Reviewer’s report

Title: Psychosocial work load and stress in the geriatric care

Version: 4 Date: 23 April 2010

Reviewer: Birgit Aust

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Review of re-revised manuscript

I think the manuscript now is close to being publishable.

Here are my last comments:

Page 5, 2. paragraph, 2. sentence: The BELUGA study still isn’t explained (for example: what does Beluga stand for? How many participants? Etc.) and what is meant by “comparatively low average workload for social stressors”? Low values for social stressors? I am not sure if "colloquies" is the right word here. It implies something more positive (a conversational tone) – why should that be stressful?

Page 18 at the bottom: The wording should be checked, for example “found” instead of “give”. Reformulate “not far from the German reality”, for example with "is similar to other findings". We (the readers) have no way of knowing if Dulon and colleagues represent the German reality since no information about their study is given. Therefore I also think the formulations later in the text should be a bit more careful when referring to "the official statistics on the German situation in geriatric care" (page 23)

Page 20 on the top: I am not sure if all readers will understand why solidarity should play a role here. I would say the high ratings for leadership quality in health care are probably partly due to the close cooperation between direct leaders and subordinates, that is, that employees tend to experience their direct leaders more as a colleague with some leadership task than a distinct leader.

Page 22: first paragraph: The explanation is much better now and I can understand the speculation (that it might be qualitative job insecurity employees are concerned about). What I still don’t understand is why the authors did not check if their assumptions are true, for example by checking the answers to the different items of the scale: Were the high values of the scale mostly driven by answers about qualitative job insecurity?

Page 22, discussion about strengths and limitations: second sentence: In general it is true that one should be careful if risk factors and health outcomes (I guess that is meant by "response" here) are both measured with self-reports. BUT this is not the problem here. The largest part of the results in this study focus on a measurement of the psychosocial conditions, that is, are their high demands or not and are these higher or lower compared to others. Therefore I don't think that the discussion of that limitation (measuring exposure and effects with the same
method) is so relevant here.

Page 24: I think the whole page should be deleted, that is, the part about "A remark on adjustment for structural biases". I think the additional analysis according to frequency of on-call duties and working hours per week show very good how the amount of work influences the experiences of demands. So why is this discussion at the end necessary? AND I do not understand the last paragraph on that page: What kind of adjustments were done? I am not aware of any adjustments in the analysis. And it seems the authors are contradicting themselves, because the last sentence says, that the "raw" data were used - which to me sound like no adjustments were made. If the authors decide to keep the page, than at least that paragraph needs to be worked with.

Smaller errors:
page 5 in the middle: However, research results Do…
page 6: delete “the amount of” in the last sentence.
Page 8: FFAS should be explained here, where it is used the first time – and not on the next page
Page 13: end of first paragraph: instead of “good value” write for example “whether a value implicates a positive or negative aspect of the psychosocial work environment”
Page 15: last sentence: This analysis was limited TO…
Page 21: next to last paragraph: delete “.. and not to particularly favourable working conditions” – or explain what is meant.
Page 23: delete (in terms of Kompier) or explain what is meant.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

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.