Reviewer's report

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

Version: 1 Date: 7 June 2004

Reviewer: Ty Ty Hopkins

Reviewer's report:

General
The manuscript seems to of clinical significance. the authors have done a very good job to isolate the subject pool to a group from which conclusions may be drawn. However, it seems that the conclusion of "the only constitutional factor that can affect Tc is leg length," is very strong considering the authors only considered 2 factors. There are many other factors that could affect Tc. The authors have only addressed 2. This should be clearly delineated, and possibly included as a limitation. Several copy edit revisions should be made to clarify language and assist the flow of the manuscript.

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

P5,Ln 105. Is the age range (30-43yrs) broad enough to make conclusions that age does not have an effect on Tc? This should at the very least be discussed in the discussion.

P5,Ln 115-116. Do these statistically significant correlations mean anything clinically? In other words, is r=.31 strong enough to make clinical recommendations? Given the literature in this area and other similar data, is this a weak correlation? Perhaps coefficient of determination should be emphasized? Perhaps this should also be considered in the discussion.

Ln 131-158. The discussion seems very poorly structured and random in its flow. Consider starting the discussion with a brief overview of the results and what they mean. Then use the literature to compare these data and try to explain why the results were as they were. Finally limitations should be discussed. The manuscript now starts with a limitation that seems somewhat random. The discussion should be completely rebuilt to effectively explain and discuss the results.

Ln 162-163. This is not the "only constitutional factor." It is merely the only factor that the authors measured which may affect Tc. The authors should revise this statement.

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

P2, Ln 55. In the purpose of the project the authors report that they would like to obtain a reliable normal value for Tc. However, there is no calculation or reporting for reliability of this dependent variable. Perhaps the authors should rephrase or report reliability.

P3, Ln 60. General descriptives should be reported for subjects - or a reference should be made to the table with specific descriptives.

Ln 138-140. How close are the results to this work? What were their results? Be more specific.

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)
P3, Ln73. What is the “top of the medial malleolus”? Perhaps a more specific descriptor - superior, medial, ...

P4, Ln90-98. Considering this measurement is the primary dependent variable of interest in this study, it seems that a more detailed description of the method should be reported here. Are there references to support your technique for Tc? With a single stimulus the authors recorded M and H waves from the muscle? Were several stimuli of varying amplitudes used to find a tracing with both H and M waves? What type of stimulus was used - what equipment?

Ln147. Consider changing “effective” to “contributing.”

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

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: No

Declaration of competing interests:

None