Reviewer’s report

Title: The return to work experiences of middle-aged Australian workers diagnosed with colorectal cancer: a matched cohort study

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Reviewer: Tyna Taskila

Reviewer’s report:

There have been increasing interest to study the topic of employment and cancer during the last decade and several studies have been published in this field. The findings of the paper therefore are not particularly new. Even show, the strengths of the study are longitudinal design and cancer-free control group support the view of publishing this paper.

The paper is well-written, the analysis are well sound and the interpretations of the findings are mainly correct.

My only criticism is about the justifications of the study, which the authors need to revise.

Throughout the text, the authors say that this is the first study looking at employment of colon cancer patients in middle-aged individuals. This is statement is slightly odd, as large majority of cancer survivors of working age (over 80%) in general are in their middle-age when diagnosed. This is particularly true in cancers like colon which are normally diagnosed in later life. In discussion, they say first that this is the first study looking at the topic and then later that "they were able to identify four studies that focused on employment outcomes". This section needs clarification. Moreover, A quick look on Pubmed shows that there are at least 10 studies that have examined employment outcomes in people with colon cancer. This number excludes those studies that had looked at other cancer types as well in addition to colon cancer. Therefore the authors need to find some stronger justification for the study as there are numerous studies that have looked at employment and colon cancer and other studies that have looked at those in other cancer types (and not only breast cancer).

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.