Reviewer’s report

Title: The Tinnitus Research Initiative (TRI) database: A new approach for delineation of tinnitus subtypes and generation of predictors for treatment outcome

Version: 2 Date: 10 June 2010

Reviewer: Nathan Weisz

Reviewer’s report:

The presented database project is an interesting approach to search for specific patterns with regards to clinical outcomes of tinnitus therapies. Since as the authors correctly note no single center / lab can possible provide all data necessary for such an effort, a collective approach using standardized diagnostic tools is highly welcome by the tinnitus research community. The paper presents an important effort and in order to raise awareness, the manuscript should be published. I have some minor comments:

Discretionary Revisions:

- The authors mention currently ~400 subjects in the database. I think it would be interesting which treatments they have received.
- The authors take treatment variability of treatment outcome as evidence of "subtypes" (p. 3 "A likely explanation is the pathophysiologic heterogeneity of the symptom tinnitus"). This terminology insinuates different generating mechanisms in different individuals, however variability may be caused by other factors completely unrelated to tinnitus itself. A indicator for this is e.g. also the extremely high variability with regards to sham treatments.
- p.7 "If not, the validated version of a given questionnaire was translated by tinnitus experts in their native language." How were these translated questionnaires validated?
- How is the further development of the database planned (e.g. dropping / integrating new measures)? Will there be regular meetings? A consortium etc.?
- How can one join the database? Will researcher only get access if contributing data? Who decides about access?

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

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