Reviewer's report

Title: The functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) procedure as experienced by healthy participants and stroke patients

Version: 1 Date: 22 October 2008

Reviewer: Claire A Hale

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Major compulsory revisions
1. Study design
   It is not clear if this study is meant to be a survey of a group of people all of whom had an MRI scan or a comparison of two particular groups of volunteers who had the scan; the young and healthy and the elderly post stroke. This needs to be clarified

2. Study Sample
   a. More information is needed about the study sample, how they were recruited and the recruitment criteria. It seems strange to be comparing 2 groups who are completely different; one young and healthy the other elderly and post stroke – if that was the intention. If there was a reason for choosing these two groups then it should be stated. Presumably the subjects were all taking part in some other research studies that involved the use of MRI scans and were not just recruited for a study which looked at how acceptable it was. In which case it the authors should give some details about these studies as well as justify the rather peculiar sample distribution and constitution. Two samples matched, at the very least, for size would have improved the study

   b. The importance of the need to make specific comments about 'left handedness' needs to be explained – if it is important. If it is not, then it should not be commented on, and removed. Since about 1 person in 7 is left handed, a sample of 70 healthy people would be expected to have about 10 people who were left handed. Therefore to state that virtually all the healthy sample were right handed is rather unnecessary. Similarly with the 22 post stroke group – one would expect the group to be mixed right and left handed- in fact one would expect about 3 people in the group to be left handed unless of course left handed people are more prone to strokes than right handed people.

The questionnaire

A copy of the questionnaire should have been included with the article

Analysis

The analysis is very simplistic and used descriptive statistics only. There did
seem to be some differences between the responses of the two groups and this could have been tested for statistical significance. It would certainly have improved the interest and rigour of the paper when carrying out a comparative analysis.

Further analysis could have been carried out such as test/retest to check if the subjects still felt the same after a short time period.

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests