Reviewer's report

**Title:** Experience of flow during everyday practice in a medical hospital ward. Results from a study based on experience sampling method

**Version:** 1  **Date:** 15 September 2010

**Reviewer:** Anke de Veer

**Reviewer's report:**

The subject in this article, flow, is interesting because it builds on a positive approach of work experiences. It is also interesting to investigate whether the concept of flow is applicable to nursing staff. Originally, the concept of flow is associated with arts, mathematics, computer activities. I think the authors can make the content of the article more interesting if they elaborate on the central concepts they use (because, as the authors already stated, within nursing this is probably a new way to look at work experiences).

**Major revisions**

1. **Background (page 4, 1st sentence).** The authors state that health care staff is able to experience positive work-related experiences and refer to unpublished writings. For the purpose of controllability, the authors better use publicly available references. Can the authors motivate why they hypothesize that the concept of flow might also be applicable to nurses and assistant nurses?

2. **Background.** The authors describe flow as a psychological state of mind “concurrently experiencing happiness, motivation and cognitive efficiency”. The authors seem to consider flow as a multidimensional construct. The article would gain in strength if the authors reflect more extensively on the construct of flow. The next reference may be helpful:

3. **Background (page 4, final par.)** The authors state that the aim of the article is to “explore the experience of flow during everyday practice….in order to increase the knowledge on salutogenic health promoting factors”. This is a rather free formulation and gives no direction to what will be investigated. Can the authors more specifically mention what kind of elements or aspects they want to explore and why? The authors might end this section with research questions.

4. **Procedure (page 6).** Please add some examples of the questions that were asked and the possible answers. It remains unclear whether the authors used existing measurement instruments or self developed questions. Also, no information is given about the validity and reliability of the measurement instruments.
5. Procedure (page 7). Please add some more information about the SOC, why it is used, the kind of questions/answers and psychometric properties.

6. The article would be easier to read if the description of the variables (page 9) is placed directly after or in combination with the measurement instruments (and before the section in which the analyses are being described).

7. Statistical data preparation and analyses (page 8). The authors perform logistic regression analyses using all respondents as well as nurse assistants only. Why not include the educational level (i.e. RN versus nurse assistant) as a variable in the overall logistic regression? Can the authors explain why they prefer to perform separate analyses for the two groups? (after all, the RN group is too small to perform a separate analysis).

8. The authors operationalize flow as an exact match between challenge and skill estimation. Whether the respondent is in a state of flow is not indicated by the respondent, but is a decision of the researchers. How does this relate to the authors’ definition of flow as a psychological state of mind “concurrently experiencing happiness, motivation and cognitive efficiency” (that refers to a personal experience). Is your operationalization an indication of the situation in which a person can possibly experience flow rather than the flow experience itself? Or, as authors such as Eisenberger et al (2005, J Organiz Behav, 26, 755-775) mention, a flow context. This should be explained and discussed in the paper.

9. Please explain why you prefer to dichotomize data (such as age, SOC, individual share of flow) rather than use the full richness of the originally gathered data? Could this explain the limited amount of relationships which you have found?

10. Page 12. “However, reporting high on cognitive resources was also positively related to flow”. What do you mean by “However”? Please give an explanation or reformulate the sentence.

11. Page 14. The authors expected to find a relationship between flow and affective resources but did not find any. They refer to other studies where such a relationship has been found. Please explain more extensively why you could not confirm this relationship.

12. Discussion. Please discuss the possible application of the flow concept to nursing staff: what means flow within nursing (from a theoretical point of view) and how can the concept of flow be used in the future to make work attractive (implications for further research as well as practical implications).

Minor revisions

13. Page 17. The authors suggest to make work more attractive by “refocusing the health care work towards more medical care activities”. Is this suggestion feasible since, at least in our country, nurse assistants are not allowed to perform many of these activities?
14. Abstract. Please also include a definition of the flow concept.

15.
Page 12 “tables 3 4” should be “tables 3 and 4”
Page 13 and reference 17 “Eisenberg” should be “Eisenberger”
Page 16 Ellis et al 2001 is not in the references paragraph

Not being a native speaker, it is difficult for me to comment on the English language usage. However, my impression is that the article needs further editing.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**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 declare that I have no competing interests