Reviewer's report

Title: Return-to-work of sick-listed workers without an employment contract - what works?

Version: 2 Date: 25 March 2009

Reviewer: Fehmidah Munir

Reviewer's report:

Minor essential revisions:

1) Abstract: under methods, please make it clear this is a cross-sectional data

2) Lit review: there are a number of studies that have looked at occ health care RTW interventions. You have not reviewed these. Although your study is specific to the Dutch system and those without a contract, it is difficult to see how it compares with other interventions and what novel contribution your study is making. In your discussion under 'international perspectives', you suggest that the interventions in your Dutch study is high compared to other countries. However, without some review of interventions offered by other countries (e.g. see papers by Nieuenhuijsen et al)- it is difficult to see what your study offers.

3) Methods: please outline any ethics procedure/approval. Under Questionnaire, please explain what TNO means

4) analysis: You state you carried out loglinear regression analysis. However, throughout the manuscript you simply refer to the analysis as 'multiple regression analysis'. This is misleading. Please adjust so that it is clear you refer to loglinear (as you had mostly categorical/binary data). Secondly, you discuss interaction effects but these are not explained fully - what interaction effects? how did you enter these into the model? where are they reported? I cannot see them reported in the table. What confounding variables did you enter? are these the same as background variables? (see page 12). Please report parameters of the model (e.g. is it a good model?)

5) results - Under basline characteristics, please make it clear whether you are simply reported observations or whether analysis was carried out.

6) results - the next section under results are purely descriptive and merely report what you present in your tables. Although these are one of your study objectives, It doesn't convey anything related to the title of your manuscript (except for the figures of how many people without a contract return to work). I suggest reducing this section. The next section on content and frequency of occ health care/interventions, please enter N for each percentage you report. In addition. For the main analysis using loglinear multiple regression, I see this as being your main objective and of most interest to the reader. it would be useful if you included an appendix outlining what each of the interventions consists of. e.g.
what does 'OHC professional discussed RTW' actually consist of?

7) discussion: Again, I feel that the main objective of your study does not come across strongly enough in the discussion. I suggest you start by re-iterating your main objective and discussing how the RTW figure for non contracted employees compares with those who have a contract who report similar illnesses. The results of the loglinear analysis should be discussed next, and where appropriate discuss these findings in relation to the lit review on Occ health itnerventions.

Discretionary revisions:

1) change description of perceived health status from 'even bad' to 'poor' or 'fairly poor' throughout manuscript, including abstract

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: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:

'I declare that I have no competing interests'