



# RUSFORSK

## Annual report 2023

Section for Clinical drug and Addiction research  
Department of research and innovation



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# 1 The year of 2023

RusForsk is a young research group with a large potential due to a diverse competence on RCT's, pragmatic designs, neurobiology, advanced statistical methods and machine learning on large datasets based on national registries. The core researchers in the research group have training in project management, and have diverse education in medical, psychological and social sciences. RusForsk has opportunities for relevant clinical research due to closeness to Norway's largest clinical department for addiction treatment. The department has ambitions of developing as a research arena with an extensive clinical research register and biobank. In addition, RusForsk has proximity to the University of Oslo with shared positions to both the faculty of medicine and the institute of psychology. Foresight reports point at an increase in demand for addiction treatment, and at the same time reduced resources in the health services in the future. Thus, the need for better and more effective treatment methods will be a challenge demanding clinical research. This is addressed through a white paper demanding a 50% increase in clinical research projects, and a total of 5% of patients being included in such projects.

RusForsk is structured with a portfolio of seven projects (2023), each consisting of a project leader (PI) leading the project group, a board, and a scientific advisory board ([Section for Clinical Addiction Reserach - RusForsk - Oslo universitetssykehus HF \(oslo-universitetssykehus.no\)](#)).

Persons with lived experience are involved in all projects. In addition to the core funding of a PI, the projects are dependent on external funding to reach their goals. In 2023 more than 50% of the total budget was from external funding. I am really happy to be the leader of this competent and hardworking group, and as we just before Christmas received two more grants, I am looking forward to 2024 with new projects, new opportunities and continuation of the important work done here at RusForsk.





# 2 Business and activities

## Applications for research funds

### Funded

- Anabolic steroids and brain health; the fountain of youth that accelerates aging? DAM
- GenSUD: Unlocking Genetic and Trajectory Insights into Substance Use Disorders through Extensive Biobank Sampling. HSØ
- Predicting inpatient detoxification treatment outcomes: Repeated admission, treatment completion and transition to substance use disorder treatment. HSØ

### Not (yet) funded

- A randomized controlled trial using addiction focused EMDR to reduce craving for patients with alcohol use disorders.
- Khat use in Norway: Status, attitudes and family consequences.



## Lectures

Employees at RusForsk have lectured or held seminars for students associated with the Department of Clinical Medicine, the Department of Health and Society, the Department of Psychology, and the Norwegian Correctional Services Education Center. Additionally our researchers have conducted lectures and workshops for clinical staff at OUH and other hospitals nationally.



## Supervisor / co-supervisor

RusForsk does not have a formal role in the education for master's or PhD education. However, our team actively engages in teaching and supervising students across all levels. PhD candidates at RusForsk are enrolled in the PhD

program at the University of Oslo (UiO) and follow courses offered by the various faculties of relevance including medicine, psychology, and criminology. PhD students at RusForsk and SERAF are participating in a joint journal club and PhD-seminars led by senior researchers at SERAF (Norwegian Centre for Addiction Research), UiO.

Through 2023, researchers at RusForsk have been main or co-supervisors for a total of 10 PhD students.

## **Participation in public committees / studies / groups**

### **Opponent in doctoral dissertations**

– At University of Bergen, University of Oslo, University of Innlandet, University of Liverpool and University of Lund.

### **OsloMET**

– Member of the reference group for the creation of a new six-year study program in clinical psychology in psychology.

### **LOVEprom**

– Member of the board of the Quality register for substance abuse and mental health.

### **Ann Kern-Godal's memorial fund**

- Member of the funding board for Horse-Assisted Therapy.

### **Reference group for monitoring the elimination of Hepatitis C**

– Member of the group at the Directorate of Health.

## **Participation in professional councils**

### **National network on clinical research on substance use disorder treatment**

- Leader of the board

### **NORSMI – Medical register and biobank**

- Member of the board

### **HSØ – regional advisory group for research**

- Member of the group

## **Achievements**

### **Annual award for high-impact papers from the Journal of Norwegian Psychologists Association**

– Work-oriented treatment for serious mental illness in the specialist health care (RusForsk was co-author).

# 3 Communication

Beyond the publication of peer-reviewed research articles, it is important for RusForsk to be able to disseminate the work and the results produced by the research. We want to direct our communication towards several types of audience; both clinical staff, patients, next of kin, leaders and politicians, and the public in general. For this work we use various platforms, primarily RusForsk.no, Facebook and newsletters.

## Online traffic at rusforsk.no

The production of news articles for RusForsk.no has been relatively steady through the year. Our page has had a total of 9 128 side views with 7 701 unique users. The most visited sites were “Increase in the number of cannabis-triggered psychoses” with 1597 views and “The evaluation project – heroin-assisted treatment” with 1 317 views. It is difficult to compare the figures with 2022 due to a change in the publishing platform from Google analytics to the internal solution SharePoint in May 2022. The numbers indicate an increase in the amount of visitors on our sites with 7 701 unique views in 2023 compared to 4 608 in 2022 (with the restructuring of the sites in mind).

## Facebook activity

RusForsk has 852 followers, an increase from 730 the previous year. The number of page views was 579 compared to 475 in 2023. The potential reach of posts posted on the Facebook page had an 165% increase in 2023, to 10 697 users.

## Newsletter

Rusforsk’s newsletter has 181 subscribers. One letter was published during 2023. This letter had an opening rate of 41,1 % and click rate of 27,8 %.





## Media coverage

[Uverdige forhold i kvinnefengslene: En varslet Krise](#), av Vegard Svendsen, Marianne Riksheim Stavseth og Anne Bukten (dagsavisen.no, 23.06.23)

[Kvinner i fengsel får det stadig verre](#), med Vegard Svendsen og Katja Nielsen (kjonnsforskning.no, 20.06.23)

[Reportasje om ansatte ved Bredtveit fengsel](#), med resultater fra PriSUD-prosjektet (aftenposten.no, 20.06.23)

[Skyhøy forekomst av psykiske diagnoser blant kvinnelige innsatte](#), med Vegard Svendsen, Katja Nielsen og Johan Lothe (14.06.23, NRK.no)

[Radioinnslag og intervju med KDI om psykiske lidelser blant kvinner i fengsel på Nyhetsmorgen](#), med Vegard Svendsen og Katja Nielsen (13.06.23, NRK.no)

[Skal se på psykiske lidelser blant kvinner i fengsel](#), med Vegard Svendsen og Katja Nielsen (12.04.23, ROP.no)

[Forebygging av dødsfall etter løslatelse fra fengsel](#), med Torill Tverborgvik (26.05.23, Erfar-

ingskompetanse.no)

[Seroprevalence of SARS-CoV-2 and humoral immune responses to mRNA vaccines among people who use drugs - In the light of tailored mitigating strategies | Research Square](#) (preprint, in review at Harm Reduction Journal) (May, 2023)

[Får pris for artikkel om individuell jobbstøtte | Tidsskrift for Norsk psykologforening \(psykologtidsskriftet.no\)](#) (presentation in Norwegian that the above paper received the annual award for high-impact papers from the Journal of Norwegian Psychologists Association) (August 2023)

[Rusutløst psykose – en problematisk diagnose | Tidsskrift for Den norske legeforening \(tidsskriftet.no\)](#) (English title: Substance-induced psychosis – a problematic diagnosis) (February 2023)

[Psykopoden: Episode 53: Rusutløst psykose - en diagnose klar for historiens skraphaug? no Apple Podcasts](#) (Podcast for Faculty of Medicine, University of Oslo)

# 4 Publications

## Annual summary of publications

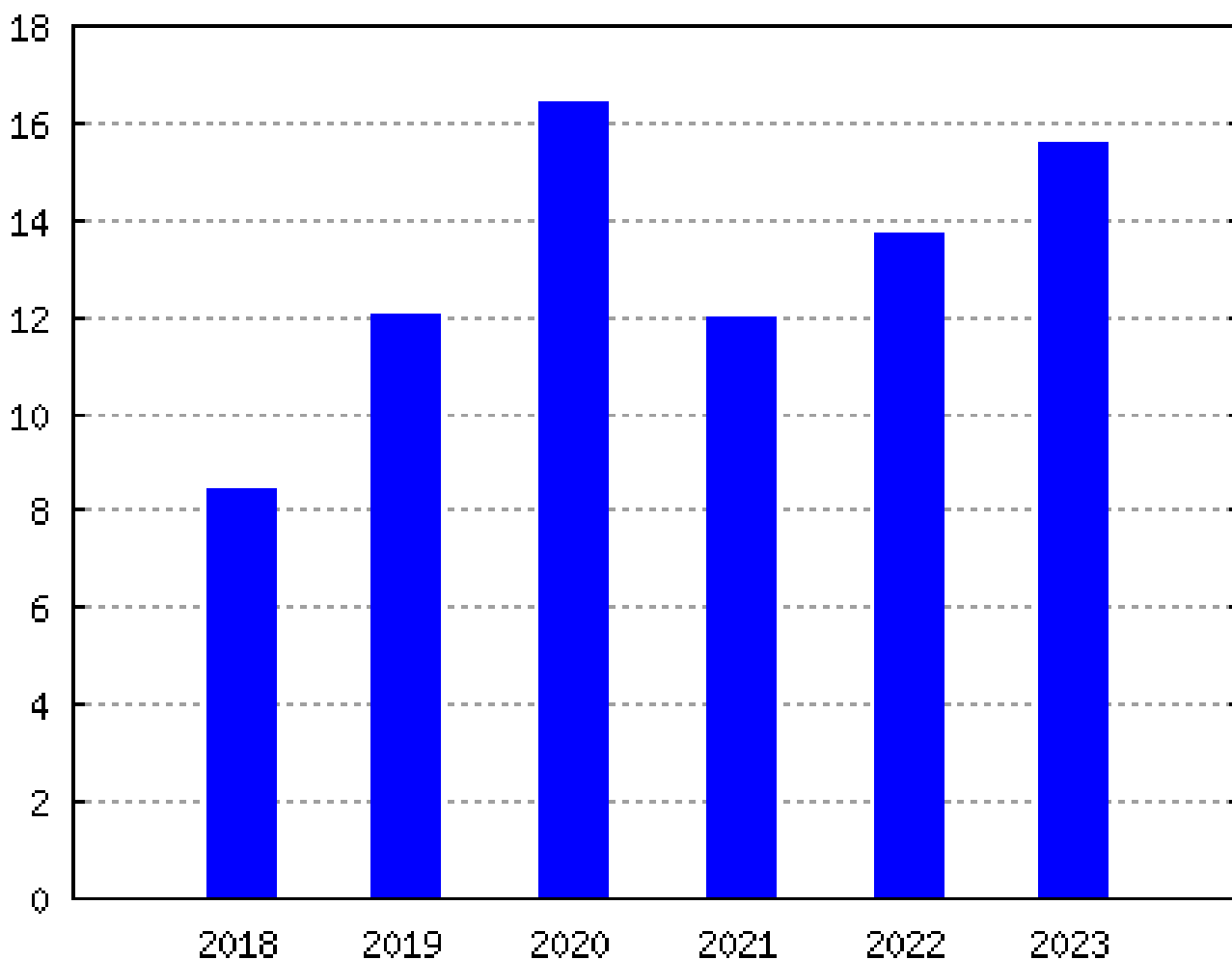


Figure 1: Publication points for RusForsk 2018-2023.  
Numbers from PUBLIKA.no

## List of publications in 2023

Abdullah R, **Bjørnebekk A**, **Hauger LE**, Hullstein IR, Edvardsen T, Haugaa KH, Almaas VM (2023)

**Severe biventricular cardiomyopathy in both current and former long-term users of anabolic-androgenic steroids**

Eur J Prev Cardiol (in press)

DOI 10.1093/eurjpc/zwad362, PubMed 37992194

Andersen SN, Hyatt JM, Lobmaier P, **Stavseth MR**, **Bukten A** (2023)

**Leaving Their Drugs at the Gate? Exploring Changes in Drug Use From Before to During Incarceration in Norway**

Int J Offender Ther Comp Criminol, 306624X231168596 (in press)

DOI 10.1177/0306624X231168596, PubMed 37312513

Bramness JG, Syse A, **Rognli EB** (2023)

**Substance-induced psychosis – a problematic diagnosis**

Tidsskr Nor Laegeforen, 143 (3)

DOI 10.4045/tidsskr.22.0762, PubMed 36811432

**Bukten A**, Skjærvø I, **Stavseth MR** (2023)

**Exploring mental health comorbidities and opioid agonist treatment coverage among people in prison: A national cohort study 2010-2019**

Drug Alcohol Depend, 250, 110896

DOI 10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2023.110896, PubMed 37515826

**Ellefsen R**, **Wüsthoff LEC**, **Arnevik EA** (2023)

**Patients' satisfaction with heroin-assisted treatment: a qualitative study**

Harm Reduct J, 20 (1), 73

DOI 10.1186/s12954-023-00808-8, PubMed 37312181

Henriksen HCB, **Havnes IA**, **Jørstad ML**, **Bjørnebekk A** (2023)

**Health service engagement, side effects and concerns among men with anabolic-androgenic steroid use: a cross-sectional Norwegian study**

Subst Abuse Treat Prev Policy, 18 (1), 19

DOI 10.1186/s13011-023-00528-z, PubMed 37013635

**Jørstad ML, Scarth M, Torgersen S, Pope HG, Bjørnebekk A (2023)**  
**Clustering psychopathology in male anabolic-androgenic steroid users and nonusing weightlifters**

Brain Behav, 13 (7), e3040

DOI 10.1002/brb3.3040, PubMed 37150843

Malme KB, Ulstein K, Finbråten AK, **Wüsthoff LEC**, Kielland KB, Hauge J, Dalgard O, Midgard H (2023)

**Hepatitis C treatment uptake among people who inject drugs in Oslo, Norway: A registry-based study**

Int J Drug Policy, 116, 104044

DOI 10.1016/j.drugpo.2023.104044, PubMed 37149914

Næss O, Ekeland TJ, **Arnevik EA**, Aarstad J, Lid TG (2023)

**Governing by commissioning services - Implementing alcohol screening and brief interventions in hospital settings in Norway**

Eval Program Plann, 98, 102271

DOI 10.1016/j.evalprogplan.2023.102271, PubMed 36921405

**Rognli EB, Dalsrud MK, Wüsthoff LEC, Arnevik EA (2023)**

[Poor uptake of service provision at a drug-related emergency department – a qualitative study]

Tidsskr Nor Laegeforen, 143 (5)

DOI 10.4045/tidsskr.22.0471, PubMed 36987889

**Rognli EB, Heiberg IH, Jacobsen BK, Høye A, Bramness JG (2023)**

**Transition From Substance-Induced Psychosis to Schizophrenia Spectrum Disorder or Bipolar Disorder**

Am J Psychiatry, 180 (6), 437-444

DOI 10.1176/appi.ajp.22010076, PubMed 37132221

**Scarth M, Hauger LE, Thorsby PM, Leknes S, Hullstein IR, Westlye LT, Bjørnebekk A (2023)**

**Supraphysiological testosterone levels from anabolic steroid use and reduced sensitivity to negative facial expressions in men**

Psychopharmacology (Berl) (in press)

DOI 10.1007/s00213-023-06497-2, PubMed 37993638

**Scarth M**, Westlye LT, Havnes IA, **Bjørnebekk A** (2023)  
**Investigating anabolic-androgenic steroid dependence and muscle dysmorphia with network analysis among male weightlifters**  
BMC Psychiatry, 23 (1), 342  
DOI 10.1186/s12888-023-04781-1, PubMed 37193971

Skauen JE, Pallesen S, **Bjørnebekk A**, Chegeni R, Syvertsen A, Petróczi A, Sagoe D (2023)  
**Prevalence and correlates of androgen dependence: a meta-analysis, meta-regression analysis and qualitative synthesis**  
Curr Opin Endocrinol Diabetes Obes, 30 (6), 309-323  
DOI 10.1097/MED.0000000000000822, PubMed 37410490

**Stavseth MR** (2023)  
**Remember to clean the data before use!**  
Tidsskr Nor Laegeforen, 143 (2)  
DOI 10.4045/tidsskr.22.0825, PubMed 36718890


Svendsen VG, **Stavseth MR**, Skardhamar T, **Bukten A** (2023)  
**Psychiatric morbidity among women in Norwegian prisons, 2010-2019: a register-based study**  
BMC Psychiatry, 23 (1), 390  
DOI 10.1186/s12888-023-04886-7, PubMed 37268924


Tverborgvik T, **Stavseth MR**, **Bukten A** (2023)  
**The association between drug use and mortality in a Norwegian prison cohort: a prospective cohort study**  
Health Justice, 11 (1), 22  
DOI 10.1186/s40352-023-00223-y, PubMed 37058181


Henriksen K., Jacobsen J.-A., Henriksen E., Gomes L., **Wüsthoff L. E.**, **Arnevik E. A.**, and Krajci P. (2023).  
Recruiting and Retaining Patients in Low Threshold Opioid Agonist Treatment: A Retrospective Cohort Study  
*Heroin Addiction and Related Clinical Problems*, published ahead of print

# 5 Research projects


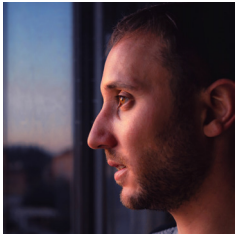
In 2023 RusForsk had a portfolio of seven projects. Two of the ongoing projects have collected full data sets and are analyzing and writing up results in international papers. Three projects are in a phase of just ending or soon ending clinical data collection (two of them clinical RCT's), have funded PhD and post docs, and are in the process of writing papers for international journals. Two clinical projects are in the data collection phase. The different phases of the projects are reflected in the publication list. The clinical research in the SUD field is scarce with a need for high quality research relevant for clinical practice. The strategy of Rusforsk aims at filling this gap in evidence-based treatment, and the portfolio of projects reflects this goal. Nationally most recent research has focused on existing opioid agonist treatment. RusForsk aims at developing, implementing and survey new treatment methods, methods shown effective for other mental disorders within a transdiagnostic framework.

<b>PriSUD:</b> Diagnosing and treating substance use disorders in prison /Project period: 2019 - ongoing 	<b>Project leader:</b> <b>Anne Bukten, SERAF, UIO</b>
	The overall goal of PriSUD is to develop new knowledge that contributes to better mental and physical health, and to improved quality of life for people in prison living with substance abuse disorders. The project aims to examine inmates in three different time periods related to imprisonment: before imprisonment, during imprisonment and post-release. <a href="http://www.en.prisud.no">www.en.prisud.no</a>


<p><b>Anabolic Androgenic Steroid Research:</b> effects on brain and cognition/ Project period 2019 – ongoing</p> 	<p>Project leader: <b>Astrid Kristine Bjørnebekk, RusForsk, OUS</b></p>
	<p>The primary objective of the project is to unravel the mechanisms by which long-term AAS use impacts brain aging and related behaviors, and to pinpoint traits or markers that predispose individuals to AAS dependence.</p> <p>Utilizing longitudinal data from a substantial cohort of AAS users and non-exposed weightlifters, our study employs brain age prediction techniques. Our findings reveal a notable acceleration in apparent brain aging among long-term, high-dose AAS users, seemingly correlated with dependency and excessive AAS use.</p> <p>Moreover, our research has uncovered cognitive and psychological factors associated with AAS dependence across diverse populations. Secondary objectives involve investigating associations between various health metrics within our sample, brain-predicted age and dependence.</p> <p><a href="http://ous-research.no">OUH - The Anabolic Androgenic Steroid Research Group (ous-research.no)</a></p>

<p><b>Hooked on work/2019 – ongoing</b></p> 	<p>Project leader: <b>Eline Borger Rognli</b>, RusForsk, OUS</p> <p>In this study we investigate if the method Individual Placement and Support, which is an evidence-based method in helping individuals with psychosis obtain and keep work, is an effective and suitable method to help individuals with substance use disorders obtain and keep work. The outcomes are employment, substance use, mental health and quality of life.</p> <p>The Hooked on work project consists of a randomized controlled trial (RCT), and observational study and a qualitative study. Inclusion in the RCT has ended, reaching target sample size of N=200. We are currently working with linking the RCT project-data with outcome data on employment from Statistics Norway. Data collection for the observational study and the qualitative study has also ended.</p> <p>The objective of the RCT is to investigate if Individual Placement and Support is an effective method in helping patients with substance use disorders obtain work. The observational study, which collects data at three sites outside of OUH, will investigate predictors for obtaining work among all those who receive Individual Placement and Support. The qualitative study, encompassing interviews with patients and treatment providers, will investigate the experience of receiving the employment support, perceived obstacles in obtaining work for the patient group, and integration of the Individual Placement and Support method in the health service.</p> <p><a href="https://www.rusforsk.no">Section for Clinical Addiction Reserach - RusForsk - Oslo universitetssykehus HF (oslo-universitetssykehus.no)</a></p>
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<p><b>INTACT -</b> integrated trauma and addiction treatment</p> 	<p>Project leader: <b>Kristine Abel</b>, RusForsk, OUS</p> <p>Previous research has shown that EMDR is effective in trauma treatment, but little research has been done on EMDR in people who have concomitant trauma and substance abuse disorders. Planned RCT (N=100) if funded externally (applications sent)</p> <p><a href="http://oslo-universitetssykehus.no">INTACT - Oslo Universitetssykehus HF (oslo-universitetssykehus.no)</a></p>
<p><b>Heroin assisted Treatment</b></p> 	<p>Project leader: <b>Linda C Wüsthoff</b>, RusForsk, OUS</p> <p><b>Objectives:</b></p> <p>The overarching goals of the research project is to assess how Heroin Assisted Treatment (HAT), as a novel clinical intervention, can be implemented and integrated within the framework of Medication Assisted Rehabilitation (MAR) in the specialist health services, the clinical outcomes of the treatment, and the potential cost-benefit effects of the initiative.</p> <p>RusForsk will lead the research efforts in sub-studies related to the following thematic areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attitudes and experiences regarding HAT among patients, family members, and staff</li> <li>• Process evaluation of the implementation of the HAT treatment program</li> </ul> <p><b>Link to website:</b> <a href="http://oslo-universitetssykehus.no">Section for Clinical Addiction Reserach - RusForsk - Oslo universitetssykehus HF (oslo-universitetssykehus.no) (Heroin Assisted Treatment)</a></p>



<p><b>Prevalence and symptoms of COVID-19 among individuals with substance use disorders in Oslo during the coronavirus pandemic</b> (2020-2023)</p> 	<p>Project leader: <b>Linda C Wüsthoff</b>, RusForsk, OUS</p> <p><b>Objectives:</b> Remarkably few individuals with severe substance use problems in Oslo tested positive for SARS-CoV-2 during the initial wave of the pandemic, despite comprehensive testing efforts within municipal substance use facilities. The primary objectives of this study were to investigate whether these findings stem from the fact that individuals within this cohort:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Had not been exposed to SARS-CoV-2 infection,</li> <li>2. Underwent asymptomatic courses of the illness, thus avoiding testing, or</li> <li>3. Had developed immunity against COVID-19 through prior exposure to other viral infections.</li> <li>4. Additionally, we aimed to examine the immune responses elicited by vaccines targeting SARS-CoV-2.</li> </ol> <p><b>Link to website:</b> <a href="https://www.oslo-universitetssykehus.no">Section for Clinical Addiction Reserach - RusForsk - Oslo universitetssykehus HF (oslo-universitetssykehus.no)</a> (Prevalence and symptoms of COVID-19 among individuals with substance use disorders in Oslo during the coronavirus pandemic</p>
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# 6 PHD projects

## Substance Use Disorders in the Norwegian prison population – Needs, treatment and post-release outcomes

**PhD candidate:**

Nicoline Lokdam, MS Public Health

**Main supervisor:**

Anne Bukten, OUS/UiO

**Co-supervisor:**

Marianne Riksheim Stavseth, RusForsk - OUS/SERAF.

**Background**

About half of the Norwegian prison population has challenges with substance use, often in combination with mental health problems and social challenges. Although the inmates have the right to the same treatment as they do outside prison, there is reason to believe that the substance use and addiction treatment offered in prisons differs from the treatment outside prison. This applies to both access and the content of the treatment. We know little about how substance use and addiction problems are identified among the prison population, if those with problems are offered treatment, or how the treatment affects the inmates after release from prison.

**Method/design**

The project uses quantitative data from the Norwegian Mental Health and Addiction study (NorMA), the prison register KOMPIS and the Norwegian patient register. The NorMA cohort consists of 733 individuals who were in prison in 2013-2014 and who answered a large questionnaire about their background, substance use and general health. The cohort and register data combined make it possible to study the inmates with substance use and addiction disorders in a lifetime perspective. Among other things, we can look at all sentences they have had and look at the use of health services before, during and after the sentence.

The study is part of the PriSUD project .

## Anabolic –androgenic steroid use – impact on brain health and dependence

**PhD candidate:**

Morgan Scarth, MS Epidemiology

**Main supervisor:**

Astrid Kristine Bjørnebekk, RusForsk - OUS

**Co-supervisor:**

Lars Westlye, UiO

**Background**

Use of anabolic-androgenic steroid (AAS) has increased in recent years, posing a significant threat to public health via somatic and psychiatric consequences, including increased risk of cardiac problems, aggression, and higher crime rates. While these substances are not considered addictive in the same way as psychoactive substances, many users appear to become dependent. This project aims to identify patterns and traits, both psychiatric and biological, which may indicate vulnerability for the development of AAS dependency.

**Method/design**

Longitudinal and cross-sectional measurements of psychiatric symptoms, personality traits, as well as biomarkers and neuroimaging techniques will be used to identify both the consequences of long-term use and potential mechanisms for dependency development. The project will initiate by identifying profiles of dependency, and progress to identify biological and psychiatric associations with these groups. The results of this project will be relevant not only for the AAS-user population, but will likely have relevance for several broader populations including next-of-kin, non-AAS-using weightlifters, and clinicians in the addiction and dependence field.

The PhD-project is part of the Anabolic steroids and effects on brain and behavior project.

## Health risks and treatment of anabolic-androgenic steroid dependence – a pilot study exploring off-label use of endocrine therapy to reduce withdrawal symptoms

**PhD candidate:**

Hans Christian Bordado Henriksen, MD

**Main supervisor:**

Ingrid Amalia Havnes, OUS

**Co-supervisors:**

Anders Jørgensen, UIO

Sudan Neupane, OUS

**Background**

The use of anabolic steroids can cause serious health problems such as disturbances in the sex hormones axis, where the body's own testosterone production is reduced or stopped indefinitely. The symptoms of low testosterone levels can last from months to years: including severe fatigue, depression, sleep problems and reduced sexual function. Many choose to continue with steroids to avoid these ailments, despite the fact that they really want to stop using. This can cause an increased health risk. Today, steroid addicted users are offered treatment and follow-up in TSB (Interdisciplinary specialized treatment of addiction disorders), but there has never been research into whether hormone therapy should be part of the treatment.

**Method/design**

This is a longitudinal intervention study where a group of steroid-addicted men will receive off-label treatment with the drug clomiphene (antiestrogen) to try to stimulate the body's own production of testosterone after steroid use has ended. They will be compared with participants in another ongoing study of men who end their steroid use without such treatment. We will investigate whether the hormone therapy produces fewer signs of testosterone deficiency compared to ending without it. We will also look at the physical - and mental state of health before, during and after the treatment to assess how the state of health changes over time, up to 12 months after the end of steroid use.

## An investigation of the significance of work and feasibility of Individual Placement and Support (IPS) for patients with substance use disorders

**PhD candidate:**

Erlend M. Aas, MS Sociology

**Main Supervisor:**

Eline Borger Rognli, RusForsk - OUS

**Co-supervisors:**

Ingrid Amalia Havnes, OUS

Silje Endresen Reme, UiO

**Background**

Many people with substance use and addiction disorders experience that the transition to a drug free everyday life is demanding. Loneliness and boredom are cited as the most common reasons for a relapse into substance use. Work is associated with better outcomes of substance use treatment and fewer relapses. Nevertheless, around 80-90 % of patients in substance use and addiction treatment are unemployed, and evidence-based employment support methods are lacking in the addiction field.

IPS is an evidence-based employment support method developed for patients with severe mental illnesses, and has very good results. The PhD project explores whether one can take this method developed for one patient group and apply it to another patient group without significant changes, or if the IPS method needs adjustments to be better adapted to patients with substance use and addiction disorders.

**Method/design**

The PhD project is part of the research project Hooked on Work. The PhD candidate carries out a qualitative study where interviews are conducted with patients who receive IPS, IPS employment specialists and clinicians who collaborate with the Hooked on Work project. The analyses of the interviews are carried out in an interdisciplinary analysis group with Thematic Analysis as the leading method. In addition to that, the candidate will carry out a quantitative study where the aim is to investigate and compare key characteristics between patients with substance use and addiction disorders and patients with severe mental illnesses who apply for IPS.

## Individual Placement and Support for patients undergoing substance use disorder treatment

**PhD candidate:**

Kristoffer A. A. Andersen, Cand.Psychol

**Main Supervisor:**

Eline Borger Rognli, RusForsk – OUS

**Co-Supervisor:**

Marianne Riksheim Stavseth, Rusforsk - OUS/SERAF,

Espen Ajo Arnevik, Rusforsk - OUS/UiO

**Background**

The multi-method project “Hooked on Work” is based on data from two quantitative studies: A randomized controlled trial (IPS-SUD Trial) which started in 2021; and an observational study conducted in 2020. The target group are Norwegian SUD patients currently undergoing out- and in-patient drug treatment. Helping SUD patients achieve a better quality of life by enabling them take part in more stable social groups and obtain paid employment is a treatment goal in which many patients strive for, however SUD is associated with high rates of unemployment, ranging from 80-91%. This project wants to assess whether the vocational method “Individual placement and support” (IPS), which has good effect in patients with severe mental disorders, will be effective in helping SUD patients reach their goal of paid employment and better quality of life.

**Method/design**

The efficacy of IPS for SUD patients will be investigated through the IPS-SUD trial. In this trial 200 SUD patients were randomized to receive IPS or TAU. The participants were followed-for 18 months. The main outcome is whether they have achieved one day of paid work. Secondary outcomes are related to more detailed assessments of employment (total time worked, time to obtain first job, duration, number of jobs) and about mental distress, substance use and quality of life.

The observational study is an assessment of the applicability of the method in Norwegian healthcare setting for the SUD population. The target group is SUD-patients at Oslo municipal addiction outpatient clinic, Haugenstua resource center and the Tyrili Foundation. In addition, data from the IPS-SUD trial intervention group will be combined with data from the observational IPS study and then analyzed for potential variables which may predict or moderate employment and health-related outcomes.



## Transforming Stigma? Analysing the Impact of Heroin Assisted Treatment on Patients Lives and Self-Identity

### **PhD candidate**

Vegard Haukland, MS Sociology

### **Main Supervisor:**

Ph.D Rune Ellefsen, RusForsk - OUS

### **Co-Supervisor:**

Sveinung Sandberg, UiO



### **Background**

The 5-year long trial period of Heroin Assisted Treatment (HAT) started in January of 2022. It is an intense form of treatment where people with Opioid Use Disorder (OUD) meet up twice a day at a clinic to receive medical grade heroin (diacetylmorphine). The target group is people with long-term OUD who up until this point has not benefitted from traditional opioid addiction treatment. The shift from daily use of illegal street heroin to receiving heroin as medicine brings with it a new set of labels, from “drug addict” to “patient”. The project seeks to investigate if being in HAT has an impact of the patients self-identity and sense of stigmatization, and how these mechanisms works from an institutional level. The project also aims to describe how the patients experience the treatment in general, and how it affects their everyday life.

### **Method/design**

The project has a qualitative longitudinal design. 10 to 15 newly enrolled HAT patients will be recruited and interviewed separately at three separate instances over the course of 18 months. 10 to 15 staff members will also be interviewed over the same time span. Around 300 hours of ethnographic field observations will be conducted in the two clinics (Oslo and Bergen). The data will be coded with the involvement from the user-organization ProLAR-nett. As a method for analysis, three separate dimensions of HAT will be described and investigated in three separate articles; the relational dimension, the medical dimension and the structural dimension.

## Our team in 2023

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