Reviewer's report

Title: Occupational therapy and return to work: a literature review

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Reviewer: James Hill

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That being said, there are several areas where I believe the authors are over-stating their findings. I will highlight the Lambeek et al study as it is one of the six studies from which the authors draw their conclusions and the article is cited 11 separate times by the authors.

In the Lambeek study – the randomization compared usual care to a workplace intervention, where the medical team involved the employee’s supervisor (or use the term employer) in both identifying the barriers and coming up with solutions. The fact that an occupational therapist was part of the team was serendipitous; in fact, average patient contact for providers was the same for the occupational medicine physician and the occupational therapist with approximately 17 sessions with the physical therapist. The involvement of the employee’s workplace, a cornerstone of successful RTW, is the intervention, not the OTI.

I do not mean to minimize the value of occupational therapy to the rehabilitation process but my fear is that your broad searching strategy has excluded several areas of specialization for occupational therapists that may have some reasonable occupational data: hand/burn rehabilitation (OT is a vital part of burn rehabilitation for splint manufacturing, contracture prevention, and mobilization of scar, particularly in the hand) and blind/visually impaired rehabilitation. If you state that occupational therapy has a major role to play in return to work, how can there be almost zero literature on the topic?

The conclusion that multidisciplinary care benefits the rehab population may be warranted but I do not see how you can separate out the OT component from the other disciplines. If you are using inpatient rehabilitation centers in the US, in order to maintain accreditation the disciplines of physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech language pathology, and rehabilitation nursing must all be represented – so all inpatient rehab studies that included a RTW outcomes may
be OTIs.

At best, this paper serves to highlight the anachronous term Occupational Therapy as it applies to the workplace – the authors note that Vocational Rehab has taken over this role. Given the problems defining rehabilitation interventions, as well as the difficulty with return to work outcomes, there is probably no answer to the authors’ hope to define effectiveness of Occupational Therapy Interventions by RTW. I believe that this point adds value to the literature, I am not sure that a paper framed as a comprehensive review of the literature drives the point home.

**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