ADHD in treatment seeking patients with a substance use disorder
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Acknowledgements

It all started with the family I was born in.
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This thesis is grounded in my profession as a mental health nurse, working for over thirteen years (1987-2000) in an addiction treatment centre in the Netherlands. Together with my colleagues we tried, to the best of our knowledge, to offer these patients the treatment they needed. In many cases treatment was successful, but in the majority of patients, treatment failed. Patients quit their treatment, relapsed, returned, relapsed etcetera and way too often, they died as a consequence of their addiction. Obviously, these patients suffered, on many aspects of life, and so did their parents, partners, children, family and friends. Many of the patients had additional, comorbid psychiatric and personality disorders. During my working days at the addiction treatment centre, the concept of Dual Diagnosis was explored, but it took us to the end of the 1990s, before the first SUD patient in our addiction treatment centre was diagnosed with and treated for comorbid adult Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

I learned to respect and was inspired by the strength and courage of the patients, seeking help for the devastating disorder they suffered from: Substance Use Disorders (SUD). I thank all of these patients. And I thank all of my former colleagues at Heesteroord, especially Gerrie de Vries, Jan van der Wal, Annie v.d. Kooij, Eric Wever†, Wim Wildschut, Louis Vos, Tosca Derks and Maarten Hazeleger. These were rough days, many times so very difficult. But also: we had lots of fun together. Thanks for everything!

After finishing my Master's degree in Health Sciences in 2000 I started working for the Trimbos-instituut, (Netherlands institute on Mental Health and Addiction), with the ambition to help closing the gap between practice and science.
I thank Anne Goossensen for inviting me to change jobs and leave the field of practice for the field of science, and for introducing me to the topic of ADHD and SUD.
I started working on a project (2000-2004) aimed at setting state of the art procedures for diagnoses and treatment of adult ADHD in addiction treatment centers (this project is described in chapter 3 of this thesis). Ever since, I am working on two major goals related to the topic of ADHD in addiction treatment centers:

1) increase of the quality of diagnosis and treatment of patients suffering from both SUD and ADHD;
2) prevention of development of SUD in children and adolescents with ADHD.

Establishing these goals is too much for one person, one institute, or even one country. Therefore I initiated an international network of experts on this topic.

I thank my managers at the Trimbos-instituut: Lourens Henkelman, Gerdien Franx and Hedda van 't Land, and the Trimbos-instituut CEO Jan Walburg. They constantly encouraged me and trusted me. This support was of invaluable importance for me and for the emerging international research network.

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Boston and talked with dr. Wilens. I thank him for this meeting, and for suggesting organizing a meeting with international researchers in the field of ADHD and SUD, to discuss using the same research instruments, in order to improve comparability of international research. This, in fact, started the international research network on ADHD and substance abuse.

A year later, in December 2005, the first meeting of what now is the International Collaboration on ADHD and Substance Abuses (ICASA; www.adhdandsubstanceabuse.org), took place in an Amsterdam hotel. Since than, we had meetings once a year. We organized national conferences on ADHD and SUD in the countries that participated and hosted our annual meetings. We developed research projects, and executed the IASP study. Currently we are in the final stage of a second ICASA project (the Continuous performance test in ADHD and SUD Patients, CASP study) and we are working on future collaborative projects. Since 2010 the network operates as a formal foundation by Dutch law.

The development of the network, developing the research projects and working on publishing the results turned out to be an incredible experience. These acknowledgements would become even longer than they already are, if I were to thank all of the involved persons. So: thanks to all of you who were and are involved in projects of the ICASA network and in the network itself!!

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