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Commentary

This interesting paper attempts to address a logical question of whether strength and EMG activity is mediated by verbal encouragement in a gross motor task. Although the results support the use of verbal encouragement, I have some reservations about the statistical methods adopted. It is disappointing that such a well designed study fails to explore the full potential of the question. The analysis ignores the potential for a gender by treatment interaction. Independent groups *t* tests systematically collapse the data across each independent variable. A gender by condition analysis of variance would have been preferable and the most appropriate statistical method to analyse the EMG and the strength data. In this way, the potential interaction of gender and condition could have been explored.

The authors correctly conclude that verbal encouragement has the potential to improve performance. This is one of the strategies that a sports psychologist could advocate in mental training programme. Researchers interested in such psychological strategies may also wish to refer to such journals as *Journal of Sports Psychology*, *The Sports Psychologist*, *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, *International Journal of Sports Psychology*, and *Perceptual and Motor Skills* among others.

The authors acknowledge that an increased EMG signal was expected in the verbal condition. The explanation for its absence is plausible, particularly as the brachialis is the primary flexor of the elbow and its activity would not be directly measurable by surface EMG, due to its location. A study which uses needle EMG would perhaps enable the question to be answered more fully. In summary, the conclusions of the study, although pertinent, are limited by methodological constraints.

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