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: 3 Date: 15 August 2015

Reviewer: Daniel Reissmann

Reviewer’s report:

The manuscript has improved a lot and the authors addressed almost all of my concern. However, there are still some minor issues.

Minor Essential Revisions

1. Even though the authors have slightly modified the conceptual model, it is still not suitable to be tested in the current study. Therefore, the authors should change the aim of the study, stated at the end of the introduction section, to what was actually done (e.g., effect of dental treatment in patients on social assistance on OHRQoL and job-seeking skills self-efficacy). To test the model, much more data and more sophisticated statistical methods (e.g., path analyses with structural equation modelling and confirmatory factor analyses) are required.

2. The authors state in the first paragraph of the method section that effects on oral health are expected and should be observed. However, what they actually measured was OHRQoL. This is only one perspective of oral health and does not include any physical measure. Therefore, the term oral health is somewhat confusing and incorrect since an effect on oral health in the narrow sense can not be tested in this study. Would be better to consistently mention OHRQoL as the outcome.

3. In my opinion, this is not neither a descriptive nor a correlational study. There is an intervention, and hence a prospective study design. I would suggest to call this study a prospective, non-randomized clinical study. If desired, the term “uncontrolled” would also be appropriate and could be added.

4. The authors state that the OHIP measures “people’s perception of the social impact of oral diseases on their well-being.” This is not correct since it is not a social impact, it is any impact. I would recommend to remove “social”.

5. There is no need to describe the three methods of summarising OHIP item score. Just report the applied method.

6. The discussion of the study’s limitations is still insufficient. A critical consideration of the small sample size is lacking. The authors tried to argue why no control group was required. This sounds like an excuse and is not correct. As there was an intervention (dental treatment), a control group is required to
demonstrate that the observed effects on OHIP and JSS scores are related to the intervention and not caused by other (not assessed) factors. In conclusion, there are substantial limitations, and potential effects of these limitation on study’s findings and generalisability should be critically evaluated and not only wiped away.

7. The conclusion seems to somewhat overemphasising the study’s finding. As far as I understand the JSS, it is just a measure to assess the perceived influence of self-efficacy on the job-seeking skills. Whether these patients were actually more efficient in seeking a job after receiving dental treatment was not assessed. This should be the next step before suggesting the intervention to policy. Conclusion should be phrased more restrained and based only on what was actually observed in the study, considering that this was “an exploratory pilot study” as the authors stated in the title.

Discretionary Revisions

8. Tab 2: What is meant with “Front teeth”? This does not sound like any type of treatment such as fillings etc. Please clarify.

9. Tab 3: Based on the scoring system and the low number of subjects, only one decimal for JSS scores would be appropriate. To improve clarity, OHIP score could also be presented in this table.

10. Tab 4: Correlation coefficients should be reported with two decimals.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

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.