Reviewer's report

Title: Comorbid mental disorders in substance users from a single catchment area - a clinical study.

Version: 1 Date: 9 November 2010

Reviewer: Morten Hesse

Reviewer's report:

Major compulsory revisions.
This study is meant to assess the prevalence of psychiatric disorders among substance abusers among first-time treatment seekers. Estimates of prevalence are statistics, and the authors can estimate the power to detect the existence of certain disorders, given assumptions about their prevalence in the background population, and power analyses should be provided for this issue.

Further, in order to facilitate the replication of this study, it is important that you define "first-time contacts" in a way that is replicable. Is "first time" going to be defined in terms of self-report, register data from the clinic, or registers from psychiatric hospitals, or a combination of these sources. Some patients may have been in psychiatric care several years ago, and may not even remember these treatment episodes. Others may have received some kind of help from informal groups, religious groups, or therapists whose treatment is not recorded in any official database.

The protocol does not specify how the researchers plan to deal with study attrition. Some subjects may show up for one interview, but not complete the entire interview in one setting (the PRISM is quite long). Some subjects may be lost, simply because they do not show up for the full assessment, and it is important for a study with such a comprehensive assessment package to give an indication of how incomplete assessments will be handled. For instance, what if organic brain damage is suspected, but the patient disappears after being referred for neuropsychological assessment?

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests.