Reviewer's report

Title: Observational Skills Assessment Score: reliability in measuring amount and quality of use of the affected hand in unilateral Cerebral Palsy

Version: 3 Date: 12 August 2013

Reviewer: Ann-Kristin Gunnes Elvrum

Reviewer's report:

Thank you to the editor and the authors for the revised manuscript with response to the reviewers. I think the inclusion of the additional file describing the tasks for the older children was useful, as well as the flow chart. However, it would be valuable with some more words explaining the flow chart. I am also happy with most of the responses, but still have some concerns which require Minor Essential Revisions. See below:

Background section:

1. 1st paragraph: The definition of performance is clear and well written, but I still feel that the manuscript would benefit from a more precise definition of what the authors mean by capacity. According to the manuscript capacity is defined as the “maximum potential capability to use the affected hand in bimanual tasks”. However, capacity and capability may not describe exactly the same thing. According to Holsbeeke et al. (1) capacity describes the person’s ability to execute a task in a standardized, controlled environment, whereas capability describes the person’s ability to execute a task in his/her daily environment. In the ICF (2) capacity is defined as an individual’s highest ability to execute a task or an action, and is measured in a uniform or standard environment. Capacity could also be defined as the best possible ability upon request (i.e. what the child “can do” when asked to) (3).

2. 3rd paragraph: If capacity is well defined in the beginning of the manuscript, this word can be used alone later on in the manuscript, for example in the following sentence: “Use of the affected hand is stimulated but not obligated in the AHA. We felt the need for an instrument that measures the potential capacity of the affected hand in bimanual skills.

3. 3rd paragraph: I suggest rewriting “unilaterally” in the description of MUUL. Maybe you can write “one hand at a time” instead: “Furthermore, it measures one hand at a time and contains tasks that are usually not done by the assisting hand”.

4. 3rd paragraph: It is stated that AHA was developed in 2007, but AHA was developed for children from 18 months to 5 years of age in 2003, see reference (4) below. Thus, this needs to be changed in the manuscript.

5. 3rd paragraph: According to the authors of AHA (4) AHA measures effective
use of the assisting hand in bimanual activities, so I suggest to write this instead of spontaneous use.

Methods:

6. 1st paragraph: In the description of the included and excluded participants you describe the excluded children as “children with very severe hand impairments”. It would be preferable if you could use MACS levels to describe the level of hand function for included/excluded children instead.

In general:

7. I wrote in my previous report that there is a need for some language corrections before this manuscript is being published. The authors have not responded to this comment, and as far as I can see the language has not been corrected in the revised manuscript. I still feel there is a need for language corrections, not limited to the examples below:

• Methods and results should be referred to in the past tense both in the abstract and in the main document, while interpretation of the results should be in the present tense.
• Consistency in the use of the words assessor and rater in the figures and main document would ease the reading of the manuscript. The same goes for scoring, measurement, assessment.
• Abstract: OSAS measures amount and quality of use of the affected hand ……… in bimanual skills… (Maybe write bimanual tasks or activities instead of bimanual skills?)
• Use ‘the’ in front of ICF.


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

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being
published

**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