Reviewer’s report

Title: Rehabilitation time before disability pension

Version: 3 Date: 6 August 2012

Reviewer: Kurt Svardsudd

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Major Compulsory Revisions

1. 30% of the study population was excluded because of missing data in one or more variables. Table 1 gives an excellent overview of where the missing data were located. The attrition rate is not alarmingly high but may cause concern. However, all variables included in the analysis of model 1 in Tables 2-5 seem to have complete data. I suggest model 1 be re-analysed based on the full sample, and the differences compared to the revised sample be reported in the manuscript, for instance in the Methods or Results sections.

2. The screening data was collected in 1988-1989 but follow-up data was collected from 1992 and onwards. This means that follow up is left truncated which may cause an analytical problem, since a number of persons may have died or moved out of the area (additional attrition). Why was follow up data truncated? Were they not available before 1992? Please comment on this issue in the text.

3. Page 11, paragraph 3. ‘… ICC was statistically significant …’. Please provide confidence intervals in the Tables or p-value in the text.

4. Table 1. The alternatives of alcohol description are not mutually exclusive. ‘Up to 1-2 times per month’ and ‘More than once a week/daily’ leave a gap, for instance 3 or 4 times a month. This problem should be addressed.

Minor Essential Revisions

5. Page 8 Unemployment. Does the sentence ‘… whether the respondents had been unemployed throughout the follow-up period’ mean that the respondents must have been unemployed throughout the whole follow-up period or does it mean at any time during the period?

6. Language. Page 10 line 5. ‘diagnosis’ should be ‘diagnoses’ (plural form). Page 10 line 4 from bottom. I suggest the sentence ‘In figure 1, we have presented …’ is change to ‘In figure 1 a categorical … in months is presented’ (the sentence would be better and you get the right tense). Page 11 first line ‘… rehabilitation time, AS compared …’. Page 11 last line ‘… the ICC is …’ should be ‘… the ICC was … (always past tense in scientific medical texts). Page 16 line 6 missing word ‘This IS also in line …’. Page 18 Acknowledgements. The sentence ‘The study was funded …’ appears twice.
7. Table 1. In the legend there is an inconsistency. ‘… dropping out from labour market …’ is at variance with the term used in the text. I suggest the following wording of the legend ‘Descriptive statistics. Mean, median and standard deviation of number of days from first day of work disability to day of granted disability pension’ (then the description of the time interval is consistent with the corresponding description in the text, for instance in page 6 last paragraph).

Discretionary Revisions
8. Throughout the text the we-form is frequently used. This is unorthodox. In scientific medical writing the passive form is the standard. I suggest the authors adjust the text to passive form to obtain a more professional approach towards the readers.

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 declare that I have no competing interests