Reviewer’s report

Title: The prevalence of work-related stress, and its association with self-perceived health and sick-leave, in a cohort of employed Swedish women.

Version: 3 Date: 2 December 2008

Reviewer: Els Clays

Reviewer’s report:

The authors have provided adequate answers to the issues raised in the first review and the paper has improved in several ways. Nevertheless I still want to place some further questions and comments.

Major Compulsory Revisions

Methods section

1) Research design and population, lines 6-8: “Additionally, 85 of the now …”. I do not understand this step in the procedure, could you explain this further?

2) The reliability of the questionnaire was tested by a non-parametric statistical method for evaluation of paired data. This needs further clarification: what does this test involve exactly? Does the concept of ‘paired data’ mean that the questionnaire was filled out more than once?

3) In relation to the previous issue, has the internal consistency of the scales been tested by calculating Cronbach’s alpha’s? Has a principal component analysis been carried out?

4) It is not clear to me how the level of overall work-related stress was defined for most of the scales. “Each participant’s median label was calculated…” What exactly does this involve?

5) The previous issue is of particular importance since one of the study objectives is to investigate the prevalence of different types of stress. In order to examine this, one should not discriminate between stress groups by choosing arbitrary cut-off points, like is done for the categories ‘indistinct organisation’ and ‘individual demands’ (dichotomisation at the upper quartile). This needs further clarification.

Discussion section

6) The issue of ‘common method variance’ should in my opinion be discussed as a study limitation. Since both exposure and outcome variables were assessed at the same time and by self-report methods, it is likely that the effect estimates (in this case the OR’s) are inflated. (This would not be the case if associations were examined between stress and physical examination measures.)
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.