Reviewer's report

Title: Understanding long-term sick leave in female white-collar workers with burnout and stress-related diagnoses: a qualitative study

Version: 1 Date: 11 January 2010

Reviewer: Els Clays

Reviewer's report:

Overall, I believe this is a relevant and well written paper. The paper has an original focus on the topic and therefore it can offer an important contribution to the literature.

I have some minor remarks and questions.

- How exactly were the 16 women selected from the list of 300 eligible persons? Was this a random selection? Also, why exactly 16 invitations? Was this number based on some sort of power calculation standard in qualitative research?
- The 16 women were on sick leave for more than 90 days. Was there a lot of variance in the number of sick leave days at the time of the interview?
- Was it possible to check or control for some sort of inter-observer variability since the interviews were taken by 4 different persons?
- It would be highly interesting to include more suggestions as to the relevance of the study results for both research and policy.

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.