Reviewer's report

**Title:** GPs' experiences of working with sick leave after changes in the Swedish social security system, a qualitative focus group study

**Version:** 2  
**Date:** 20 July 2014

**Reviewer:** Wout de Boer

**Reviewer's report:**

1. **Is the question posed by the authors well defined?** Yes and no
   
   Major Compulsory Revision required
   
   Yes, to the extent that a measurement at a specific moment is inquired about, no to the extent that a comparison is suggested with the period before the changes in social security. This comparison should either be worked out properly or left out altogether.

2. **Are the methods appropriate and well described?** No.
   
   Major Compulsory Revision required:
   
   I do not understand how the sampling was carried out so as to achieve maximal variation. It is unclear what variation in sampling was required beforehand and how it was determined that saturation was achieved with the 22 GPs. The authors make quite a point of their capturing of variation but the results do not indicate much variation. Focus groups with people who work together in the same location is not a way to capture differences.
   
   It is unclear to me on what literature the discussion guide was constructed and the items are very global. This needs specification. What items were left out and for what reason? One thing that changed for the GPs are the guidelines (Beslutsstöd) but they are not mentioned at all.
   
   How did that selection affect the reduction to 4 categories in the analysis? The aggregation of 349 meaning units is not simply to be dismissed as with a lack of theory and emerging categories.

3. **Are the data sound?** Unclear.
   
   Minor essential revisions required: Given the search for variation the unanimity is surprising. I would expect an explanation for that or a more differentiated presentation of results. Moreover, it is unclear what is result of the discussions and what is interpretation by the authors.
   
   Minor essential revisions required: Every now and then comparisons are made to the time before changes in social security. Half of the participants seems to have worked too short a time to have witnessed these changes, so what does this represent?

4. **Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data**
deposition?
Major Compulsory Revision required: See above: too much is left implicit.

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?
Major Compulsory Revision required: In the start of the discussion the comparison with the earlier period is addressed. The reader must infer that the changes were meant to make the work of the GPs easier. That is of course not so. And anyway the methods used do not allow a comparison over time.
Major Compulsory Revision required: Both conclusions are, in my opinion, not supported by the data.

6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated?
Major Compulsory Revision required: The main limitation of the study seems to be the unclear methods; this is not addressed.

7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished?
They acknowledge earlier work but do not show how they build on it.

8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?
Yes.

9. Is the writing acceptable?
Yes

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

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