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Gamblers at risk and their help-seeking behaviours

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This study was commissioned by Gambling Research Australia – a partnership between the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments

New York Council on Problem Gambling 15th Annual Conference 1-2 Oct 2014

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Overview

- Who is most at risk for problem gambling?
- Professional sources of help
- Non-professional sources of help
- Self-help
- Cultural aspects of help-seeking
- Changes in types and modes of problematic gambling

Who is most at risk for problem gambling?

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What populations are most at risk of problem gambling?

Review of 202 prevalence studies – average prevalence of problem gambling = 2.3%
Rates worldwide range from 0.5% to 7.6%

PG Rates	Worldwide	US
Highest	Singapore, Macau, HK, Sth Africa	Puerto Rico
Above average	Belgium, Northern Ireland	Mississippi, Louisiana, Nevada, Minnesota, New Jersey
Average	Sweden, Switzerland, Canada, Australia, US, Estonia, Finland, Italy	The rest (where studies available)
Below average	Great Britain, South Korea, Iceland, Hungary, Norway, France, NZ	Florida, Indiana, New Mexico, Wisconsin, Delaware, Kentucky, North Dakota, South Dakota, Iowa
Lowest	Denmark, Netherlands, Germany	

Question

- What does the previous table tell us about factors that might affect PG rates in a population?

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What affects problem gambling risk at the population level?

- Availability – exposure theory (e.g. casino proximity, EGM density, casino employees).

- Adaptation after initial honeymoon period –> decreasing PG rates. Why?
  - population awareness of potential harms
  - decreased gambling participation
  - severe adverse consequences remove people from pool of problem gamblers (e.g., bankruptcy, suicide)
  - aging population
  - increased efforts in responsible gambling, harm minimisation, treatment

(Williams, Volberg & Stevens 2012)

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Who is most at risk?

Socio-demographic	Psych & contextual	Gambling forms
Male	Substance abuse, tobacco, illicit drugs	EGMs
Under 35 yrs	Mental health problems	Table games
Less education than average	Disability, poor physical health	Poker
Unemployed (US = PT/FT emp.)	Impulsivity	Sports betting
Low income	Risk-taking	Horse/dog betting
Single (+ sep/divorced in US)	Avoidance coping	Internet gambling?
Minority group or immigrant	Gambling fallacies	Engaging in more gambling forms
Non-Caucasian, Indigenous, Hispanic, African-American (US)	Family history of PG Gambling at young age	

Source: adapted from Williams, Volberg & Stevens 2012

Questions

- How does this at-risk profile compare to the profile of your clients?
- Who are you not seeing? Which groups are you missing?

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Help-seeking study

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Why is help-seeking for problem gambling of concern?

- Significant costs to individuals, families and communities
- < 10% of problem gamblers ever seek professional help
- Diverse services available, but under-utilised
- Yet most people benefit from treatment
- But most use informal and self-help instead

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Help-seeking behaviours study

- Australian national study on help-seeking for gambling problems.
- Commissioned by Gambling Research Australia.
- Conducted by the Centre for Gambling Education & Research, Southern Cross University.
- Authors: Nerilee Hing, Elaine Nuske, Sally Gainsbury.
- Acknowledgements: many from CGER, incl. Dr Helen Breen

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Methods

Quantitative:
1. Nationally representative telephone survey of regular gamblers (n = 242)
2. Telephone survey of gambling helpline callers: gamblers (n = 170) and family (n = 48)
3. Telephone survey of gamblers in counselling (n = 110)
4. In-language survey of CALD gamblers in venues (n = 208)

Qualitative:
5. Telephone interviews with recovered problem gamblers (n = 10) and family (n = 4)
6. Interviews with Indigenous Australians (n = 65)
7. Interviews with CALD gamblers in treatment (n = 6) and counsellors (n = 21)

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Help-seeking from professional sources

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Survey results

From combined quantitative data from regular and problem gamblers (N = 730):

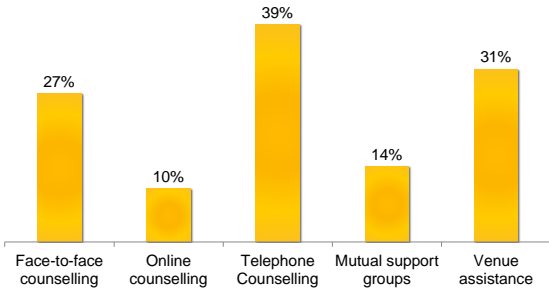- Problem gamblers = 47%
- Moderate risk = 16%,
- Low risk = 11%
- Non-problem = 21%

- Low awareness of main services.

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Awareness of professional gambling help services
(N = 720)

Face-to-face counselling	Online counselling	Telephone Counselling	Mutual support groups	Venue assistance
27%	10%	39%	14%	31%

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Use of professional gambling help services

- Low use
- Amongst problem gamblers in representative sample of regular gamblers, 4% currently, and 19% previously, used professional help of any kind
- Once contact is made, a range of services used
- Face to face counselling most popular, followed by telephone counselling
- Amongst problem gamblers, divorced and born in Australia significantly more likely to seek professional help
- Different profile to at-risk groups

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Questions

- What are the top 5 motivators for people to seek professional help?
- What are the top 5 barriers that deter people from seeking professional help?

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Motivating factors for professional help-seeking

1. Financial problems
2. Concerns gambling might develop into a major problem
3. Concerns you could not go on
4. Negative emotions
5. Relationship problems
6. Concerns about welfare of dependents

- Problem gamblers – severe financial and emotional issues, rock bottom before seeking professional help

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Barriers to help-seeking

1. Wanting to solve problem on own
2. Shame
3. Pride
4. Denial
5. Stigma

Internal not external barriers most common

Stigma of problem gambling

- Individual discredited by society due to problem gambling
- Labelled, stereotyped, judged as social failures, discrimination
- Impedes problem acknowledgement, help-seeking, self-esteem, self-efficacy, use of social support
- PG seen as personal responsibility, due to bad character, stressful life circumstances
- Stereotypes as derelict, greedy, irresponsible, reckless, neglectful, stupid

(Hing, Holdsworth, Tiyce & Breen, 2013)

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Question

- How can we reduce the stigma around problem gambling?

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Help-seeking from informal sources (significant others)

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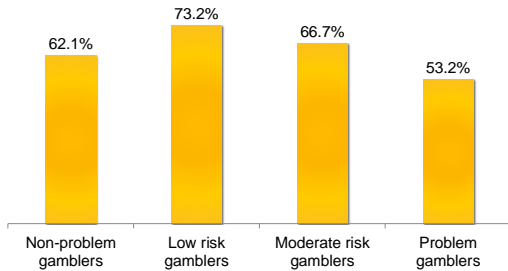UNIVERSITY

Informal help

- Previous research estimates 50% of problem gamblers depend solely on informal support (Clarke et al., 2007)
- Willingness and use of informal help much higher than for professional help
- But how effective is it?
- And what toll does providing help take on partners and significant others?
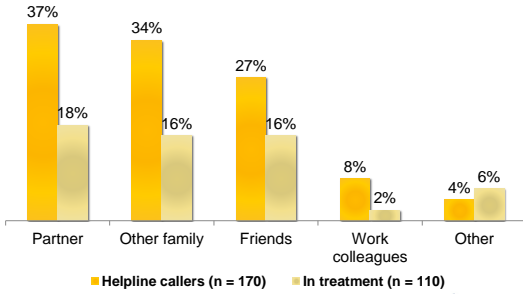
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Willingness to use informal help
(N = 720)

Non-problem gamblers	Low risk gamblers	Moderate risk gamblers	Problem gamblers
62.1%	73.2%	66.7%	53.2%

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Informal help used by problem gamblers

	Partner	Other family	Friends	Work colleagues	Other
Helpline callers (n = 170)	37%	34%	27%	8%	4%
In treatment (n = 110)	18%	16%	16%	2%	6%

Helpline callers (n = 170)   **In treatment (n = 110)**

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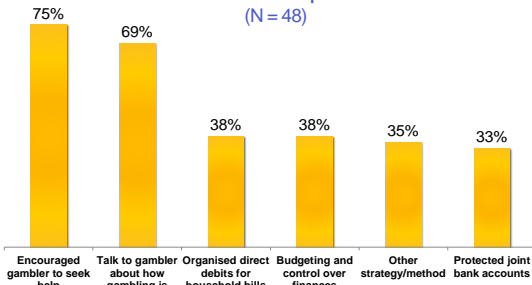
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What help do significant others provide?

- Small qualitative study with partners (N = 18) (Hing & Nuske)
- Help provided:
  - Emotional support, caring, nurturing
  - Practical support, taking over responsibilities, to compensate and protect against further losses
  - Sounding board
  - Encourage and assist help-seeking
  - Encourage, monitor and assist behaviour change
- Can be be both 'victims' and 'enablers'
- Informal help not always consistent or positive

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Main strategies used by significant others who had called a helpline
(N = 48)

Encouraged gambler to seek help	Talk to gambler about how gambling is affecting them	Organised direct debits for household bills	Budgeting and control over finances	Other strategy/method	Protected joint bank accounts
75%	69%	38%	38%	35%	33%

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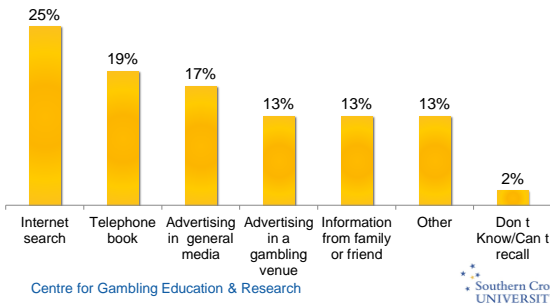
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Challenges for significant others in providing help

- Lies, deceit, betrayal undermine willingness to support
- Too emotionally and physically stressed
- Disempowered, erodes self-worth, confidence, identity
- Shame, guilt, self-blame, esp. when problem continues
- Alone – relationship threatened, socially isolated
- Stigma, keep problems hidden, often don't tell family and friends
- Lack experience, skills, knowledge, understanding, distance and objectivity to help
- Most did not receive support and advice they needed
- Sought help only when desperate
- Low knowledge of help services

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Where significant others found out about the gambling helpline
(n = 48)

Internet search	Telephone book	Advertising in general media	Advertising in a gambling venue	Information from family or friend	Other	Don t Know/Can t recall
25%	19%	17%	13%	13%	13%	2%

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Questions

- How can support *provided by* significant others to problem gamblers be improved?
- How can support *for* significant others be improved?

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Use of self-help strategies

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Self-help

- First form of help used
- Followed by informal help
- Professional help sought last

- Self-help can be used for prevention and recovery

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Use of self-help measures (N = 730)

	%
Limit access to money	45
Set budget for gambling	42
Take up diversionary activities	40
Avoid main gambling venue	30
Info about how gambling works/odds	29
Keep records of gambling	24
Info about problem gambling	21
Avoid other gamblers	21
Checklist to self-assess problem	18

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Differences in self-help amongst PGSI groups

- Problem gamblers – avoid main gambling venue, but less likely to set gambling budget or seek info on gambling and problem gambling
- Moderate risk – diversionary activities, limit access to cash, seek info, set gambling budget, checklists and records
- Non-problem – least likely to use self-help strategies

- Main barriers to self-help:
  - not wanting to stop gambling
  - problem denial

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Question

- Self-help is the first form of help gamblers use. Brainstorm 5 ways in which we can encourage gamblers to use self-help strategies before a gambling problem becomes severe.

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Cultural aspects of help-seeking

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Cultural factors influence gambling and help-seeking

- Cultural differences affect perception of gambling and gambling help
- Unique barriers and motivators for help-seeking
- Problem gambling appears greater among those born overseas and not speaking English at home
- Necessary to design culturally-specific awareness campaigns and treatment programs

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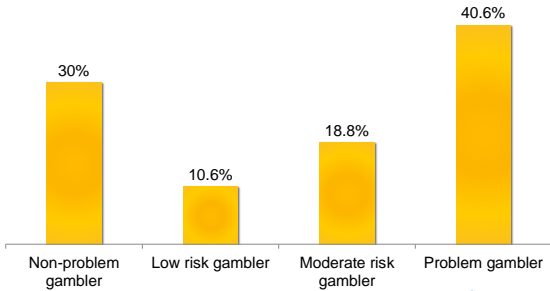
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In-venue survey of CALD regular gamblers

- Translated to Chinese, Vietnamese, Arabic, Croatian, Serbian
- 64% not born in Australia
- 31% Vietnam, 10% Asia, 7% Europe, 6% Serbia/Croatia, 6% Arabic-speaking countries
- 36% spoke language other than English at home

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PGSI results amongst CALD regular gamblers
(N = 208)

Non-problem gambler	Low risk gambler	Moderate risk gambler	Problem gambler
30%	10.6%	18.8%	40.6%

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Preferred sources of help

- 9% had previously sought professional help
- 48% would not seek professional help
- 20% would seek help from GP
- 9% would call gambling helpline
- 5% would use face to face counselling

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CALD Counsellors' interviews (n = 21)

- Working with clients from many cultural groups:
Chinese, Vietnamese, Sri Lankan, Italian, Greek, Lebanese,
Yugoslavian, Serbian, Bosnian, Arabic, Egyptian

- Many similarities across cultures

- Clients typically only present when gambling is causing
major problems:
*"Nobody, and I mean nobody, comes too early. That's across
cultures. People come when they're being evicted."*

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Motivating factors for professional help-seeking

- Financial stress and subsequent crises
*"When they're bottoming out. They realise they can no longer
avoid the problem. They have to face it."*

- Encouragement or demand from families:
*"If you get help I can help you to pay off your debts and I'll give
you some financial help to get out of debt, but you've got to
make sure you go and see somebody."*

- Address immediate issues:
*"A lot of them don't want to stop gambling…
They want to stop feeling poor."*

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Barriers to professional help-seeking

Internal factors:
- Cultural values of success and self-reliance
- Guilt and shame
- Failure to recognise gambling problems

Environmental factors:
- Bail out by family members

External factors:
- Fear of lack of confidentiality

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Lack of understanding of help-seeking

"*Chinese people think counsellors are useless. What the counsellor tells them they already know. It wastes time to see a counsellor.*"

"*I had this lady, she came to see me, she said "My nephew stopped smoking three years ago and he just used patches." She asked if I had patches for gambling to stop gambling. So there is no awareness of what gambling is.*"

Referral pathways for professional help

- Turn to family first
- Seek financial help
- Seek medical help
- Turn to the community

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Question

- What does your treatment agency do to attract and cater for CALD and First Nations clients? Could this be improved? How?

Changes in types and modes of problematic gambling

Internet gambling study: Help-seeking component

- *Interactive Gambling* (Hing, Gainsbury, Blaszczynski, Wood, Lubman & Russell, 2014)

Methods:

- National telephone survey of 15,000 adults
- Online survey of 4,594 gamblers, including 620 problem gamblers
- Interviews with 81 internet gamblers, including 30 in treatment
- Problem gamblers categorised according to most problematic gambling mode: internet vs land-based

Features of internet gambling leading to loss of control (interviews)

- Use of digital money
- Access to credit
- Lack of scrutiny
- Ready accessibility
- Aggressive promotions

- Variable success in using self-limiting strategies
- Most considered that more comprehensive RG measures are required of internet gambling operators

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Results

- Problem internet gamblers more likely than land-based problem gamblers to be:
  - male
  - younger
  - lower psychological distress
  - experience problems with sports and race wagering
- Uptake of help lower amongst problem internet compared to problem land-based gamblers
- Problem internet gamblers less likely to have used most types of professional help, as well as informal help and self-help
- Both groups had a similarly low use of online help

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Questions

How might the treatment sector be best equipped to cater for:
- the rise in Internet gambling?
- increases in gambling problems associated with sports betting, especially amongst young males?

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Summary

- Low awareness and use of professional sources of gambling help
- Low willingness to use services before crisis
- Preference for self-help, then informal help – efficacy?
- Need to reach gamblers before crisis
- Need to lower stigma of problem gambling
- Increase referral and treatment from non-specialists
- Increase usefulness and availability of self-help strategies
- Better equip significant others to provide help
- Cater for specific needs of different cultural groups
- Cater for changing gambling modes and gambling forms associated with problem gambling.

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