Reviewer's report

Title: Predictors of trends in self-rated health. A prospective study of IT and media workers.

Version: Date: 3 Date: 13 September 2005

Reviewer: Seppo Miilunpalo

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General
The research topic is interesting and relevant, i.e. it's important to develop health measures and assess different characteristic of such measures. The background of the former studies have been shortly reviewed, in spite of that the introduction is sufficient for the reader to understand the approach and research questions. The current methods of this study have been described properly and seem to be adequate.

The most prominent finding was that baseline SRH predicted future change in SRH and it was interpreted to be partly due to statistical phenomenon of regression to the mean. Does this mean that one year is to short period to recognize real changes in rather healthy population?

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)
The study was planned as a experimental trial in order to study the beneficial effects of a web-based stress management system (first report, reference 13) and also in this report the results have been reported separately in (or in relation to) intervention vs. reference group. The formation of research groups (randomization process?) should be described.

As well it should be considered what could be the importance of the selection of study sample for the results (highly selected group of IT experts and other well educated professionals): is there enough variation in the SRH variable in a homogenous study group and how can the results be generalized to other populations.

The study participants and variation of the HR variable according to main background factors of the study subjects should be described better (SRH according gender, age, socioeconomic background, other health measures). Table 5 gives the correlations between these background factors but the difference e.g. between the highest vs. lowest quartiles cannot be estimated. This kind of data would be useful in estimating the results and comparing the observations to former studies.

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions
Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests.