Reviewer’s report

Title: Recognition of delirium in ICU patients A diagnostic study of the NEECHAM confusion scale in ICU patients

Version: 1 Date: 6 June 2005

Reviewer: Marquis D Foreman

Reviewer’s report:

General

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

1. the title identified the phenomenon of interest to be delirium yet throughout the manuscript, the authors use the antiquated term "acute confusional states." The term should be delirium, or with respect to the varying states identified by the NEECHAM, cognitive impairment.

2. there is additional literature not referenced by this group that could make additional contributions to the background of this manuscript: Foreman and Milisen (2004). Improving the recognition of delirium. Primary Psychiatry 11(11), 46-50. as well as work by Ely, MacNicoll, Miller, and Rockwood et al.

3. as currently written there is a great deal of jargon that minimizes the contribution of this work, e.g., page 2: "drip". and unclear sentences, e.g., page 3, line 2: "to minimize under recognition," would read better "to improve recognition"; also unclear on page 3 is "Enables the NEECHAM confusion scale nurses to detect delirium in ICU patients." It is unclear as to what is meant by "submit a case history," (page 3)

4. It should be made clear that those patients at greatest risk for delirium were excluded from study, see criteria page 3.

5. On page 5 when talking about the various categorizations of impairment as determined by performance on the NEECHAM, the authors should provide the cutpoints for each of the categories.

6. Page 7, "The application of the scale was assessed as moderately." moderately what? it is unclear/incomplete. also "There were, however, doubts regarding the relevance of the items." which items, please indicate. and on page 8: "Finally, some of the ICU nurses wondered whether the scale could be made more compact and printed on a single A4 page." the meaning of this is unclear.

7. The discussion and conclusions could be strengthened by the addition of the above literature.

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

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 importance in its field
Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: No

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