Reviewer’s report

Title: Less impaired than anticipated; the frequency of upper extremity function within 72 hours after first occasion of stroke in an unselected population. A part of the SALGOT study.

Version: 3 Date: 14 October 2012

Reviewer: nijasri Suwanwela

Reviewer’s report:

1. Research Question
1.1 The research question is not clear and not well expressed on the title. For example, on page 4 “The aim of the study was to describe the baseline characteristic….., and also to investigate the frequency of impaired arm and hand function”, but the title only focuses on arm function. Also, the two main questions are not quite relevant.

2. Methods:
2.1 The authors stated that this study is a retrospective study. However, on page 5, it is described that “independent evaluations of arm and hand function were performed by the 2 authors”. Is this being done as a routine practice?
2.2 Please clarify about the study population. It is stated in the material and methods section that all first ever stroke who were admitted at one of the stroke units were studied. Nevertheless, the result section, 26 were in other hospital and 12 were hospitalized in another country. These patients should have been excluded already.
2.3 Please explain why the term “unselected” and “non-selected” are used for the study population since they are “selected”.

3. Results
3.1 How was upper extremity impairment prior stroke assessed? What are the causes of the impairment since all were first ever stroke cases.
3.2 Factors influencing the impairment of arm and hand function should be analyzed in detail. Univariate and multivariate analyses should be performed.
3.3 Tables are redundant and not so informative.

4. Discussions
4.1 The authors should discuss more about the reasons why this study found a relatively lower number of patients with arm and hand impairment. Do the study population have milder form of stroke than previous studies? Also, patients admitted in ICU were excluded. Would this cause selection bias, therefore, the result might not represent the real stroke population.

Level of interest: An article of limited interest
Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests