Reviewer’s report

Title: Self-reported parkinsonian signs in the EPIC-Norfolk cohort

Version: 1 Date: 11 April 2005

Reviewer: Peter Hobson

Reviewer’s report:

General

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)
Review: Ishihara et al
Self-reported parkinsonian signs in the EPIC-Norfolk cohort.

This is an interesting paper that reports the Self-reported parkinsonian signs in a sub-cohort of the EPIC-Norfolk cohort. Overall the paper is well written, however there are several omissions of references and some inaccuracies that would need to be addressed.

Major Compulsory Revisions

Introduction

Paragraph 1 lines 6 & 7: The authors should reference the papers here.

Paragraph 3 line 4. Whilst reduced olfactory function (OF) has been associated with pre-clinical PD, the authors should also consider that several other conditions such as vascular disease have associations with OF.

Methods (1).

Paragraph 2. I am not sure what table 1 contributes to this manuscript. I would suggest that they analyse the longitudinal data or remove this table, because in its present form it appears to be taking up space.

Data analysis

The authors need to describe and name the statistical tests in this section.

Discussion study population.

Paragraph 1. Whilst I agree that PD is a relatively rare disease in individuals under the age of 45 years, the same cannot be said of those aged over 75 years. PD and parkinsonism is a disease of the elderly and it rises significantly with age and thus it is likely that the although the cohort here may be representative of those aged 45-74 years, it is not representative of a general population and overall it weakens the study because of this selection bias.

Methods (2)

Paragraph 2. The authors in their literature review have missed a number of references such as Mutch et al, (neuroepidemiology 1991), De Rijik et al (neurology 1995), Meara et al (Jrn Epid &
Community Health 1997) and a more recent paper 2000 publishes in the JNNP.

Paragraph 3. The authors refer to reference 20 as evidence of misdiagnosis, which would be fine if the current study was a clinico-pathological based study, which it is not. Meara et al, 1999 and Ben-Sholomo et al 2000/1 community based studies are more relevant to the current investigation and should have been referenced.

Discussion

The discussion could be improved if the papers I have already referred to were also compared.

I would suggest that the limitations of the current investigation are discussed in greater detail.

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: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:

'I declare that I have no competing interests'