Reviewer's report

Title: Firm downsizing and diagnosis-specific disability pensioning in Norway

Version: 1 Date: 4 October 2012

Reviewer: Gun Johansson

Reviewer's report:

This is an interesting and important article that focuses on the impact of labour market conditions on disability pension (DP). I greatly approve of such a perspective as main focuses in previous research of DP have been on individual conditions or their near environment. The questions are well defined, although the scope is somewhat to broad.

My concerns are:

Major Compulsory Revisions

The authors have to clarify how present study differs from Rege et al 2009. To me it seemed to be the same sample, design and question in both studies

The authors have to clarify how "firm" is defined and operationalized. Is firm equal to employer, workplace or something else. One employer can have several work places, which is the case for e.g county councils. Whether one define employer or work place can therefor greatly impact on the results. As women more often are employed by public employers who have many work places, definition chosen will be especially important for results among women. The results found should also be considered in discussions in relation to definition used.

The authors also have to clarify how information of "firm" are gathered. From what I can see, the only information given is that firm is collected from NAVs register where firm is noted for each individual leaving and staying. But if a person have been with an employer for a long time, how will they be registered? A further question is how information on downsizing (your main variable) and other firm characteristics is collected. From information given, it is not possibly to value whether "down-sizing" is a trustworthy construct and measurement.

Minor Essential Revisions

Although the topic is interesting the manuscript gives an overwhelming impression. I can see two reasons for this. The first is that the scope of the article is too broad. I would recommend to exclude the stratification on diagnosis in this article and if you believe it to be important, present it in another article. Secondly I recommend to only present odds ratios for the main variable "downsizing" in relation to stratification variables and different models. Odds ratios for the confounders are not in focus and of no interest for this study. I would also recommend excluding measures of variance, intraclass correlation and R2 from
the tables. I do not understand how to interpret them. E.g. what does variance between firms display? Is it proportion DP between employers or firms with different downsizing-figures? An alternative to exclusion is of course to better introduce these measurements. As the authors from these figures conclude that firm characteristics have less impact than individual they seem to contradict the results from the logistic regression. If the authors choose to keep these measures and give them such dignity they should address this contradiction in the “Firm variance” chapter in discussions.

The contradiction mentioned above is also evident when you trace a gender difference from the unexplained variance although this difference is not evident in your logistic regressions. As a reader this is very confusing. Which measurement shall be trusted?

I would like to have some possible implications of the results addressed in discussions. Are there any important research questions for the future? Are there any weak grops to watch out for when downsizing?

**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