Author's response to reviews

Title: Rehabilitation time before disability pension

Authors:

Morten Støver (morten.stover@ntnu.no)
Kristine Pape (kristine.pape@ntnu.no)
Roar Johnsen (roar.johnsen@ntnu.no)
Nils Fleten (nils.fleten@uit.no)
Erik R Sund (erik.reidar.sund@skde.no)
Bjørgulf Claussen (Bjorgulf.Claussen@medisin.uio.no)
Solveig O Ose (Solveig.Ose@sintef.no)
Johan H Bjørngaard (Johan.H.Bjorngaard@ntnu.no)

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Author's response to reviews: see over
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Dear Editor,

We would be grateful if our paper “Rehabilitation time before disability pension” could be considered for publication in BMC Health Services Research.

The decision to grant a disability pension is usually the end of a long process of medical examinations, treatment and rehabilitation attempts. The decisive factor to whether one is granted a disability pension or not should be ones health and work capacity, and thus people should receive the same possibilities and treatment from their local employment and welfare office independent of their place of residence. This study investigates to what extent the time spent on rehabilitation time prior to disability pension is associated with characteristics of the individual or the local employment and welfare office, measured as municipality variance.

In the study we followed 2,533 40-42 year olds who received disability pension during a period of 18 years, showing that baseline health characteristics were only moderately associated with rehabilitation time. Younger people and people with unemployment periods had longer rehabilitation time before a disability pension was granted. There were only minor differences in rehabilitation time between men or women, and between different levels of education. Approximately 2 % of the total variance in rehabilitation time could be attributed the municipality of residence for the total sample, while the corresponding figures for psychiatric diagnosis were 12-17%.

Longer rehabilitation time before granting disability pension for younger persons and insecurity of permanent work inability for persons experiencing unemployment reflects extended rehabilitation requirements for these groups. The longer rehabilitation period and the variation between municipalities for persons with psychiatric disorders might mirror the lack of common knowledge on the working capacity and on fitted rehabilitation programs for people with mental problems.

This is the second article from the present study, and has not been submitted to other journals. The first article from this study was published in BMJ Public Health in February 2012.

All the authors have read the final version of the manuscript and agreed to its submission.

Sincerely yours,

Morten Støver, Ph.D. research fellow
Norwegian University of Science and Technology
Department of Public Health and General Practice
Postboks 8905, MTFS
7491 Trondheim
Norway
Telephone: private +47 95 25 37 72, work +47 73 59 88 76, Fax: +47 73 59 75 77.
E-mail: morten.stover@ntnu.no
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We appreciate the quick response, and have made following additions, as proposed in your e-mail.

1) The first article from this study, published in BMC Public Health is now cited (23). These two articles are the first in a study that uses the Nordland Health study to assess how the risk of disability pension can be attributed to contextual factors as measured by municipality variance. The first study assessed municipality variance for the risk of receiving a disability pension, while this study assessed municipality variance in the length of the rehabilitation process for those who were granted disability pension.

2) In this resubmission, we have included a Competing interests section after conclusions.

3) In this resubmission, we have included an Authors’ Contributions section, after Competing Interests. We have also included an acknowledgements section.