



Brief Mood Disorders and Problem Gambling Research Plenary Session

Tuesday Oct. 26th 2004

KEY MESSAGES

MDSC is a National voice for consumers and families affected by mood disorders.

MDSC is taking a leadership role in bringing together mood disorders and problem gambling researchers, funders and mood disorders self-help community to better understand a serious emerging health concern.

This collaborative approach to developing a research agenda is a first for mental health in Canada.

- Government directed gambling is growing.
- Problem gambling is growing.
- People with mood disorders may be more 'at risk' of developing problems or experience more serious consequences from their gambling.
- Today will set a research agenda that will close our gap in knowledge.
- The MDSC will share the findings with consumers through its networks through prevention and public awareness activities.
- MDSC will play an ongoing role in advising government policy.

PROJECT GOALS

The purpose of the Forum is three-fold:

- To engage clinical and research experts in the field of mood disorders to work collaboratively with problem gambling researchers and the mood disorders self-help community to better understand and manage this emerging issue
- To improve public awareness, prevention, assessment and management of this issue, and
- To inform government policy development on gambling related issues

A secondary goal of the Forum is to define the ongoing collaborative partnership that will shape the relationships among the represented sectors and ensure that the role of the MDSC remains central to ongoing progress.

We have invited individuals from the following areas:

- Leading experts in mood and anxiety disorders
- Problem gambling researchers
- Research funders
- Leaders from the mood disorders associations

At the end of the day we expect to have created a short and long-term research agenda that will address the intersection between mood disorders and problem gambling. Your participation is critical to identifying and developing the research priorities that are produced as a result of the Forum.

BACKGROUND FACTS

Gambling in Canada is BIG business:

- According to [Statistics Canada](#) there were over 100,000 places to make a bet in Canada in 2001.
- In 2002 an estimated 18.9 million adults wagered \$11.3 billion on government-run lotteries, video lottery terminals, and casinos. Gamblers spent an additional \$440 million on horse racing.
- Spending rates on gambling have increased four-fold over the last decade.
- The average Canadian adult gambler spent \$447 in 2001. Participation and spending rates increase with household income.
- In 2001 gambling activity in Canada employed an estimated 47,500 persons as either regulators or operators of gambling for government or within gaming management companies.
- Over 83% of the adult population gambled legally last year most without problems.
- Canadians have accepted legalized gambling in part because it is government owned, operated and regulated. Canadians trust that governments will look after the needs of all its citizens.

Problem gambling is growing

- According to the [2002 Statistics Canada Canadian Community Health Survey](#) 1.2 million adult Canadians or one in twenty were at risk of experiencing problems or were problem gamblers.
- Recently released study estimates that 1/3 of gambling revenues in Ontario are generated by problem gamblers.
- Problem gamblers are more likely to have higher rates of alcohol dependency and substance abuse.
- Of the 85% of problem gamblers who recognized they had a problem, over half had tried to stop gambling, but were unable to do so.
- The more often people gamble the more likely they are to have problems (particularly if their game of choice is casino games or video lottery terminals).
- Problem gambling causes serious, financial, social, emotional, and physical harm not just to the person gambling but to their family as well.
- [Youth](#) are twice as likely as adults to develop a gambling problem.
- Only a fraction of those with problems seek professional help.

Problem Gambling And Mood Disorders

- Using the 2002 [Canadian Community Health Survey](#), researchers found that one-quarter of problem gamblers suffered a major clinical depression at some point in their lives.
- In the same survey one-fifth of problem gamblers had contemplated suicide in the last year.
- In a recent Quebec study more than half of the 75 people whose suicides were linked to gambling problems had a major mental illness - primarily depression.
- In numerous studies researchers found over three quarters of people who sought treatment for gambling problems experienced a major depressive disorder.
- Researcher found that many people gamble to cope with feelings of loss, to avoid difficult situations or when they are depressed and / or feeling anxious.
- Research suggests that depression and anxiety is not relieved by gambling and in fact appears to make things worse.
- Gambling, mood disorders and drinking are a very volatile mix. It appears that when these three elements combine gambling problems are more severe, emotional and physical health is worse and the risk of suicide goes up.