

The elephant outside the room

Thoughts on treatment from a
population perspective

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The conundrum

- ◆ Most people don't come to treatment
- ◆ Only 1 in 3 people with a lifetime diagnosis of pathological gambling report ever seeking treatment

Suurvali, H., Hodgins, D. C., Toneatto, T., & Cunningham, J. A. (2008). Treatment-seeking among Ontario problem gamblers: results of a population survey. *Psychiatric Services, 59*, 1343-1346.

Today's talk

- ◆ Who comes to treatment?
- ◆ Why don't people come to treatment?
- ◆ What happens to people who do not come to treatment?
- ◆ What does the general public think happens?
- ◆ What to do about people who don't seek help?

Gambling data for today's talk

◆ RDD telephone survey of 8,467 adults from Ontario funded by OPGRC

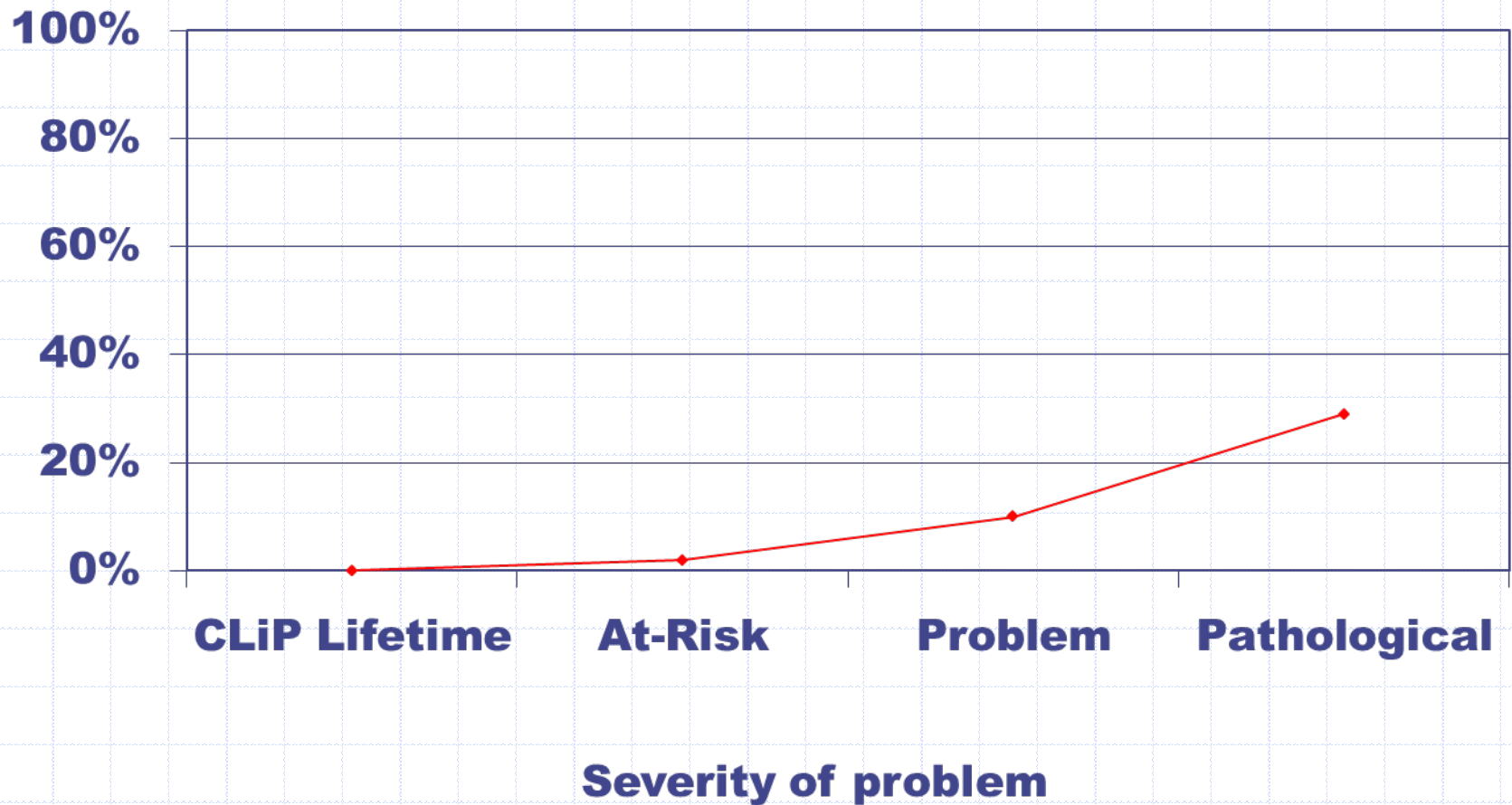
Severity of gambling problem	Lifetime (N = 1,205)	Past Year (N = 730)
CLiP ≥ 1	824	500
At Risk Gambler	235	162
Possible Pathological Gambler	89	38
Probable Pathological Gambler	57	30

Who comes to treatment?

- ◆ Relation to severity of problems
- ◆ Treatment users as active consumers

Treatment use ever - Ontario

Percent using
treatment resources



Addictions Services Used (problem gamblers, N = 1,205)

Treatment	Number Ever Accessed
Any service use	28
Gambler Anonymous	15
Telephone helpline	9
Professional in private office	8
Spiritual leader	7
Assessment or outpatient	6
Family or marital counseling	6
Inpatient or residential treatment	2
Self-help (Internet or printed materials)	52

Treatment users are active consumers

- ◆ Of those who accessed treatment (n = 28)
 - 55% accessed only one
 - 27% accessed two
 - 17% accessed three or more

- 63% also used self-help (Internet or printed materials)

Summary so far

- ◆ Most people don't come to treatment
- ◆ Those who do have more severe problems/consequences
- ◆ Treatment users are active consumers

But ... Prevention Paradox

- ◆ In the area of alcohol and public health
 - Most of the harm from alcohol use comes from people with less severe problems
 - Concept could also be applied to gambling

- ◆ What is the goal of a treatment system?
 - Help people who come to treatment or address population level harm?

Why don't people come to treatment?

- ◆ Shame and stigma
- ◆ Issues with treatment availability
- ◆ Want to handle problem on their own
- ◆ Problem perception
- ◆ Gambling part of the solution, not just the problem

Suurvali, H., Hodgins, D. C., Toneatto, T., & Cunningham, J. A. (2012). Hesitation to seek gambling-related treatment among Ontario problem gamblers. *Journal of Addiction Medicine, 6(1), 39-49.*

What happens to people who do not come to treatment?

◆ Natural history of gambling problems

- How common is self-change?
- What factors are associated with untreated recovery?
- Does self-change occur in all addictive behaviours?

Recovery from gambling problems (treated or untreated)

	Lifetime Problem Gambling Status			
	CLiP 1 or more only (N = 824)	NODS risk (N = 235)	Possibly pathological (N = 89)	Probably pathological (N = 57)
Past Year				
No symptoms (N = 450)	45.4	19.4	20.7	12.1
1 or more symptoms (N = 755)	54.6	80.6	79.3	87.9

Cunningham, J. A., Hodgins, D. C., & Toneatto, T. (2009). Natural history of gambling problems: Results from a general population survey. *Sucht, 55, 98-103.*

Untreated change from gambling

- ◆ Of the 450 participants with no symptoms in the last year, only 8 had ever used treatment (including Gamblers Anonymous)
- ◆ **Self-change common even when severe definition of problem used**

Reasons given for change

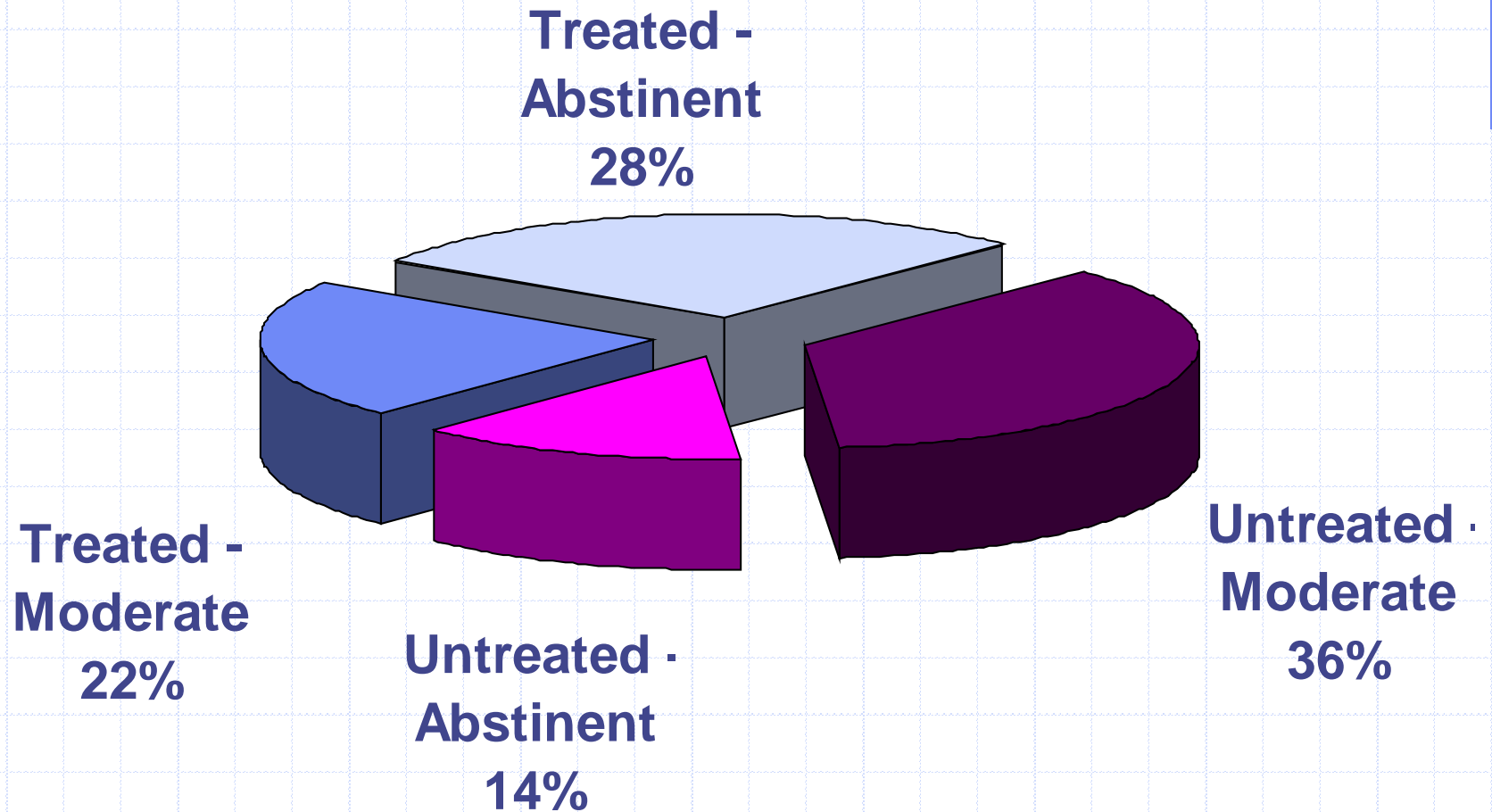
- ◆ 25% Negative consequence driven
 - E.g., couldn't afford it/debt/financial
- ◆ 42% Drifting/maturing out reasons
 - E.g., life changed/got married
- ◆ 42% Reflective maturation reasons
 - E.g., common sense/came to realization

- ◆ Consequence driven more likely when had more severe problem prior to resolving



What about other addictions?

Remitted from Alcohol Abuse or Dependence - OHS



Cunningham, J. A., Lin, E., Ross, H. E., & Walsh, G. W. (2000). Factors associated with untreated remissions from alcohol abuse or dependence. *Addictive Behaviors*, 25 (2), 317-321.

Varying the severity of prior problems - CADS

Recovery Pathway	Number of Prior Problems Ever Experienced				
	Two or more (n = 569)	Three or more (n = 417)	Four or more (n = 309)	Five or more (n = 211)	All Six (n = 109)
% (n1) Treated	19.3	25.5	29.7	38.6	46.3
% (n1) Abstinent	93.0	92.8	93.3	92.4	93.0
% (n1) Moderate Drinker	--	--	--	--	--
% (n2) Untreated	80.7	74.5	70.3	61.4	53.7
% (n2) Abstinent	53.4	56.8	62.0	73.6	80.5
% (n2) Moderate Drinker	46.6	43.2	38.0	26.4	--

Cunningham, J. A. (1999). Resolving alcohol-related problems with and without treatment: The effects of different problem criteria. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, 60, 463-466. 18

Service use of prior drug users - CADS

	Cannabis (1531)	Cannabis Regular (783)	Cocaine/ Crack (415)	LSD (555)	Speed (257)	Heroin (64)
% Any treatment	5.8	9.0	16.0	14.1	20.4	34.5
% Drug related	3.1	5.2	10.4	9.5	14.3	--
% Alcohol related	3.9	5.8	10.9	8.4	14.1	--
% Police contact	5.7	9.8	21.9	20.8	24.8	50.6

Cunningham, J. A. (1999). Untreated remissions from drug use: The predominant pathway. *Addictive Behaviors*, 24 (2), 267-270.

Prior drug dependence – treatment use in the NLAES

	Cannabis (600)	Cocaine/ Crack (375)	LSD (98)	Speed (280)	Heroin (42)
% Any treatment	43.1	59.7	65.4	53.6	90.7
% Drug related	27.2	44.5	45.9	38.3	69.8
% Alcohol related	34.5	45.7	61.5	46.2	73.9

Cunningham, J. A. (2000). Remissions from drug dependence: Is treatment a prerequisite?
Drug and Alcohol Dependence, 59, 211-213.

What does the general public think happens?

- ◆ Never really been asked?
- ◆ But, treatment and abstinence viewed as necessary for recovery

Beliefs about gambling problems

% Possible to fix gambling problems on own , without getting any treatment	47
% Former problem gamblers can reduce gambling to that of a social gambler	29
% Strongly agree gambling problems best seen as a form of:	
disease or illness	38
wrongdoing	17
habit, not disease	32
drug addiction	53

Cunningham, J. A., Cordingley, J., Hodgins, D. C., Toneatto, T. (2011). Beliefs about gambling problems and recovery: results from a general population telephone survey. *Journal of Gambling Study*, 27(4), 625-631.

What to do about people who don't seek help?

- ◆ If people don't seek treatment and most deal with their problems by themselves, is there a problem?
 - Prevention paradox
 - What is our mandate?
 - Many problem gamblers are interested in some type of help

Interest in different types of self-help by severity of problems

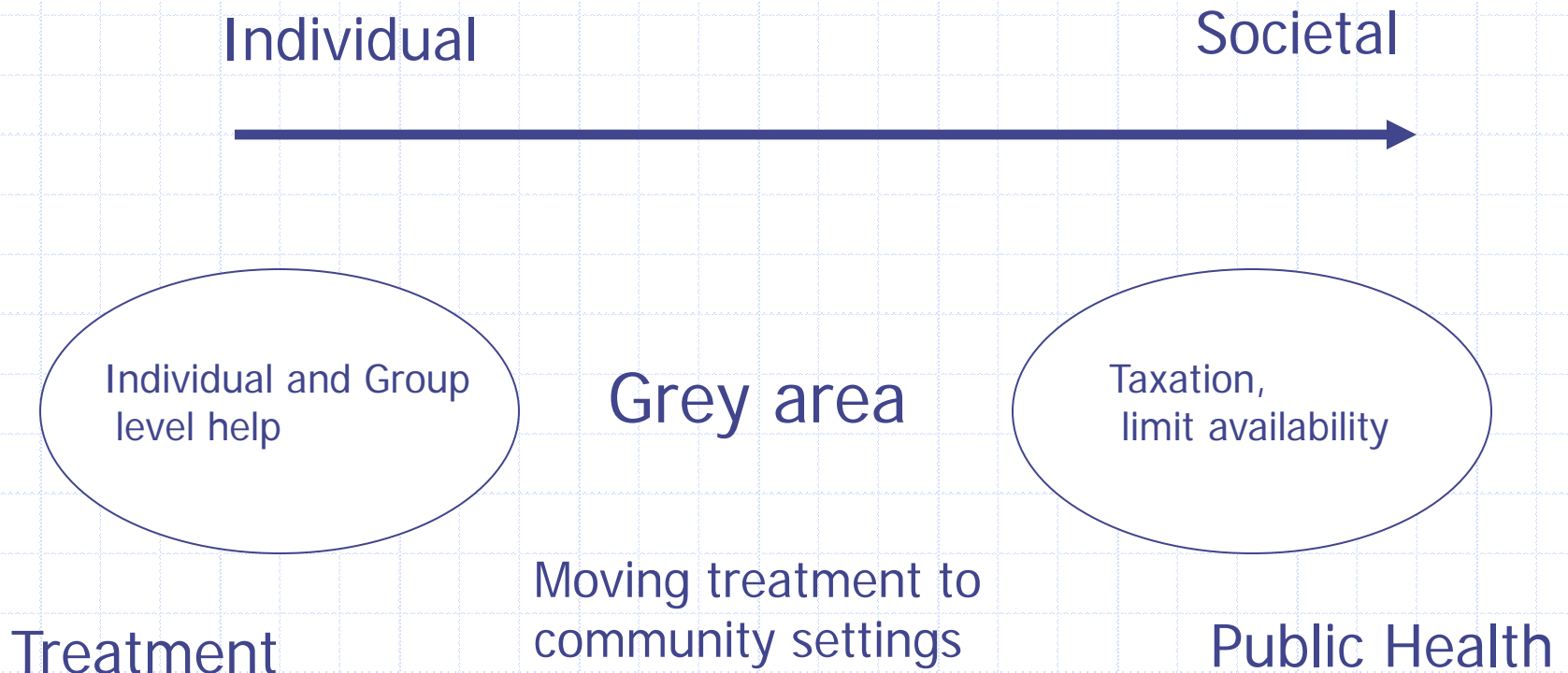
Interested in receiving ...	CLiP last year one or more (N = 500)	At Risk Gambler (N = 162)	Possible or Probable Pathological (N = 68)
% Telephone call	16.9	17.3	38.4
% Self-help book	21.9	20.9	56.9
% Internet personalized feedback summary	26.3	32.4	52.8

Cunningham, J. A., Hodgins, D. C., & Toneatto, T. (2008). Problem gamblers' interest in self-help services. *Psychiatric Services, 59(6), 695-696.*

One part of the solution

- ◆ Take treatment to people rather than making people come to treatment
 - Brief interventions in other health care and social support settings, helplines, self-help materials, Internet, etc.
- ◆ A grey area between public health (taxes, availability) and treatment (individual level help)

Continuum of intervention strategies



Collaborators and Funding

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