Reviewer's report

Title: Return to work after a workplace-oriented intervention for patients on sick-leave for burnout - a prospective controlled study

Version: 2 Date: 13 February 2010

Reviewer: Mirjam Ekstedt

Reviewer's report:

This paper is dealing with important challenges in the Swedish labor market. The hypotheses rely on existing theory on causes for work-related burnout. Literature on intervention for employees on sick-leave for work related disorders is rare. This manuscript is a contribution to the domain.

Discretionary Revisions

1. It is unclear to me if the relation between sick-listing and work stress was re-checked also in the control group. It is said that “identified persons were informed by a letter and followed up with a phone call to re-check the relation to work stress, and eligible persons were invited to participate”. But later on it is stated that “Of a total of 739 people who were sent the invitation letter 108 were considered eligible” and from those 108 the intervention group was formed. I presume that this relation was re-checked also in the control group, the flow chart give a hint in that direction, otherwise a comparison with the intervention group would be highly misleading. But there is no such information in the presentation of the control group and a clarification on that issue is recommended.

2. The weakest chain in this study is clearly the thrifty information about the control group and this limitation is already honorable discussed. But nothing is said about the impact of motivation as a strong covariate to participate in a workplace intervention. Clearly those who denied participating were unmotivated to try a work place intervention and it is very likely that an intervention would have been less successful in that group. We don’t know why they were uninterested to participate, but whether there was a trait of “there is no point”-character, or bad experiences of a rigid organization, or if there were fighters on their track back to work again, all of them considered that they should not benefit from an intervention. Anyway my point is that there is a selection bias in this study that is not so easy to control, so there will be wise to be cautious about the conclusions drawn from the results.

Minor essential revisions

1) The layout of tables and figures needs improvement and to be formatted according to the journal’s style.

2) The headings are difficult to understand especially table 3 and figure 2

3) In table 2, under week 80, the numbers of participants in the PP-group are 75 implying one missing number
**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**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