Reviewer's report

Title: Web-based guided self-help for employees with depressive symptoms (Happy@Work): design of a randomized controlled trial

Version: 3 Date: 16 July 2012

Reviewer: Anette Kersting

Reviewer's report:

I would advise this study protocol for publication.

Reviewer's comments:

Happy@work is an innovative prevention program for treating depressive symptoms at the work place. Since the incidences of depression and burnout are rising, the need for help increases continuously. Self-helping treatment programs via the Internet constitute well-proven interventions for reducing depressive symptoms. With the implementation of such a program people get help at their working place before they get sick-listed. The cost-effectiveness will be analyzed from a societal and a companies' perspective. The study design is a smart and all-encompassing combination of the self-help program, the process evaluation and the cost-benefit analysis.

The study protocol is well-structured, detailed, and clearly written but there are some revisions:

1. Major compulsory revisions
   - In the background section (page 3) you gave general prevalence of depression. Are there more recent and more specific numbers? Since the whole study is closely related to the Dutch health system, it would be interesting to know more about prevalence numbers of depression in the Netherlands.
   - I would use the € consistently (page 3).
   - On page 7/8 (in the last third) you start sentences with “the” several times. To improve readability and expression it would be nicer to vary.
   - You wrote “The support will be directed at guiding the participant through the intervention and will not be aimed at developing a patient-therapist relation as in traditional psychotherapy.” Could you give some examples for this guidance in order to understand this kind of guidance?

2. Minor essential revisions
   - page 7: in citation 41 is a space too much

3. Discretionary revisions
   None.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field
Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.