérôme Favrod
Amount requested (CHF)	266640

Comments regarding the overall assessment

Although I rated the scientific impact and the feasibility as very good some of the applicants rate poor on their scientific output and competence. This is why I rated this only moderate.
In the end my overall impression was therefore only good.

Detailed evaluation

Applicants' scientific track record and expertise

Main applicant: Jérome Favrod
J. Favrod is into research in community psychiatry based on his background as nurse. He published approximately 20 peer-reviewed articles mostly as co-author in collaborative studies. Furthermore, he attributed to a number of book chapters, review articles and supported master theses and wrote one monograph. According researcherid.com his h-index = 9 is with 38 articles with citations. Most articles deal with therapies in chronic psychiatric disorders. As to the knowledge gained so far, I have no doubt that Prof. Favrod is capable in performing the study.

Co-applicant: Alexandra Nguyen
A. Nguyen is a registered nurse working in the same field as the main applicant. She co-authored a number of publications since 2013 and has one monograph as first author from 2009. According to her CV she is well experienced in teaching (esp. nurses) and therefore capable of performing tasks in the suggested study. Whether she has a deepened knowledge in scientific studies I cannot decide by means of the information given.

Co-applicant: Iannis McCluskey
He is a peer practitioner in psychiatry. He has no record of scientific experience. He is supposed to support the conduction of the study.

Co-applicant: Philippe Golay
Ph. Golay is a psychologist and experienced researcher at the CHUV. In the past 5 years he published 6 peer-reviewed articles, 3 times being first author. His focus is on psychological testing and validation.

Co-applicant: Charles Bonsack
Ch. Bonsack has a long record of research in detection and treatment of psychosis. I have no doubt that he is capable in adding valuable support to the project.

Overall, despite 2 of the co-applicants do not have any or have less experience in research, the main applicant and 2 co-applicant provide enough knowledge for performing the suggested project. Co-applicant McCluskey shouldn't act as a co-applicant although I can understand the rationale very well.

Scientific relevance, originality and topicality

The presented project is based on a pilot study addressing problems of positive emotions in chronic psychotic disorder, namely schizophrenia.
Whereas positive symptoms as hallucinations and delusions can be well treated with medication, it is very difficult to treat negative symptoms. Although positive symptoms may have a serious impact during acute episodes, deterioration of cognition, avolition and anhedonia pose the major long-term problem in schizophrenia patients. That's were community psychiatry and specialized programs for improving the abilities of the patients jumps in. As to my knowledge the addressing of positive emotions in such programs is not in the main focus although there a large number of studies that try to understand the blunted affective responses in schizophrenia. As there is no other treatment available to date and the pharmacological approaches to negative symptoms fail on a large scale, this study seems to be promising.
To implementation of EEG measurements alongside the other examinations is interesting and should be pursued although it is not the main focus of the study.
To conclude there is an urgent need for addressing this problem and therefore the suggested project is interesting and worthwhile to be followed.

Broader impact (forms part of the assessment of scientific relevance, originality and topica

The broader impact of the study lies in its structure. If PEPS proves to be effective the design of PEPS is elegant and can be applied with nurses and peers on a short-term basis. This is of high importance as nurses, peers and relatives have major impact on the well-being of schizophrenia patients. This would help the patients not only with their deficits in emotion processing, but furthermore help them to regain motivation. As schizophrenia being one of the most deteriorating diseases in the world with a high number of days lost due to invalidity according WHO this would also have an impact on society and its burden due to schizophrenia. Therefore, this project has relevant broader impact.
The suggested EEG measurements may add more to the understanding of the neurophysiological background of emotions deficit in schizophrenia, but there is a large number of studies that have added information to this field. I wonder why there is no fMRI study planned as it would add further valuable structural and functional information in time. Although EEG has a high time resolution, it lacks detailed topographical information. I don't think that patients would be too bothered by applying MRI scans.

Suitability of methods and feasibility

Methods are neat and suitable in the difficult to be handled patients' group. Its feasibility has been shown in the pilot study and therefore I have no concerns as to the study conduction.