

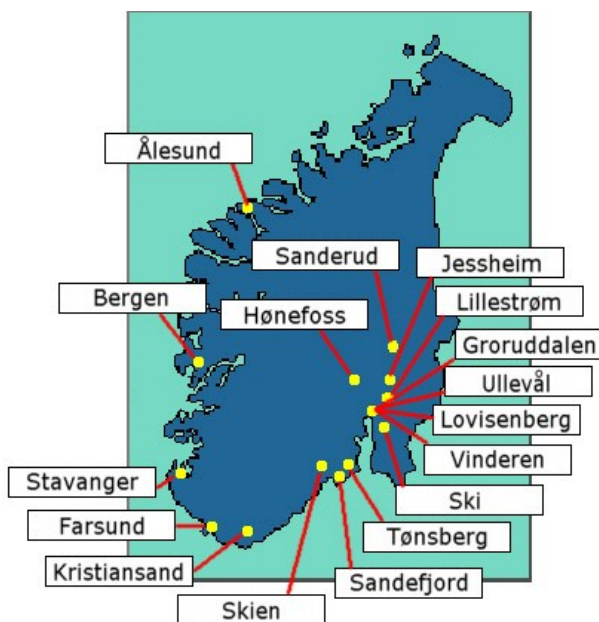
## The Norwegian network of personality-focused treatment programmes by Geir Pedersen

In 1992 the leaders of a number of treatment units came together and established the *Norwegian Network of Psychotherapeutic Day Hospitals* (Karterud, Pedersen et al., 1998). Their primary motivation was that the units were treating patients with comparable problems (Personality disorders) by comparable therapeutic interventions (Group therapy). Their main challenge was to measure and document treatment effects, since none of these relatively small units was able, within a reasonable time-frame, to collect a representative sample of patients powerful enough to answer such questions scientifically. The nucleus of the co-operation should be a system with schemata, tests and procedures woven together by a software program which had to be developed specifically for this purpose. After a period of domain and system specification, it was worked out a consensus about common basic routines and assessment procedures, as well as a user friendly computer system reflecting those basic elements.



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Today the Network is called *The Norwegian Network of Personality-Focused Treatment Programs*, of which nineteen units in southern part of Norway are members, treating approximately 600 patients a year. The advantages and gains of this clinical and research cooperation is undisputable, both at an individual clinical level (Urnes et al., 1998), on ward level (Karterud, Wilberg, et al., 1998), and at a general health care level (Wilberg et al., 1998). Research on data from this collaboration has been comprehensive, both with respect to the understanding and treatment of patients with personality disorders (Karterud et al., 2003; Wilberg et al., 2003; Karterud & Pedersen, 2004, Kvarstein et al., 2014), the relationship between staff related variables and patient outcome (Halsteinli et al., 2008) and to an extensive psychometric research on several assessment instruments.



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On a regular basis, all members of the Network send their anonymous data to the general manager of the Network for quality controls. Then, each unit receives a standardized report of their annual activity, with comparisons to former years. In addition to treatment durations, treatment incidents, drop-out rates and diagnostic frequencies, the reports describe patient characteristics such as levels on different areas of distress, patient satisfaction, and treatment outcome on several self- and observer reported clinical variables. Furthermore, the anonymous data from all units are merged into a large database. By this, the Network has a central database for clinical and psychometric research, continuously increasing in number of patients. Today this

database counts thoroughly assessed clinical information from approximately 8000 patients.

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In accordance with the view of Maurish (2000) the core philosophy of the Norwegian Network is that all activities and implementations are user-driven and that research and clinical interests are balanced. For many years, different courses in assessment and quality assurance are held repeatedly at each treatment unit. The computer system is easy to operate and clearly visualizes the clinical routines. It has functions for quick access to graphical presentation of individual test results, both at specific time sets as well as for longitudinal profiles.

Financially, the Network is a 'Dutch treat', with an annual fee of 4.640 EUR, covering partly the expenses for the Networks' general manager whose responsibility is in the field of coordinating the assessment routines, system engineering and research. He holds tight connection with the units by phone and mail and performs multiple and regular site visits to calibrate practical routines. Every six months, the leaders from each treatment unit meet to discuss current clinical challenges and interests, and once a year all units meet at a full day clinical conference, where the latest clinical findings or other relevant topics are presented.

During the last two decades the Norwegian Network has grown to be an honourable institution by its focus on quality assurance, the exchange of clinical knowledge cross- and between a large number of clinical units, and by building bridges between clinicians and researchers. It has enhanced the daily clinical routines with its focus on validity and reliability of assessment tools, and by this, generated one of the largest clinical databases of patients with personality disorders in the world.

By its nature the Norwegian Network has great potentials. In relatively short time it can give answers to important research questions related to specific disorders, treatment programs, or assessment methods and instruments.

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### **Geir Pedersen, PhD**

**General Manager / Senior Researcher, Oslo University Hospital - Ullevaal, Division of Mental Health and Addiction, Department for Personality Psychiatry, Oslo, Norway**

**E-mail: [geir.pedersen@medisin.uio.no](mailto:geir.pedersen@medisin.uio.no)**

**Web: <http://www.dagbehandlingsnettverk.no/>**