Reviewer’s report

Title: Sick-leave track record and other potential determinants of a disability grant A population based study of 8,218 men and women followed for 16 years

Version: 2 Date: 4 August 2008

Reviewer: Jane E Ferrie

Reviewer’s report:

This paper is well written, easy to read and provides new evidence that advances our understanding of the determinants of disability pension, a subject of increasing importance in light of policies aimed at retaining older workers in active labour force.

Please number your comments and divide them into

Major Compulsory Revisions

None.

Minor Essential Revisions

1. The authors should discuss the fact that their measure of sickness absence is far more comprehensive than their measures of other potentially important covariates, such as smoking. It would be interesting to see the effect of pack-years for smoking in the 4 populations for which the authors have these data. This could be reported in the text.

2. The authors should explain in the Introduction why these findings might be of interest to a general public health readership and should discuss the implications of their findings in the Discussion.

3. On page 3 and page 15 the reader feels as if she is being given conflicting information about the first day of sickness absence – would the authors please clarify.

4. The Methods section is very long. For this reason it would be helpful if the section started with a couple of sentences giving a synopsis of the main study design (not the case-control study).

5. On page 7 the authors indicate that some participants were granted a disability pension 'because of labour market conditions'. Would they please explain what this means.

6. Women and men are not listed consistently in the text in the order they are
presented in the Tables.

7. Page 10 and elsewhere – benefiters is term rarely used and would be better replaced with disability pensioners or beneficiaries.

8. Page 12, second paragraph – where are there data to support this claim?

Discretionary Revisions

1. Page 7, paragraph 2 – if death data are used only to exclude participants from the analyses, information on coding of cause of death is not required.

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

**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.