Reviewer's report

Title: An exploratory pilot study to assess self-perceived changes among social assistance recipients regarding employment prospects after receiving dental treatment

Version: 2 Date: 22 June 2015

Reviewer: Christopher Vernazza

Reviewer's report:

This is a well written report of a small pilot study investigating a timely and interesting area. Given this, the findings are interesting but of limited relevance due to the small sample size and recruitment strategy. However, as the pilot nature of the work is clear from the title and manuscript, this is acceptable.

Major compulsory revisions

1. The manuscript and analysis are complicated by the multitude of measures used. The OHIP and JSS scores are key to the paper and so the "qualitative" aspects and non-validated 4 questions distract from the main findings. In addition the "qualitative" work is somewhat basic in its methodological robustness. I would recommend dropping the 4 non-validated questions and reducing the emphasis in the results on the qualitative aspects.

2. The introduction is an excellent summary of the context and the authors should be congratulated on proposing a conceptual model, but as this is important the development of the model should be explained in a little more detail. The model also appears surprising in some elements; for example, I would expect a direct link between general and oral health (in both directions) and also a link between self-efficacy and employment (rather than passing through increased productivity). I would also expect a direct link between QoL and health improvements.

3. The discussion mentions the small sample size but doesn't really address this as a weakness. In addition, the self-selecting nature of the population and the problems of having no control etc. are not discussed and should be.

Minor essential revisions

4. There are some quite colloquial phrases in the last paragraph e.g. "wicked" "piece of the puzzle" which should be replaced.

Discretionary revisions

5. The "Instruments used" section of the methods should fall directly after the "Questionnaire design" section then followed by the "recruitment and sample" section

6. It would be useful to have a separate "Conclusions" sections (perhaps just inserting a sub-title before the last 2 sentences.
7. The figure in Appendix 1 adds little to the text and could be dropped
8. Appendices 2 and 3 could be constructed to highlight the sub-domains of the instruments.

**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