Reviewer's report

Title: Significant difference between three observers in the assessment of intraepidermal nerve fiber density in skin biopsy

Version: 1 Date: 21 August 2008

Reviewer: svein mellgren

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Review:

The manuscript reports interobserver differences in quantification of intraepidermal nerve fiber density in skin biopsy.

1. The purpose of the study is well formulated.

2. The methods are appropriate, but the locations from where the biopsies were obtained should be given more specifically (dorsum of the foot, etc.)

3. The data seem sound.

4. The manuscript are over all acceptable, but the language can still be improved. Reference no. 9 has wrong year (should be 2005).

5. The Discussion and conclusion are adequately balanced.

6. The limitations of the study are adequately stated.

7. Relevant references are cited.

8. Title and abstract are OK.

9. See above (4).

Main conclusion: The work convey the important message that interrater variability is a problem with this method. The observation that there are significant differences between the counts of three different technicians is important, although it has been demonstrated before between two counters (partly shown in reference 8). It is also interesting and in accordance with experience that the method they use (and also used by others) sometimes represent difficulties in determining the transition between dermis and epidermis, which is essential for correct counting of fibers.

For The Editor: Accept after minor Essential Revisions.