Reviewer’s report

Title: Effects of a vocational rehabilitation programme on return to work among sick-listed primary health care patients A population-based matched, case-control study

Version: 1 Date: 27 Jan 2020

Reviewer: Erik L Werner

Reviewer's report:

Thank you for a second review on this paper, which I still find very interesting and worthy publication.

However, with reference to the authors' response to my first assessment, there are still some of my concerns that are not fully responded to. Furthermore, I realize at this review that the data collection was done 15 years ago? I am not sure if this impacts on the results but society has changed in several ways over the 15 years and I believe this should be included as a possible limitation.

Previously I missed some more information on the intervention. I see that the authors provide me some of this in their response to the reviewer but my goal was to have this information included in the paper. I still believe it is of importance to have some insight of the intervention given as part of the methods. I do not find much of this on the pages 5 and 6 as stated.

Also, the references to studies from workplace interventions with a more favorable outcome are quite poorly. In my opinion, this should be highlighted in the discussion section. If most interventions in health care centers are of little value as opposed to those taking place at the workplace (?), this is an important observation.

In the introduction section the authors state that up to now "no multidisciplinary rehabilitation intervention has been effective regarding sick leave conclusion in the general population". I believe this is true. However, it leaves a question: Why should the founders of this intervention believe this to be successful? What was the idea to create another multidisciplinary initiative if all initiatives previously have been unsuccessful? Were there any new items in this program?

I believe the response to this is that the knowledge on this in 2004 was still based on a belief on multidisciplinary rehabilitation programs, but I suggest it to be mentioned in the manuscript.
Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

No

Does the work include the necessary controls?
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

I recommend additional statistical review

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Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

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