Understanding the barriers to gambling treatment

Gambling in Canada

Breaking down barriers: How to reach individuals resistant to treatment

- The stats? 10%?
- Why do people seek treatment?
- Barriers? Why don’t people seek treatment
- Solutions?
Problem gamblers don’t tend to seek treatment

- Estimates range from 0 to 19%
  - US National studies
    - Slutske (2006) – 7.1%, N= 2,417; 9.9%, N = 43,093
    - Kessler (2008) – 0%, N=9,282
  - California
    - Volberg (2006), 10%, N= 7,121
  - Australia
    - Slutske (2009) – 19%, N=4,764
  - Ontario, Canada
    - Cunningham OPGRC survey (2007)

Cunningham, Hodgins & Toneatto, 2007

General Population RDD N=8,467

- $100+ in lifetime- n=4250
- NODS CLiP >0- n=1205
- Lifetime and Past year NODS (DSM-IV)

Proportion seeking treatment (Ontario)

- Lifetime Pathological (n=57)
- Lifetime Problem (n= 89)
- Overall

Suurvali et al., 2008
Problem gamblers don’t tend to seek treatment

- Yes, but estimates all based upon small numbers, plus other study limitations and therefore inexact
  - e.g.,
    - Largest sample NESARC N =43,093
    - Lifetime PG – 0.4%, n=185
    - Treatment-seekers – 10%, n=18
  - 10 to 18% depending on the jurisdiction

How does this compare to Mental Health and Addictions Treatment?

- NESARC: N = 43,093 (PG = 10%)
  - Alcohol Abuse
    - Treatment – 8%
  - Alcohol Dependence
    - Treatment – 25%

- Ontario (PG = 18%)
  - Alcohol Problems
    - Treatment 36%

Oleski et al., 2010
Cunningham et al., 2003

How does this compare to Mental Health and Addictions Treatment?

- Mental Health CCHS1.2 2006
  - Past year problem (mental health, alcohol, other drugs) – 10.9%
    - Any treatment? 39%
      - Mostly GPs
    - Rule of thumb – about 50%
  - More mature field?
What we know about why people seek treatment - the 10-18%?

- Consistent cross national findings (N = 19 studies; Suurvali et al., 2010)
- 5 nations - Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Switzerland, US
- Varied in design, sample
  - 10 studies on reasons for quitting/resolving problem
  - 5 Treatment samples
  - 4 self-exclusion samples
- Open versus checklists, all retrospective
- Mostly multiple reasons

What we know about why people seek treatment? Most frequent motivators

What would it take to get you to seek help?

- Of the people with past years problems:
  - Money - Financial problems
  - Relationship impacts
  - Negative life Impacts
  - Lack of control over gambling/feeling addicted
Treatment-seeking increases as problem severity increases

Some prospective data....

Does the Transtheoretical Model predict treatment-seeking?

- N = 136 Pathological/Disordered gamblers
- Media-recruited
- Non-treatment-seeking
- Mean age 47
- 47% female
- EGMs, casinos main problem

- Followed at 6 (71%) and 12 months (67%).
Six month treatment-seeking

- Formal (22%)
  - mode = 1
    - Psychologist, social worker, counselor
    - Gambling treatment program
    - Clergy
    - Support group

Six month treatment-seeking

- Informal (71%)
  - mode = 2
    - Family, spouse, friends
    - Internet
    - Written materials
    - Mutual Support group

Potential predictors

- Problem severity (PGSI)
- Previous treatment
- Contemplation ladder (0 – 10)
- Stages of change (RTC, URICA)
- Temptations for Gambling Scale
- Gambling Abstinence Self-efficacy scale
- Processes of change
Processes of Change Subscale Scores

Potential predictors

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- Processes of change

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- Temptations for Gambling
  - Negative affect
  - Social factors
  - Seeking wins or money
- Gambling Abstinence Self-efficacy
  - Negative affect
  - Positive emotions/testing urges
  - Winning/external situations
  - Social factors
Predictors at 6 months

- 22% sought treatment
- Logistic regression – $\chi^2 (10) = 39.6$, $p < .0001$, $R^2 = .52$
  - Severity of problem (PGSI) – OR = 1.3
  - Readiness to change (RTC) – OR = 1.5
  - GASS – winning subscale – OR = 1.9
    - Feeling a need to win, financial pressure
  - Process of change – social liberation = OR = 3.0
    - Paying attention to media messages about gambling

Predictors at 12 months

- 32% sought treatment
- Logistic regression – $\chi^2 (11) = 28.0$, $p < .0001$, $R^2 = .33$
  - Severity of problem (PGSI) – OR = 1.2
  - Readiness to change (RTC) – OR = 1.2
  - GASS – winning subscale – OR = 2.8
  - Process of change – social liberation = OR = 2.1

Predictors of treatment

- Transtheoretical model is a useful way to think about treatment seeking
  - Media messages
    - Financial struggles, desire to win (contemplation strategy)
    - The possibilities of being gambling free (precontemplation strategy)
What we know about barriers. Why don’t people seek treatment - the 90%?

- Consistent cross national findings (N = 19 studies; Suurvali et al., 2009)
- 6 nations - Australia, Brazil, Canada, New Zealand, Switzerland, US
- Varied in design, sample
  - 6 population studies
  - Treatment samples
  - Open ended, checklists. Etc.

Why don’t people seek treatment? Major Barriers

- Wanting to handle problem on own
- Shame/stigma, embarrassment, pride
- Unwillingness to admit problem
- Lack of knowledge about treatment
- Concerns with treatment effectiveness
- Practical issues concerning treatment

What about problem and treatment awareness?

- Of the 730 people with a past year problem:
  - 60% had seen an ad for gambling treatment
  - 65% could name a treatment service
  - 89% indicated they could find a service

Suurvali et al., 2011
What about problem and treatment awareness?

- Better education is related to greater awareness
- Higher in Ontario than in other jurisdictions-
  - Gainsbury et al., 2013 in Australia
    - Helplines – 39%
    - Venue services- 31%
    - Counseling – 27%

Evidence that public awareness campaigns increase treatment-seeking
- Productivity Commission Report, 2010 review
- Web-site and helpline spikes

What do people in general know about gambling problems?

- Perceived Addictiveness
- 1-5 rating

Perceived Problem Prevalence in Alberta (N = 6000)

Konkoly Thege et al., 2014, Add Research & Theory
Other beliefs about gambling problems

Why don’t people seek treatment? Major Barriers

- Wanting to handle problem on own ✔
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- Practical issues concerning treatment

Some are just taking a different route to recovery.....

- Natural recovery, self-recovery is very common
- Promoting self-recovery is an alternative to providing formal treatment....

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Promote self-recovery or stepping stone to more formal treatment

- Trying it on your own is the first step (95%)
- Use of self-help materials is more frequent than treatment

![Types of Assistance Reported by Pathological Gamblers (%)](chart.png)

- Residential
- Family/marital
- Therapist
- Clergy
- Helpline
- GA
- Print or Internet tools

Suurvalli et al., 2008

Problemgambling.ca

- July-Sept. 2014 – 9,413 visits
  - Visit duration: 6:30
  - 71% new, 29% returning
  - Most popular pages for return users
    - PGSI screener
    - Forum
    - Self-help Worksheets
    - Family support worksheets
  - 1762 registered for self-help tools
  - 231 mobile downloads (2013 fiscal)

Does it work? Stay tuned....

- Randomized Clinical Trial in progress....

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Why don’t people seek treatment?

Major Barriers

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Admitting a problem is.....

- a prerequisite to seeking treatment
  - Why else would someone go?
- a later stage of problem evolution (e.g., only 27 of 53 last year problems acknowledged having a problem)
- different than recognizing that gambling is causing a negative consequence.
  - People will admit this earlier – more temporary, less existential
- is not a prerequisite to starting to change. People sometimes begin to change before admitting problem, in response to negative consequences
- How can we capitalize on that?

Conclusions

- The vast majority of PGs do not seek treatment
- Barriers include both attitudinal (not ready, stigma) and structural factors (convenience)
- Motivators are (fear of) negative consequences
- Some people are taking a different route to recovery
- Strategies need to focus on all these factors
  - Tweaking treatments
  - Encouraging readiness – help people imagine that their lives can be different
  - Promoting self-change, broaden options