Reviewer’s report

Title: "Is all the stuff about neurons necessary?" The development of lay summaries to disseminate findings from the Newcastle Cognitive Function after Stroke (COGFAST) study

Version: 0 Date: 02 Jan 2017

Reviewer: Andrew Entwistle

Reviewer's report:

I looked forward to reviewing this paper - I became keen on Plain English when writing my PhD; A lot of science and medical and health information is now written in Plain English - English that is simple, uses words that are easily understandable; and in such a manner that the informed public can understand the science/medicine/health subjects. I query that this paper does this: 1) 5 members of the public were selected from replies to an invitation; 4 attended on Focus Group 1 and 3 attended Focus group 2. that would not satisfy me as providing a strong evidence base;2) the authors use of some words is not the normal or preferred usage - adaption and exemplar are two such; see Fowler. 3) I have rarely (ever?) seen the Flesh metrics used for science or medicine - and after looking at relevant websites I wonder why the authors decided they were appropriate without further testing(this could be a separate project: 'Comparison of different readability metrics for science, medical and health writing...). The weblink at the end of the paper did not take me to the website therefore I could not review the 'supplementary material; on 2 occasions when attempting to connect to the site, my Acrobat reader (up to date) crashed meaning I could have lost hours of reviewer time. These experiences do not encourage the reviewer or 'the general public' to read on. The first time I tried, the ONS reference link took me straight to the site; the second time it came up with a '406 - site does not exist or has moved'; copying the link into Google did the same and a colleague found the same (I gave no other information to colleague) the ONS site needed searching to find article; I did not try the other reference links therefore they need checking.

I have added my comments to the pdf (in comment 'bubbles') which I ask the authors to consider.

Finally, writing Plain English does require lots of practice; it is hard work! I am not convinced that this paper - 7 years in the writing?- adds much to what is already available for writing in general, not just about specialist material. However, I have given my recommendation to publish because many people may not realise how important this is. Good Plain English should also help researcher reputation hence career.
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An article of limited interest

Quality of written English
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Needs some language corrections before being published

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