

# ETUDE - EU PhD FUNCTIONAL DISORDERS NETWORK



## ETUDE

Encompassing Training in functional  
Disorders across Europe  
PhD prospectus

## ETUDE

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**EURONET-SOMA**

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# ETUDE

Encompassing Training in Functional Disorders across Europe

## What is ETUDE and how many PhDs are there?

ETUDE is a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Innovation Training Network (ITN), funded by the European Commission, Horizon 2020 Program. It is designed to train the next generation of researchers in Functional Disorders. The Network will provide **PhD training to 15 Early Stage Researchers** (ESRs) within **three year fixed-term positions**.

## When will the PhDs start?

Around **September 2021**. Starting dates may vary between countries due to local requirements.

## Who can apply?

ETUDE is looking for a wide range of applicants for 15 projects. Eligible candidates:

- Can be from **any country in the world**, both from inside and outside the EU
- **Must not have lived for more than 12 months out of the last 36 months in the host country** where the PhD project will take place
- **Must not have already done a PhD** or similar higher research degree
- Can be from a **wide range of disciplines** that are suitable for the proposed project. For example, medicine, psychology, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, anthropology, social sciences, neurosciences and others.

## When is the deadline and interview date?

Deadline for applications is **28 February 2021**. Apply via this link <https://bit.ly/3mDf84D>  
The interviews will be held online on 24-25 March 2021.

## Can I approach potential supervisors?

Yes. Informal approaches are accepted. Please feel free to email the supervisor(s) of the projects that are of interest to you.

## How will the partnerships work?

ETUDE enables a new generation of researchers to interact in a unique manner and to create an unprecedented European network to promote **Functional Disorders (FD)**. ETUDE consists of partners with somatic and psychiatric backgrounds covering the whole range from experimental and theoretical models to the clinical practice and industry. ETUDE is grounded in existing collaborations within the EURONET-SOMA network, initiated in 2016 which has resulted in several joint publications, research exchanges, symposia, and a Summer school on FD (<https://www.euronet-soma.eu/>). With ETUDE, we aim to develop our collaboration one step further into a pan-European graduate school.

### ETUDE - EU PhD FUNCTIONAL DISORDERS NETWORK



Locations of the 15 ETUDE PhD projects

## Objectives of ETUDE

ETUDE stands for “**Encompassing Training in fUnctional Disorders across Europe**”. This programme aims to identify underlying mechanisms, improve diagnosis and treatment, and reduce stigma of patients with functional disorders. Functional Disorders (FD) are clusters of chronic somatic symptoms that currently cannot be associated to reproducibly observable pathophysiological mechanisms. Functional limitations are as severe in FD as in well-defined chronic physical diseases. Direct medical costs and indirect costs as a consequence of sick leave and disability are high. However, diagnostic practices vary between fields and different concepts of FD have important consequences for patients. These challenges result in a lack of knowledge on FD, leading to fragmented and insufficient health care for patients with FD, and a society in which patients with FD experience stigma from both the society as well as from health care professionals. There is an urgent need to solve the fragmented and insufficient education and research landscape. ETUDE aims to structurally improve health care for FD across Europe.

Therefore, the goal of ETUDE is the development of a sustainable and structured training programme in order to educate a new generation of interdisciplinary creative early stage researchers that are able to cross disciplines and to translate theory and experimental models to products and services that improve care for patients.

**“ETUDE applicants can be from anywhere in the world and from many discipline”**

# ETUDE PHD POSITIONS

There are 15 PhD POSITIONS as part of ETUDE. This section gives a brief overview of each position and its supervisor. The PhDs are grouped in to FOUR WORK PACKAGES (or themes).

## WORK PACKAGE 1 - Mechanisms underlying the development of functional disorders

WP 1 is focused on mechanisms underlying the development of FD, and will go beyond the traditional discipline-specific diagnoses that artificially divide the research field. Within this theme, four PhD students will develop new insights into transdiagnostic mechanisms, which will inform new diagnostic methods or products and identify treatment targets.

| ESR 1: Symptom perception as a transdiagnostic mechanism underlying FD   |  |
|--|--|
| <p><b>Supervisor: Prof. Michael Withthöft &amp; team</b></p>   | <p><b>Mainz, Germany</b></p>    |
| <p><b>Why Johannes Gutenberg-University?</b></p> <p>With around 32,000 students from over 120 nations, Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz (JGU) is one of Germany's largest and most diverse universities. JGU unites almost all academic disciplines and offers an extraordinarily broad range of courses.</p> <p>Our department of Clinical Psychology, Psychotherapy, and Experimental Psychopathology combines innovative research into the mechanisms of mental disorders with comprehensive education in clinical psychology and psychotherapy, both on a graduate and post-graduate level. The integration of research and clinical training follows the scientist-practitioner model. The research focuses on chronic somatic symptoms and related conditions across the lifespan as well as on key mental processes (e.g. emotion regulation and interoception) that are of transdiagnostic relevance for our understanding of mental disorders and chronic physical conditions.</p> | <p><b>The Project</b></p> <p>The primary aim of this research is to test whether alterations in the perception of signals originating within the body (i.e. interoception) and emotion regulation abnormalities are causally related to functional disorders (FD).</p> <p>Using experimental and correlational research designs, we aim at testing possible alterations regarding interoception and emotion regulation in persons at risk for the development of FD. First, possible associations between symptom reports and alterations in interoception and emotion regulation will be explored. Second, possible alterations in interoception and emotion regulation will be actively manipulated (e.g. by using innovative training procedures) in order to prove their potential causal role in the origination of chronic somatic symptoms and to foster the development of innovative treatments for FD.</p> |
| <p><b>Who are we looking for?</b></p> <p>Someone passionate about the mechanisms behind Functional Disorders (FD) and chronic somatic symptom distress in general. Suitable backgrounds are: psychology graduate, particularly with a background and interest in clinical psychology, psychophysiology, and experimental psychopathology research.</p>   | <p><b>The Partners</b></p> <p>The academic secondments are planned at the <b>Eötvös Loránd University</b> (Hungary) and at the <b>Technical University of Munich</b> (Germany) in collaboration with Prof. Ferenc Gábor Köteles and Prof. Nadine Lehnen respectively. The non-academic secondment will be at <b>Tumi Therapeutics</b> (Belgium) aimed to learn about translation from scientific results to clinical services.</p>   |
| <p><b>Email <a href="mailto:witthoef@uni-mainz.de">witthoef@uni-mainz.de</a> for further queries</b></p>   |  |

## ESR 2: Sensory-motor processing as a trans-diagnostic mechanism underlying FD

**Supervisor: Prof. Nadine Lehnen**



**Munich, Germany**



### Why Technical University of Munich?

The group is based at the Department of Psychosomatic Medicine and Psychotherapy, university hospital, Technical University of Munich (TUM), one of the leading university centres for FD, with large in- and outpatient facilities.

We are an innovative, interdisciplinary group enthusiastic about understanding, diagnosing and treating FD. We enjoy discussing research ideas with each other and within multiple national and international co-operations and networks we are part of.

PhD candidates will be part of the TUM community, TUM ranking among Europe's most outstanding universities in research and innovation.

Munich, we feel, is a great city to live in, with fun things to do and opportunities to relax – the Bavarian Alps are an hour's travel away.

### The Project

The project investigates whether there is a trans-diagnostic mechanism underlying FD by examining sensory-motor processes in patients with different functional symptoms.

It builds on prior work indicating dysfunctional brain interaction between sensory input and expectations about sensory consequences of one's own actions in FD (key papers see [here](#) and [here](#)). The project being based on clinical, experimental and computational approaches, PhD candidates can start from either of these approaches and explore towards the others.

We thrive to directly translate project findings into diagnostics and therapy for FD patients. This is also reflected in the research visits, which include a medical technology company.

### Who are we looking for?

We are looking for candidates with a strong interest in patients with functional disorders.

This project can be approached from different angles within our interdisciplinary team.

We welcome applicants with a degree in **medicine, psychology, physiotherapy, behavioral, systems or computational neuroscience, health or sport sciences, engineering, computer science or mathematics.**

### The Partners

The group has ample opportunities for research visits and co-operations. Planned visits within ETUDE are

- 1) **Clinical Psychology, Psychotherapy and Experimental Psychopathology, JGU Mainz, Germany**
- 2) **Cognition in Action Lab, Institute of Cognitive Sciences and Technologies, Rome, Italy**
- 3) **EyeSeeTec GmbH, Munich, Germany**

**Email [N. Lehnen@tum.de](mailto:N.Lehnen@tum.de) for further queries**



### ESR 3: Dysfunctional Breathing as a transdiagnostic mechanism underlying FD

**Supervisor: Prof. Joanna Rymaszewska**

**Wroclaw, Poland**



#### Why Wroclaw Medical University?

The Psychiatry Department of Wroclaw Medical University has a strong clinical background, with three different psychiatric clinics on site (inpatient and day care), psychotherapy unit as well as access to the variety of University Hospital's clinics. Several projects including transcranial magnetic stimulation and deep brain stimulation are being conducted, creating many opportunities to learn about different treatment methods as well as facilitate patient recruitment for the study.

The city of Wroclaw has been the European culture capital in 2016 having a vast English-speaking community of foreign students as well as expats. Wrocław offers many opportunities for cultural and social activities for English-speaking visitors and residents.

#### The Project

The main goal of this project is to study dysfunctional breathing patterns as underlying FD, in order to develop diagnostic instruments and new treatment options. We aim to study dysfunctional breathing patterns and their relation to different FD by establishing breathing patterns in patients with different types of symptoms with the use of objective sensor-based methods collected using wearables and psychometric and qualitative analyses of subjective self-report measures. We will study objective versus subjective symptoms, symptom perception, and identify risk factors for persistence of symptoms. The result will be used to develop European recommendations covering diagnosis and treatment.

#### Who are we looking for?

We are looking for someone being interested in psychiatry, psychology and functional disorders and eager to learn. Due to the nature of the project, which includes working with patients, a medical or psychological background with some therapeutic knowledge and on hands patient experience would be preferred.

#### The Partners

The PhD candidate will take part in two secondments, academic and non-academic. First will take place at **KU Leuven** leading by Prof. van den Bergh, a EURONETSOMA member specialized in predictive processing and breathing patterns. Second is planned at **Breath in Balanz**, to learn how knowledge about breathing patterns is translated into an app functioning as a personal coaching and feedback system. Breath In Balanz helps people to improve or restore their breathing pattern with the BreathBalanz, a breathing coaching and feedback system.

**Email [joanna.rymaszewska@umed.wroc.pl](mailto:joanna.rymaszewska@umed.wroc.pl) for further queries**

## ESR 4: Developmental transdiagnostic mechanisms underlying FD

**Supervisor: Prof. Charlotte Rask**



**Aarhus, Denmark**



Aarhus is one of the safest cities in the world where most of our inhabitants speak English. With two nearby airports, it is easy to get to.

### Why Aarhus University Hospital?

**Aarhus University Hospital** is the largest and most modern university hospital in Northern Europe situated in Aarhus in Denmark. The close relationship between **Aarhus University** and Aarhus University Hospital is internationally recognized and provides researchers with an ideal setting to link scientific research with clinical need and assessment to iteratively improve upon new solutions and methodologies.

At the Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, where the researcher will be based, we are already involved in several projects on FD in children and adolescents. The department has a team which treats young people with severe FD as well as strong research traditions on both diagnostics, epidemiology and clinical intervention studies.

### The Project

This will be the first encompassing study on the developmental trajectories of FD from preschool to adolescence, their health outcomes and the potential role of family factors, performing epidemiological analyses on data from the **Copenhagen Child Cohort** and the unique national Danish registers. A secondment at the University Medical Center Groningen (UMCG) in the Netherlands will allow complimentary analyses in the Dutch LifeLines cohort. The project group will include both national and international experts in FD and young people.

As there will be two ETUDE PhD positions located in Aarhus it will be possible to network locally with another international PhD student during the whole project period.

### Who are we looking for?

You could have a degree in medicine, psychology or health sciences and preferably experience in epidemiological research and analysis of large data set from different sources.

You are open minded with academic integrity, high ethical standards and possess the ability to collaborate respectfully with internal and external colleagues.

### The Partners

The secondment at the **UMCG** in the Netherlands will be in collaboration with professor Judith Rosmalen. The non-academic secondment will be situated at the Section for children and adolescents, **Aarhus Municipality**, Denmark which will offer the PhD student the opportunity to spend time with clinicians that see and work with young people with FD in a primary setting.

**Email [charrask@rm.dk](mailto:charrask@rm.dk) for further queries**



## WORK PACKAGE 2 - Diagnosis of Functional Disorders

WP 2 is focused on diagnosis of FD, and will involve three PhD students who will study predictive validity of diagnostic criteria. Their aim is to improve the current symptom-based diagnostic criteria that are insufficiently validated, and to simultaneously establish a basis for future improvements of diagnostic criteria.

| ESR 5: Predictive validity of diagnostic criteria of FD used in mental health care  |  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>Supervisor: Prof. Bernd Löwe</b></p>   | <p><b>Hamburg, Germany</b></p>   |
| <p><b>Why UMC Hamburg-Eppendorf (UKE)?</b></p> <p>The <b>UKE</b> is one of Europe's most modern clinics and is known for offering excellent career opportunities. The UKE is a cosmopolitan and multi-cultural employer. The campus is in the center of Hamburg's Eppendorf neighborhood that is "a city within a city" with many restaurants and beautiful green open spaces.</p> <p>The Institute and Clinic for Psychosomatic Medicine and Psychotherapy has an international reputation for research in somatoform and functional disorders. We are an open-minded and welcoming interprofessional team with a broad scientific network including national and international working groups. Our research projects address the pressing needs for improvement in the recognition, diagnosis, explanation and treatment of patients with persistent somatic symptoms. You can find our relevant publications <a href="#">here</a>.</p> | <p><b>The Project</b></p> <p>The main goal of this project is to further develop valid diagnostic criteria for functional and related disorders and derive recommendations for future classification systems. In an online study, a prospective cohort of patients with persistent somatic symptoms will be followed over one year. Various diagnostic criteria will be assessed at baseline. The severity of somatic symptoms, health related anxiety, functional impairment, and diagnostic status will be assessed at baseline, after 6 months and after 1 year. A set of the most valid diagnostic criteria will be identified and guide future development of diagnostic classification systems regarding functional and related disorders.</p> |
| <p><b>Who are we looking for?</b></p> <p>Someone passionate about functional disorders and persistent somatic symptoms. Suitable backgrounds are: Degree in medicine, psychology or health sciences. Experiences in psychodiagnostics, online data collection or analysis of large data sets would help.</p>  | <p><b>The Partners</b></p> <p>There will be scheduled research visits at <b>Technical University Munich</b> (Germany), and <b>University Medical Center Groningen</b> (the Netherlands), and collaborations with <b>GAIA</b>, a global pioneer in digital therapeutics, located in Hamburg (Germany), and the <b>Dimence Group</b>, a specialist centre for functional symptoms &amp; somatic symptom disorders, located in Groningen (the Netherlands).</p>   |
| <p><b>Email <a href="mailto:b.loewe@uke.de">b.loewe@uke.de</a> for further queries</b></p>  |  |

## ESR 6: Predictive validity of diagnostic criteria of FD used in somatic health care

**Supervisor: Prof. Judith Rosmalen**

**Groningen, The Netherlands**



### Why UMC Groningen?

The University Medical Center Groningen (UMCG) is one of the largest hospitals in the Netherlands. More than 10,000 employees provide patient care, are involved in medical education and perform cutting-edge scientific research. Research and education at the UMCG are funded through the University of Groningen.

Groningen has been included in a list of the twenty "Best Small Cities in the World" and ranked third in a European quality of city life survey. Groningen has also been ranked the best student city in the Netherlands based on nightlife and restaurants, cultural hotspots and student density.

The research group of Judith Rosmalen is a productive group with a nice working atmosphere. For further details on output see [my profile](#).

### The Project

This project questions what the advantages and disadvantages are of receiving a diagnostic label of a functional disorder in case of for persistent somatic symptoms. This will be done in two large population-based cohorts in the Netherlands ([Lifelines](#)) and Denmark (DanFund) that both include the diagnostic criteria and several diagnostic labels. We will study the differences in prognosis of persistent symptoms in groups with and without a diagnostic label. In addition, in-depth interviews are planned in which patients are questioned about what the diagnostic label meant and changed for them. The aim is to develop knowledge on diagnostic labels in order to advice patients and clinicians on their use.

### Who are we looking for?

We are looking for an enthusiastic candidate with a degree in health sciences, medicine, psychology or sociology, good communication skills and preferably experience with epidemiological research.

### The Partners

**Pain Alliance Europe (PAE)** is a non-profit organisation based in Belgium, functioning as an umbrella organisation of 44 national and regional associations in 19 European countries, concerned with chronic pain, regardless the underlying condition.

The analysis in the DanFund cohort will be done in collaboration with **Aarhus University Hospital**. In addition, this ESR will also perform a short secondment to the University of Edinburgh to prepare the interview scheme based on the survey results collected by other ESRs in ETUDE.

**Email [j.g.m.rosmalen@umcg.nl](mailto:j.g.m.rosmalen@umcg.nl) for further queries**

## ESR 7: Predictive validity of diagnostic criteria of FD used in primary care

**Supervisor: Dr. Tim Olde Hartman**

**Nijmegen, The Netherlands**



### Why Radboud UMC Nijmegen?

### The Project

Nijmegen, the oldest city of the Netherlands, is a vibrant city of around 170.000 inhabitants housing lots of students from Radboud University. Radboud university medical center wants to have a significant impact on health care by pioneering in shaping the health care of the future in a person-centered and innovative way. The department of Primary and Community care conduct multidisciplinary research in the fields of general medicine, mental health, geriatrics, public health and medical information science.

Effective management of patients with Functional Disorders (FD) is only possible when stigmatization of these patients by physicians has been reduced.

The main goal of this project is to study and reduce the extent of stigmatization of patients with FD by physicians (general practitioners as well as specialists).

Dr. Tim Olde Hartman, senior researcher and general practitioner, leads the Radboudumc primary care research group with a focus on personalized approaches of medically unexplained symptoms (Functional Disorders) and mental health. He has more than 15 years of experience and is (inter)nationally known in this research field.

This project will learn to assess the degree of stereotypical beliefs in physicians using Implicit Association Tests, vignettes and in-depth interviews, and will compare these stereotypical beliefs in different health care professionals across Europe.

We will develop an eLearning on stigma and perform a feasibility study in which we test its effects on physicians' stigma and stereotypical beliefs.

### Who are we looking for?

### The Partners

A passionate young researcher with a degree in health sciences, medicine, psychology or sociology. Preferably he or she should have experience with some qualitative research methods.

Two academic partners (**University Medical Center Hamburg-Eppendorf** (Germany) and **Wroclaw Medical University** (Poland)) experienced in stigma research in the field of FD and one non-academic partner (**De Bagagedrager** (The Netherlands)) experienced in the developments of anti-stigma products.

**Email [Tim.OldeHartman@radboudumc.nl](mailto:Tim.OldeHartman@radboudumc.nl) for further queries**

## WORK PACKAGE 3: Treatment of Functional Disorders

WP 3 is focused on treatment of FD, and aims to inform evidence-based European recommendations on treatment and health care for patients with FD that include content as well as organization of care for FD. The five PhD students will collectively provide the first encompassing overview of health care for FD across Europe, and will improve care for FD by developing specific products, services and new modes of delivery, and indicators to evaluate them.

| ESR 8: Effective treatment for FD across diagnoses and disciplines  |  |
|---|--|
| Supervisor: Prof. Fiammetta Cosci   | Florence, Italy  |
|    |    |
| <b>Why University of Florence?</b>  | <b>The Project</b>   |
| <p>The University of Florence is one of the largest organizations for research and higher education in Italy. It has been recently ranked among top Italian Universities for the distribution of national research funds and is one of the most active Italian Universities in terms of European projects and related grants.</p> <p>Researchers at the University of Florence can benefit from approximately 40 research structures, including inter-departmental and inter-university centres.</p> <p>The clinical base of Florence is a University Hospital having the best quality equipment disposal, which allows to conduct diagnostic and treatment at the highest level.</p> | <p>This PhD project will allow to develop a transdiagnostic overview study on the prevalence of Functional Disorders and their effective treatments used in the different medical disciplines. The aim is to perform a systematic review and meta-analysis of the available literature to quantify prevalence of Functional Disorders across Europe; and identify effectivity of symptom-specific and generic treatment elements in relation to characteristics of patients with Functional Disorders, thus identifying predictors of treatment success across the different diagnoses.</p>  |
| <b>Who are we looking for?</b>  | <b>The Partners</b>  |
| <p>Someone passionate about Functional Disorders, their treatments, and epidemiology. It would particularly suit a <b>medical</b> graduate interested in a career in <b>psychosomatics</b> or <b>psychiatry</b>, or <b>psychologist</b> with a medical background. An interest in <b>literature reviews</b> and <b>meta-analysis</b> would be a benefit.</p>  | <p><b>Bound – Intelligent Health Capital</b> (BIHC), Lisbon, Portugal is an agency intensively dedicated to creating intelligent and integrated digital solutions that could generate meaningful data insights, experiences, and outcomes concerning organisational health.</p> <p>The <b>Bergische Universität Wuppertal</b> (BUW), Wuppertal, Germany, is an international top-level academic institution which offers facilities for basic psychological research, diagnostic assessment and treatment of patients in an outpatient setting. It is involved in <b>European EURONET-SOMA Summerschool</b> on Persistent Physical Symptoms: Multidisciplinary Challenges.</p> |
| <p>Email <a href="mailto:fiammetta.cosci@unifi.it">fiammetta.cosci@unifi.it</a> for further queries</p>   |  |



## ESR 9: Health Care Related Factors of Somatic Symptom Persistence across Europe

**Supervisor: Prof. Bernd Löwe**



**Hamburg, Germany**



**Why UMC Hamburg-Eppendorf (UKE)?**

The **UKE** is one of Europe's most modern clinics and is known for offering excellent career opportunities. The UKE is a cosmopolitan and multi-cultural employer. The campus is in the center of Hamburg's Eppendorf neighborhood that is "a city within a city" with many restaurants and beautiful green open spaces.

The Institute and Clinic for Psychosomatic Medicine and Psychotherapy has an international reputation for research in somatoform and functional disorders. We are an open-minded and welcoming interprofessional team with a broad scientific network including national and international working groups. Our research projects address the pressing needs for improvement in the recognition, diagnosis, explanation and treatment of patients with persistent somatic symptoms. You can find our relevant publications [here](#).

**The Project**

The main goal of this project is to identify health care- and treatment-related factors that deteriorate functional and related disorders. In the first study phase, a systematic review of potential health care-related and treatment-related factors that contribute to symptom persistence and deterioration will be conducted. Based on the findings, we will conduct online surveys in different European countries including participants with high risk of FD to identify the factors involved in symptom persistence over time.

**Who are we looking for?**

Someone passionate about functional disorders and persistent somatic symptoms. Suitable backgrounds are: Degree in medicine, psychology or health sciences. Experiences with systematic reviews, online surveys or health services research would help.

**The Partners**

There will be scheduled research visits at **Wroclaw Medical University** (Poland), **University of Florence** (Italy), and **University Medical Center Groningen** (the Netherlands), and a collaboration with **USUMA**, an independent market and social research institute headquartered in Berlin (Germany).

**Email [b.loewe@uke.de](mailto:b.loewe@uke.de) for further queries**

## ESR 10: Patient-centred eHealth as an accessible first step intervention for FD

### Dr. Lisbeth Frostholtm



### Aarhus, Denmark



### Why Aarhus University Hospital?

**Aarhus University Hospital** is a large and very modern university hospital located in Aarhus in Denmark. The close relationship between **Aarhus University** and Aarhus University Hospital is internationally recognized and provides researchers with an ideal setting to link scientific research with clinical practice.

At the **Department of Functional Disorders**, where the researcher will be based, we are specialized in research and treatment of FD. Moreover, we are involved in several studies on eHealth for FD and related disorders. The department has a clinic which treats FD and health anxiety. Research centre and clinic is on the same location.

### The Project

The main goal of this project is to develop personalized eHealth in a collaboration with numerous European countries.

The ESR will learn how to develop a first 'one size fits all' prototype that will be initially tested in 5-10 European Centres and adapted based on the results of this pilot. The final eHealth program will be tested in a larger multi-centre cross country clinical study. The ESR will learn how to apply a participatory design employing end-user involvement in the development and design.

As there will be two ETUDE PhD positions located in Aarhus it will be possibly to network locally with another international PhD student during the project period.

### Who are we looking for?

You could have a degree in psychology, medicine, or health sciences and possibly clinical experience, and experience with end-user involvement and eHealth.

You are creative and possess high academic integrity. You have a talent for project management in collaboration with internal and international colleagues.

### The Partners

The secondment at the **University of Sheffield** in the UK will be in collaboration with Dr. Christopher Burton to learn about explanatory models for FD. The non-academic secondment will be situated at **RelieVR B.V.** in the Netherlands in collaboration with Mr Zantema to learn about development of an eHealth product.

At the Department of Functional Disorders, you will have ample opportunity to discuss your project with clinicians and researchers involved in related projects.

Email [lisbeth.frostholtm@aarhus.rm.dk](mailto:lisbeth.frostholtm@aarhus.rm.dk) for further queries



## ESR 11: Treatment for FD patients with functional cognitive symptoms

**Prof Alan Carson**



**Edinburgh, UK**



### Why University of Edinburgh, UK?

The Functional Neurological Disorder (FND) research group in the beautiful city of Edinburgh has an international reputation for research in to FND with large cohort studies, randomised trials, studies of new phenotypes. The group's ethos is that quality research can still be done in a fun atmosphere (our 2020 activity report can be viewed at [Twitter](#)).

The group is embedded in the Centre for Clinical Brain Sciences, Edinburgh University's 'bench to clinic' approach designed to promote interdisciplinary research across neuroscience related disciplines; read more in this [Lancet profile](#).

Edinburgh has a long history of welcoming incomers and pro-European outlook; 75% of population wished to stay in the EU. It even has a mini mountain in the middle of the city.

### The Project

This PhD will develop our work on functional cognitive disorders (key papers [here](#) and [here](#)).

The main goal of this project is to develop and conduct preliminary acceptability testing for an e-Health treatment based on a combination of education and cognitive behavioural therapy for functional cognitive symptoms. We will develop a protocol for the inclusion of a diagnostic tool for FD patients characterized by functional cognitive symptoms into memory clinics for identification of patients based on our recent review. Using a participatory design, this ESR will develop an education package for use with general practitioners on how to explain and discuss diagnosis of FD characterized by functional cognitive symptoms. Finally, we will run a small n=20 feasibility study using the developed intervention in a routine clinical setting.

### Who are we looking for?

Someone passionate about Functional Disorders and cognition. It would particularly suit a **medical** graduate interested in a career in **neurology** or **psychiatry**, or **neuropsychologist** with a medical background. An interest in **digital healthcare** would be a benefit.

### The Partners

An academic secondment is planned to the Aarhus University Hospital in collaboration with professor Lisbeth Frostholt. The non-academic partner **Daysix** is a multi-disciplinary agency who brings good ideas to life. The company's ethos is **-We love the word good**. It's rich in meaning and application. Things can be good in themselves, designed well, looking beautiful, functioning sweetly. Things can also do good, create impact, drive performance, produce results, even inspire positive change in the world. Whatever we're making, we aim for both, producing well-crafted "things" that are needed and make a difference.

**Email [a.carson@ed.ac.uk](mailto:a.carson@ed.ac.uk) for further queries**

## ESR 12: Collaborative care networks for FD

**Supervisors: Dr. Lineke Tak & Prof. Judith Rosmalen**

**Deventer, The Netherlands**



### Why Dimence Mental Health Care?

### The Project

At the **Dimence** specialist center for persistent somatic symptoms and somatic symptom disorders, we deliver tertiary multidisciplinary care for patients with FD.

Next to clinical care, our research focuses on barriers and opportunities to implement effective communicating strategies and treatments.

To prevent that patients need tertiary care after long diagnostic delay and ineffective treatments, one of our goals is to improve collaborative care in our region.

Deventer is a historical city built along the banks of the river IJssel. It is a charming place for people who cannot choose between a vibrant metropole and a quiet place in the forest, as Deventer has integrated best of both.

Lineke Tak is head of this department, psychiatrist and researcher, and vice-chair of the Dutch national network on functional disorders. This PhD position is linked to the University of Groningen (the Netherlands), where Judith Rosmalen is the primary supervisor.

In the city of **Deventer** and its surroundings, we have started a regional network for FD, with more than 120 participating caregivers (general practitioners, (psychosomatic) physiotherapists and occupational therapists, psychologists, rehabilitation clinics, tertiary mental health care center). Our purpose is to link evidence-based elements in care and treatment for FD and collaborative health care networks.

First, we will provide an overview – based on declaration data – of the organization of health care for FD with those for depressive disorders in the Netherlands. Using a Delphi method to evaluate input from healthcare care providers and patients, we will define relevant structure and process indicators for collaborative care networks. We will also test barriers to care as experienced by stakeholders in a European survey.

This project ultimately aims to deliver an open source toolbox including practical strategies for collaborative care for FD. In this project, the PhD will learn principles of participatory action research: when problems in feasibility are encountered, methods will be adapted and re-evaluated.

### Who are we looking for?

### The Partners

Someone who likes to analyze complex systems and is able to put oneself in others' position. It would particularly suit someone with an interest in the interface of somatic and mental health care, medical policy making or sociology. **An interest in 'how networks work' would be a benefit.** Understanding Dutch or willing to learn this language is preferred to be able to participate in this network.

**ProScoop** is a non-profit organization focused collaborations between different health care parties and domains, starting from the perspective of citizens. ProScoop has an overview of the developments in the healthcare domain and continuously anticipates the changes that take place. This organization have a wide experience with networks that work and networks that do not work.

The project also includes a secondment at the **University Medical Center Hamburg-Eppendorf**, where a collaborative care network, Sofu-Net, has already been initiated and studied.

**Email [l.tak@dimence.nl](mailto:l.tak@dimence.nl) for further queries**

## WORK PACKAGE 4: Stigma associated with Functional Disorders

WP 4 is focused on the stigma that patients with FD meet, both from health care professionals as well as from other patients and the general society. Collectively, the three PhD students in this work package will study stigma, and develop and evaluate methods and products to reduce it.

| ESR 13: Negative attitudes in health care professionals: occurrence and interventions  |  |
|--|--|
| Supervisor: Dr. Tim Olde Hartman   | Nijmegen, The Netherlands  |
|   |    |
| <b>Why Radboud UMC Nijmegen?</b>   | <b>The Project</b>   |
| <p>Nijmegen, the oldest city of the Netherlands, is a vibrant city of around 170.000 inhabitants housing lots of students from Radboud University. Radboud university medical center wants to have a significant impact on health care by pioneering in shaping the health care of the future in a person-centered and innovative way. The department of Primary and Community care conduct multidisciplinary research in the fields of general medicine, mental health, geriatrics, public health and medical information science.</p> <p>Dr. Tim Olde Hartman, senior researcher and general practitioner, leads the Radboudumc primary care research group with a focus on personalized approaches of medically unexplained symptoms (Functional Disorders) and mental health. He has more than 15 years of experience and is (inter)nationally known in this research field.</p> | <p>In this project we will use the world famous continuous/longitudinal morbidity registration in which since 1971 all encounters between patients and General Practitioners (GPs) are registered and systematically coded (24 GPs, 32.000 patients, over 1 million encounters).</p> <p>The main goal of this project is to study current health care trajectories and predictors of an unfavourable course in patients visiting the GP with FD, by epidemiological analyses of detailed GP registry data.</p> <p>We will develop and validate a prediction rule for an unfavourable course of FD in primary care by making use of Bayesian networks and Artificial Intelligence.</p> <p>All analyses will be repeated in data from Malta, after which differences will be related to results obtained by the cross-European survey on health care for FD.</p> |
| <b>Who are we looking for?</b>   | <b>The Partners</b>  |
| <p>A passionate young researcher with a degree in health sciences, medicine, psychology, data sciences or mathematics. Preferably he or she should have experience with the epidemiological analysis of large data sets or with Bayesian network analysis.</p>   | <p>The academic partner in this project is the <b>Mediterranean Institute of Primary Care</b> (Malta).</p> <p>The non-academic partner is <b>USUMA GmbH</b>, Market and Social Research (Berlin, Germany) has a lot of experience with cross-European surveys.</p>   |
| <b>Email <a href="mailto:Tim.OldeHartman@radboudumc.nl">Tim.OldeHartman@radboudumc.nl</a> for further queries</b>  |  |

## ESR 14: Providing acceptable patient-centred explanations for FD

**Supervisor: Prof. Chris Burton**



**Sheffield**



**Why University of Sheffield?**

The University of Sheffield is one of the Russell Group of UK Universities and was the only one established by its local working community. Our Faculty of Medicine Dentistry and Health includes internationally excellent medical education, human communication sciences and one of the largest Health Services Research centres in the UK.

Sheffield was once England's steel city. It is now an outdoor city.

**The Project**

This project will build on Prof Burton's work on translating new science about functional disorders into practical explanations which clinicians can use with patients. The work will include analysis of clinical consultations to further understand how explanations for functional disorders work (or don't!).

The project will be jointly supervised by Prof Burton a GP and Dr Traci Walker a linguist and conversation analyst.

**Who are we looking for?**

A future leader in research or teaching how clinicians communicate explanations in ways that are science-led and person-centred. Your background may be in communication sciences, sociology or psychology but your passion has to be in understanding communication.

**The Partners**

The project will also involve an academic placement at **RUMC Nijmegen** bringing together your work with some of the parallel streams in ETUDE.

The non-academic secondments will be in collaboration with the **Pain Alliance Europe** (Belgium) to learn about the patient perspective and **Grasshopper Films** (Germany) to produce an interactive video to train clinicians.

**Email [chris.burton@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:chris.burton@sheffield.ac.uk) for further queries**



## ESR 15: Online and offline stigma for FD in the general population: occurrence and interventions

### Prof Jon Stone



### University of Edinburgh, UK



### Why University of Edinburgh?

The Functional Neurological Disorder (FND) research group in the beautiful city of Edinburgh has an international reputation for research in to FND with large cohort studies, randomised trials, studies of new phenotypes.

Prof. Stone (Neurology) and Prof. Carson (Neuropsychiatry – see ESR 11) co-lead a vibrant multidisciplinary group exploring many facets of FND.

As Secretary and President-Elect of the new FND Society ([fndsociety.org](http://fndsociety.org)) Edinburgh is at the heart of FND and FD research in Europe and globally.

### The Project

This PhD will be an innovative study of stigma as it applies specifically to people with functional disorders, and especially FND.

In the last 5-10 years there have been dramatic changes in the way that FND is framed both by medical professionals. For the first time by people with FND, who previously were invisible, are now leading patient organisations and active on social media with new and important consequences.

This new landscape is making clear that stigma and misunderstanding are a key issue for people with FND. This project will aim to understand this better and use creative ways to overcome it.

### Who are we looking for?

Someone passionate about Functional Disorders and FND. Suitable backgrounds are: **medical** graduate interested in a career in **neurology** or **psychiatry**, **psychology** graduate, **sociology** graduate. An interest in creating educational content and social media would help.

### The Partners

The partners will be technology companies that can help create materials such as video to overcome stigma (**Grasshopper Films**, Germany), as well as organisations involved in analysis of social media (**Dimence group**, The Netherlands).

**Email [Jon.Stone@ed.ac.uk](mailto:Jon.Stone@ed.ac.uk) for further queries**

More information on ETUDE partners and individual ESR projects can be found at <https://www.euronet-soma.eu/itn/>

# ETUDE RECRUITMENT FAQs

- **I have a medical degree, am I eligible for ETUDE?**

A person who has obtained a MD degree is, in general, eligible to do a PhD training, so in principle you are eligible for ETUDE. But this can vary per country. We advise to check if a MD degree in the country of origin of the candidate and in the country where the project will be carried out is suitable to start a PhD.

- **I have a medical degree and have performed clinical activities in the last 3 years, am I eligible for ETUDE?**

If, since the acquiring of your MD degree, you have only done clinical work, you should be in principle eligible for ETUDE. If you have combined research and clinical activities, then a maximum of 4 years of research experience (full time equivalent research experience) is allowed.

- **The ETUDE vacancy states that I need to submit a certificate of Master's degree for the application. As I will only be finished with my Research Master degree this in August 2021, I am unable to provide these documents now.**

It is important that the relevant degree (Masters) is obtained at the moment of enrolment, not at the moment of applying for the position. It should be clear from the CV and letter of interest that it will be feasible to get the degree in the months between applying for the position and enrolment in the project.

- **Is it possible to apply to more than one ETUDE project?**

Yes, it is possible. Please clearly indicate in which projects you are interested in the letter on interests.

- **The ETUDE vacancy states that I need to demonstrate my ability to understand and express myself in both written and spoken English at a level that is sufficiently high for them to derive the full benefit from the network training (C1 or C2 level). Do I have to submit a C1 or C2 level certificate for the application?**

There is no need for uploading C1 or C2 level certificates. It is important to mention the knowledge of English in the CV and demonstrate it during the personal interview.