Reviewer’s report

Title: Evidence-based guidelines in the assessment of work disability: an international survey and a comparison of quality of development according to AGREE in Germany and the Netherlands.

Version: 3 Date: 31 August 2009

Reviewer: Jako Burgers

Reviewer’s report:

The authors have integrated the reviewers’ comments well, which improved the paper substantially. I do not have any major comments. I only have suggestions to improve the readability of the paper.

Title:

The title is quite long now. If the subtitle would be removed, the paper may be more appealing to read.

Abstract:

- I am not sure about the term ‘social insurance’. I think the authors mean ‘social insurance medicine’. Please check the use of this term throughout the whole paper. The abbreviation SIM could be used.
- Please use the term ‘work disability’ consistently, instead of ‘disability for work’ (see comments reviewer 2)
- Background: ‘…can be assessed…’ instead of ‘…is assessed…’; ‘…relatively new’ (add relatively)
- Method: ‘Official use’: please clarify. I think the authors mean ‘endorsed by …’; ‘two experts’ (add two)
- Results: use quotation marks ‘Scope and purpose’ and ‘Clarity and presentation’ (also throughout the paper); replace ‘insufficiently’ by ‘had low scores’.
- Conclusion: use the term ‘AGREE Instrument’ instead of ‘AGREE’ (throughout the paper); replace ‘further discussion’ by ‘more elaboration’; ‘benefit’ instead ‘profit’; ‘for providing evidence’ instead of ‘for this’.

Introduction:

- ‘Although instruments used to support medical decision making are not validated for this purpose [6, 9, 11], this does not necessarily mean that they are unsuitable.’ This refers to a few instruments and not to all instruments. Rephrase and formulate positively
- Move paragraph about the AGREE Instrument to the Method section, and the limitations to the Discussion section.
- Page 5, r. 2: ‘grounds’ can be replaced by ‘evidence’ or ‘recommendations’.
Also check in the whole paper the use of the term ‘grounds’. This is not a usual term.
- Page 5, 2nd paragraph: I suggest to skip ‘Having guidelines for medical work does not necessarily mean that the quality of the work is supported.’
- Page 6: paragraph on social insurance medicine can be shortened. Only describe those differences between SIM and clinical practice that are relevant for this study
- Page 6: move information about EUMASS as data source for the guidelines to Methods section
- Page 7: I am not sure about the term ‘Disease oriented medical’; only ‘disease oriented’ might be better.

Methods
- Page 7: ‘a distinction that is evident from the relative guideline’s title’ can be replaced by ‘based on title’
- Page 8: ‘translated item 11 and 16’ could be replaced by ‘adapted user guide of item 11 and 16’

Results
- Page 8: ‘…officially in use in, in …’ does not read well. Please reformulate
- Page 9: replace ‘eight smaller sets’ by ‘set of eight smaller’
- Table 1: Number of pages and references (add number); a separate row for the country could be added; skip publisher, which is described in the text. Explain abbreviations.
- Page 10: agreement was ‘high’ instead of ‘good’
- Table 2: add number of guidelines in 2nd row

Discussion
- In general the length of this section can be shortened.
- Add a (short) discussion on the differences in guideline scores between diseases.

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: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:
I am trustee of the AGREE Research Trust, which holds the copyright of the AGREE Instrument