Reviewer's report

Title: Reliance on social security benefits by Swedish patients with ill-health attributed to dental fillings: a register-based cohort study

Version: 1 Date: 24 April 2012

Reviewer: Leonard Crocombe

Reviewer's report:

This is a novel article looking at the association between social security benefits, ill-health and amalgam dental fillings. The rapid shift from sick leave to disability pension following filling replacement is an important finding.

I have a few suggestions which I hope will improve the paper:

Major Compulsory Revisions
- My understanding of the methods is that the cohorts were selected over a 6-year period (1999-2005) and what type social security benefits they had over the same 6-year period had was analysed. If so, this is really a cross-sectional study which means that cause and effect cannot be found. If that is correct, then the statement in the conclusions that "patients with health problems related to dental materials are likely to become dependent on social security benefits" cannot be sustained. It could be that the other way around, i.e. people dependent on social security benefits are likely to have health problems related to dental materials.
- If my understanding of the methods is incorrect (and I note that in the first paragraph of the Discussion Section 13 years is mentioned), and this is a longitudinal survey, i.e. the social security status of the participants was only after the request for restoration replacement, then it was not made clear to me in the Methods and it needs to be better described.

Minor Essential Revisions
- The research relates only to amalgam fillings, but that is not clear in the title.
- There was a high proportion of females in the cohorts. It would be nice for the authors to discuss why this may be so.

The figures 1, 2 and 3 are labelled A and B. It would be better if they were better described in the labels
- It isn't clear to me why the comparison was made of those between successful and unsuccessful applicants for subsidised replacement of dental fillings was done, i.e. what extra information would be obtained that would not be obtained from the. The reason for this using this comparison could be better described.

Discretionary Revisions
- It was not clear on what basis the application for for subsidised replacement of
fillings could be rejected (fully or partly). A better explanation of this process would help explain why a comparison of between successful and unsuccessful applicants for subsidised replacement of dental fillings was done.

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.