



research reveals...

an update on gambling research in ALBERTA

About The Alberta Gaming Research Institute

The Alberta Gaming Research Institute is a consortium of the Universities of Alberta, Calgary, and Lethbridge. Its primary purpose is to support and promote research into gaming and gambling in the province. The Institute's identified research domains include bio-psychological and health care, socio-cultural, economic, and government and industry policy and practice. The Institute aims to achieve international recognition in gaming-related research. It is coordinated by a Board of Directors working in collaboration with the Alberta Gaming Research Council. The Ministry of Alberta Gaming provides funding to the Institute.

OUR MISSION:

To significantly improve Albertans' knowledge of how gambling affects society

Your comments and queries are welcome either by e-mail abgaming@ualberta.ca or phone 780.492.2856.

Alberta Gaming Research Institute Board of Directors, 2002

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Brazilian psychiatrist seeks to understand gambling craving

MENTION THE TERM 'compulsive gambler' and what impression springs to mind? Did you think of personality traits such as impulsive, spontaneous, brash, or reckless? Dr. Hermano Tavares of the Foothills Medical Centre at the University of Calgary is considering the issue of personality and its specific contribution to gambling addiction in his role as a co-investigator for the Institute-sponsored research project "*Gambling craving and its relation to addiction and personality*". Through increased understanding of the psychology of the gambler, Tavares hopes to improve methods used in problem gambling treatment.

According to Dr. Tavares, previous research has shown us that gamblers are more impulsive and increasingly prone to anxiety than non-gamblers. He states that "[researchers] now want to know which of these characteristics contribute to the phenomenon of craving." Initial results of his investigation indicate that impulsivity is related to higher cravings at the beginning of treatment for a gambling addiction. "The initial treatment of impulsive gamblers should, therefore, include specific interventions targeting gambling cues that are likely to elicit craving and relapses", says Tavares.

Dr. Tavares first became interested in the link between impulsivity and addiction while working on an internship at the *Psychiatric Clinic Addiction Outpatient Unit* in the Brazilian city of São Paulo. He says he encountered "the so-called multi-impulsive client, individuals who presented a diffuse psychopathology that includes all sorts of addictions and unrestrained behavior" at the unit. Gambling, as it happened, proved to be the perfect model for Tavares to investigate during his doctoral studies research at the Department of Psychiatry, University of São Paulo.

Dr. Tavares and his wife (also a Psychiatrist) have, for some time, wanted to conduct research abroad to contrast their Brazilian experiences with another culture. An opportunity for them to perform post-doctoral research in Canada arose when they were introduced to Dr. Nady el-Guebaly of the Foothills Hospital Addiction Centre in Calgary. After a brief visit to the centre, the couple happily accepted the opportunity to pursue their research interests while, at the same time, experiencing Canadian culture. Tavares says that both he and his wife were "impressed not only by the hospital's structure, but also by the possibility of developing research with the aid of community agencies." Dr. Tavares' colleagues and the broader research community have been equally impressed with his work. He was awarded the prestigious 2002 National Council on Problem Gambling Ph.D. Student Research Award for Outstanding Dissertation in the Field of Problem Gambling for his innovative research on pathological gambling and obsessive-compulsive disorders.

When asked to compare the gambling landscape in Canada with that of Brazil, Tavares sees some striking similarities. He notes, "computerized games such as VLTs and electronic bingo lead the expansion of the gambling business and account for the majority of gambling problems reported at treatment centres in Brazil. Also, the personality profiles of both Brazilian and Canadian gamblers are quite alike, which I think is surprising given all the cultural contrast." Differences, he sees, involve



"Gambling craving and its relation to addiction and personality"

governmental attitudes to policy and regulation surrounding gambling. In Brazil, gambling initiatives have been approved by the government but are led by the private sector – in stark contrast to the involvement of Canada’s provincial governments. “The fact that the private sector leads the gambling expansion in Brazil is a possible explanation to why we lack a better regulating structure. We also miss epidemiological data, consequently we don’t know how much gambling is impacting our society or how it is affecting specific groups like ethnic minorities or low-income earners. One thing is true though, *Gamblers Anonymous* meetings are multiplying all over the country. No matter how hard we work, moving to the top of the waiting lists for gambling treatment in our public hospitals might take more than a year.”

Ultimately, Tavares plans to return to Brazil to continue his research into the causes and treatment of addictions. His work in Canada has been of tremendous benefit to the University of Calgary and the Alberta Gaming Research Institute. Dr. Tavares says that both he and his wife have also enjoyed their unique Canadian experience and adds that “about a year ago we had a daughter who was born at the Foothills Hospital, a fact that is likely to make our bond to Alberta a long lasting one.”

New institute board chair elected: Dr. Nady el-Guebaly



EFFECTIVE JULY 1ST, 2002, Alberta Gaming Research Institute Board Member Dr. Nady el-Guebaly of the University of Calgary was appointed Board Chair. Dr. el-Guebaly is currently Professor and Head, Division of Substance Abuse, Department of Psychiatry at the University and past Chair of the Department. He is also the Founding Director of its Addiction Centre and continues to be involved with numerous professional organizations.

Dr. el-Guebaly has an extensive and accomplished record of scholarship in the area of mental health and addiction medicine. His introduction to the field dates back to his initial psychiatric training in the United Kingdom in 1969.

Since that time, his major research interests have included the vulnerability of offspring of alcoholic parents, developing optimal treatment opportunities for the mentally ill substance abuser, the health impact of pathological gambling, and medical education and international delivery of care. These interests have resulted in some 450 publications, over 100 peer-reviewed papers, and 40 past and current grants.

The Institute is pleased to welcome Dr. el-Guebaly into his expanded role as Board Chair. The Institute would also like to extend special thanks to departing Board Chair Dr. Keith Archer, University of Calgary, for his excellent service during the Institute’s formative stages.

Dr. Tavares is involved as a co-investigator in the following Institute-funded projects:

GAMBLING CRAVING AND ITS RELATION TO ADDICTION AND PERSONALITY

Dr. Nady el-Guebaly (Principal Investigator)

FUNCTIONAL MAGNETIC RESONANCE IMAGING OF PATHOLOGICAL GAMBLERS

Dr. David Crockford (Principal Investigator)

Dr. el-Guebaly is involved as the principal investigator in the following Institute-funded projects:

GAMBLING CRAVING AND ITS RELATION TO ADDICTION AND PERSONALITY

Dr. el-Guebaly is involved as a co-investigator in the following Institute-funded projects:

FUNCTIONAL MAGNETIC RESONANCE IMAGING OF PATHOLOGICAL GAMBLERS

Dr. David Crockford (Principal Investigator)

PREVENTING RELAPSE IN FORMER GAMBLERS

Dr. David Hodgins (Principal Investigator)

Conference 2003: Prevention of Problem Gambling

University of Lethbridge, Lethbridge, Alberta, March 27 - 28, 2003

Together with the School of Health Sciences, University of Lethbridge, the Alberta Gaming Research Institute is sponsoring the ‘Prevention of Problem Gambling’ conference on *March 27-28, 2003*. It will take place at the University of Lethbridge and will be of interest to researchers, clinicians, counsellors, educators, and representatives from government and industry. The conference schedule has not been finalized but plans are in place to have presentations from leading Albertan, Canadian and international gambling researchers. Additionally, there will be presentations on the development of specific prevention initiatives and programs. Many will relate to adolescents and youth. Conference details will be posted on the Institute website (www.abgaminginstitute.ualberta.ca) as they become available.

12th International Conference on Gambling and Risk-Taking

Fairmont Waterfront Hotel, Vancouver, BC, May 26 - 30, 2003

The Institute for the Study of Gambling and Commercial Gaming at the University of Nevada, Reno is sponsoring the 12th International Conference on Gambling and Risk-Taking. The Alberta Gaming Research Institute is one of the Associate Sponsors. It will take place *May 26-30, 2003*, at the Fairmont Waterfront Hotel in Vancouver, British Columbia. The objective of the conference is to stimulate research and facilitate discussion and debate about gambling and commercial gaming throughout the world. Paper submission proposals will be accepted until January 15, 2003. See the conference webpage (www.unr.edu/coba/game/confer.asp) for further details.

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