Reviewer's report

Title: Assessing factors influencing return back to work after cholecystectomy: a qualitative research

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Reviewer: Thue Bisgaard

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Regarding the manuscript:

“Assessing factors influencing return back to work after cholecystectomy: a qualitative research”

Major comments

1. This is a well written article on an important topic, the causes of sick leave after one of the most often surgical procedures; cholecystectomy.

The design of the study observational. However, and unfortunately, this study is retrospective in nature and the analysis is based on qualitative analyses. Patients in the study were recruited from a previous randomised study by one author group (Arch Surg 2008; 143:371-377). In this study, the authors randomized 257 patients under going cholecystectomy by laparoscopic or open technique. Patients received no standardized recommendations for convalescence / returned to normal activity, but were told to resume work and normal activities as soon as they felt ready to do it. The authors reported nearly 4 weeks of sick leave in both surgical groups! I wonder why. The fundamental finding of this extremely long period of convalescence is the background for the present study. It is known from other parts of the literature than when using short recommendation of convalescence, eg. 1 or 2 days (Arch Surg. 2001; 136:917-921) duration of convalescence can be shortened to less than 4-5 days! So the present study was the retrospective nature and patients who participated had no preoperative recommendations. The authors wish to analyze or "all aspects that influence the timing of return to work" after cholecystectomy, but unfortunately the present study design does not allow this.

2. The authors concluded, that physicians perceive important factors other than the patients. And so what? What do the authors actually conclude from their study? What will the authors, based on their finding recommend their patients undergoing cholecystectomy? Do the authors think that 4 weeks of convalescence should be recommend for patients under going routine cholecystektomy? I think that is an alarming and wrong interpretation.

Minor comments

1. Patients were included after minimum 6 month after cholecystektomy. What
was the range (6-24 months)? At least, 6 month after an operation means historical data when taking in to consideration that patients should remember recall the main problems on not taking up normal activities during the first days after the operation. Why were the patients not included in this analysis one week after the operation or even more relevant, why was the study not performed in a prospective manner?

2. The authors mentioned several times “company physicians” – what is that?

3. In the present publication the authors does not give their actual duration of sick leave for the patients included but refer to the previous mention study with 4 weeks actual sick leave. What was the actual sick leave in the included patients?

4. The authors mentioned “adapted work” in the result section, what is adapted work?

**Level of interest:** An article of limited interest

**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’ below. If your reply is yes to any, please give details below.