Reviewer’s report

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

Version: 0 Date: 23 Dec 2016

Reviewer: Marius Fimland

Reviewer's report:

This review was performed by PhD-candidate Nina Klevanger and Researcher Marius Steiro Fimland.

Overall we find the study to be of interest. However, some issues described below should be addressed, and syntax and grammar improved.

TITLE

"How do occupational rehabilitation clinicians approach…" is not entirely correct as the researchers did not observe how the clinicians approached patients, but rather how they reported approaching them. Perhaps a bit picky, but consider rewording.

INTRODUCTION

Are there no studies internationally investigating how RTW-professionals approach sick-listed individuals?

65. RTW not defined

65: Consider "can be" instead of "are"

74: In Norway or everywhere? And lacks a reference.

88: Can clinicians target system level factors in rehabilitation?

91-93: States several general needs, but do the authors think that this study can answer the questions raised?

Aim: should the Norwegian context perhaps be mentioned somewhere in the aim. These findings will perhaps not apply to other countries or dissimilar systems?

Aim: could be clearer and more succinct.
METHODS

111-115: Quite confusing. Consider skipping names or initials. Are PhD, MSc necessary?

130: How many inpatient and outpatient? Consider including some more information about the rehabilitation programs the clinicians worked with.

Data collection: participants were divided in groups based on profession so they could easier identify with experiences. Nowhere in the article is there mentioned something about different professions having different views on anything - should we assume that all occupational rehabilitation clinicians approach patients in the same way? Furthermore, did you consider grouping differently? E.g. inpatient/outpatient?

RESULTS

We find the disposition of the result section to be very good. The themes are also clearly described and cover many interesting facets regarding the clinicians' experiences of how they approach their patients on LTSA and the difficulties they encounter. However, the presentation is not always coherent according to what the material (clinicians' experiences) can say something about. In our opinion, it should be made evident throughout the text that all descriptions (both regarding the patients' challenges and what clinicians do) are based on the clinicians' narratives. (E.g. line 268-270: «Many participants have been sedentary for a long time because they interpret bodily reactions and symptoms as harmful, having a behavior characterized by fear avoidance and pain catastrophizing»). This is also mirrored in the titles of the themes. For example, the first theme, «A thorough interdisciplinary mapping process of the participants' lifeworld enabled targeted interventions», is both an approach and a statement on the result of this approach, whereas the second theme, «Building a therapeutic alliance through communication characterized by sensitivity to the participants needs and emotional concerns», describes the clinicians' experience of what is a necessary approach. The last theme, «The clinicians initiate processes of change that increase the participants abilities and possibilities for RTW», describe what clinicians do.

Subheading: "enabled" should be present not past

168: "decide choice of interventions" or how to approach the patient?

185-186: What is meant by "they present the onion as a whole"?

193: Are all participants in 18 institutions drawing a shoe or a clock?
241: "These participants typically..." Here and several places in the manuscript, what presumably are the clinicians’ perceptions/statements, is written as something that is factual.

267 "To create feelings of.." is not the same as "increase feelings of.." which is written elsewhere, please make consistent.

268: Again, a factual statement: "Many participants have..."

320-329: 1) You start by describing exhausted patients who let others be in the driving seat/control their lives. The text does not exemplify that the exhausted woman let anyone else take control of her - perhaps she controlled the daughter and husband? 2) Maybe the point just isn’t being conveyed effectively here, but asking a mother who is taking care of her sick daughter when was the last time she did something that was important to her? Presumably taking care of her daughter was important to her. 3) The exhausted woman experienced that things worked fine when she involved her husband, "even though she did not have total control the whole time". This seems a bit contradictory to the previous statement "let others...control their lives", as it appears that the woman was more controlling/excluding her husband in the first place, than the other way around?

352: is it important to include "and close, immediate" in the heading, or could it be removed?

363: "...most participants need follow-up after the program". Again, an opinion/statement that is presented as factual

DISCUSSION

The most prominent themes are contextualized by referring to relevant literature. However, we have some suggestions.

398-400: please elaborate on how the core components in Costa-black, and how they are relevant to your findings

411: Introducing MI here is a bit surprising, it could be that it just should be reformulated somehow. Do all clinicians use MI?

477-478: suggest to include a reference here

485-493: when referring to the clinicians view that it is important to reveal participants thoughts of appropriate or inappropriate behaviour, it is pointed out that this topic has been given little attention in occupational rehabilitation research. Therefore, it would be interesting if you could elaborate more on this topic to provide new information to the field.
494-497 that "grind down the threshold to working life" seems to be specific to occupational rehabilitation - is perhaps quite obvious, and could be deleted/rephrased?

511-515 We don’t think all of this has relevance to this study.

549-551 consider deleting.

**Are the methods appropriate and well described?**
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

**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.

Not relevant to this manuscript

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Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Needs some language corrections before being published

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