Reviewer's report

Title: Factors explaining differences in perceived health among German long-term unemployed

Version: 1 Date: 2 February 2012

Reviewer: Alex Burdorf

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Major Compulsory Revisions

Minor Essential Revisions
1. The response is calculated on those already agreed to participate, any idea about the true response in this difficult target group?
2. A bit more detail is needed on how the questionnaires were collected, eg collected as part of the regular re-integration activities? all written filled out or also interviews (given this target population a potentially selective method).
3. I would like to see the correlation between the physical and mental SF-12 scores, since I expect that the correlation is very low, maybe even opposite, and that will add to our understanding of comparability of correlates with both scores. Maybe this comparability needs more attention, eg depression has an effect both on mental and on physical health.
4. The difference between both centres is striking, could one hypothesize a little more about influence of classical parameters to be associated with the health benefits of employment, such as self-esteem, having perspective in life (Jahoda).
5. At the end of the discussion suddenly work ability is introduced, and I am not sure whether it is correct to interpret SF-12 as a measure of work ability. Please rephrase or explain.

Discretionary Revisions
1. The term participation rate is a flaw, since it will almost never be a true rate, but simply a proportion.

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'