Reviewer's report

Title: Diagnosing migraine in research and clinical settings: The Validation of the Structured Migraine Interview (SMI)

Version: 2 Date: 13 July 2009

Reviewer: Csaba Ertsey

Reviewer's report:

Dear Editor,

I have reviewed the answers of Samaan et al to the issues I had raised when reviewing the first draft of their paper. I sincerely think that the authors have significantly improved the manuscript. Yet there are two points that in my opinion still need some refinement.

One such point is the use of self-reported migraine and antimigraine drug use as the means of assessing the SMI's reliability. The shortcomings of these indicators were exposed in my review. I am afraid that the authors cannot rely on historical data obtained in a different study of a different population with different methods (ie. Rasmussen et al, Headache, 1991) when trying to establish self-reported migraine as a reliable indicator of migraine.

The second point that might be improved is the case of those twenty patients who had been administered the SMI in a face to face interview in a previous study and re-interviewed by phone in the present study, a mean 2.5 years after the face to face interview. The main issues here are the small sample size and the long time frame between the two measurements. The authors have not addressed these issues in the revised text. I still think that an average of 2.5 years between the two administrations is not safe, as subjects may change over time (eg. a patient not having migraine before may have developed migraine in this time frame), and is substantially different from the usually suggested time frame of approximately 1 month. Moreover, the authors do not seem to be aware of the fact that test-retest reliability measures stability over time with all other circumstances unchanged, so the use of two different administration methods (face to face vs. phone interview) is not justified. The way the discussion of this part is worded (last paragraph, page 14 of revised manuscript) seems to indicate that the authors wish to demonstrate that administering the SMI by phone may be as valuable as a face to face one. While this is an important issue for the future usability of the SMI, I think that this study is not suited to decide this.

It is my sincere hope these comments can help the authors in the preparation of the final version of their paper.

Sincerely, Csaba Ertsey

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field
Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.