

Partnering with persons in long-term recovery from substance use disorder: Experiences from a collaborative research project

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Henning Pettersen, Morten Brodahl, Jeanette Rundgren, & Ingrid Havnes

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Background

Traditional research about substance use disorder (SUD) treatment is considered, among an increasing number of service users, to be disempowering and poorly reflective of their priorities (Faulkner 2004, Trivedy & Wykes 2000).

Persons with user experiences see the need to bring more depth and detail into the knowledge production, and often wish to participate in research projects (Borg 2009).

Such inclusion is a quality-assurance safeguard that generates important questions from different vantage points, which are highly relevant to all levels of health and care services (Beresford 2003, Bowling 2009).

Aim

To examine the experiences of both peer researchers and a principal investigator who collaborated on a study of SUD recovery, and to examine how peer researcher participation influenced the research process.

... and to write a methodological article.

Context and Methods

Four persons with previous SUD contributed to planning, preparation and conducting the study:

- Commenting on research questions and interview guide
- Reviewing transcribed interviews
- Initial data analysis
- Co-author on articles

Monthly meetings through 12 months 2015-2016.

Resource group (RG): Stig Haugrud, Jeanette Rundgren, Tore Klausen og Morten Brodahl



Context and methods

- Individual interviews with 18 persons in recovery from SUD
- 10 men / 8 women
- Aged 35-65
- Substance abuse history: mainly heroin and/or alcohol

Published articles

Why do persons with long-term substance use disorders stop abusing substances?

A qualitative study

H. Pettersen, A. Landheim, I. Skeie, S. Biong, M. Brodahl, V. Benson & L. Davidson
(2018)

How social relationships influence substance use disorder recovery:

A collaborative narrative study

H. Pettersen, A. Landheim, I. Skeie, S. Biong, M. Brodahl, J. Oute & L. Davidson
(2019)

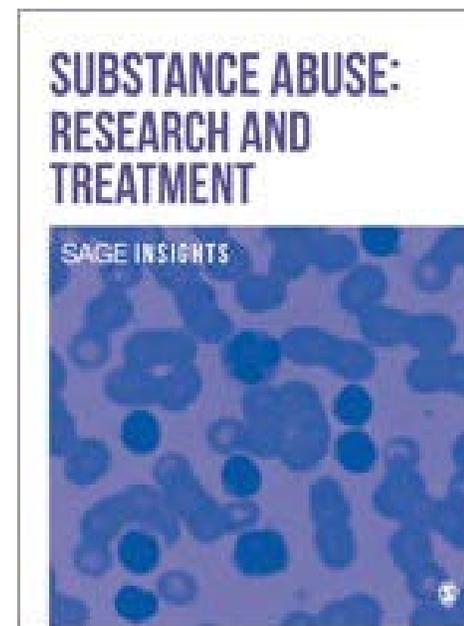
Helpful ingredients in the treatment of long-term substance use disorders:

A collaborative narrative study

H. Pettersen, A. Landheim, I. Skeie, S. Biong, M. Brodahl, V. Benson & L. Davidson
(2019)

Hvorfor slutter personer med langvarig ruslidelse å bruke rusmidler?

H. Pettersen & M. Brodahl. Stof – tidsskrift for stofmisbrugsområdet (2018).

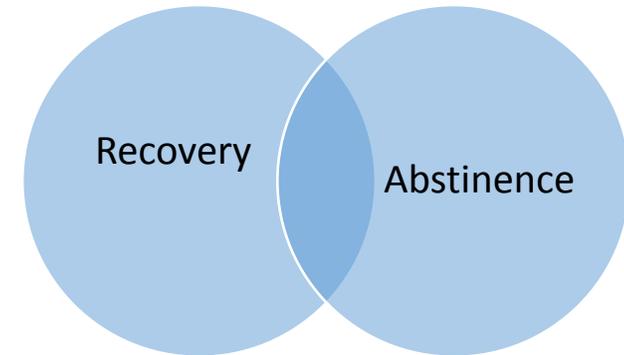


Overview of the research process

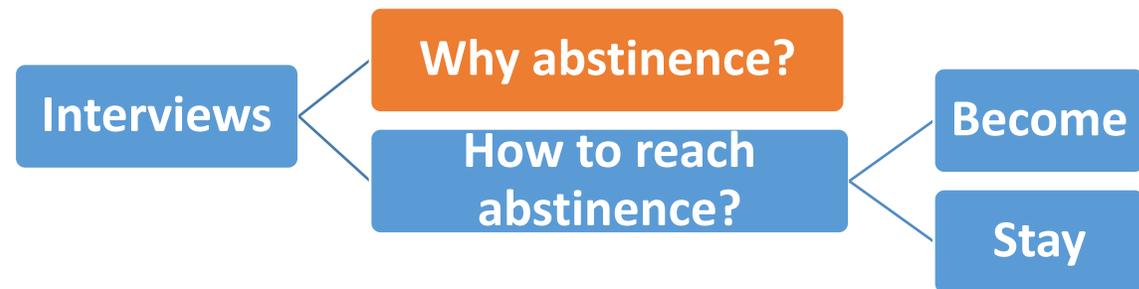
Time frame	2015		2016	2017 - 2018		
Process	Preparation	Group discussions 1-4	Group discussions 5-9	Articles published/in review	Group discussion 10	Principal investigator
Method and objective.	Establishing agreement to include patients from two cohort studies (COMORB).	Establishing the PRG. Agreement on working conditions. Feedback on and review of the interview guide.	Data analysis of the working steps and of the PRG members' experience of the process.	Journal publications and dissemination. PRG members as co-authors and dissemination to remaining PRG members.	Data analysis of the PRG members' experience of the process.	Reflections on the research process with the PRG.
Data material (reports, recordings, transcribed interviews).	Reports from three meetings. Obtaining approval from the Ethical Committee for Health Research Ethics.	Reports from four meetings.	Reports, digital recordings, and transcriptions from five meetings.	Art. 1) Why those with SUD stop abusing substances? Art. 2) Helpful ingredients in the treatment of SUD (in press) Art. 3) How social relationships influence SUD recovery Art. 4) A popular scientific article based on article 1, published in Norwegian Each article distributed to the PRG.	Report, digital recording, and transcription of a two-hour meeting.	Summary of continuous notetaking.

Preparatory discussions ...

Are recovery and abstinence coinciding?

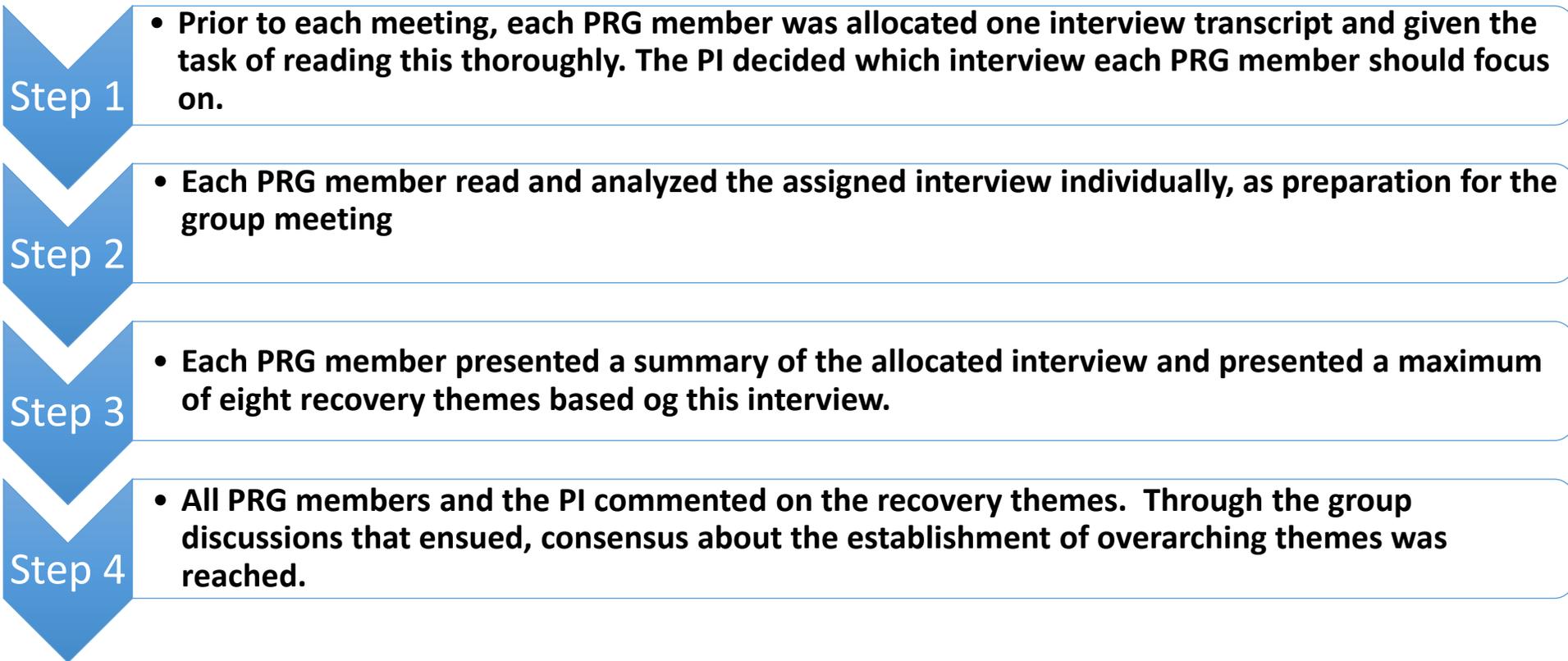


Which questions were asked?

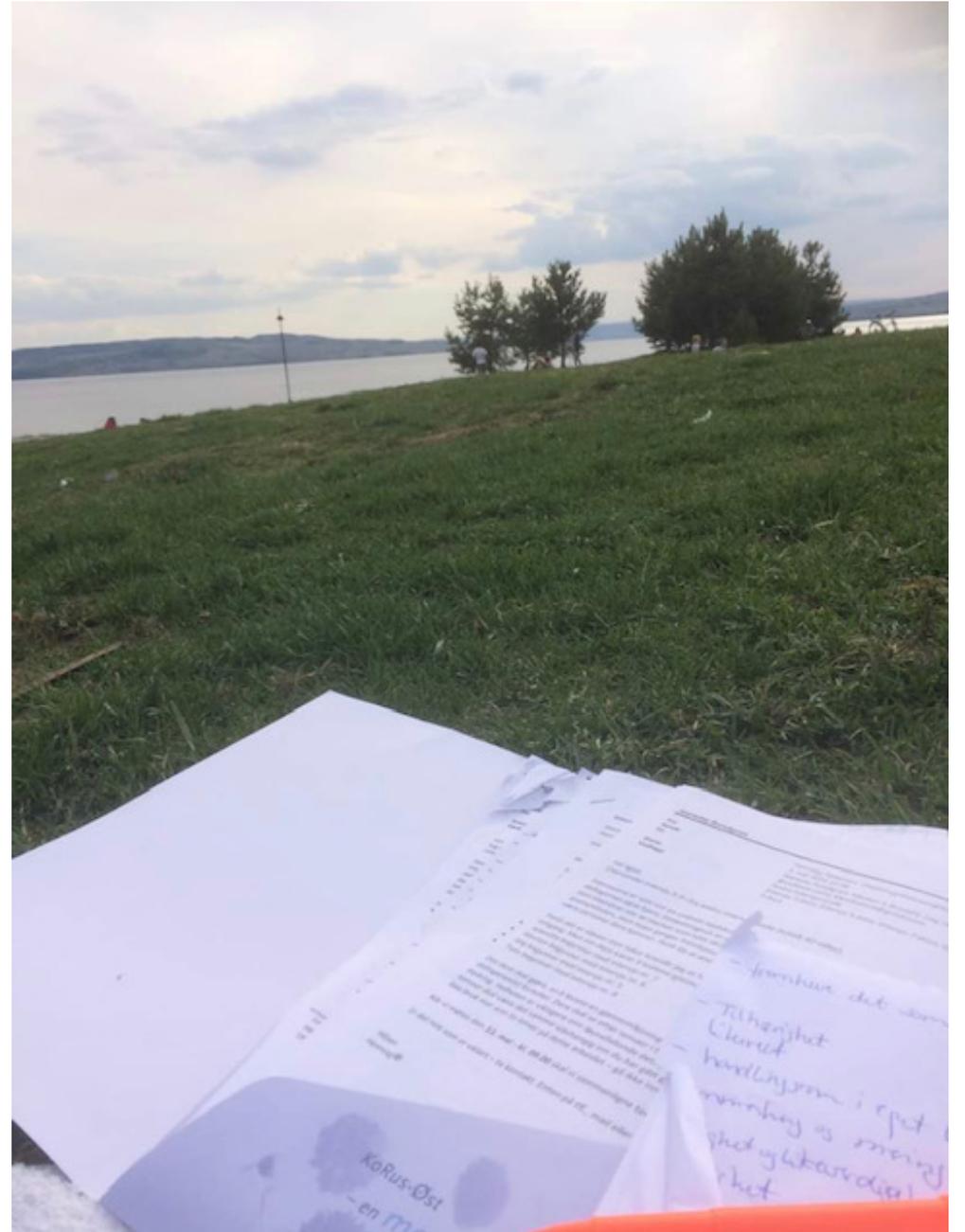


The analytic process

The process with review and analysis of interviews repeated ever 4.-5. interview:



Findings



Finding 1: Main contributions from the RG

- Discussions concerning contents of the interview guide
- Reflections about the influence of pre-understanding
- Perspectives on how to collect data

Finding 2: The RG's experiences

- The importance of collaborating with others with user experiences
- Experienced safety of participating in a research project with stable management
- Openness concerning sharing of private experiences

Finding 3: The researcher's experiences

- The RG contributed to alternative ways to formulate research questions and interpret data
- Collaboration with the RG contributed to both professional and personal support

Lessons learned

When establishing a research group for studying recovery, it can be advantageous to include persons with experience from using a variety of substances and having diverse treatment experiences.

If possible, recruit at least one person with user experience having formal education in collaborative research.

The time frame of the project, tasks and salaries should be decided well in advance.

In all meetings it is crucial to discuss methodological challenges, and ensure that work tasks are customized the participants' competence.

The researcher/PI should have received training in conducting collaborative research, or being part of a work environment where it is possible to discuss methodological challenges with other researchers.

