

Youth Gambling International

International Centre for Youth Gambling Problems and High-Risk Behaviors
Centre International d'étude sur le jeu et les comportements à risque chez les jeunes

FEATURE ARTICLE

“What did your kids do this summer?”

Jeffrey L. Derevensky

International Centre for Youth Gambling Problems and High-Risk Behaviors

At the end of the school year you can hear children and teens shouting with joy. It's a time for relaxation, a time to catch up on sleep, no more teachers and no more books and for many children and teens a time to head off to camp.

There are a wide variety of summer camps for children to enjoy. Sports camps, space camps, computer camps, art camps, horseback riding camps, etc. But some young entrepreneurs, trying to capitalize on the international poker craze, came up with a new, novel camp idea. *Poker Camp* for kids. Let's

teach them the “correct ways to play Texas Hold'em.” Do we really need to be sending our children to camp to learn how to play poker?

These ingenious folk tried to run this camp in Vancouver, British Columbia but were ultimately thwarted by the government of British Columbia. If this was not bad enough, the Montreal Gazette (our only English daily newspaper) ran an editorial suggesting that sending children to poker camp, especially boys, is a good way of teaching them mathematics, probability theory, risk taking and how to best read individuals. What could they be thinking?

What the editorialists failed to realize was that developmentally, young children may not have the cognitive maturity to understand limit setting, advanced probability theory, or how to read the behavioral signs of their peers. Second, while there may be some learning of mathematics involved in poker there is little transfer of learning. As such while they *may* learn to be better poker players their performance in class concerning addition, multiplication, division and fractions will not improve. Third, there is ample empirical evidence to suggest that having engaged early on in gambling and/or having won a lot of money (a big win is often dependent upon one's age) early on



in life is predictive of later gambling problems.

The notion that a Kids Poker Tour can be advertised suggests that gambling has become a widely socially acceptable behavior and form of entertainment throughout the world...even for kids. And, while it's true that only a relatively small percentage of individuals experience severe gambling problems, we would be best advised to teach our children these skills when they have the social and cognitive maturity to acquire them.

Heeding a growing body of research, many legislators throughout the world in their wisdom established age limits for engaging in this behavior, similar to drinking alcohol. British Columbia's Solicitor General John Les should be congratulated for his efforts at changing the existing regulations and statutes to require a permit to operate this type of enterprise. The budding entrepreneurs took a hint and decided to pull out of Vancouver

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before they even started; although they reportedly had large numbers of children and teens registered.

There is growing evidence that upwards of 80% of teens in many jurisdictions throughout the world have engaged in some form of gambling (for money) during the past year with another 30% doing so weekly. What starts off as harmless fun can escalate rather quickly and end up producing some very serious negative consequences.

While we all recognize that adults can gamble excessively and have problems, few people associate problem gambling with adolescents. As such, parents often condone this behavior, sometimes subtly or overtly encouraging their gambling. Yet, like adults, there are a number of adolescents with some very serious gambling problems.

One teen walked into our offices wearing a PokerStar.com baseball cap. I noted what an attractive cap it was and he responded if you lose \$10,000 they'll send you one as well.

Teaching individuals the probability of winning the 6/49 appears to do little to deter individuals from purchasing lottery tickets. A teen with a serious gambling problem once reported to me that he was intent on purchasing a lottery ticket. When I indicated his chances were greater to be struck by lightning than winning the lottery, he responded that it looked very cloudy outside and who knows if there will be a lightning storm!

Adolescents in particular think they're smarter, more resilient, more intelligent than the rest of us. However, for every smart poker player there is always someone smarter, someone

luckier (adolescent boys in particular attribute winning to skill and losses to bad luck). Going to poker camp is not the answer.

Unlike many other risky behaviors that adolescents eventually try, we have few prevention programs in place in our schools to educate adolescents about excessive gambling and/or how to engage in it in a responsible manner. As well, we have even fewer parent/adult outreach programs to help educate the public. We all have a responsibility to help establish effective prevention and awareness programs.

Clinicians dealing with problem gambling were uniformly outraged at the prospects of a poker camp for children.

What's next-drinking camp?

**COMING FROM LAS VEGAS TO VANCOUVER
THE KIDS POKER TOUR**

**TEACH KIDS THE CORRECT WAY
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SUMMER 2006 - 2 DAYS - FOR KIDS AGED 10-14 AND 15-18

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- DEVELOP ANALYTICAL THINKING AND STRATEGIES
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- UNDERSTAND RISK AND REWARD SCENARIOS
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Alberta Longitudinal Gambling Study

Researchers from the universities of Calgary, Alberta and Lethbridge are to examine the habits of 2,000 gamblers over the long term to determine how their behaviours change and for some people, what begins as a harmless attraction to poker or VLTs, can escalate into an unmanageable gambling addiction with potentially devastating consequences.

The study is being funded by the Alberta Gaming Research Institute.

“The assumption is that gambling is generally progressive,” says Dr. David Hodgins, director of the University of Calgary’s Gambling Addictions Lab and one of the lead researchers in the five-year project. “And while that definitely does occur, we don’t really know how common it is or what the contributing factors are.”

In the past year, 82% of Albertans participated in some form of gambling, helping to give the province its reputation as a high-rolling hotbed. Net proceeds in

Alberta in 2005-06 from VLTs, slot machines and ticket lotteries are projected to be \$1.2 billion. Charitable gaming revenue in 2004-05 was \$238 million. In Calgary alone there are six casinos with two more planned.

“Some studies show that of those who gamble, about 5% have moderate to severe problems with gambling, meaning they are experiencing some loss of control,” Hodgins explains.

Gambling addictions cut across all sectors, from well-paid professional athletes like golfer John Daly, to those who can ill afford the inevitable losses.

Dr. David Casey, also of the University of Calgary, says that for this phase of the study researchers need 1,000 gamblers who gamble at least a couple of times a month and spend more than \$10 a month on any type of gaming, whether it’s lottery tickets, bingo, VLT’s, horse racing or something else. A control group of 1000 randomly selected people is already in place.



The long-term, follow-up study will focus on both social and problem gambling, looking at why people, how much they gamble and what problems their gambling may cause.

“One other thing the study will allow us to do is to monitor how changes in policy affect gambling habits,” Hodgins says. “For example, if access to gambling changes with the addition of new casinos, how does that affect an individual’s behaviour?”

The research findings will be used to formulate a better understanding of gambling, and could be used to find solutions to gambling problems and perhaps help develop gambling policy.

“There’s a lot of interest in gambling world-wide, from it being something bad to it being something that governments and businesses promote,” said Hodgins. “There is a lot of interest in gaining a better understanding of both social and problem gambling,” said Hodgins. “There are a lot of strong opinions on gambling, but very little data.”

Source: July 2006 issue of the Responsible Gambling Digest



British Columbia Study Measures Social Impact of New Gambling Venues

A newly published study of the social and economic impacts of new gambling venues in British Columbia highlights the fact that the assessment of the social impact of gambling requires long-term tracking.

The rapid expansion of casino gambling in Canada over the last decade has led the government of British Columbia to commission research on the economic and social costs and benefits of increasing gaming venues in order to develop responsible policies and assist provincial and municipal governments and other stakeholders in community planning. The opening of four gaming venues in the Province (two new facilities and adding slot machines into two existing facilities) created an opportunity to study the impacts of new gaming facilities.

The purpose of the study is to learn what, if any, economic and social costs and benefits emerge over time from the creation and operation of these four venues. The study is being done in three waves:

Baseline (2004)

First Impact Measures (2005)

Final Report with Second Impact Measures (2006)

The first impact report compares present 2005 data with baseline social and economic data gathered prior to and during the opening of three of the four gaming venues (2004). The final report, due in 2007, will have sufficient data to support impact analysis.

Social Impacts

The overall pattern of gambling behaviour in 2005 was found to be similar to 2004 in terms of the relative popularity of the various forms and the concomitant median expenditures. However, a few significant changes occurred. In 2005 there were lower lottery

expenditures, less frequent high risk stock gambling, lower Internet gambling expenditures, lower slot machine expenditures, lower casino table game expenditures, while slot machines play private gambling (e.g., poker) increased. The decrease in lottery play and increased private gambling (e.g., poker) reflect national trends.



It is possible that the introduction of the new gaming venues may have accelerated this decline in lottery play (the magnitude of which is very small, in any case). The decreased expenditure on slots, table games, and Internet gambling seems counterintuitive given the introduction of the new venues. However, it is important to note that decreased expenditures are coincident with increased participation in each of these activities. What appears to be happening is that there is an influx of new people playing these games who are spending more modest amounts on these activities relative to the patronage in 2004.

Existing negative perceptions about the perceptions or harms associated with gambling became significantly more negative in 2005, with 57.1% of the populace now indicating they believed gambling's harms either somewhat or far outweigh benefits (compared to 14.6% who believed

that gambling's benefits either outweighed gambling's harms). However, the overwhelming majority of people 69.3% continued to believe that the decision to gamble was a matter of personal choice.

Different prevalence rates of problem gambling in 2005 (4.5%) were somewhat lower than those obtained in 2004 (5.6 %).

Problem Gambling

At this point, it cannot be said with certainty that the new venues are exacerbating problem gambling in British Columbia. However, the researchers note a number of trends:

1. The RDD survey does not show a significant increase in the incidence of problem gambling in three communities studied (although problem gambling is a progressive disorder).
2. Problem gambling counselors note a possible slight increase in problem gamblers who report that the onset of their problem may be due to new venues.
3. The venues appear to have produced new gamblers, judging from both RDD Survey and Patron Survey data showing that in each venue, some people are now gambling at the venues that previously did not gamble.
4. Calls to the problem gambling help line have increased coincident with the opening of the new venues. Without further determination of past and present gambling patterns of these individuals causation cannot be inferred. It is possible that the increase relates more to extensive media coverage of problem gambling.

The full report may be accessed at – http://www.pssg.gov.ca/gaming/responsible_gambling/docs/impact_study_first_report.pdf

Source: June 2006 issue of the Responsible Gambling Digest

SPOTLIGHT ON RESEARCH CENTRES

UCLA

The UCLA Gambling Studies Program (UGSP) was founded in 2005 by an unrestricted gift from the Annenberg Foundation and is part of the Semel Institute for Neuroscience and Human Behavior at UCLA.

The UCLA Gambling Studies Program (UGSP) is devoted to understanding pathological gambling, its causes, natural history, cultural factors, and the obstacles to successful treatment. The mission of the program is to translate research findings into cost-effective, evidence-based methods of prevention, education, and treatment. A direct result of this work will be a reduction in the individual and societal damages caused by pathological gambling.

Specific areas of interest include:

- Characterizing the neurobiological risk factors that contribute to pathological gambling
- developing new approaches to the treatment and prevention of pathological gambling
- assisting community treatment providers in moving empirically-supported treatment of pathological gambling into mainstream application
- supporting public health policy initiatives to ameliorate social and cultural consequences associated with pathological gambling

Key Personnel:

Timothy W. Fong, M.D.

Dr. Fong is an Assistant Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at the UCLA Neuropsychiatric Institute and Hospital. Dr. Fong completed his undergraduate and medical school at Northwestern University in Chicago. He then came to UCLA

and finished his residency in general psychiatry in 2002 and was the first accredited addiction psychiatry fellow at the UCLA Neuropsychiatric Institute.

In addition to being co-director of the UCLA Gambling Studies Program, he is also the director of the Impulse Control Disorders Clinic and the UCLA Addiction Medicine Clinic.

Current research projects include drug development trials, examining how stress and use of alcohol affect the neurobiology of pathological gamblers and developing brief interventions for pathological gamblers.

Richard J. Rosenthal, M.D.

Dr. Rosenthal has been treating gamblers and conducting research on problem gambling for the past 22 years. He co-authored the DSM-IV diagnostic criteria for pathological gambling and was co-investigator on the first genetic study of the disorder. In 1986 he founded the California Council on Problem Gambling, and in 1990 he created the first inpatient gambling treatment program in the state. From 1995-2000 he co-chaired the program committee for the National Conference on Problem Gambling. He has published approximately 40 articles and book chapters on the phenomenology, course, and treatment of pathological gambling and on other impulsive and self-destructive behaviors.

Research

Recent research projects include participation in a multi-site drug trial for the treatment of pathological gambling and completion of preliminary data that examines the effect of context on impulsivity in pathological gamblers. Since 2005, UGSP has also collaborated with



local community mental health providers to initiate a series of research projects that examine the impact of problem gambling on Asian Pacific Islanders communities in Los Angeles. Finally, UGSP is heading up two clinical trials to examine the efficacy of self help workbooks and telephone counseling to pathological gamblers who live in California.

Treatment

The UCLA Impulse Control Disorders Clinic is an outpatient clinic that provides treatment for pathological gamblers and their families. Services included consultations, diagnostic assessments, pharmacological management, individual psychotherapy and family therapy.

This is a teaching clinic that is staffed by psychiatry residents and Dr. Fong provides supervision. Dr. Richard Rosenthal continues to treat pathological gamblers in his office in Beverly Hills and his clinical services are an important part of the UGSP treatment services. He provides long-term psychotherapy and psychoanalysis.

Education

UGSP is very active in educating the UCLA healthcare community about the consequences of pathological gambling. For instance, UGSP created a medical student elective for impulse control disorders and has created a seminar for undergraduate students to discuss gambling.

Current Publications of Interest

New Book

The Economics of Casino Gambling by Douglas M. Walker

Casino gambling has spread throughout the world, and continues to spread. As governments try to cope with fiscal pressures, legalized casinos offer a possible source of additional tax revenue. But casino gambling is often controversial, as some people raise moral objections to gambling. In addition, a small percentage of the population may become pathological gamblers who may create significant social costs. On the benefits side, casinos are often purported to spur economic growth (increases in GDP), employment, and tax revenues. However, these benefits have been questioned. Does casino expansion simply “cannibalise” other industries, having no net effect? Or does casino gambling have significant positive economic impacts? The Economics of Casino Gambling is a comprehensive discussion of the social and economic costs and benefits of legalized gambling.

Available: January 15, 2007.

Source: June 2006 issue of the Responsible Gambling Digest

Milestones in the natural course of onset of cigarette use among adolescents

Andre Gervais, Jennifer O’Loughlin, Garbis Meshefedjian, Christina Bancej, Michele Tremblay

The natural course of onset of cigarette use has been conceptualized as progressing sequentially through 5 stages

(preparation, trying, irregular use, nicotine-dependent smoking). However, recent studies suggest that symptoms of nicotine dependence can occur early in the onset process, raising questions about the validity of this model. The objective of this study was to describe the sequence and timing of 12 milestones (6 related to cigarette use and 6 to symptoms of nicotine dependence) during onset of cigarette use. Symptoms of nicotine dependence were found to develop soon after the initiation (first puff) preceding monthly, weekly and daily smoking. The authors concluded that cessation interventions that manage dependence symptoms may be needed soon after initiations. A similar study of

gambling seems warranted.

Source: From the Department of Epidemiology, Biostatistics and Occupational Health, McGill University (O’Loughlin, Bancej), and the Agence de santé et des services sociaux, Direction de santé publique, Montréal, Que. (Gervais, Meshefedjian), and the Institut national de santé publique du Québec, Québec, Que. (Tremblay)

To access the full report go to <http://www.cma.j.ca/cgi/content/full/175/3/255>



News from the Centre ...

The International Centre for Youth Gambling Problems & High-Risk Behaviors at McGill University is pleased to announce the launch of a new service for adolescents and young adults experiencing gambling problems. **Talk it Out** - www.gamtalk4teens.org - is an Internet-based interactive (in real

time) helpline dedicated to offering confidential and anonymous information and support to youth across Canada from 8 p.m. to midnight, Eastern Time, seven days a week. This online chat service is provided by graduate trained psychology students and supervised by Centre staff. This 1-year pilot project

is currently available in English. Please keep in mind that this service should not be considered individual therapy, however it is intended to be a readily available support service and resource for youth.



The Centre would like to congratulate Dr. Lia Nower who is relocating to Rutgers University.

New Staff

We would like to welcome **Amy Taylor** who has joined the Centre as the new research and project coordinator. Amy has her Bachelor of Arts in Human Relations from Concordia University and has been working and volunteering with special needs students in schools around the city for the past 6 years.

The Centre would also like to welcome **Alissa Sklar** who will be taking on the role of “Director of Program Development and Communications” as Carmen Messerlian will be taking a maternity leave.

Alissa has an MA and Ph.D. in Communication from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. She has researched and taught a variety of topics, including social and cultural identity, critical perspectives on advertising and popular culture, social construction of information technologies and documentary film and video. Alissa spent three

years as full-time faculty at Concordia University's Department of Communication. She has just completed a two-year post-doctorate research project through the FQRSC at an inter-university research centre located at UQAM, in which she applied an ethnographic approach to the study of minority identities in Montreal. Alissa is also a freelance journalist, and publishes regularly for a local parenting magazine called Montreal Families, as well as other publications in Canada and the United States.

Announcement

The Centre is pleased to announce that its prevention CD-ROMs for primary and secondary school, *The Amazing Chateau* and *Hooked City*, are the recipients of the 2006 Silver and Gold Horizon Interactive Awards for outstanding interactive media solutions in Education/Training.

The Horizon Interactive Awards is a prestigious international competition recognizing outstanding achievement among interactive media producers. The awards showcase the best web site design, cd-roms,

dvds, video, kiosks, video games and other interactive media.

This year marked the largest and most competitive entry field to date, nearly double that of 2005, with hundreds of entries from many different countries including Australia, Canada, Croatia, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Italy, Malaysia, Indonesia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Portugal, Italy, Singapore, South Africa, United Kingdom, and nearly all 50 US States.

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The Amazing Chateau CD Rom

www.horizoninteractiveward.com

Upcoming Events

International Conference on Gambling: “Gambling and its Impacts: Policy, Practice and Research Perspectives”

13-15 September 2006
Auckland, New Zealand

International Pokies Impact Conference

18-19 September 2006
Melbourne, Australia

7th Annual NCRG Conference on Gambling and Addiction: “Lost in Translation? The Challenge of Turning Good Research into Best Practices”

12-14 November, 2006
Las Vegas, Nevada

3rd International Conference on Gaming Industry and Public Welfare

17-19 November 2006
Beijing

16th Annual National Association for Gambling Studies Conference

22-25 November 2006
Sydney



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