Reviewer's report

Title: Tinnitus Rehabilitation in Adults: a Retrospective Study

Version: 1 Date: 20 March 2008

Reviewer: CARLOS HERRAIZ

Reviewer's report:

This manuscript is a retrospective study to assess the efficacy of a different approach for tinnitus management. This method, called Tinnitus Rehabilitation (TR) by the authors, is based on Tinnitus Retraining Therapy (TRT). The main difference between both of them is related to the subjects and shorter duration of the counseling in TR. This fact seems to be interesting for the medical practice because the 90-minute TRT counseling is not possible to be applied in the majority of our crowded hospitals. During the fifteen years since the first description of the TRT method, the professionals have adapted the counseling to the characteristics of the patient (age, cultural level), tinnitus annoyance (mild or severe) and available time per patient. This manuscript demonstrates that a 30-minute counseling can be also effective for tinnitus relief.

The other difference between TR and TRT is referred to sound therapy. According to TR, white sound generators are not mandatory for category 1 patients. Due the fact that two patients decided to be fitted with these instruments, I would not consider any difference in the principles of sound therapy between both treatments.

The manuscript defines the issue posed (tinnitus rehabilitation) in a correct way. The title and the abstract convey the conclusions of the work. The method is appropriate and well described. The paper adheres to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition. The discussion and conclusions are well balanced and adequately supported by the data. The limitations of the work are clearly stated. The authors seem to acknowledge the works upon they have built their paper. The quality of written English is acceptable. The statistics does not need to be reviewed by a statistician.

The manuscript could be accepted, although I would suggest some discretionary revisions:

ABSTRACT

1.-Background: It should be included the description of the TR sound therapy applied for category 1 patients (“white noise generators were not mandatory or recommended”)

2.- Results: It should be included the statistical value (p= ) after the scores for THI and VAS after the treatment.

METHODS
3.- The second and third paragraph should be included in RESULTS instead of METHODS. The description of the data obtained from the subjects (age, duration, hearing loss; type of tinnitus, etc.) is not previously designed. It has been gotten after the study.

4.- Tables usually show the information in a faster and more comprehensive way. I recommend changing paragraph 3 (type of tinnitus) into a table.

RESULTS / DISCUSSION

5.- I recommend the use of a table for the presentation of the first paragraph of “decline in THI Score and VAS after TR”

6.- Although it is discussed afterwards, the comparison of the results when using the SGs could be confusing. It should be described the causes to reject the use of SGs. If the patient has not sleeping problems or he cannot hear the SG because of his hearing loss, he will not acquire the device. To compare the efficacy of SGs, the groups should be homogeneous (similar sleeping and hearing difficulties)

7.- It has been concluded that the use of hearing aids (HA) is not crucial for tinnitus relief through TR. As it is argue in the discussion, all the patients that reject the hearing aids had only slight hearing loss. The group fitted with the HA included all degrees of hearing impairment. I would recommend comparing the efficacy of TR considering two groups with slight hearing loss, one with HA and the other one without it. The conclusion of this comparison could be interesting due the fact that nowadays, there is a tendency to use open-fit HA for slight hearing loss and tinnitus patients.

8.- We cannot get any conclusion about the efficacy of White Sound Generators and Jastreboff’s category 1, because the sample is too small (only 2 patients were fitted with WSGs)

CONCLUSION

9.- The first paragraph, related to the absence of a control group (without treatment) has to be included in the DISCUSSION. It has not been commented in any part of the manuscript so it cannot be included in the conclusions.

10.- It should be included the statistical value of “p=” after the scores of THI and VAS.

What next?: Accept after discretionary revisions

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

Quality of written English: Acceptable

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'