Author's response to reviews

Title: Assessment of visual fixation in vegetative and minimally conscious states

Authors:

Haibo Di MD, PhD (dihaiobo19@aliyun.com)
Yunzhi Nie Msc (nyz5090@163.com)
Xiaohua Hu MD (hu_yi_sheng@126.com)
Yong Tong MD (fliertongyong@163.com)
Lizette Heine Msc (lheine@ulg.ac.be)
Sarah Wannez Msc (swannez@student.ulg.ac.be)
Wangshan Huang Msc (huangwangshan@sina.cn)
Dan Yu MD (yudanwj@aliyun.com)
Minhui He MD (heminhui2003@yahoo.com.cn)
Aurore Thibaut Msc (athibaut@ulg.ac.be)
Caroline Schnakers PhD (c.schnakers@ulg.ac.be)
Steven Laureys MD, PhD (steven.laureys@ulg.ac.be)

Version: 4
Date: 15 June 2014

Author's response to reviews: see over
1. Reviewer's report
Title: Assessment of visual fixation in vegetative and minimally conscious states
Version: 3
Date: 31 May 2014
Reviewer: Marion Luyat
Reviewer's report:
The authors had replied to all my remarks. The article should be published

Thank the reviewer very much.

Level of interest: An article of outstanding merit and interest in its field
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

2. Reviewer's report
Title: Assessment of visual fixation in vegetative and minimally conscious states
Version: 3
Date: 5 June 2014
Reviewer: Yelena Guller
Reviewer's report:
To Whom It May Concern:
Thank you for making the suggested revisions to the manuscript. A few minor comments are provided below:

Minor Essential Revisions
Abstract: “However, the use of different stimuli changes the frequency of visual fixation occurs in patients…” Should read “However, the use of different stimuli changes the frequency with which visual fixation…”

We thank the reviewer for this comment. The sentence now read: “However, the use of different stimuli changes the frequency of visual fixation occurred in patients” (see Abstract)

Methods: First paragraph- “and this protocol can be re-administered” should be “and this protocol was re-administered…”

We thank the reviewer for noticing this error. We have changed it in the text accordingly (see Methods section).

Background: First paragraph- you have already defined MCS and VS/UWS abbreviations in the abstract so you can just use the abbreviations in the text.

We thank the reviewer for this suggestion, and have changed them in the text (see Background section).

Discretionary Revisions
Discussion: Can you hypothesize why 3 MCS patients did not fixate on any of the three objects?

We agree with the reviewer. In fact, we have given the possible explanation in Discussion section: “Neurological assessment showed that one of these 3 patients failed to eye blink to threat, indicating impaired brainstem reflexes. The remaining two patients had intact brainstem reflexes and reproducible but inconsistent command following, which could be explained by a visual impairment [14]” (see Discussion section).
3. Reviewer's report
Title: Assessment of visual fixation in vegetative and minimally conscious states
Version: 3
Date: 8 June 2014
Reviewer: Pietro Pietrini
Reviewer's report:
The authors well addressed my requests for clarifications. However, I am still not convinced about the interpretation given for the only subject who failed the mirror task. I asked whether other alternative explanations can be given apart from the fact that for that patient the mirror was the last stimulus presented. This is, however, a minor problem, a 'curiosity' that does not affect the quality of this manuscript. I have no further comments or requests.

We thank the reviewer’s comment. In fact, the fluctuation of states are common in MCS patients, which is an alternative possible explanation for the subject who failed the mirror task in our study.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field
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