Reviewer's report

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

Version: 2 Date: 24 October 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)

The manuscript has substantially improved following revision. However, a number of concerns remain that need to be addressed. Specifically, there are still some abrupt changes in the argument presented in the Background. In particular, on page 4, the first sentence of the second paragraph deals with motor impairments, while the second sentence suddenly switches to perceptual impairments.

Also, the last sentence of the Background (bottom of page 5, top of page 6) introduces the notion of early Parkinson's disease. It is unclear why patients in the early phases of PD (as opposed to those in the later phases of the disease) would have a reduced capacity for inhibiting saccades to irrelevant objects. More generally, the authors should provide a rationale for investigating perceptual deficits specifically in early PD.

Please clarify and elaborate the statement on page 5, paragraph 2, sentence 2 “However, in most … for task performance.”

I find the disproportionately poorer performance of the older PD patients very interesting, particularly as it corroborates some of our own recently published data (Kemps, Smalec, Vandierendonck & Crevits, 2005). Hence, the analyses pertaining to age effects outlined in the cover letter should be incorporated in the manuscript and discussed with reference to other studies that have reported similar findings.

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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