Reviewer’s report

Title: The Impact of Fathers’ Physical and Psychosocial Work Conditions on Attempted and Completed Suicide Among their Children

Version: 2 Date: 2 January 2006

Reviewer: Töres Theorell

Reviewer’s report:

General
This is original and interesting work. The authors have used a British Columbia cohort of 30,000 sawmill workers for the study of the relationship between father’s psychosocial working conditions and suicide. Since the cohort is relatively homogenous some methodological problems are avoided. There were differences between attempted and completed suicides and also between male and female workers.

Exposure was defined as the conditions that the father had had during the period when the participant was between 0 and 16 years old. The assessment of psychosocial working conditions was made indirectly. Since all the job titles were recorded between 1950 and 1998 for all subjects who had been working for at least one year in one of the participating sawmills it was possible to use information gathered on estimated psychosocial conditions associated with these titles. A panel of four experts did this for the period before 1975 and a panel of senior workers did the same thing for the periods 1975 to 1985 and 1985 to 1995. It is not clear whether the same method was used for the period 1995 to 1998. In this way it was possible to assess indirectly psychological demands, decision latitude and social support at work. Information on unemployment was also gathered as well as marital status, race, completed or attempted suicide, mental health diagnosis or alcohol-related mental health diagnosis, all of those prior to their child’s attempted or completed suicide.

Information on death and hospitalisation in the cohort’s children born 1952 to 1998 was linked to the sawmill cohort.

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

The statistical analysis is appropriate and the conclusions also adequate. There are clearly too many tables. First of all I do not feel that presenting both genders together really adds anything. I also feel that it is not very useful to present univariate results for attempted and completed suicides together – which would mean that table 2 could be omitted altogether. I would also omit table 5. The small lack of clarity regarding job title information for the years 1995-1998 should be rectified (maybe I did not read properly)

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

There are some small errors in typing.
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: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests