Reviewer's report

Title: Central loop of the h reflex, is age an important factor?

Version: 1 Date: 4 June 2004

Reviewer: Riccardo Mazzocchio

Reviewer's report:

General
This paper examines the influence of such factors as age and leg length on the central loop of the H-reflex. The findings do not appreciably add to the literature as they are presented here. The correlation between leg length and H-reflex latency is already known, as it is also known that age is not a factor, as also concluded by the present study.

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

The abstract is quite confusing and should better describe the aim of the work. In particular, it should be emphasized that age itself may be a cause of subclinical neuropathy (nonspecific neuropathy of late life) which may go undetected and therefore influence the interpretation of the results. Data should be more clearly discussed keeping in mind the aim of the work. Measurements of F-waves from the tibial nerve should be added to exclude proximal motor nerve conduction alterations.

The authors should also be aware that non-invasive methodologies (study of the H-reflex recruitment curve) are available for subclinical diagnosis of S1 radiculopathy (cf. Mazzocchio et al, BMC Musculoskeletal Disorders 2001, 2:4) other than the evaluation of central loop latency by deep tissue needle electrical stimulation. This should be at least mentioned in the discussion. Also, what is the advantage of deep electrical stimulation at the level of the sacrum versus non-invasive magnetic stimulation at the same level?

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

Two leg measurements would be useful to compare side-to-side differences.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

Quality of written English: Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:
None