Reviewer's report

Title: Length of sick leave - Why not ask the sick-listed? Sick-listed individuals predict their length of sick leave more accurately than professionals

Version: 2 Date: 31 August 2004

Reviewer: Harald Reiso

Reviewer's report:

General
There are considerable improvements of the article

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

The title is now:
Length of sick leave - Why not ask the sick-listed? Sick-listed individuals predict their length of sick leave more accurately than professionals

The continued use of the terms diagnostic accuracy and diagnostic validity are confusing. This is not an article about the correctness of diagnoses. I suggest that either the authors use diagnostic accuracy and diagnostic validity throughout the article, and define the terms in the methods section, or better I think: define and use terms like predictive accuracy and predictive validity (since the title refers to prediction, as do the abstract (prediction/prognosis), the research question (prediction), predictive power (Statistics), “predicted more accurately” (Results/ROC), and “predicted their length of sick leave far more accurately” (page 13). Table 3 and 4 use diagnostic validity, why not use predictive accuracy?

Cut-off needs to be defined in the methods section and in the legend for figure 2. May this serve as a template for a definition (from the authors’ reply letter)?: The preferred cut-off for identifying sick leaves lasting 12 weeks or longer is the cut-off that maximise the sum of sensitivity and specificity (nearest the upper left corner of the diagram).

Use a “box” defining predictive accuracy, predictive validity and cut-off?

Page 9, first paragraph lacks references to p-values or 95% CI for the figures presented.

Use the terms “medical consultants” and “insurance officers” throughout to increase readability/clarity.

Page 11: Where are the figures 1000, 333, 111 and so forth from??

Table 4 still seems unnecessary. Why not write the essence of it as text?

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

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The article needs another round of “language wash”.
Some comments are given in the enclosed return manuscript.
Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:

None