Reviewer's report

Title: Valproic acid is associated with cognitive decline in HIV-infected individuals: a clinical observational study.

Version: 4 Date: 7 November 2006

Reviewer: giovanni G schifitto

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)

It is my understanding that the reliable index of change (RCI) is a composite score that uses a specific cutoff to define change. It appears to me that in this study the authors really used just a composite score for the neuropsychological results, in which case they should not refer to as a RCI as they have previously published (page 7). The relevance of this is that only a few of those 8 subjects might have achieved the cutoff that signifies change. I do not think that there is anything wrong with using only the neuropsychological composite score. I also recommend that the quantitative analyses be limited to the first follow-up visit i.e., 6 months because thereafter there are even fewer patients to make any sense of quantitative analyses. This could be a simple analysis of change from baseline using the composite neuropsychological score. It would be best, in my opinion, to qualitatively describe the additional time points as shown in the figure.

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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)

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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 whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:

I have published results that conflict with those reported in this paper