Author’s response to reviews

Title: How do occupational rehabilitation clinicians approach participants on long-term sick leave in order to facilitate return to work? - A focus-group study.

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How do occupational rehabilitation clinicians approach long-term sick-listed participants in order to facilitate return to work? - A focus-group study.

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Silje Maeland, PhD

Dear editor,

Thank you very much for the possibility to resubmit our manuscript. We appreciate the concrete comments and suggestions for improvements provided by the reviewers and have revised the manuscript. We hope that you will find the revised manuscript acceptable for publishing. Responses to the reviewers’ comments follow in the red text below.
Marius Fimland and Nina Klevanger (Reviewer 2):

We think that the revised manuscript has been improved. However, grammar and syntax should be improved throughout the article, and we suggest that the authors consider a language editing service.

Thank you for your suggestion; we have used a language editing service in our final manuscript to improve syntax and grammar.

Specific comments

Several places the authors use the term "stakeholders" in some form, either alone or "local stakeholders" or "external stakeholders" or "key stakeholders (which is exemplified) or "multi-stakeholder". Please clarify what stakeholder means and what the difference between the various stakeholders are (particularly local vs external; if they in fact are different).

Thank you for your observation.

What we mean by stakeholders is described in the section you refer to. We have chosen to remove “internal, external, local” as a prefix to stakeholders and used “key stakeholders” or “stakeholders” when we use a general term on several actors - such as NAV, employer, and practitioner.

L82: "... as acceptance and commitment therapy (20)". Consider including Fimland et al. 2014 BMC public health or Aasdal et al. 2017 JOOR, as these studies use ACT in occupational rehabilitation in Norway.

We decided not to include additional references in this sentence since we are referring to authors that are describing the models and theories clinicians are building on in their approaches, not individual studies. However, we have included an additional sentence in line 86-88: “There are published several studies on the use of acceptance and commitment theory in occupational rehabilitation in Norway [5, 24-26].”

L90: suggest to include a reference to the case-management ecological model.

New reference is included (Ref 29, line 94)

L106: Ref 32 is a comprehensive book - should a specific chapter be cited?
There are several chapters where this problem is discussed, e.g. 1, 8, 13, 15, 19, 34. We have added: , as described in several chapters in the “Handbook of Return to Work” in the text Line 110. (Ref 36)

Data collection: it is stated that 4 focus group interviews were conducted simultaneously, but in Authors` contributions it is stated that three of the authors were moderators and two were co-moderators - how does this add up?

We were 8 persons conducting the 4 focus groups, but only 5 of us participated in writing the article. The remaining persons are thanked for their participation in the “acknowledgement” section.

L180: "Basic mapping of the participants` life world is mentioned, but in the Results (L193) "..thorough interdisciplinary mapping process" is used. Are they the same thing?

Thank you for your observation. They are the same things, to make it clear we have included “Basic mapping” in the heading (Line 201-202)

L239-241: Consider shortening

Thank you for your suggestion. Title is shortened (Line 247-248): “The clinicians build a therapeutic alliance to initiate individual change processes among their participants”

L270: NAV probably "refer" patients rather than "admit"?

Thank you, we have changed the word according to your suggestion (Line 277)

L560: It is not clear what is meant by "…see analogies between their situation and other life areas".

Thank you for your observation. We have revised the sentence to make it more clear: “…helping them to see analogies with their own situations” (Line 571-572)

L603: Please reword to make more sense: "..., which make RTW challenging for both the clinicians and their participants."
Thank you for your comment. We have revised the sentence to make it more precise: “...which make the selection of interventions and the RTW process challenging for both the clinicians and their participants” (Line 614-615)

Additional improvements of sentences for clarity

(Line 447) … core components of evidence-based-return-to-work interventions for individuals with musculoskeletal and common mental disorders [31, Table 26.1].

Added sentence to be more precise in use of concepts (Line 447-449): Costa-Black classified the core intervention components in three corresponding interfaces of interaction: interface with workers; interface with workplaces; and interface with stakeholders.

Revised sentences to be more fluid and shorter (L448-453): In the interface with workers, the clinicians in this study described that they use cognitive behavioural approaches, in either one-to-one or group sessions. The participants expectations, beliefs, self-efficacy, personal control, attention to pain stimuli, coping, inefficient and negative attitudes and thoughts were addressed.

Changed from: In accordance with the more detailed description given by Costa-Black, the clinicians in this study described that they use cognitive behavioural approaches where the participants attributions, expectations, beliefs, self-efficacy, personal control, attention to pain stimuli and coping are addressed. This was done in either one-to-one or group sessions.

Revised sentences (Line 472-480).

Creating positive encounters was also described as a goal in order to increase the therapeutic alliance, which was seen as a prerequisite by the clinicians for the participants to adhere to the rehabilitation programme, and for the clinicians’ possibilities to initiate individual change processes. This approach is supported by research. A systematic review found that patient-centred communication is associated with positive therapeutic alliance [50]. The approach is also seen as vital to achieve consensus and adherence to the goals of treatment and to initiate individual change processes [52-55].

Changed from: To create positive encounters were also described as a goal for the clinicians in order to increase the therapeutic alliance. This alliance were seen as a prerequisite by the clinicians for the participants to adhere to the rehabilitation program, and for the clinicians’ possibilities to initiate individual change processes. This is in concordance with a broader
research tradition where a trustful relationship is seen as vital in order to achieve higher levels of consensus on the goals of treatment, making well-founded decisions, adherence to treatment, less resistance during treatment and enhance behavioural change [48-53].

Revised sentence (L495-497): Interface with stakeholders encompass administrative provisions, communication between stakeholders, team-based approach and RTW co-ordination or case management, according to Costa-Black [31].

Changed from: Two other core components in occupational rehabilitation, according to Costa-Black, is the interface with stakeholders and the workplace. The interface with stakeholders includes the interdisciplinary team-based approach used to deliver and coordinate different types of treatments.

Revised sentence (L530-531): In our study, the clinicians described interaction with different stakeholders, coordination of activities and follow up of participants as challenging but essential.

Changed from: In our study, interaction with external stakeholders and coordination of activities and follow up over time were described as challenging but essential by the clinicians.

Revised sentence (L588-590): Our unique contribution is a more detailed description of some of the factors targeted by occupational rehabilitation clinicians for change among their participants on long-term sick leave by giving examples of what they do, say or provide in order to initiate changes to promote RTW among their participants.

Documents showing changes due to improvements in syntax and grammar will be sent on demand.