Reviewer's report

**Title:** Effectiveness of an intervention at construction worksites on work engagement, social support, physical workload, and need for recovery: results from a cluster randomised controlled trial

**Version:** 1, **Date:** 11 August 2012

**Reviewer:** Jorgen Gullestrup

**Reviewer's report:**

I have had the opportunity to look over the manuscript in question and will offer comment as appropriate.

In terms of the questions posed, style, validity of data, limitations and acknowledgement, abstract and writing style I have little to contribute. I find it of an acceptable standard.

However, in its current form I think it will be of limited use and interest unless some additional aspects of the study are covered. The program was ultimately found to be ineffective and thus the usefulness of this article will be lessons learned from the study. I feel that more discussion of both Program Failure and Theory Failure is required to justify the publication of the article.

**Compulsory Revisions:**

Program Failure – Did workers have an ability to feed back into the program regarding their experience of the program in which case it would be interesting to know what was said about the program from the participants. If workers did not find the tools provided useful in the first place, then it could go a long way towards explaining why the program did not have the expected outcomes and the lower than expected compliance.

Theory Failure – Research does not occur in a vacuum. What is lacking from the article is a description as to what industry based considerations was taken in the design of the study. Was employers, subcontractors, workers, unions and safety representatives consulted. If the intervention was based on an outsiders view of the industry this this could be a lesson on its own. It could be interested to know how industry culture, industrial circumstances, psychosocial conditions of the workforce and power relationships was considered in the study design.

**Discretionary Revisions:**

The intervention relied on workers taking particular actions based on training received to have a specific effect such as mini breaks. Part of the identified potential program failures was the empowerment training not always involved the supervisor in the training sessions. It is therefore not entirely clear from the paper wether the required actions from the workers as part of the program actually was
within the workers power – i.e. would supervisors accept workers taking rest breaks when required and would workers be inclined to do this at a time when job security was threatened by the economic downturn.

It appeared that the study relied on attitudes to fatigue and work environment as the responsibility of the individual and not at a systemic level as a collective attitude to these matters at a workplace level. Was measures taken to identify cultural changes in the workplace as a result of the intervention?

Was any general psychosocial issues such as core needs, job satisfaction, work/life balance etc considered at any level in the study?