Reviewer's report

Title: The effectiveness of very early rehabilitation for acute stroke patients in Japan: a nationwide cross-sectional survey

Version: 1 Date: 24 March 2010

Reviewer: Eline Lindeman

Reviewer's report:

A huge database was used to evaluate the effects of very early rehabilitation of stroke patients, a highly relevant topic.

Questions to be answered or revisions to be made before acceptance are in my opinion:

1. The question posed by the authors is defined, however the title concerns 'effectiveness' of VEI, whereas the introduction states (final sentence) that the 'efficacy' is studied. Which term is right?
2. In my opinion ADL at discharge and length of stay are both relevant outcome parameters (which are not independent), however only ADL (measured with the insensitive mRS) is evaluated. I suppose data on length of stay are available, because they are used for calculation of training intensity.
3. Table 1 is hard to read, please present the data in a way which is easy to understand for the reader.
4. Table 3 shows that much more variables than VEI are related to ADL at discharge. Some remarks should be made in the results (and discussion section).
5. In the results section data are presented that are also (exactly) shown in the tables. Such redundancy should be prevented.
6. The discussion can be shortened, especially the arguments on page 21 and start of 22.
7. The influence of length of stay should be discussed.
8. In the abstract the results description is not very sound (how to interpret a marginal effect of 0.153?); the sentence: we failed to detect... should be replaced by a more 'scientific' text.
9. In the methods section, data source is stated: data ..... were collected in a standardized ELECTRIC format, I suppose another term should be chosen.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published
Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:

'I declare that I have no competing interests'