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: 18 Jan 2017

Reviewer: Alison Ford

Reviewer's report:

It was clear that the authors wanted to test a method of creating lay summaries, although it was unclear why the end product was limited to four such summaries.

The VOICENorth group which provided the five volunteers was clearly identified as a public contributor group and the attendance and meeting sequences were described and their interests/expertise were listed in their profiles. The process of working with the VOICENorth group (comments/drafts/focus groups) was quite clearly set out. The Flesch-Kincaid grading scheme for reading ease was described to the reader but no justification offered for its choice as the grading system in this case (for example, I don't know if there are other competing grading scales and this was identified as the best one, or how widely the FK scale is used.)

On page 4, I would have expected to see reference to the fact that the NIHR Journals Library requires a plain English summary in all full reports that it publishes and that detailed author guidance has been developed for this purpose.

The methods and sequencing of the project were broadly well set out, though I would have liked to see a definition of 'older people' in the 'study setting' section. There was no particular discussion about the strengths and weaknesses of the methods - they were just stated. The inclusion of an example lay summary at each stage of the process was helpful and enables the reader to see the progression.

There were no major ethical considerations but the public contributors to the process appeared to have received clear instruction and have been treated considerately. It is not clear what provision would have been made had accessibility to the written material been a barrier to involvement. The plain English summary in the paper is clear and concise although I would have preferred it if it had been clearer that the conclusion stated at the end of the PES was the hypothesis that was being tested.

The overall style and layout of the paper is acceptable but there are a number of distracting typographical errors which will require correction.
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An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

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

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