Reviewer’s report

Title: Guidance strategies for a participatory ergonomic intervention to increase the use of ergonomic measures of workers in construction companies: a study design of a randomised trial

Version: 2 Date: 9 December 2013

Reviewer: Diane Gyi

Reviewer’s report:

Minor compulsory revisions

The report is very well written, I congratulate the authors on the writing style and use of English. Most of my suggestions are points of clarification for the document:

1. Explain exactly what the companies will be told at the recruitment stage regarding the intervention types and assignment to groups? Are they told the hypothesis? If so, how will this affect the results? Perhaps they would prefer the ‘face to face’ option for example?

2. Also, I am unclear whether there are direct costs to the company for either intervention or if they are ‘in-kind’? For example, does the ergonomics consultant charge companies for their time? Presumably the ‘face to face’ option is more expensive or is it essentially free? Do companies pay for the cost of the ergonomic measure – these can be expensive and take time to get agreement and make a case to senior managers. These points need clarifying in your proposal. Also, how does this affect recruitment?

3. With regard to your secondary outcome measures, there are a lot of them, many of which have complex and repetitive scales. Again, from my experience of research in the field, these will be challenging and time consuming for many workers to complete and may affect your ‘drop-out’ rate. Have you done any pilot testing of these with construction workers? I think you should consider this before you start the project OR do you have examples of where these scales have been used with these workers? Also, please define when exactly these measures are collected/completed by individual workers i.e. what is pre-intervention defined as and what is post-intervention defined as?

4. How are individual construction workers/trades selected by the participating companies? What is the anticipated sample size of these workers?

5. Explain, why there will be ‘13 email contacts’ - this seems arbitrary to some extent. Does it matter how much email correspondence there is? Is the 13, the number of formal emails sent out? Is ‘discussion’ around an email allowed? I know your proposal states ‘emails’ specifically, but had you thought about Skype or other social media options?
6. The study design is demanding in terms of the commitment of the participating companies. My experience has been mainly in the UK but recruitment can be very time consuming, particularly with getting the relevant permissions, and agreements of senior management in place, particularly if there are cost implications. How are you going to motivate companies to participate and keep participating? What drop-out rate are you anticipating? Is this built into your recruitment strategy?

7. In Section 3.4.3, I am not sure what you mean by the sentence ‘No co-interventions are planned by the participating constructions companies…..’ Explain what is meant by this.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

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

Declaration of competing interests:

I have not competing interests