Reviewer's report

Title: Tinnitus Rehabilitation in Adults: a Retrospective Study

Version: 1 Date: 22 March 2008

Reviewer: Tobias Kleinjung

Reviewer's report:

This is a retrospective study which is presenting a substantial reduction of THI score in tinnitus patients after a simplified version of Tinnitus Retraining Therapy (TRT), called Tinnitus Rehabilitation (TR).

However there are some concerns which should be considered before publication.

Major Compulsory revisions:

In my opinion it is not necessary to introduce a new terminology (Tinnitus Rehabilitation, TR) for the author’s treatment strategy in tinnitus patients. It would be sufficient and much less confusing to call the method a “simplified form of TRT”. I would suggest using this terminology already in the title, as TRT is a standard procedure which is internationally well known.

The lack of a control group is only briefly mentioned in “Conclusions” (page 13). The inability of ruling out a placebo effect due to the absence of a control group or untreated comparison should be discussed.

It is not clear to me, if the follow up measurements were collected in a systematic way on clearly defined endpoints.

Within in the group of patients there is obviously a large variability of symptoms, other clinical characteristics and length of treatment, which offers a potential for selection bias. Furthermore there is a division into 4 different treatment groups, where certain parts of the treatment program were only administered after specific demand of the patient. The question arises, if all patients can be summarized in one group, which is implicated in the abstract.

The duration of tinnitus seems to be a very important factor in most tinnitus therapy outcome studies. The discussion should focus in more detail on the fact that there was no significance of this factor for TR.

The sustained therapy outcome with a decline of 39.4 points in THI score seems to be very effective, even more effective than standard TRT or other therapeutic efforts in tinnitus patients. This should be discussed in more detail, additional literature of therapy effects of TRT should be related to the results of this study. Are there any patients with negative results or worsening of their tinnitus?
Minor Essential Revisions:

It would be more appropriate to present the results in a figure instead of a table. The text is consisting of a lot of abbreviations. A table would be suitable.

The international literature and especially Pawel Jastreboff usually provides the term “hyperacusis” in combination with tinnitus. I would suggest to use this term instead of DST.

Discretionary Revisions:

The paragraph on “Subjects and Sample Size” might easier be presented in a table.

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory 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.