



Photography: Frank Diemel

## Recap colloquium ‘Reimagining will & skill’

13 June 2024

**What can we do to support youth who struggle with antisocial behavior and addiction to achieve their own long-term goals? This was the main question we tackled at the second [Healthy Start](#) colloquium on 13 June at Kunsthal Rotterdam: ‘Reimagining will & skill’. During this inspiring day we brought together experts from various disciplines to share their unique insights, methods and tools to support youth during treatment and in daily life. The colloquium was moderated by Healthy Start Fellow Ilse van de Groep. We wrapped up the day with an interactive panel discussion and networking drinks.**

**Pecha Kucha Reshmi Marhe – Why is it important to study and treat combined antisocial behavior and addiction problems?**

[Dr. Reshmi Marhe](#) is the Ambition Lead of Healthy Start ambition ‘[Tackling juvenile delinquency and addiction](#)’ and assistant professor at the Clinical and Forensic and Legal Psychology

departments of the Erasmus University Rotterdam. She kicked off the colloquium with a Pecha Kucha presentation in which she introduced us to the complexity of combined antisocial behavior and addiction problems. She told a story about one of her former participants in research, Mo, a 40-year-old heroin and cocaine dependent patient who had been in and out of jail for the past 25 years and started using drugs from age 12. During her research she uncovered that the complexity of Mo's case was not exceptional and both psychological, social, and neurobiological issues can play a role. Even though there are many other individuals who struggle with similar issues, treatment efforts are often not successful – which is problematic for (young) adults themselves, but also for society more broadly. Hence, Reshmi argued that to support young people, we need to work towards an approach more tailored to individual needs, motivation, and personal goals. This approach requires collaboration across disciplines and between science and society.

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### **Keynote James Blair – How can we improve multi-disciplinary neuroscientific research in youth to inform treatment?**

[Prof. dr. James Blair](#) is a Clinical Professor at the Department of Clinical Medicine, University of Copenhagen. He started his keynote by reiterating the importance of multi-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary collaboration, illustrated by the success of a large-scale collaboration between research and clinical practice at [Boys Town National Research Hospital](#). But James stressed that collaboration is also needed to resolve some of the challenges we face in neuroscientific research: (1) the current diagnoses we use in research and treatment are not very reliable, (2) Not all people with the same diagnosis show the same problems, and (3) it is difficult to predict how (well) patients will respond to treatment. He argued that both multi-disciplinary teams and user engagement are necessary to work towards more effective treatments. He also made a case for assessment-based care instead of diagnosis-based care. Not: has someone been diagnosed with ADHD or Conduct Disorder? But instead: what kind of behavior does someone show that interferes with their functioning in daily life?

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### **Pecha Kucha Jennie Lukoff – How can we personalize treatment to young adults' needs and motivation?**

[Jennie Lukoff](#) is a Healthy Start PhD candidate, working on the ambition 'Tackling juvenile delinquency and addiction'. During her Pecha Kucha presentation, Jennie explained that young adults who show combined antisocial behavior and addiction problems often do not realize that they might benefit from psychological treatment. Therefore, her first research aim is to find out whether daily self-monitoring allows young adults to gain more insight into their own behaviors, to enhance their motivation to change their behavior. Given that young adults with multiple

problems often also do not receive help when they need it most, her second aim is to identify 'need' and 'opportunity' states that may serve as starting points for future interventions. 'Need states' refers to moments in which a person might be tempted to aggress or use substances, for example when they experience stress or craving. 'Opportunity states' are moments in which a person is more open to receiving and acting on intervention efforts. Jennie is currently collecting pilot data in a sample of 20 students by means of daily self-monitoring through their smartphone devices. This will be repeated in a sample of 50 multi-problem young adults in Rotterdam. To ensure that future interventions align with the motivation and goals of young adults, she wants to involve them in co-creation sessions and ask their feedback on the results. By combining different research methods and sources of information, her research will help us work towards more effective, timely and responsive interventions.

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### Reflection Ilse van de Groep

[Ilse van de Groep](#) is Healthy Start Fellow of Healthy Start ambition 'Tackling juvenile delinquency and addiction'. Her reflection on the day:

“It was really valuable to hear from various experts what our next steps should be to improve research and treatment for young adults with multiple problems. We can move forward in various ways: by improving our measurements of neuropsychological functioning through machine learning, we can hopefully develop clinical tools that target problems in daily functioning. We can make research more ecologically valid by using experience sampling methods, and use smartphones, VR and other technological tools to make treatment immersive and fun. One thing that became clear during the panel discussion with Prof. dr. Ingmar Franken, dr. Willem-Paul Brinkman and the audience is that the perspective of youth themselves holds great promise to advance both research and treatment. This aligns with the shift we hope to make within our project, from merely identifying and treating problems, to simultaneously also highlighting the strengths of youth, and supporting them to foster the joys in their lives. The panel discussion also nicely highlighted why the integration of both scientific and practical knowledge is so valuable: an important insight highlighted by one of our societal partners, Jasmijn Verhage, head of [Stichting De Nieuwe Kans](#), during the discussion was that youth may not always have had opportunity to even have such positive and joyful experiences. Hence, we really need an integrated and transdisciplinary approach to empower youth to identify and achieve their own (positive!) long-term goals.”

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*Did you miss the colloquium and would you like more information about our ambition or are you interested in collaborating with us? Please contact us via [healthystart@convergence.nl](mailto:healthystart@convergence.nl).*