Reviewer's report

Title: In-depth Study of Personality Disorders in First-admission Patients with Substance Use Disorders

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Reviewer: Ulrich W. Preuss

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Langåset al, BMC Psychiatry

The study investigates first-admission individuals with alcohol- and drug use disorders regarding their Axis II disorders. 61 subjects from a catchment area in Norway were enrolled and assessed with a number of psychometric interviews and tests including the Psychiatric Research Interview for Substance and Mental Disorders (PRISM), SCID-II, Inventory of Depressive symptoms (IDS) and SCL-90-R. Results indicate that approximately half the participants had an AXIS II disorder of which antisocial and borderline personality were the most frequent. Comorbid individuals also had a higher rate of mental disorders and psychosocial problems. The authors conclude that symptom load of substance use disordered individuals with a comorbid personality disorder differs from those without a comorbidity. While screening for Axis II disorders is recommended in substance abusing individuals, these persons may have different treatment needs too.

Strength: recruitment of individuals from a specific catchment area and the use of psychometrically well-evaluated assessment instruments. The limitation of the study is certainly the rather small number of individuals enrolled. Further, it is not new or surprising that subjects with an alcohol- and substance use disorders and a comorbid Axis II disorders have a higher rate of psychiatric comorbidity and difficulties in psychosocial abilities. Somewhat surprising is the authors’ approach to include so-called “sub-threshold” individuals.

Several issues should be addressed:

1. The authors have to define what substances were abused in their sample. While subjects with an alcohol use disorders can be indirectly counted from the text, it is not clear what drugs were consumed by the remaining subjects (alone or in combination).

2. “SUD” in this sample is a somewhat misleading term. Since the authors subdivide the sample into AUD and DUD subjects in the results section, the correct terms are: alcohol and substance use disorders or alcohol and drug use disorders (ASUD or ADUD)

3. How many participants were out- and inpatients? Were there any differences
in sociodemographics and Axis I/II disorders between in- and outpatients? Usually, inpatients are more severely affected by SUD, rates and severity of comorbid illnesses.

4. Results section and tables: in samples of less than 100 subjects, the third digits in percent values do not make sense.

5. Results section, “other mental disorders”: What do the authors mean with a non-SUD Axis I disorder? Was a differentiation made between Axis I disorders induced by alcohol and substance use, and pre-existing mental comorbidity before the substance use onset (or during prolonged periods of abstinence)?

6. Discussion, “Axis I comorbidity”, “Our data also suggest a high correlation between social phobia and PDs”: is this caused by or a consequence of PDs?

7. Tables and Text: The rationale for the inclusion of sub-threshold PDs into the analysis is not very clear. The differences between groups are weakened by this approach. Since the authors present all tables with respect the inclusion of subthreshold PDs, they should elaborate more on the advantages and disadvantages of this inclusion and how the results are changed by this approach.

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

**Quality of written English**: Needs some language corrections before being published

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

**Declaration of competing interests**:

I declare that I have no competing interests