**Reviewer's report**

**Title:** Interaction among general practitioners age and patient load in the prediction of job strain, decision latitude and perception of job demands

**Version:** 3  **Date:** 16 August 2004

**Reviewer:** frans nijhuis

**Reviewer's report:**

**General**
A small scale but interesting study.
It is worthwhile to publish it, but it needs some changes.

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

* Is the question posed by the authors new and well defined?

There is no real research question. One of the causes is that the relevant literature is in the discussion part in stead of into the introduction.
The introduction has to lead to the research question Why is it an important topic from scientific viewpoint in relation to other research and from a practical viewpoint: which societal problems can be answered by this research.

* Are the methods appropriate and well described?

The research question is very specific so only a few variables have to be measured and there are well described. The predicted relation is also a problem. In the way the authors look for example to decision latitude makes that decision latitude is not a characteristic of the work but a subjective experience. It looks to me that the author's have to explain why they expect that the age and patient load influences the work characteristics. It is an approach that is in a specific way contrary to the existing literature.

* The description of the results

The results are described in a very short way. It is a very strait analyses, but it is hardly understandable what the results of the analyses are.
I would like to start with some more extensive descriptions of the statistics. In the experience of the job demands, decision latitude and psychosocial stress in general high or low. Is there a real problem?
The second step would be to give a correlation matrix to look at the univariate correlation's that step makes it easier to understand the interaction effects found in the regression analyses.
Relations have to be written in relation to their meaning: e.g. the decision latitude decreases by rising age of the doctors.
The description of results in the summary needs be more oriented at the meaning of the result than on the statistics.
* Discussion

A large part of the discussion has to be replaced to the introduction to give a rationale for the research question. The discussion has to be oriented on three questions:
- Are the results in accordance with earlier research findings and if not: is there an explanation for these results?
- What are the implications of the findings for future research?
- The problem of self-rating, self-judgement, the subjectivity of the judgements have to be discussed. Is it not possible that doctors who experienced a too high workload have already diminished their workload?

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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)

* Are the data sound and well controlled?

As far as I can see is there no problem with the data.

* The writing

It will be necessary to read the text very carefully, there are some failures in it and also the reference list contains at least one fault in the description of the names.

* Title and abstract

The abstract could be more informative, by not giving the statistical results but a description of the results in words.

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research
interests

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

**Statistical review:** No

**Declaration of competing interests:**

NONE