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Alberta Gambling Research Institute Conference 2019: Blurred Lines in Gambling Research

Browne, Matthew; Clark, Luke; Cunningham, John; Hilbrecht, Margo; Johnson, Mark R.; Quilty, Lena C.; Rodda, Simone; Sanders, James; Tavares, Hermano; Tremblay, Joël...

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What is the Utility of Responsible Gambling Programs?

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Disclosures

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For a commentary on the academy’s engagement with industry see Wohl and Wood (2015, IGS)
RESPONSIBLE GAMING

RESPONSIBLE GAMING:
OUR COMMITMENT. EVERY DAY.

Responsible Gambling

Gamble Responsibly
RESPONSIBLE GAMING

Loss Limit: You are empowered to decide your loss limits per day or week.

TIME LIMIT  DEPOSIT LIMIT  LOSS LIMIT  SELF EXCLUDE

Daily Weekly Monthly

Submit

Know When to Stop Before You Start® Gambling Problem? Call 1-800-GAMBLER

12th - 18th October 2017
Kenny, you gotta know when to walk away.
Key principles and guidelines for RG programming:

1. Reduce prevalence of gambling-related harm
2. Use research to develop and refine policies and programming
3. Identify short- and long-term priorities
4. Create an action plan to address priorities
5. Evaluate policies and programming to reduce gambling-related issues
RG programing should:

1. Train employees
2. Educate the player:
   - How games work and the odds of winning
   - Treatment programs and helplines
3. Include self-exclusion programs
4. Modify environmental features that increase problematic play
5. Engage in ethical advertising
Corporate social responsibility

Growing belief that companies have a moral obligation to advance society beyond the product they sell.

Social responsibility helps maintain a pro-social image to (potential) customers.

In controversial industries, companies must include harm-minimization to be palatable to government, policy makers, and the public.
Blurred lines?

- Gambling in all provinces in Canada is heavily regulated and RG programs are a major component (employing many).
- World Lottery Association: RG certification (with levels).
- Responsible Gambling Council: RG accreditation, train RG Advisors.
- GamRes: GamGuard to assess the riskiness of game features, designs and characteristics.
Responsible Gambling Programming: Critiques

- RG programming is a cover for industry to pursue its profit motive
- Weak regulatory oversight of RG programming/failure to keep operators accountable
- Predatory gambling practices continue despite (or to offset) RG programming
- Too much emphasis on personal responsibility of the gambler
Do responsible gambling programs achieve their harm-minimization objective?
Is training of RG advisors effective?

Immediately following training there is an increase in:

1. understanding of the importance of RG
2. understanding of odd of winning/erroneous cognitions about how games work.
3. knowledge about how and when to intervene

(Girux et al., 2008; Ladouceur et al., 2004; LaPlante et al, 2012; Wong & Poon, 2011)
Is training of RG advisors effective?

At follow-up:

1. Approached players with greater frequency (Ladouceur et al., 2004; Wong & Poon, 2011)

2. Decreased confidence about intervening as well as confidence about what constitutes RG behaviors (Dufour et al., 2008; Girux et al., 2008)

3. Erroneous cognitions returned (LaPlante et al., 2012)
What effect do RG advisors have on players?
Are players satisfied with RG advisors?

Among people who interacted with a RG Advisor:

1. Most (91%) believed the advisor was caring
2. Most (89.1%) believed the advisor was helpful
3. Most (91.3%) believed the advisor was knowledgeable

Typically 70%-90% report satisfaction in service surveys (Car-Hill, 1992)

Gray, Shaffer, & LaPlante, 2018
Do trained RG advisors have a positive influence on players?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Only half (48%) said that they learned about how gambling works.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Most (77%) player who interacted with a RG advisor said that they learned strategies to keep gambling positive.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Almost all (98%) said they learned about the purpose of the RG program.</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

Gray, Shaffer, & LaPlante, 2018
Do RG programs minimize harm?
The Slot Machine: What Every Player Needs to Know
(Wohl et al., 2010, 2013)
Erroneous cognitions as a function of condition and time of assessment

Wohl et al., 2010
RESPONSIBLE GAMING

LOSS LIMIT: YOU ARE EMPOWERED TO DECIDE YOUR LOSS LIMITS PER DAY OR WEEK.

TIME LIMIT  DEPOSIT LIMIT  LOSS LIMIT  SELF EXCLUDE

Daily     Weekly     Monthly

SUBMIT
A Growing Literature on the RG Utility of Player-Tracking Data

For empirical evidence... Auer & Griffiths, 2015a, 2015b, 2016; Edgerton et al., 2016; Gainsbury, 2011; Griffiths et al., 2009; Wood & Wohl, 2015, Wohl et al., 2017

The importance of behavioural feedback lay in players’ inability to track their expenditures (Wohl, Davis, & Hollingshead, 2017).
Behavioural feedback can down-regulate spending

Wood & Wohl, 2015, IGS
At Issue: Perception of responsible gambling programs

- Reasonable evidence that RG tools help minimize harm.
- Most players think RG tools work.
- Not many people use RG tools (stigma).
- Strong brand association between RG & disordered gambling.
Three key questions for those who run RG Programs

1. **HOW DO YOU KNOW IF YOUR RESPONSIBLE GAMBLING PROGRAM IS WORKING?**
2. **WHICH PART OF YOUR RESPONSIBLE GAMBLING PROGRAM WORKS BEST?**
3. **DO ASPECTS OF THE PROGRAM WORK BETTER FOR SPECIFIC TYPES OF PLAYERS?**
The Future of RG Programming: Recommendations
The necessity of benchmarking

Document current state

Document existing processes end-to-end so that the scope and areas of improvement can be fully assessed.

Set goals

Start by identifying potential areas of improvement so that the benchmarking exercise can focus on these.

Gather data

Collect baseline data.

Look for gaps

Analyze for gaps.

Gather more data

Gather more data following any change.
Determine what is good uptake

Georgian Downs: 3.1% of active loyalty program members have used My PlaySmart
Shorelines Casino Belleville Casino: 11.5% of active loyalty program members have used My PlaySmart
Positive Play Scale
Wood, Wohl, Tabri, and Philander (2017)

THE PPS IS A 14-ITEM SCALE THAT ASSESSES POSITIVE BELIEFS AND BEHAVIOURS ABOUT GAMBLING.

Two beliefs subscales:

- **Personal Responsibility**: The extent to which a player believes they should take ownership of their gambling behaviour.

- **Gambling literacy**: The extent to which a player has an accurate understanding about the nature of gambling.
**Beliefs:**

I believe that..........

**Personal Responsibility**

- I should be able to walk away from gambling at any time
- It’s my responsibility to spend only money that I can afford to lose
- I should be aware of how much MONEY I spend when I gamble
- I should only gamble when I have enough money to cover all my bills first

**Gambling Literacy**

- Gambling is not a good way to make money
- My chances of winning get better after I have lost (reverse coded)
- If I gamble more often, it will help me to win more than I lose (reverse coded)
Positive Play Scale

Wood, Wohl, Tabri, and Philander (2017)

Two behaviour subscales:

- **Honesty & control**: The extent to which players are honest with others about their gambling behaviour and feel in control of their behaviour.

- **Pre-commitment**: The extent to which a player considers how much money and time they should spend gambling.
behaviours: In the last month

**Honesty and Control**
- I felt in control of my gambling behaviour
- I was honest with my family and/or friends about the amount of MONEY I spent gambling

**Pre-commitment**
- I only gambled with MONEY that I could afford to lose
- I only spent TIME gambling that I could afford to lose
- I considered the amount of MONEY I was willing to lose BEFORE I gambled
- I considered the amount of TIME I was willing to spend BEFORE I gambled
Canadian National Survey: PPS scores (collapsed across Provinces)

American Surveys: PPS scores (collapsed across four States)

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<td>8.6%</td>
<td>20.3%</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>88.2%</td>
<td>65.1%</td>
<td>81.9%</td>
<td>79.6%</td>
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<td>37.9%</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>61.9%</td>
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Booster session for RG Advisors and Casino staff

They can single handedly undermine gambling literacy

Eliminate conflicting messages

No markers to "save" electronic gambling machines

Don’t display "hot" and "cold" numbers, or previous winning numbers (e.g., roulette)
REWARDING TOOL USE
(Wohl, 2018, IGS)

Loyalty points for:
- Limit setting
- Limit adherence
- Watching educational material
- Attending RG workshop/lectures
- Visits to RGICs
Veikkaus Points

Collect points by:
1. Getting to know the self-monitoring services
2. Taking a self-assessment test
3. Familiarization with how gambling revenue is used.

The program also includes videos, fun questionnaires, and information about game reforms.
A way forward for operators

Establish defensible track record:

1. Prevent harm: Provide RG tools, player-account feedback

2. Intervene when harm is identified: Player-account feedback

3. Arms-length research to validate efforts; access to player-account data
A way forward for academics

1. Keep an open mind

2. Scientific rigor – Open Science

3. Arms-length research to validate efforts; access to player-account data
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