Reviewer’s report

Title: Traditional and non-traditional seizures treatments for autism: an on-line survey.

Version: 2 Date: 30 September 2010

Reviewer: Michael Morrier

Reviewer’s report:

It was a pleasure to review the article entitled “Traditional and non-traditional seizures treatments for autism: an online survey” since this is an area of research that needs to be explored further. I can clearly see that the authors have addressed some previous concerns regarding the manuscript. Even with the need in this area of research, I was unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions. There were several major limitations that need to be addressed before I would recommend publication. Each will be addressed below.

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. The authors have done a good job summarizing what is currently known about seizures in individuals with autism spectrum disorders in the introduction. Even with this summary, I did not feel that the authors did a though job of bringing us to the purpose of their study. Without a specific research question stated it was hard to determine what exactly the research were hoping to gain from this survey, and how the results would specifically add to the field as a whole. After reading the introduction I was left asking myself why is this study needed.

2. My major concerns revolve around the survey itself. How was this survey developed and what was the stated purpose? Did the authors have any sort of literature that they were drawing from in order to generate the survey questions/topics? Were any experts in ASD and/or seizures used when developing the survey to insure internal and external validity? Were standard survey research protocols used in the development of the survey (viz., Bradburn, Sudman, & Wansink, 2004, for ways to state questions; Scheaffer, Mendenhall, & Ott, 2006, for survey development). More information on the survey development is needed for me to feel comfortable with their instrument.

3. Authors state that 2 surveys were developed, with one specifically created for ASD without seizures. What were the differences in these surveys and why was this one needed? More information on these and maybe an appendix with them included would be helpful.

4. With the control group, who exactly made up this group and how was it determined that the participants in the control group did not actually have seizures or other conditions which could bias results.
5. Was group membership determined specifically from the caretakers accessing the correct survey? Were individuals sampled to confirm ASD and seizure subtype? Were gold standard diagnostic measures used (e.g., ADOS and ADI-R)? What about documentation of seizure activity? If not, this should be addressed as a limitation to the research in the discussion.

6. Was there any questions related to dosage of medications for seizure taken? Were participants of tradition and non-traditional seizure treatments monitored by a medical professional? Was this professional contacted to ensure reports were accurate?

7. Without knowing the validity and reliability of the survey instrument the results are read with caution, which reduces the impact they can have in this field. Once the survey (the basis for the results) has been shown to be reliable and valid a resubmission review should concentrate on the analyses and result interpretation. Until that time, these results should be viewed as incomplete.

Minor Essential Revisions

1. The authors should do a though editing of the manuscript before submitting a revision. There are several places where words appears to be missing from sentences and some sentences do not convey complete thoughts.

2. The authors may want to consider revising the title to include autism spectrum disorders rather than autism only since the research clearly uses individual across the entire spectrum and not just the subtype of Autistic Disorder.

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**
I declare that I have no competing interests