



# GAMBLING RESEARCH REVEALS

## Conference 2007 to address gambling-related harm through evidence-based practices

The Institute and the University of Calgary are co-sponsoring the sixth in a series of special interest gambling research conferences. This year's theme is "Addressing Gambling-related Harm through Evidence-based Practices" and is scheduled for Friday, March 30 and Saturday, March 31, 2007 at The Banff Centre in Banff, Alberta, Canada.

Conference 2007 will focus on innovations on the treatment of problem gambling. New developments in treatment and in treatment systems will be highlighted. Advancements in basic research with implications for prevention and treatment will also be presented. The meeting brings together the leaders in the development of evidence-based treatment approaches for problem gambling in an intimate meeting setting in the majestic Canadian Rockies.

Confirmed topics include:

- Motivational and cognitive treatments
- Enhancing compliance in treatment
- Telephone-based treatment
- Addressing comorbidity
- Advances in pharmacology
- Family-based approaches
- Personality-based treatment matching
- Early findings from the Alberta Leisure, Lifestyle and Lifecycle longitudinal project.



Confirmed presenters include: **Dr. Jeremiah Weinstock** (University of Connecticut), **Dr. Edelgard Wulfert** (SUNY Albany), **Dr. Jeffrey Marotta** (Oregon Department of Human Services, Addictions and Mental Health Division), **Dr. Jon Grant** (University of Minnesota), **Dr. David Casey** (Alberta Gaming Research Institute), **Dr. James Kennedy** (University of Toronto), **Mr. Eric Tyssen** (Healthlink Turning Point Alcohol and Drug Centre, Melbourne, Australia), **Dr. Kate Diskin** (Addiction Centre, Foothills Medical Centre, Calgary), **Dr. Nady el-Guebaly** (University of Calgary), **Dr. Lorne Korman** (University of Toronto), **Dr. Sherry Stewart** (Dalhousie University), **Dr. Rob d'Hondt** (Jellinek Consultancy, The Netherlands), and **Ms. Mia Moran-Cooper** (The Problem Gamblers Help Network of West Virginia).

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The program teaches a family member specific strategies that will likely increase non-gambling behaviour and decrease gambling behaviour.  
—Ph.D. Student  
Nicole Peden

## Community reinforcement and family training (CRAFT) for families of problem gamblers: An interview with Nicole Peden

Past research investigations have concluded that a majority of problem gamblers have never sought formal treatment for their gambling problems (Focal Research, 1999). Moreover, it has been found that up to 97 per cent of current pathological gamblers are not utilizing available treatment services (Volberg, 1998). Though problem gamblers are reluctant to seek out treatment on their own, analyses of gambling help-lines indicate that concerned family members often initiate assistance on their behalf (Cuadrado, 1999; Griffiths, Scarfe, & Bellringer, 1999; Distress Centre, 2001; Potenza, Steinberg, McLaughlin, Wu, Rounsville, et al., 2001). It is precisely these family members of problem gamblers that doctoral student Nicole Peden and co-investigator Dr. David Hodgins are targeting in their Institute-funded research investigation to evaluate

the efficacy of Community Reinforcement and Family Training (CRAFT) treatment for problem gamblers. In a recent interview with Ms. Peden, she provided the following answers to questions relating to CRAFT and its applicability to problem gambling treatment:

### What was it that interested you in pursuing a PhD with a research focus on problem gambling?

My interest in problem gambling was initiated by my work as a research assistant in the University of Calgary's Addictive Behaviours Laboratory. One particularly interesting study that took place involved the conversion of the CRAFT approach so that it could be used as a self-help workbook (Makarchuk & Hodgins, 2001).

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The conference will be of interest to clinicians, administrators, educators, prevention specialists, and researchers. Additional information about the conference, including the program and registration form is available from the Institute web site. For additional information, please see the Institute web site ([www.abgaminginstitute.ualberta.ca](http://www.abgaminginstitute.ualberta.ca)).

*The deadline for early (discounted) conference registration is January 26th, 2007. Final conference registration is March 9th, 2007.*

### Call for conference posters

A poster session is scheduled for March 31, 2007 during which investigators

can present recent empirical research on gambling and gambling disorders. The Conference Committee invites researchers to submit a 200-word abstract in electronic format (MS-Word preferred) to Will Shead, [nwshead@ucalgary.ca](mailto:nwshead@ucalgary.ca). Abstracts should include: title of research, names of authors with the presenting author underlined, author affiliation, and contact information. The abstract should address: (a) sample and methods, (b) results, (c) implications for the field.

*Submission deadline is February 3, 2007 (with peer review process and decision completed by February 10). Please note that all poster presenters must register for the conference.*

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Family members of problem gamblers who received this self-help workbook reported a greater reduction in gambling behaviour by the gambler than families who received just a standard information package. Both the CRAFT approach and the information package were equally effective in getting the gambler into treatment and helping the family member with their own distress. My own dissertation extends this work by delivering the CRAFT approach in an individual intervention format and comparing it to the self-help workbook.

### **What programs are currently most often recommended for families of problem gamblers in Alberta?**

Currently there are few options available to family members of problem gamblers. In Calgary, the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission [AADAC] offers a 4-week group for families of individuals addicted to alcohol, drugs or gambling. There is also a Gam-Anon meeting, which is a self-help program and support group for family members of problem gamblers; in Calgary, there is one meeting per week. Families can also choose to seek help from an individual counsellor. To date, there are no published trials on the efficacy of the above interventions used with families of problem gamblers. The CRAFT approach has been empirically supported with substance use disorders and the self-help workbook has received favourable results with family members of problem gamblers.

### **What is the CRAFT approach? Is it being used in Canada or elsewhere to assist families of problem gamblers?**

CRAFT is a cognitive-behavioural approach that has three main goals: 1) to help the family member with their own distress; 2) to decrease gambling behaviour, and; 3) to help move the gambler toward treatment. Both the self-help workbook and the individual intervention focus on

helping the family member achieve these three goals. The clinical community is catching onto CRAFT and there is interest spreading throughout Canada in using it with family members of problem gamblers. The only available published literature relating to the use of CRAFT with families of problem gamblers is the self-help workbook *Helping the Problem Gambler Help Yourself: A Self-Help Approach for Family Members*.

### **Why might the CRAFT approach be attractive to families of problem gamblers?**

The CRAFT program teaches family members how to help the gambler and help themselves by responding more effectively to the gambling problem. Many family members try ineffective means to get the gambler to stop gambling... for example, pleading, threatening, begging, providing ultimatums, or bailing them out. The program teaches a family member specific strategies that will likely increase non-gambling behaviour and decrease gambling behaviour. They also learn how to suggest treatment to the gambler in an effective manner. Finally, the CRAFT approach helps the family member to deal with the distress caused by the gambling.

### **Are there examples of what program implementers teach concerned significant others?**

CRAFT is a cognitive-behavioural approach that teaches families of problem gamblers how to respond more effectively to the gambling. There are six main techniques taught. They are: 1) functional analysis of the gambling behaviour; 2) positive communication skills; 3) rewarding non-gambling behaviours; 4) withdrawing rewards; 5) allowing natural consequences, and; 6) suggesting treatment in an effective manner. As well, the program focuses on enriching the family member's life. The intervention typically takes 8 to 12 individual face-to-face sessions.



### **From the Library...**

*Canadian Gaming Business* (ISSN 1911-2378) is a new gambling industry trade publication that is to be published six times a year as a joint venture between MediaEdge Communications and The Canadian Gaming Association. Content included in the magazine primarily focuses on issues surrounding Canada's gaming and gambling industry. It will appeal primarily to industry watchers but may also be of some value to researchers wanting to keep abreast of new gaming initiatives and policy developments in Canadian jurisdictions. A free subscription sign-up is available from the publication's web site [www.canadiangamingbusiness.com](http://www.canadiangamingbusiness.com).

University of Alberta School of Library and Information Studies student Angela Binnie ([binnie@ualberta.ca](mailto:binnie@ualberta.ca)) has been assisting with the selection and acquisition of gaming materials at the Winspear Business Reference Library since October, 2006.

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### Do early research results indicate that CRAFT might be a promising intervention?

The CRAFT self-help workbook (Makarchuk & Hodgins, 2001) was successfully pilot tested with family members of problem gamblers (Makarchuk, Hodgins, & Peden, 2002). It was also recently used in a large randomized controlled trial (Hodgins, Toneatto, Makarchuk, Skinner, & Vincent, 2004). In both studies, families who received the CRAFT self-help workbook fared better than those in the control group. They also reported decreased gambling by the problem gambler and more satisfaction with the intervention. The groups were, however, equivalent on the number of gambling consequences, family functioning and relationship functioning, as well as gambler treatment engagement rates. Importantly, many family members reported the need for more concrete support in implementing the strategies and procedures, such as how to suggest treatment in an effective manner. Further, the authors concluded that CRAFT delivered in its original format (i.e., individual face-to-face) may increase the efficacy of this approach (Hodgins et al., 2004).

Nicole Peden and Dr. David Hodgins are still recruiting individuals to participate in their CRAFT investigation. To date, the 14 participants who have completed the program have been very receptive to it. Referrals are being accepted from individuals residing in the Calgary area who are concerned about a family members' problem gambling and who are not currently in treatment. To participate, contact the University of Calgary's Addictive Behaviours Lab at 403-210-9580.

#### ADDITIONAL SOURCES OF INFORMATION:

Cuadrado, M. (1999). A comparison of Hispanic and Anglo calls to a gambling help hotline. *Journal of Gambling Studies*, 15(1), 71-81.

Distress Centre Summary Report (April 1, 1998 to March 31, 1999). *Service Monitoring & Research*. April 2001.

Focal Research. (1999). *Nova Scotia VL players survey 1997/1998*. Halifax, NS: Nova Scotia Department of Health.

Griffiths, M., Scarfe, A., & Bellringer, P. (1999). The UK national telephone gambling helpline: Results of the first year of operation. *Journal of Gambling Studies*, 15(1), 83-90.

Hodgins, D. C., Toneatto, T., Makarchuk, K., Skinner, W. & Vincent, S. (2004). *Minimal Treatment Approaches for Concerned Significant Others of Problem Gamblers: A Randomized Controlled Trial*. Ontario Problem Gambling Research Centre (OPGRC).

Makarchuk, K. & Hodgins, D.C. (2001). Minimal treatment for concerned significant others of problem gambling. *A self-help manual for CSOs of problem gamblers*. University of Calgary, AB.

Makarchuk, K., Hodgins, D. C., & Peden, N. (2002). Development of a brief intervention for concerned significant others of problem gamblers. *Addictive Disorders & Their Treatment*, 1(4), 126-134.

Potenza, M., Steinberg, M., McLaughlin, S. D., Wu, R., Rounsville, B. J., & O'Malley, S. (2001). Gender-related differences in the characteristics of problem gamblers using a gambling helpline. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 158(9), 1500-1505.

Volberg, R. A. (1998). *Gambling and problem gambling among adolescents in New York*. Albany: New York Council on Problem Gambling.

### AHFMR publication recognizes Ph.D. Student Will Shead

The Fall 2006 issue of *Research News* from the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research (AHFMR) profiled a number of up-and-coming young investigators who have been awarded grants from the Foundation. Prominently included is University of Calgary student Will Shead whose Ph.D. is being supported through an AHFMR studentship. Shead is studying the role that expectancy plays in gambling. The full article is freely available online from the AHFMR web site [www.ahfmr.ab.ca](http://www.ahfmr.ab.ca).

