Reviewer's report

**Title:** Intervention Mapping for development of a participatory return-to-work intervention for temporary agency workers and unemployed workers sick-listed due to musculoskeletal disorders.

**Version:** 1  **Date:** 20 February 2009

**Reviewer:** Alex Burdorf

**Reviewer's report:**

Major compulsory revisions

1. I still have problems with this introduction. The rationale for participatory approaches in references 2-10 are all from the same research group, of which several are only design descriptions. This may be good for increasing the h-index of particular researchers, but this is not appropriate science! I am expecting to read (1) about studies that demonstrate positive effects of specifically the participatory approach, eg Loisel et al, (2) these effects consistently observed, i.e. one or two positive trials do not necessarily imply that generalisibility is high, and (3) what is not know about the effects of participatory approaches (in the studies cited it is a black box...). The latter two are absolutely vital to point out. If one knows the effective elements in participatory (ergonomics?) approaches, intervention mappng would not be required at all. Reference 15 states: “PE studies provided partial to moderate evidence”. Hence, there is certainly some debate. Thus, I strongly require this part to be rephrased and other citations to be used.

2. In reference to my earlier remark 7, I am still doubtful about the description. The authors basically have two options: (1) PE is the starting point (given their introduction) and IM is used to extend/tailor PE to the specific population, or (2) IM is the starting point, but then PE is just one of the potential outcomes of the process.

In the current study it is not clear which option has been choosen. The answer of the authors on my previous remark 7 is troublesome, since it conflicts the introductory remarks on the importance of PE. Also, when one suddenly broadens the scope to any participatory approach, I am lost.

3. I have consulted the experts within my group on IM, and feel thus, qualified enough the make the above statements.

**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