Reviewer's report

Title: Dealing with sickness certification - a survey of problems and strategies among general practitioners and orthopaedic surgeons.

Version: 1 Date: 1 May 2007
Reviewer: Olaf Gjerløw Aasland

Reviewer's report:

General

The article does not offer much new knowledge in this field. The significant differences between GP's and OS's is nothing but expected, given their different patient categories.

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

The political dimension of sickness certification is lacking. WHY have the doctors been given this role that they to a large extent don't like? HOW do they see it as an obligation rather than a medical task?

Also: why aren't the patients' employers included in the discussion on how to improve sickness certification practice?

I don't know if the data contains information on differences in sickness certification practices, but this would have been an essential question: do the doctors who experience the certification process differently also practice it differently? May this lead to a selection of doctors on the side of the patients?

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

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

There is a recent publication on how GP’s think differently in this matter that might be considered for inclusion:

Gulbrandsen P., Hofoss D., Nylenna M., Saltyte-Benth J., Aasland OG.
General practitioners’ relationship to sickness certification

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

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

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