Reviewer's report

Title: External validation of two prediction models identifying employees at risk of high sickness absence: cohort study with 1-year follow-up

Version: 1 Date: 2 July 2012

Reviewer: James Hill

Reviewer's report:

Discretionary Revisions

1. Would only report the 593 sample in the abstract, not the 633.

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

2. Without access to reference 15 (in press) I have very little information to go on regarding the original methods - which is important as this manuscript is a confirmation of previous work. It is difficult to make any definitive statement regarding the methods/choice of model/etc.

3. Please define what the difference is between sickness days and sickness episodes: perhaps an example - a worker misses 3 days of work on one occasion and 4 days on another, this would be 7 SA days and 2 SA episodes? Is there any qualifier for an episode, such as duration (at least 3 days? out for 1 day also counts as 1 episode?)

4. Building on #3 comment, how many employees share groups? are they mutually exclusive or are the two samples made up of roughly the same number of individuals (you report 66 and 67, coincidence? In this case, the model and regression coefficients are only influenced by a very few data points? right?

5. Table 3. It appears that the regression coefficients (SE) under the Development setting heading and the Validation setting no updating heading are exactly the same? Is this true or is this a data coding error?

Major Compulsory Revisions (which the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

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