Reviewer's report

Title: Work ability in young male and female workers - influenced by changes in work. A prospective cohort study.

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Reviewer: Jorma Seitsamo

Reviewer's report:

The study by Boström et al aims to describe longitudinally the influences of work to work ability of young workers. The subject is important since as the authors say the aim research concerning work ability has been carried out among older workers.

My main concern covers the methodology and statistics used in the manuscript. The authors have the work ability into four groups based on the one-year changes and then they explain the impact of one-year changes of work characteristics to the work ability groups. The main problem with this approach is that it omits totally the level of the measured variables. For instance in the table A the baseline values of the work ability measure are 9.2 in the reduced group, 6.1 on the improved, and 8.6 in the constant group. If work ability is at its height at the baseline, there is only one way to go, down. Likewise, if work ability is low at the baseline, the only way is upwards.

If a young person has low work ability there may be some health issues or living habits or over weight etc involved and these should be included in the analyses.

Some other comments:

1. The language needs stylization
2. The follow-up period is very short. The study was planned to cover a 10-year period, why publish one year results?
3. There are too much and too large tables. What is the meaning of the tables A and B? Why not include the characteristics of the subgroups in table 1? Concerning other tables, perhaps it is better to exclude from the tables the insignificant variables of the univariate analysis.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.
Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.