Reviewer's report

Title: Abnormal susceptibility to distracters hinders perception in early Parkinson's disease: a controlled study

Version: 1 Date: 21 August 2006

Reviewer: Eva Kemps

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)

General comments

The study presents a neat and interesting set of findings; however, the message of the manuscript is not clear. This could be remedied by some major re-writing. In particular, it is not clear from the Background (or the Abstract) what the rationale for the study was. In addition, the authors should present their argument more coherently, and clearly communicate the contribution of their research to the literature. At present it is not clear what the focus of the paper is. The Background initially focuses on sensory and perceptual disturbances in Parkinson’s disease, but then moves on to discuss eye movements, which are subsequently purported to be linked to attention (p.4), yet another cognitive function.

Specific comments by section

Abstract:

The abstract is too long and should not contain any statistical output.

Background:

In addition to the general comments (see above), the link between the first and second paragraphs is rather abrupt. Also, the third paragraph is very long. It would facilitate reading if this were divided further into paragraphs.

Method:

The age range of the participant sample is rather broad. Was there an effect of age on task performance for either or both participant groups?

Please explain more fully the difference between the antisaccade task and the capture task (p.7).

Please specify what the blocks referred to on p.7 consisted of?

Results:

Please specify whether reaction times of all trials were included in the analysis or only those of correct responses.

Please explain the purpose of conducting correlational analyses between task performance and patient characteristics (p.8).

Please provide standard deviations alongside the means for the correct responses in the control and onset conditions (p.8).

Discussion:
The first paragraph of the Discussion is very long, and would benefit from subdivision into further paragraphs.

I do not agree with the statement that the participants were UNAWARE of the appearance of the irrelevant stimulus (p.10). The irrelevant stimulus was clearly visible and hence, participants would have been conscious of its presence.

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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 declare that I have no competing interests