Reviewer's report

**Title:** The effectiveness of very early rehabilitation for acute ischaemic stroke patients in Japan: a nationwide retrospective cohort survey

**Version:** 2  **Date:** 30 June 2010

**Reviewer:** Eline Lindeman

**Reviewer's report:**

The authors gave an adequate response to most remarks of the reviewers, however some new ‘problems’ were introduced. Moreover I suggest to remove some phrases, because they donot add to the core message and because the article is rather ‘bulky’.

Page 4. Stating that Bernhardt defines VEI as a start within 2 days needs a clarification why in the present article VEI is defined as a start within 3 days. Maybe you should remove the VEI definitions in the introduction and shortly discuss the broad scope in the discussion section.

Page 6. 5th sentence from below: Replace ‘The authors used the day of ….’ By ‘We used the day of ….’ (to prevent the suggestion that McGuire used the day of …)

Page 7. Remove ‘such as the US Medicare claims database or the US Nationwide Inpatient Samples’

Page 21 and start 22. In my opinion no ‘new data’ should be introduced in the discussion section: Suggestion to shorten the text: Due to voluntary participation, there might be a possibility of sampling bias. We compared hospitals who submitted both claim and clinical data (and were included in the analysis, N = 294) with those who submitted claim data only (N = 681). Most prominent difference was that in general, included hospitals were more likely to be high-volume large general hospitals specialising in acute care of stroke while the excluded hospitals were more likely to be smaller private facilities providing a mix of acute and chronic care services. Thus, the presented results in our analysis may be applicable only to the larger acute hospitals, and whether VEI exhibits a similar effect on patient functional outcome in a broader range of hospitals needs further investigation.

Page 22 Because in my opinion no ‘new data’ should be introduced in the discussion section I suggest to remove: ‘We conducted a sub-analysis by hospital and preliminarily found that the average functional outcomes in those hospitals with relatively low training intensity tended to be worse than in those hospitals with higher intensity treatment, even after adjusting for the functional severity of patients at admission (data not shown)’. Showing these data to the reviewers was sufficient in my opinion.
Figure 1 comes outside the page margins.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.