Reviewer’s report

Title: "A powerful intervention: GPs' use of sickness certification in depression"

Version: 2 Date: 7 May 2012

Reviewer: Ellen Piek

Reviewer’s report:

In general

1. Compliment to the authors: in the introduction they describe in simple and clear terms the system of sicklisting in the UK, with which I was not familiar.
2. The article has a clear structure. The language is of high quality. The subject is very interesting, although in other European countries sicklisting systems are very different. This makes it difficult to compare and generalize results.

Major Compulsory Revisions

3. Methods- Sample: The research question in the introduction is well-defined, but in the paragraph Methods-Sample another research question is posed: the authors state that they were interested in the potential difference between practices with low and high incapacity claimant rates. This should have been mentioned in the introduction. Especially since the results section almost starts with the answer to this research question, it is clearly important and should have been introduced as such in the introduction. Apart from this, it is a difficult question in a qualitative study, as it is difficult to define a difference without using quantitative terms. I must compliment the authors with the description of the results of this question, they do not use quantitative terms. Nonetheless, it is questionable if this should be the main question of this study and the focus of this article, which the authors in a few sections suggest it is.

Minor Essential Revisions

4. References, several mistakes have been made when comparing the references to the examples from the instructions for authors section on the website of BMC:

1. The book title should be in italic and a “;” between TSO and 2008 instead of a “.”
2. Publication year not necessary
3. There should be a “:” between the authors and Title, the Title should be bold and followed by a “.” The volume number should also be bold.
4. Same as for no. 3, there is a “.” Between authors and title, the “:” between volume and page numbers is missing.
5. There is a “,” instead of a “;” between the authors and the title, the “;,” between publisher and publication year is missing.
Etcetera, I think the authors should very closely study their reference list again and restructure it according to the BMC Family Practice format. In (almost) all references there are small errors. I only listed the first few references since I do not think it is my task to correct all these mistakes.

Discretionary Revisions

5. Methods-analysis-final paragraph: I think this paragraph holds the middle between describing analysis en interpreting the results. Emerging themes might be better described in the results section?

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

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests