

PEER REVIEW HISTORY

BMJ Open publishes all reviews undertaken for accepted manuscripts. Reviewers are asked to complete a checklist review form and are provided with free text boxes to elaborate on their assessment. These free text comments are reproduced below.

ARTICLE DETAILS

Title (Provisional)

Repetitive transcranial magnetic stimulation in conjunction with scalp acupuncture in treating post-stroke cognitive impairment: a protocol for systematic review and meta-analysis

Authors

xie, haihua; Zhang, Ruhan; Cao, Sihui; Jiang, Jia; Huang, Bo; Liu, Mi; Peng, Liang

VERSION 1 - REVIEW

Reviewer	1
Name	Wang, Jun-Xiang
Affiliation	Beijing University of Chinese Medicine, School of nursing
Date	22-Jan-2025
COI	None

This paper systematically presents the meta - analysis protocol of rTMS combined with SA for treating post - stroke cognitive impairment. It comprehensively addresses multiple aspects, including the epidemiology of post - stroke cognitive impairment, the action mechanisms of rTMS and SA, the current research status, meta - analysis methods, and future research directions. To a certain degree, it reflects the research frontiers in this area. However, several significant flaws have been detected, and these must be rectified before the manuscript can be considered for publication. The detailed comments are as follows:

1.Inconsistency between Control Intervention and Research Objective

There is an apparent contradiction between the control intervention and the study's objective. The study is centered on exploring the effectiveness of the combined application of rTMS and SA in treating post - stroke cognitive impairment. However, in the control group, the use of only rTMS, SA, or conventional treatment does not align with the core purpose of the study. This deviation may lead to inaccurate or misleading research conclusions. It is essential to re - evaluate and adjust the control intervention to ensure it is consistent with the research goal.

2.Redundancy in Eligible Study Selection Criteria

The criteria for selecting eligible studies have been elaborately described in the main text. Repeating these criteria in the S1 Table seems redundant. You should clarify the purpose and significance of this repetition.

3.Inadequate Elaboration of Study Limitations

The limitations of the study are not comprehensively expounded. Based on the specific research context and methods, a detailed supplementary explanation is required. Clearly identifying and analyzing the limitations can help readers better understand the scope and potential weaknesses of the research, as well as provide valuable references for future research improvement. Make sure that the limitations are thoroughly and objectively presented.

4.Outdated Citations

Some of the cited literatures are quite old, which may not reflect the latest research progress in the related fields. It is necessary to search for and incorporate more up - to - date literature. Replace the dated references with relevant and recent studies at appropriate positions in the paper to ensure the research is based on the most current knowledge and findings. This will enhance the timeliness and credibility of the paper.

5.Clarification of the Significance and Difference of the Protocol

There is a lack of clear explanation regarding the significance of publishing such a protocol for systematic review and meta - analysis. Additionally, it is not clear what the fundamental differences are between this protocol and the subsequent systematic review. Please provide a detailed elaboration on these two aspects. A clear understanding of the protocol's value and its distinction from the systematic review can help readers better appreciate the research process and the contribution of this study.

Reviewer	2
Name	Dishman, Deniz
Affiliation	The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston
Date	19-Feb-2025
COI	None

Neuromodulation in stroke recovery overall and particularly in cognitive decline can fill a critical gap in post stroke management. This review will add significant evidence in the field of stroke recovery. This is well written with a few minor grammatical errors that can easily be addressed by an English translation editorial service.

VERSION 1 - AUTHOR RESPONSE

Responses to Reviewer #1:

Q1. Inconsistency between Control Intervention and Research Objective

There is an apparent contradiction between the control intervention and the study's objective. The study is centered on exploring the effectiveness of the combined application of rTMS and SA in treating post - stroke cognitive impairment. However, in the control group, the use of only rTMS, SA, or conventional treatment does not align with the core purpose of the study. This deviation may lead to inaccurate or misleading research conclusions. It is essential to re-evaluate and adjust the control intervention to ensure it is consistent with the research goal.

Responses: Thank you for your insightful feedback regarding the inconsistency between the control intervention and the study's objectives. We sincerely appreciate your rigorous evaluation, which has helped us refine the methodological rigor of this work. In response to your suggestion, we have revised the "type of control group" in the manuscript (Page 10, Lines 172-179).

Q2. Redundancy in Eligible Study Selection Criteria

The criteria for selecting eligible studies have been elaborately described in the main text. Repeating these criteria in the S1 Table seems redundant. You should clarify the purpose and significance of this repetition.

Responses: We apologize for any inconvenience caused by this issue. After careful consideration, we have deemed Table S1 as redundant and have decided to remove it.

Q3. Inadequate Elaboration of Study Limitations

The limitations of the study are not comprehensively expounded. Based on the specific research context and methods, a detailed supplementary explanation is required. Clearly identifying and analyzing the limitations can help readers better understand the scope and potential weaknesses of the research, as well as provide valuable references for future research improvement. Make sure that the limitations are thoroughly and objectively presented.

Responses: Thank you very much for your comments. We have also realized the inadequacy in elucidating the limitations of our study and have made revisions accordingly. Due to the requirements of the journal and its editors, discussion section is not part of journal formatting requirements for protocol articles. Therefore, we have presented the limitations of this study in the section on advantages and limitations (Page 4, Lines 59-64).

Q4. Outdated Citations

Some of the cited literatures are quite old, which may not reflect the latest research progress in the related fields. It is necessary to search for and incorporate more up - to - date literature. Replace the dated references with relevant and recent studies at appropriate positions in the paper to ensure the research is based on the most current knowledge and findings. This will enhance the timeliness and credibility of the paper.

Responses: We sincerely apologize for this and have already revised the cited literatures (Page 18, References 4,7-8; Page 19, Reference 19; Page 21, References 32, 35, 38-40).

Q5. Clarification of the Significance and Difference of the Protocol

There is a lack of clear explanation regarding the significance of publishing such a protocol for systematic review and meta - analysis. Additionally, it is not clear what the fundamental differences are between this protocol and the subsequent systematic review. Please provide a detailed elaboration on

these two aspects. A clear understanding of the protocol's value and its distinction from the systematic review can help readers better appreciate the research process and the contribution of this study.

Responses: Thank you very much for your valuable suggestions regarding our article. We have carefully reviewed your comments and have made modifications in the article based on your suggestions. We have added the significance and difference of the protocol (Pages 7-8, Lines 124-135).

Responses to Reviewer #2:

Q1. Neuromodulation in stroke recovery overall and particularly in cognitive decline can fill a critical gap in post stroke management. This review will add significant evidence in the field of stroke recovery. This is well written with a few minor grammatical errors that can easily be addressed by an English translation editorial service.

Responses: Thank you for your feedback. We have corrected the grammatical errors by an English translation editorial service.

VERSION 2 - REVIEW

Reviewer	1
Name	Wang, Jun-Xiang
Affiliation	Beijing University of Chinese Medicine, School of nursing
Date	08-Apr-2025
COI	

Keep in modifying the reference style and good luck

VERSION 2 - AUTHOR RESPONSE

Responses to Reviewer #1:

Q1. Keep in modifying the reference style and good luck.

Responses: Thank you very much for your suggestions. According to the journal's official website and published literatures, we have made revisions to the reference formatting (Page 18-20).
