



**The Society for the Study of Gambling**

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# **Newsletter**

**Number 49 Spring 2013**

# **The Society For The Study Of Gambling**

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**Spring 2013, Number 49**

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## **The Society For The Study of Gambling**

The Society for the Study of Gambling was formed in 1977 to provide a forum for those concerned with research into gambling, to promote its scientific study especially as far as the psychological, legal, social and economic aspects are concerned, and to inform and educate the public about these matters. In more recent times the Society has broadened its focus to include a wide range of issues relevant to the field of gambling.

The membership of the Society is drawn from a wide circle of people who have an interest in various aspects of gambling. They range from gambling operators, regulators, academics, and those who work with problem gambling. It is a condition of the Society that there should be freedom of opinion and practice among its members, so that the Society does not take any particular stance in relation to gambling.

### **Meetings**

The Society holds two meetings a year in London, usually in May and November. Meetings are held under The Chatham House Rule and cover a wide range of topics reflecting current gambling issues. In recent meetings this has included discussion on aspects of regulation, technology, research, and social responsibility.

### **Newsletter**

Talks and papers presented at the Society's meetings are often reproduced in the Newsletter at the invitation of the Editor and with the permission of the author. They are not intended to be an alternative to publication in a learned journal.

The Editor welcomes unsolicited manuscripts, book reviews, and other items which would be of interest to the Society's members.

An archive of previous newsletters is available on the Society's website: [www.societystudygambling.co.uk](http://www.societystudygambling.co.uk)

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## Editorial

Lorien Pilling, Research Director, Global Betting and Gaming Consultants

The Society's recent meetings have had a strong legal emphasis, reflecting the influential role that regulation plays in the gambling sector. Dr Alan Littler spoke at the November 2012 meeting and outlined the changes being proposed for gambling regulation in the Netherlands. His latest assessment of the Dutch situation opens this edition of the newsletter.

Professor Garry Smith provides a different angle on legal matters with useful advice for any of our members who find themselves required to act as an expert witness in trials involving gambling addiction.

On the topic of problem gambling in this edition, Dr Sally Gainsbury from the Centre for Gambling Education and Research, Southern Cross University, has contributed an article on treatment and interventions for young people with gambling problems. Therapist Liz Karter gives readers an "exclusive" ahead of the publication of her new book *Women and Problem Gambling* (Routledge, March 2013), whilst Melody Askari compares the results of the first Isle of Man gambling prevalence survey with the findings from the UK version.

The newsletter closes with some casino recollections and anecdotes from opposite sides of world and from different perspectives. Chris Moore remembers his time as dealer in the Bahamas in the mid-1970s, whilst Professor William Thompson describes his attempts to talk to the management of a casino in Australia.

Thank you to all the authors who have given their time to contribute articles and to the publishers for giving permission to reprint certain articles.

### Professor Bill Eadington

Sadly, the Society has to report the death in February of Professor Bill Eadington, Director of the Institute for the Study of Gambling, University of Nevada.

Bill was a long-standing member of the Society for the Study of Gambling and a regular contributor to the newsletter, giving readers the benefit of his expertise in gambling regulation. His first article for the newsletter, *Regulatory objectives and the expansion of casino gambling*, appeared in the second edition more than 30 years ago in 1982.

In 2011 Professor Eadington was inducted into the American Gaming Association's Hall of Fame and presented with a special achievement award for gaming education.

Speakers at recent meetings have included:

**November 2012, London Mathematical Society, De Morgan House**

**Dr Alan Littler, VMW Taxand** – Dutch gambling reform and the moving feast in Europe

**Jimmy Desai, DAC Beachcroft LLP** – Cookies, Social gaming and the risks to data privacy

**John Greenway, former MP** – Comments on the Government's plans for the gambling industry

**Susanna FitzGerald QC, One Essex Court** – Discussion of the case Camelot UK Lotteries Ltd v The Gambling Commission and the Health Lottery ELM Ltd

**February 2013, ICE Totally Gaming expo, ExCeL**

**George Gardiner** – Reputation risk and hacking in online gaming

**Pierre Tournier, Policy Action** – Gambling policy: the very latest from the EU

**Gabrielle Patrick, iSeed** – Social Gaming: Developments in the past 12 months

**Conference Notice**

**15<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Gambling and Risk Taking**

**27 – 31 May 2013**

**Caesars Palace, Las Vegas, Nevada**

The Institute for the Study of Gambling and Commercial Gaming at the University of Nevada, Reno, in partnership with the International Gaming Institute at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, are sponsoring the 15th International Conference on Gambling and Risk-Taking. The conference will take place May 27-31, 2013, at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas, Nevada.

The primary objectives of the conference are to contribute to the base of scientific knowledge about gambling in all its dimensions, to stimulate further research, and to facilitate discussion and dialogue about gambling and commercial gaming as it has developed and continues to evolve throughout the world.

**More information**

<http://igi.unlv.edu/conference/>

# **Dutch Gambling Reform & The Moving Feast in Europe: A potted history of the move towards a regulated remote market**

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*This article is based upon my presentation "Dutch Gambling Reform & the Moving Feast in Europe", presented at the Society's meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> November 2012 and has been updated so that it is correct at the time of writing (4<sup>th</sup> February 2013).*

## **1. Introduction**

Currently remote gaming in the Netherlands is regulated by way of a blanket prohibition. A prohibition which, to some extent, only exists on paper with national authorities having declined to bite the bullet and initiate legal proceedings against remote gaming operators supplying services in the Netherlands. It was left to one of the incumbent monopolists to pick up the gauntlet and defend its monopoly rights against operators licensed elsewhere.

The observation that the only thing which is constant is change, is undoubtedly being felt by those operating within the Dutch gaming market. Several developments, undoubtedly entwined with one another, mark a shift in the general mind-set of the government regarding gaming and the gearing up for another regulatory approach to remote gaming to be selected. Since a change in government in October 2010 one of the governing coalition parties has been strongly in favour of regulating the remote sector with the State Secretary for Security and Justice, Fred Teeven ("State Secretary"), championing this cause. Whilst rulings from two courts delivered a mixed message for the remote sector, political preferences have meant that remote gaming has not left the political agenda in recent years. Furthermore, in April 2012, the Gaming Authority (*Kansspelautoriteit*) ("Authority") became operational and in the prelude to the establishment of a regulatory regime this authority has taken a particular approach to enforcing, or perhaps 'managing' is more correct, the prohibition on remote gaming. Indeed, the change in climate is such that some remote operators

and incumbent national market players managed to come together in a rare display unity to put forward some common understandings to the State Secretary in November 2012.

These developments, along with other interesting diversions, will be reviewed to show how the Netherlands is evolving from a complete prohibition on remote gaming and transitioning towards a more open regulatory environment. This short article will take on the following structure; Section 2 will provide an overview of the current regulatory set-up before Section 3 provides a brief description of the challenges the existing regulatory regime has faced in terms of EU law. Section 4 notes how a change in government resulted in a different view on gaming and remote gaming, one which looks towards a regulated market for remote services. The current approach to enforcement is analysed in Section 5 before Section 6 considers the consequences of the September 2012 national elections with some concluding remarks in Section 7.

## **2.Current Regulatory Set-up**

The Betting and Gaming Act 1964 (*Wet op de kansspelen*) ("Act") is the primary piece of legislation for gaming in the Netherlands and centres around a "prohibited unless licensed approach", as embodied in Article 1(a). For those forms of gaming which are currently permitted the Act provides the Authority with the competence to award a single licence, and prior to the Authority becoming operational the Minister for Security and Justice enjoyed this competence. The Act does not provide the Authority with a legal basis for authorising, by way of a licence, the provision of remote gaming services. Therefore, all remote gaming services offered in the Netherlands are unlicensed and in breach of the prohibition contained in Article 1(a) of the Act. Particular forms of gaming, such as "small-scale gambling", are explicitly exempt from this "prohibited unless licensed approach" conditional upon certain requirements being satisfied. However for current purposes such "small-scale gambling" will not be dealt with any further.

Licences which are awarded are done so on either a permanent or semi-permanent basis. Two monopolies operate pursuant to permanent licences; *Holland Casino* enjoys a monopoly for offering casino gaming in the Netherlands.<sup>1</sup> Currently it has fourteen venues across the Netherlands in which it offers both table gaming, including poker, and slot machine gaming. Therefore *Holland Casino*

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<sup>1</sup> These are found in Amsterdam, Breda, Eindhoven, Enschede, Groningen, Leeuwarden, Nijmegen, Rotterdam, Scheveningen, Schiphol (Amsterdam) Airport, Utrecht, Valkenberg and Venlo.

enjoys a monopoly for the offline commercial provision of poker in the Netherlands. The *Staatsloterij* operates the state lottery pursuant to the second permanent licence.

In terms of semi-permanent licences, the non-profit foundation (a private entity) operating under the name *De Lotto* holds the licence for the provision of sports-betting services and lotto. Revenues generated under this licence are to be directed towards sports, culture, social welfare and public health. Significantly this case gave rise to the *Betfair* preliminary ruling of the Court of Justice of the European Union ("CJEU") which will be turned to in Section 3 which is important because of its implications for the award of licences in the Netherlands. *De Lotto* holds a second semi-permanent licence for the operation of an instant lottery, which is essentially scratch card gaming. The final semi-permanent licence is that held by Sportech Racing b.v. which provides horserace betting under the name of 'Runnerz'.

There are two exceptions to this scenario however. Firstly the so-called charitable lotteries, for which three licences have been awarded for three different lotteries to a single undertaking. Whilst these licences are also semi-permanent in nature they are framed as an exception to the prohibition contained in Article 1(a) of the Act in the absence of a specific provision providing a basis for such licences to be awarded. This is in contrast to the aforementioned semi-permanent licences which are awarded pursuant to a specific provision in the Act rather than as an exception to the general prohibition contained in Article 1(a). A key feature of these charitable lotteries is that at least 50% of their revenue must go to good causes with each lottery focusing upon different fields. For example, draws for the *Nationale Postcode Loterij* ('National Postcode Lottery') are based upon players' postcodes with revenues generated going to organisations active in development cooperation and human rights; nature and environment; humanitarian assistance; civil, social and cultural works, plus public health.<sup>2</sup> Secondly, the Act does not create a regulated regime based upon exclusivity for the slot machine sector. Three licences are required in order to sustain a slot machine operation; a premise licence; a licence for the exploitation of slot machines and a type approval for the machine in question. Unlike the other gaming sectors the Act does not establish a cap on the number of operations.

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<sup>2</sup> The other two charity lotteries are:

- BankGiro Loterij ('Bank Giro Lottery'); draws are based upon bank account numbers with donations to organisations active in culture, conservation and social welfare.
- Vriendenloterij ('Friends Lottery'); draws are based upon an individual's mobile telephone number (plus two letters) with donations to organisations active in culture, social welfare sport, physical education, humanitarian assistance and conservation.

Generally speaking such semi-permanent licences have been awarded for periods of five years and have then been renewed. However, with developments in case-law and the desire of the State Secretary to reform the legislative landscape, including that relating to offline gaming, recent licences have been renewed for shorter periods of time. Although it is true that none of the current semi-permanent licence holders can offer remote gaming comparable to operators licensed in other regulatory regimes, either by way of their licence or approval of their terms and conditions, they are able to offer via the Internet those forms of gaming and services which they offer offline. This is referred to as the "e-commerce" approach under which the Internet is considered as merely constituting an additional distribution channel.

At present 2015 is being mooted as the year in which a transparent licensing procedure will take effect for the forms of gaming currently subject to semi-permanent licences. Changes are also afoot for both *Holland Casino* in terms of privatisation and the *Staatsloterij*, as it too will be subject to a transparent licensing process but details in this regard are few and far between at present. By this time the licensing regime for remote gaming should be live.

### **3. Monopolies Remain but the Principle of Transparency Shakes their Foundations**

June 2008 saw the CJEU receive two preliminary references from the Netherlands from two separate courts dealing with two distinct legal proceedings. Ultimately the two national judgements resulted in a mixed-message for both sides of the incumbent v. international operator divide. Whilst the monopoly which underpinned the supply of sports-betting services was considered to be compliant with EU law in *Ladbrokes* the manner in which that licence (and also that for horserace betting) was awarded was deemed to be incompatible with EU law in *Betfair*.<sup>3</sup> The next few paragraphs will sketch out some important aspects of these two cases.

In *Ladbrokes* the CJEU was, in broad terms, faced with providing the Supreme Court guidance on assessing whether the monopoly enjoyed by *De Lotto* for the provision of sports-betting services was compatible with the freedom of establishment and the free movement of services as embodied in the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union ("TFEU").<sup>4</sup> This was particularly

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<sup>3</sup> Case C-258/08, *Ladbrokes Betting & Gaming Ltd, Ladbrokes International Ltd v. Stichting de Nationale Sporttotalisator*, [2010] ECR I-4757 and Case C-203/08, *The Sporting Exchange Ltd, trading as Betfair v. Minister van Justitie* [2010] ECR I-4695.

<sup>4</sup> Respectively Articles 49 and 56 TFEU.

interesting from an EU law point of view because, whilst in *Placanica*<sup>5</sup> the CJEU held that in order to channel demand into regulated supplies so as to achieve the objective of combatting criminality a state can engage in an expansionist policy, the Act was found to have a dual purpose. According to the Supreme Court the Act's objectives were to combat criminality and to protect consumers rather than only combatting criminality as was the case with the Italian legislation at issue in *Placanica*.

Would a policy of expansion to combat criminality within a regulatory regime which also sought to protect consumers entail that the restrictive measure was not consistent and systematic as required by the CJEU since *Gambelli*?<sup>6</sup> Not necessarily according to the CJEU, yet this would rest upon whether the national authorities are able to effectively supervise such expansion so as to ensure that the two potentially conflicting objectives are reconciled. Such an expansionist policy cannot be driven by any excessive incitement and encouragement to participate so as to generate revenues nor by the absence of illegal gaming constituting a problem which expanding supply by the incumbent operator will alleviate.<sup>7</sup> In its decision delivered on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2012 the Supreme Court conducted a very summary review of the monopoly regime and readily found that it constituted a justified restriction on internal market freedoms.<sup>8</sup>

This sat a little awkwardly with the earlier decision of the Council of State in *Betfair* which had been delivered nearly a year earlier.<sup>9</sup> The core issue at the heart of the preliminary reference made by the Council of State was whether the lack of a transparent licence allocation procedure for the exclusive licences for sports-betting and horserace betting was compatible with the free movement of services. In its preliminary ruling delivered on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2010 the CJEU considered that the lack of a transparent licence allocation procedure for the award of an exclusive licence for the provision of gaming services would be contrary to the free movement of services unless one of two provisos were met. Either that the incumbent operator was a "public operator whose management is subject to direct State supervision or a private operator whose activities are subject to strict control by the public authorities."<sup>10</sup>

Given that the incumbent operators were private legal entities the Council of State had to consider whether they were under "strict control". Although the CJEU has not blessed the legal

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<sup>5</sup> Joined Cases C-338/04, C-359/04 and C-360/04 *Criminal Proceedings against Massimiliano Placanica and others*, [2003] ECR I-1891.

<sup>6</sup> Case C-243/01, *Criminal Proceedings against Piergiorgio Gambelli and others*, [2007] ECR I-13031.

<sup>7</sup> See for further discussion, Littler, A. "Noot Zaak C-258/08, Ladbrokes/Stichting de Nationale Sporttotalisator" *Tijdschrift voor Consumentenrecht en handelspraktijken*, 2010-5, 227-230.

<sup>8</sup> Hoge Raad, *Ladbrokes v De Nationale Sporttotalisator*, LJN BT6689, 24<sup>th</sup> February 2012.

<sup>9</sup> Raad van State, *Betfair v Minister van Justitie*, LJN BP8768, 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2011.

<sup>10</sup> *Betfair*, para. 59.

community with an explicit definition of this concept, the Council of State determined that the two incumbents were not under sufficiently strict control so as to justify the absence of a transparent licence allocation procedure. Therefore the licences held by these two entities were awarded in a manner contrary to EU law whilst the underlying monopoly for sports-betting was deemed to be compatible with EU law.

Arguably one response to this situation would have been to bring all the semi-permanent licence holders under strict control so as to avoid having to award their licences pursuant to a transparent licence allocation process. Whilst there have been some changes to the governance of *De Lotto*, which arguably fall short of what is likely to be required by the notion of strict control the State Secretary, as will be detailed below, shows a clear preference for allocating such licences in a transparent manner.<sup>11</sup> As the CJEU's recent decision of 24<sup>th</sup> January 2013 regarding the Greek monopolist OPAP reiterates no transitional period applies to provisions of gaming regulations which unjustifiably restrict the free movement principles of EU law, and therefore the semi-permanent licences which are in breach of EU law remain so because they have not been reformed and continue to contradict the supremacy of EU law.<sup>12</sup> The State Secretary, as will be detailed below, seems not to be in a hurry and instead appears to be waiting for a complete overhaul of the regulatory regime to take place. The licence award process is in line for a thorough renovation so that licences are awarded in compliance with the duty of transparency.

#### **4.A Change in Government and a Push Towards Regulation**

October 2010 saw a change of government, with an incoming cabinet consisting of the conservative VVD (People's Party for Freedom and Democracy) and the centre-right Christian democrats of the CDA (Christian Democratic Appeal). This cabinet did not enjoy a majority in parliament and relied upon the support of Geert Wilders' PVV (Freedom Party) for support. This cabinet lasted until April 2012 when budget negotiations collapsed following Wilders' torpedoing of the discussions.

With Fred Teeven having been given the reigns of the gaming dossier, he published a policy letter directed towards parliament on 19<sup>th</sup> March 2011 in which he set forth his vision for reforming the sector. Three documents would have been fresh in his mind at this time. Firstly, the two preliminary rulings of the CJEU in *Betfair* and *Ladbroke's* which at the time his letter was drafted had

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<sup>11</sup> Littler, A. & Franssen, J., "How should we define 'strict control'?", *European Gaming Lawyer*, Summer Issue 2011, 18-20.

<sup>12</sup> Cases C-186/11 *Stanleybet International Ltd and Others* and *Sportingbet plc* (C-209/11) v. *OPAP*, n.y.r..

not been decided upon by the respective national court. Ultimately however the Council of State delivered its *Betfair* ruling on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2011 only a few days afterwards. Secondly, there was the existing report of the "Commissie Jansen" which had been tasked by the previous government to advise the Minister of Justice on regulating remote games of chance.<sup>13</sup> Perhaps the most important conclusion of this report was that only remote poker should be regulated to the exclusion of all other forms of remote gaming. This conclusion was based on the finding that poker was the most popular form of remote gaming in the Netherlands.

However, the State Secretary in his letter of 19<sup>th</sup> March 2011 saw no reason to limit a future regulatory regime for remote gaming to merely poker. Marking a stark deviation from the stance of his predecessors the State Secretary favoured dismantling the monopoly based regime which permeates through the Act. Permitted forms of remote gaming would be defined by consumer demand; thus he foresaw a regime in which more forms of remote gaming would be regulated than just poker as the government had been advised. The desire for a transparent and non-discriminatory licensing regime was noted, as was the need for horizontal consistency across the length and breadth of the regulatory regime.

Resistance to such plans was not muted to say the least and opposition erupted during a debate in the lower house (*Tweede Kamer*) on 7<sup>th</sup> September 2011 which had been scheduled to discuss the then forthcoming independent sectoral regulatory body, the aforementioned Authority. A number of parliamentarians, from a spectrum of political parties, took the occasion to challenge the State Secretary on a number of points in relation to his plans to regulate remote gaming. By the end of the debate a number of motions had been submitted. Such motions are not legislative proposals, but as expressions of the preferences of parliament they necessitate a dedicated response from the State Secretary on the precise points raised therein. The most pertinent ones called for:

1. The Netherlands to take the "Belgian model" as an example when regulating remote gaming and link remote operations with a land-based licence.<sup>14</sup>
2. Prohibit banks from conducting business with parties illegally offering games of chance on the internet in the Netherlands.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Eindrapport van de Adviescommissie Kansspelen via internet, *Legalisatie van Kansspelen via Internet*, August 2010.

<sup>14</sup> Filed by Madeline van Toorenborg of the CDA.

<sup>15</sup> Filed by Nine Kooiman of the SP (Socialist Party).

3. Exclude operators of remote games of chance who illegally target the Netherlands from a licence in the future.<sup>16</sup>

Although the State Secretary responded orally to the motions during the debate in September 2011 his full response was delivered in a further policy letter dated 4<sup>th</sup> May 2012. By way of the same letter the State Secretary gave further shape to his vision for the future regulatory regime for gaming, including remote gaming. At his juncture it is worth noting that the cabinet established in October 2010 had fallen just over a week before the letter was sent, i.e. on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2012. On 29<sup>th</sup> May 2012 a list of issues considered to be "controversial" in the wake of the cabinet's resignation was passed by parliament. Topics deemed "controversial" would see any pending legislative work or policy documents being suspended until the subsequent cabinet took up office. The State Secretary's gaming reforms were one such topic and were effectively frozen until October of that year. Given the content of the letter of 4<sup>th</sup> May it was quite fortunate in terms of enabling broader debates to continue that in light of the resignation of the cabinet the letter was nevertheless published in the period between the fall of the cabinet and gaming being declared controversial.

Returning to the motions of September 2011, the State Secretary responded along the following lines in his letter of May 2012:

- The call for following the "Belgian model": This was dismissed and the State Secretary showed a strong preference for being inspired by an "open system" as introduced in Denmark, whereby there would be no cap on the number of licences but strict licensing conditions and high standards. Indeed, the State Secretary's comments included noting that requiring a permanent establishment in the Netherlands as a pre-condition for a licence for remote gaming would constitute a vulnerability in terms of EU law.
- Financial transaction blocking: Having approved this motion the State Secretary noted how forty parties had received cease and desist letters requiring that they cease offering services in the Netherlands on pain of being placed on a blacklist for the purpose of financial transaction blocking. Whilst having noted that some parties had ceased supplying to the Netherlands the State Secretary informed parliament that some, whilst disagreeing with Dutch government, removed their offer which was directed towards the Netherlands. They had done so by no longer offering their services in the Dutch language and ending marketing activities on radio, television and in print media directed at the Netherlands.

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<sup>16</sup> Filed by Lea Bouwmeester of the PvdA (Labour Party)

- Excluding illegal operators from future licences: The State Secretary approved this motion but qualified his approval by noting his intention only to exclude those operators who 'persist' in targeting the Dutch market.

From a political perspective the cards would rest on the table until after the summer with national elections taking place on 12<sup>th</sup> September 2012. In the meantime however the Authority which became operational on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2012 began to show its teeth.

## **5.The Gaming Authority and its Prioritised Approach to Enforcement**

Having become "live" on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2012 it was generally expected that in terms of enforcement the Authority would adopt the blacklisting approach undertaken up until then by the Ministry of Security and Justice. However, the Authority took the two conditions referred to by the State Secretary in his letter of 4<sup>th</sup> May 2012 and with adding a third condition developed their so-called "prioritisation criteria". The third condition was that operators of remote gaming services could not use a .nl extension. This enforcement policy was set out in a press release on 8<sup>th</sup> June 2012.<sup>17</sup>

Essentially the Authority was taking a rather pragmatic approach to enforcing the prohibition on unlicensed gaming as embodied in Article 1(a) of the Act. When setting out its approach to enforcement the Authority noted that it was restricted in terms of capacity and therefore would prioritise its enforcement of the prohibition by targeting those operators which directly target the Dutch market. Therefore, should an operator satisfy at least one of the three following criteria it would run the risk of triggering the Authority to undertake enforcement measures:

1. Offering games of chance through a website which ends with a .nl extension;
2. Offering games of chance through a website which can be consulted in the Dutch language;
3. Advertising which is directed at the Netherlands via radio, television and print media.

Upon the Authority finding a website which contravenes one of these criteria the press release stated that it would give an operator a reasonable period of time to adjust the website in question so as not to meet any of the prioritisation criteria. Failure of an operator to make the necessary adjustments would result in the Authority commencing enforcement measures. It must be noted

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<sup>17</sup> Gaming Authority, *Aanpak illegale kansspelwebsites* ('Tackling Illegal Gaming Websites'), available in Dutch at <http://www.kansspelautoriteit.nl/nieuws/alle-nieuwsberichten/aanpak-illegale/>.

that those websites which did not satisfy any of the three prioritisation criteria were not suddenly legalised by complying with this approach as they remained in breach of Article 1(a) of the Act.

Subsequently on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2012 the Authority published a further press release in which it noted that of more than half of the 40 operators which it contacted in light prioritisation criteria complied or indicated that they would comply with the Authority's request.<sup>18</sup> Consequently, the Authority estimated that between 60% and 80% of the Dutch remote market complied with its request. This should not be read as understanding that the market shrunk by this percentage range but rather that operators became compliant with the Authority's criteria.

Moreover, the October 2012 press release illustrates how the Authority views the prioritisation criteria; as a means to help manage the transitional phase until a regulatory regime is introduced. The press release describes the criteria as part of a "broader policy" which seeks to protect public interest objectives whilst viewing those operators who comply with the criteria as recognising their social responsibilities and indicating their desire to be regulated. Quite suggestively the Authority referred to this situation as separating the "wheat from the chaff", although there are currently no legislative proposals available which indicate the conditions upon which future remote gaming licences will be awarded.

On 28<sup>th</sup> January 2013 the Authority played host to a large swathe of the international remote gaming community, along with local undertakings eyeing up the future market, when it hosted a "Meet & Greet" session with the sector. In a press release of 21<sup>st</sup> January the Authority publically announced this meeting in terms of establishing a good relationship with the market having been inspired by the approach of their Danish peers.<sup>19</sup> It was stated that the purpose of the meeting was to exchange information and ideas and explicitly not to determine policy or make agreements with parties regarding the award of licences. Indeed the Authority felt the need to stress that the State Secretary is responsible for gaming policy and legislation, including the introduction of a licensing framework for the sector. Two days after the meeting another press release was published in which the Authority recalled a shopping list of topics which were discussed with

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<sup>18</sup> Gaming Authority, *Kansspelautoriteit: actieve aanpak illegale kansspelen via internet werkt* ('Gaming Authority: active approach to illegal gaming via the internet works'), available in Dutch at <http://www.kansspelautoriteit.nl/nieuws/alle-nieuwsberichten/persbericht/>.

<sup>19</sup> Gaming Authority, *Meet & Greet kansspelautoriteit met aanbieders online-kansspelen* ('Meet & Greet Gaming Authority with operators of online gaming'), available in Dutch at <http://www.kansspelautoriteit.nl/nieuws/alle-nieuwsberichten/meet-greet/>.

operators who comply with its prioritisation criteria.<sup>20</sup> The Authority was upbeat about this meeting noting that the "meeting and dialogue with the sixty eight participants was particularly well received". A follow-up meeting is currently being scheduled for May 2013 during which the bill for remote gaming will be discussed but this time in the company of representatives of the land-based incumbents.

The willingness of the Authority to meet with operators who are currently unlicensed in the Netherlands, but who hope to become so in the future, was seemingly not well received by all those with an interest in the topic. On the day of the "Meet & Greet" parliamentary questions were submitted by a member of the Labour Party which sought to challenge the State Secretary on the current enforcement policy of the Authority, i.e. the use of the prioritisation criteria in enforcing the prohibition on unlicensed gaming.<sup>21</sup> In theory the State Secretary should answer these parliamentary questions by early spring.

## **6.National Elections, the Coalition Agreement and a Look Towards the Future**

National elections to elect a new government following the collapse in April 2012 took place on 12<sup>th</sup> September of the same year and resulted in considerable gains for the VVD and the Labour Party. These two parties were able to form a government on the basis of a two-party coalition. Once it had become clear that these two parties would attempt to form a coalition the following weeks were spent defining the contours of what this cabinet would do whilst in office. Eventually on 29<sup>th</sup> October 2012 the "Coalition Agreement" was published in which their programme for office was set out.<sup>22</sup> Many important references were made in relation to gaming, and particularly remote gaming, and these provide the State Secretary with a firm foundation to proceed with reforming the regulatory landscape for gaming.

Central to the gaming related provisions within the agreement was the clear drive to "modernise" policy noting that remote gaming will be strictly regulated so as to reduce the illegal offer of gaming in the Netherlands. It is worthwhile recalling that all remote gaming available in the

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<sup>20</sup> Gaming Authority, *Kansspelautoriteit maakt kennis en deelt ervaringen met aanbieders internetkansspelen* ('Gaming Authority gets to know and shares experiences with operators of internet gaming'), 30<sup>th</sup> January 2013 available in Dutch at <http://www.kansspelautoriteit.nl/nieuws/alle-nieuwsberichten/kansspelautoriteit-7/>.

<sup>21</sup> Vraagnummer 2013Z01489, Vragen van het lid Mei Li Vos (PvdA) aan de staatssecretaris van Veiligheid en Justitie over de aanpak van illegale aanbieders van kansspelen op internet (ingezonden 28 januari 2013) (Questions from member Mei Li Vos (PvdA) to the State Secretary of Security and Justice regarding tackling illegal operators of games of chance via the internet (submitted 28<sup>th</sup> January 2013)).

<sup>22</sup> "Bruggen slaan", Regeerakkoord VVD - PvdA, 29 oktober 2012.

Netherlands is, at present, illegal. Furthermore, and whilst the privatisation of *Holland Casino* has reared its head a number of times in recent years, this government noted that it would be "sold subject to conditions" because "supplying gambling is not a core task of the government".

Prior to the *Betfair* ruling there was already some willingness to open up the licence award procedure for semi-permanent licences to an open and competitive procedure through applying the duty of transparency.<sup>23</sup> As discussed above, the monopolies in question could be maintained if the relevant licensees were brought under "strict control" but instead of making it policy to do so the State Secretary committed to opening up all of the lottery licences to competition. Indeed the Coalition Agreement commits the government to ending the "under hand way" in which such licences are awarded by introducing a transparent procedure for lottery licences by 2015. A little surprisingly this includes the licence for the *Staastloterij* which is currently operated pursuant to a permanent licence.

Those with an interest in a future Dutch remote market were particularly ruffled by the prospect of a 29% gambling tax, as a means of generating €31m per annum.<sup>24</sup> However, this tax rate has to be seen in light of the fact that a Coalition Agreement only sets out a new government's plans which of course are subject to debate in parliament and the public sphere more broadly. Moreover it was widely understood that the State Secretary himself was not in favour of such a high rate of taxation and a number of incumbent operators were likewise unhappy with it. Such a high rate of taxation would have a real danger of undermining the objective of channelling Dutch players to the services of future local licensees if operators are deterred from entering the market in the first place, and those who do are unable to satisfy consumer demand.

The fact that this tax rate finds disfavour with the incumbents and remote sector alike is evidenced by the so "sector proposal" which was concluded in November 2012 by the Dutch incumbents, the slot machine sector as represented by their association the "VAN" and two international remote operators, namely PokerStars and Betfair.<sup>25</sup> In essence this short document constitutes a common understanding between the incumbent offline operators and the remote sector. In relation to taxation it states that the tax rate which is introduced should be in line with what is generally understood to be acceptable. This should help put pressure on the State Secretary

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<sup>23</sup> As illustrated by the policy note of 19<sup>th</sup> March 2012.

<sup>24</sup> Macadam, D. & Altaner, D., "Dutch Coalition Proposes Online Tax, Holland Casino Privatisation", *Gambling Compliance*, 30<sup>th</sup> October 2012.

<sup>25</sup> For further information see also Franssen, J. & Littler, A., "The Netherlands: a new face in the EU gambling family. The emergence of a Dutch gambling model", *World Online Gambling Law Report*, Volume 11 Issue 12, p.11, December 2012.

as well as his counterpart in the Ministry of Finance to agree to a rate which does not undermine the future regulatory regime.

Another common point of understanding found within the proposal is that the signatories do not want the aforementioned "Belgian model" to be replicated in the Netherlands which supports the position of the State Secretary and thereby is important at least for representing a shift in the mind-set of the incumbent operators.<sup>26</sup> Time will tell as to what degree of importance this initiative will take on in practice.

## **7. Concluding Remarks**

With a mixture of non-compliance with EU law and a pragmatic approach to enforcing domestic law the Dutch authorities are currently meandering their way towards regulating the remote gaming sector and overhauling the land-based sector too. A draft bill for enabling the regulation of the remote sector is due to be put out for consultation in the second quarter of 2013. This should give a clearer indication as to where the remote market will head but other parts of the broader programme of reform will follow with subsequent legislative proposals. Licences for remote gaming are currently estimated as becoming available at the end of 2014 or early 2015 which is the same year as when the reforms for the land-based sector take effect. It will be interesting to see how the next chapter of this potted history will read, particularly in terms of how effective reform of the remote market proves to be and how well 'joined-up' it is with proposed reforms in the land-based arena.

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<sup>26</sup> See for example, Macadam, D., "Dutch Slots Take Aim At 'Most Liberal Gambling Plans In Europe'", *Gambling Compliance* 24<sup>th</sup> August 2011 in which the slot machine sector shows a strong preference for the "Belgian model" through advocating that it should be introduced in the Netherlands, at least for a period of four or five years prior to further opening of the market.

## Seeking Help Online: A new approach for youth-specific gambling interventions

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Author(s) / Editor(s): Jeffrey L. Derevensky, Daniel T. L. Shek, Joav Merrick

Title of Book: Youth Gambling – The hidden Addiction

Title of Article: Chapter 11, Sally Gainsbury “Seeking Help online: A new approach for youth-specific gambling interventions”

Publisher: de Gruyter

Year of Publication: 2011

ISBN: 978-3-11-025520-1

<http://www.degruyter.com/view/product/129351>

A substantial proportion of adolescents and young adults gamble and rates of problem gambling amongst youth appear to be significantly higher than found in adult populations. Despite this, few youth seek treatment suggesting that traditional services are failing to help this vulnerable population. Youth are progressively active online and use the Internet for social networking, education, recreation, and increasingly, to look for help for health and mental health issues where they would not be comfortable seeking traditional forms of professional help. In recognition of this, Internet-based therapy and self-guided interventions have been launched specifically for adolescents and young adults in an attempt to reduce high-risk behaviours and increase program utilization. Research demonstrates that online therapeutic support is perceived to be acceptable and useful by youth. Furthermore, online interventions have demonstrated success in reducing smoking and heavy drinking amongst this typically hard to reach population. Given the success of similar programs, online problem gambling services are predicted to be effective in increasing youth awareness of their potentially problematic gambling behaviour and assist adolescents and young adults in retaining control and minimizing and reducing gambling-related problems.

## INTRODUCTION

Although typically seen as an adult pursuit, increasing numbers of adolescents and young adults are engaging in gambling and experiencing gambling-related problems. Studies from Australia, Canada, the US and UK that have assessed the rate of problem gambling among adolescents (aged 12-17 years) report rates of problem gambling typically 2-3 times that found in adults (1-4). Young adults aged 18-24 also appear to have significantly more gambling-related problems than any other adult age cohort (5-7). Gambling amongst youth is particularly disconcerting as young gamblers are more likely to engage in alcohol and drug use and abuse/dependence, develop significant psychiatric problems including pathological gambling, substance use and mood disorders (8).

Despite the high rates of problem gambling amongst youth, this age group rarely acknowledge their problems or seek treatment. One reason for this is that young gamblers do not typically suffer life-changing experiences, such as losing one's house, job, or spouse, that are often associated with problem gambling given that they do not have these to lose. However, youth gamblers may still experience significant psychosocial problems including financial losses, anxiety, guilt or depression, disruption and neglect of work, school, and relationships, lost opportunities and engagement in illegal activities (9).

Reluctance to seek help is not limited to young problem gamblers; however, young people have specific barriers when it comes to accessing mental health services (10). These include both structural barriers including time, costs, and travel, and personal barriers such as being overwhelmed by unfamiliar issues, lack of confidence in seeking help, or not recognizing the extent of their problem. Further, adolescents often prefer to seek help from non-professional resources, such as family and friends, rather than formal professional support including school counsellors and mental health professionals (11). The reluctance to seek help may be particularly significant amongst boys. A survey of young male callers to the Australian Kids Help Line found that although nearly half (49%) wanted to discuss their emotional experiences, they were concerned that people would react negatively, and that they would be seen as weak or judged as 'crazy' or 'uncool'(12).

Reflecting the apparent failure of traditional treatment programs to recruit clients in need of help, a survey of international experts and attendees at a US problem gambling conference ranked 'treatment issues' as being the most important area for future research to address (13). Within this priority area, improving treatment attendance and service utilisation and developing manualized treatments were identified as the most important research topics. Subsequently, it is important that new interventions be developed that are accessible to adolescents and young adults and utilised by this population.

Interest in online therapeutic interventions has gained momentum with the emergence of increasing research that online programs for health and mental health problems, including addictions, have efficacy equal to or better than traditional programs including face-to-face therapy and brief interventions and educational and self-help options, particularly for motivated individuals and those with moderate or less severe difficulties (14-19). The current chapter discusses the feasibility of utilising online therapeutic support for helping young people experiencing gambling issues. There are currently a number of youth focused informational websites aimed at preventing gambling-related harms (e.g., [www.friends4friends.ca](http://www.friends4friends.ca) and [www.wannabet.org](http://www.wannabet.org)). However, there are

currently no active interventions specifically dealing with gambling for youth that involve interactive self-help programs including personalised feedback or Internet-based interactions with therapists or peers through email, chat or discussion forums. Subsequently, evidence from the fields of alcohol and tobacco cessation is examined to inform the development of such programs.

### **Internet use**

Results from the Pew Internet and American Life Project show that in 2007-2008, 93% of American teenagers between the ages of 12 and 17 reported using the Internet, an increase from 73% in 2001, and in 2010, 95% of those aged 18 to 29 years reported using the Internet (20-22). Thirty-seven percent of the respondents indicated that they used email, instant messaging, and/or chat rooms to discuss subject matter that they would not have discussed with someone in person (22). Similar access rates have been found worldwide with a survey of adolescents in 13 countries observing that 100% of 12-14 year olds reported having Internet access in the UK, followed by 98% in the Czech Republic, 96% in Macau, and 95% in Canada (23). Even in countries with the least Internet access, usage was still common with 70% of adolescents in Hungary and Singapore reporting regular Internet use. In a similar study of 9 to 19 year olds in the United Kingdom, 47% of adolescents used email, chat or instant messaging and users indicated that talking to people online was the same or more satisfying as talking to people in real life (24) demonstrating the high comfort levels that adolescents have with Internet use.

The Internet is rapidly becoming a major source of health information for adolescents and young adults (25-26). Youth regard the Internet as appealing as it is an accessible and anonymous method of seeking help (25, 27). For example, a study by Mission Australia (28) found that young people aged 11–19 years rated the Internet as the fourth most important source of advice and support after friends, parents and relatives/family friends. Furthermore, Kids Help Line client data reveals that compared to telephone support, young people are five times more likely to seek help for mental health concerns, three times more likely to seek help about suicide and eating behavior issues, and twice as likely to seek help for self image, sexual orientation and sexual assault online (29). Similarly, amongst older teenagers (15-17 years old), 21% reported searching the Internet for information on sensitive subjects, which they found difficult to talk about face-to-face (30).

### **Rationale for internet therapy and online interventions**

High rates of Internet use amongst adolescents, young adults and college students (31), have prompted trials of online interventions for smoking and alcohol use. There are several reasons that make online interventions potentially advantageous in seeking to treat high-risk behaviours amongst youth. Firstly, the confidentiality and nonjudgmental quality of the Internet may increase the potential for youth to divulge personally relevant information, which may facilitate knowledge, attitude or behavioural changes (32). Compared with paper-and-pencil questionnaires, computerized programs for young people increase self-disclosure in sensitive areas, such as risky sexual behaviour, excessive alcohol use, marijuana use, and family problems (33-34). The anonymity

and accessibility of the Internet may allay young people's concerns about seeking help, especially their fears about being personally identifiable (35-36), which is particularly important for interventions for illegal activities such as underage gambling.

A further advantage of online interventions is the ability to assess a large and vulnerable population in a cost-effective and confidential manner and provide relevant resources to those in need. For those without Internet access in their homes, websites can be easily accessed from computers in schools, colleges, libraries and Internet cafes. Adolescents and young adults can complete online screening questionnaires in private and at their convenience and receive automatic and personalised feedback to determine their need for further intervention and be directed to relevant resources. There is evidence that brief online feedback that sets an individuals' gambling behaviour against social norms is perceived as being useful for non-problem and problem gamblers and may encourage behavioural change (37). Although youth may be sceptical about discussing high-risk and illegal behaviours with a health practitioner, parent, or other adult, they are nevertheless interested in how their behaviour compares with that of their peers (38). Online feedback interventions appeal to this curiosity while reducing apprehension associated with face-to-face discussions with a professional. Furthermore, research indicates that youth respond better to electronic feedback than to in-person feedback regarding high-risk behaviours such as drinking (39-41). Studies also report that adolescents find it easier to write than talk about severe and complex and emotional problems and that the anonymity offered by online interventions make communication easier and facilitates greater expression of emotions and interpersonal issues (42-43).

Internet interventions can be tailored to be made more relevant for the individual accessing it, providing customised information, exercises and support based on their reported problems, age, gender, stage of readiness and needs. This is particularly useful for problem gambling interventions given the variety of forms (e.g. electronic gaming machines, sports wagering, online gambling) and reasons for gambling (e.g., risk-taking, excitement, boredom, social pressure, emotional escape). Tailoring program content is more likely to be read, remembered, and viewed as personally relevant (44-45), which may ultimately increase program utilisation and effectiveness.

Internet-based interventions also enable users to control their learning environment, move at their own pace, and receive information on demand (46). This may encourage youth to access the interventions at a time convenient to them and when they are at the appropriate stage of readiness for change. The convenience of online programs allows youth to access therapeutic support from professionals or peers at any time if they need advice, counselling, or have questions. There is also less stigmatisation associated with online counselling, as no one knows that the individual is seeking help, in contrast to meetings with school counsellors or other professionals. Online programs overcome barriers to traditional treatment including geographical isolation, inability to attend individual or group sessions due to timing, transportation or conflicting commitments, fears of stigmatisation and/or privacy concerns.

## **Internet therapy and online interventions for adolescents**

Interventions for adolescents concerning high-risk behaviours are very important as this is a critical developmental period in which behavioural experimentation occurs, peer pressure is high, and maladaptive behavioural patterns can be formed. Although research is still emerging, there is increasing evidence to support the use of online interventions for youth during this difficult period of emerging adulthood. In one large-scale study, 17,000 year 10 students from South Australia were surveyed about their use of the Internet to seek counselling and advice for personal problems (47). The results revealed that the adolescents surveyed were seeking help from the Internet at the same rate they sought help from other mental health professionals such as school counsellors, psychiatrists and psychologists. The authors commented on the particular benefit of Internet therapy for teenage boys, who used the Internet as much as females, but are much less likely to seek help in person. This hypothesis is supported by further research demonstrating that about one in three adolescents were more able to self-disclose online than offline (48).

Kids Help Line ([www.kidshelp.com.au](http://www.kidshelp.com.au)) is a free confidential 24-hour online counselling service (provided in real-time, chat-based text exchange) specifically for Australians aged between five and 18 (typically used by adolescents). Online focus groups reported that the online environment was less confronting than traditional forms of counselling, with responses indicating that it was less “intimidating” and “scary”, that counsellors wouldn’t think they were “weird” and couldn’t see if they cried (11). Additional advantages included privacy issues, particularly that they would not be overheard, and being able to take time in writing replies, which increased feelings of control and comfort with the counselling process. Participants indicated that they were comfortable with text communication and felt online counsellors were more supportive than telephone counsellors. A study of Kids Help Line (49) directly compared one online counselling session with one telephone counselling session. Significant pre-existing differences were found between the groups as the online counselling group contained significantly more females, were older and reported high pre-counselling distress compared with the telephone counselling group. The higher distress levels were consistent with reported internal findings that young people using online counselling are more likely to be coded with mental health problems, suicidality, and sexual abuse than youth seeking telephone support. Although both interventions had a substantial positive overall effect on distress levels, telephone counselling had a much more substantial impact than online counselling. Telephone counselling also generated greater therapeutic alliance, lower resistance, and higher collaboration as compared to online counselling, however, these variables did not predict counselling outcomes. The authors’ hypothesized that while the duration of the telephone and online sessions were equivalent, due to the time involved with composing and typing messages, youth using the telephone were able to address their problems more effectively because of the greater speed and efficiency of communication. The authors argue that increasing the duration of online sessions would likely enhance the impact of this form of intervention.

Internet interventions may act as an adjunct to existing programs for adolescents to reduce risky behaviours. A trial of a web-based high school smoking cessation program included a specially designed web site for adolescents, along with proactive phone calls from the group facilitator to the

participant (50). Significant positive effects were found for the online intervention with 57% of participants reporting visiting the website, which was rated positively on several dimensions. Most importantly, website utilisation was associated with positive smoking cessation outcomes. In contrast, proactive phone calls failed to increase cessation rates or abstinence, which may have occurred because it was difficult to reach the adolescents and engage them in conversation at the time of the call, and in their home where they may be overheard.

An important component of online interventions can include tailored emails that provide personalised feedback, relevant cognitive and behavioural strategies and promote self-efficacy. Classroom-based web-assisted tobacco interventions found high school student smokers who participated in an interactive smoking cessation online program and received tailored emails were significantly more likely to reduce their intentions to smoke and were more resistant to cigarette use at 6-month follow-up than those in a control condition (51). The intervention also significantly reduced the likelihood of cigarette use by non-smokers. Similarly, promising outcomes have been demonstrated with a “virtual world chat room” for adolescent smoking cessation. The Internet therapy program allows young smokers to interact with a trained cessation counsellor and other teen smokers in a real-time “virtual world”. In a randomised controlled trial, smokers participated in 45-minute sessions weekly for seven weeks (52). Those who participated in the online program were significantly more likely than controls to report weekly abstinence, reduced smoking and quit rates at the conclusion of the program. Only the number of times quit was statistically significant at the one-year follow-up, suggesting booster sessions may be necessary to increase program effectiveness. Participants rated the intervention positively in terms of its ease of use, appeal and usefulness; however, only 9% logged on to receive all seven sessions with most participants receiving three online sessions.

Less promising results were found for a home-based self-guided online smoking cessation program for adolescents, which resulted in no difference in abstinence rates when compared to four brief face-to-face therapy sessions (53). Adolescents were randomly allocated to conditions, regardless of their intention to quit and although attendance rates were high for the brief office interventions, there was relatively low utilisation of the website indicating that it did not keep teenagers sufficiently engaged. The program attempted to use a non-directive, impersonal, patient-education approach, without professional guidance or prompting. The failure of this program suggests that online interventions may be more effective as an adjunct to face-to-face or online therapy, be coupled with reminders and prompts to use the site, and offer personalised, directive and interactive content and feedback to engage teenage smokers. Adolescents who used the online site made greater progress in reducing the number of days smoked compared to the face-to-face condition suggesting that the self-help site may be used as a self-management tool for those not ready to quit.

### **Internet therapy and online interventions for young adults**

As with adolescent Internet interventions, research is at early stages, but positive effects have been found for Internet-based programs for high-risk behaviours including smoking and alcohol consumption (54-56). Online interventions appear to be more appealing to young adults than

traditional programs. In an online survey of 1,564 university students, Kyprilidis and colleagues (39) found significantly greater support (82%) among hazardous drinkers for online interventions than for health education seminars (40%) or practitioner-delivered interventions (58%). Similar positive results were found in an evaluation of an online smoking cessation program for young adults (57) and Internet-based counselling services for general mental health issues amongst college students (58), indicating Internet-based therapy programs may reach a wider population of those in need of assistance, who would not seek traditional services.

A trial of an Internet-based smoking cessation program amongst young adults found participants were more engaged in the program activities, rated their treatment more favourably and had quit for more consecutive days at 3- and 6-month follow-ups compared to participants who received an in-person counselling session and traditional print-based self-help materials (54). The online intervention was introduced in an in-person session and consisted of a self-help kit, but was augmented by 10-12 counselling emails tailored to the individual. Participants were encouraged to reply by email to their counsellors with questions and comments, and to update their counsellors on their cessation progress. Emails were sent weekly for the first month and then monthly for the following five months. Additional emails were sent around the participant's cessation date. Although all participants received the same cognitive and behavioural techniques from the self-help guide and in-person session, those in the online condition were more likely to have adopted these and have made a quit attempt. The majority of participants (92%) read "most" or "all" of their emails indicating that this may be an appropriate medium to communicate with young adults. Another online smoking cessation program incorporated content of general interest to young adults, weekly reminder emails, interactive quizzes with tailored feedback, behavioural monitoring, peer-support via weekly emails from peer coaches, and weekly incentives (\$10 gift card) (55). Compared to a control group, participants had increased short-term abstinence rates. Although long-term cessation rates were not found, given that this study included participants who had no immediate plans to quit, an emphasis on taking breaks from smoking may encourage quitting attempts in the future.

Given the increasing availability and popularity of Internet-enabled mobile phones and the high use of texting among young adults, this technology has been utilised to disseminate information and implement smoking cessation interventions in young adult and college-aged smokers (16). Smoking interventions delivered via the Internet, mobile-enabled videos, and mobile phone text messages have resulted in 43% of participants making at least one 24 hour attempt to stop smoking and 22-42% abstinence rates at 6-week follow-up (59-61). Participants that continued smoking reported significantly reduced smoking rates and dependence (59). The amount of and timing of Internet- and mobile-based contacts appears to be an important factor for intervention efficacy (62).

Online interventions have also been shown to be effective in reducing hazardous drinking and improving attitudes on drinking amongst college students (32,56,58). Trials demonstrate that self-administered Internet-based CBT interventions that include personalised feedback with tailored motivational information about high-risk drinking are more effective in modifying attitudes and behaviour post-treatment and 3- and 6-month follow-ups compared to assessment only, educational websites, and interactive online interventions that do not include tailored feedback (32,38,56,63-65). Of significant note, these effects have also been shown for subgroups of heavy drinkers including women, persistent heavy drinkers, those who intend to drink heavily for a particular

occasion (e.g., 21<sup>st</sup> birthday), and those with low-motivation to change (32,65), demonstrating the usefulness of an online approach amongst a typically hard to reach population.

Importantly, brief online interventions have also been found effective for reducing high-risk behaviours amongst young adults (38). A trial of an Internet alcohol reduction intervention for college students found that students who completed a brief online screener for problem drinking and received personalised feedback found it easy to use, personally relevant and would recommend it to friends (66). The intervention prompted help-seeking behaviour, with 30% of participants accessing additional information on support services through the website. These results must be interpreted with caution due to the lack of information on corresponding behaviours. Westrup et al (67) found that despite positive interest in a self-help alcohol Internet site with personalised feedback, most participants did not report any changes in alcohol use, stress or coping, regardless of the extent of feedback they received.

Although some online self-administered programs for problematic and risky behaviours appear to have promising results, this new mode of intervention requires further development. A brief self-administered web-based program with personalised feedback delivered to college students led to less drinking at 6-week follow-up, but was not significantly different to printed material at a 6-month follow-up (68). Similarly, no differences were found in binge drinking behaviour 30-days following college students receiving a newsletter by email or post mail (69).

A systematic review of the published literature on computerised treatments for drug and alcohol abuse and dependence and smoking addiction found that the majority of studies examined incorporated self-administrated methods with therapist contact for assessment at most (16). These methods included interactive, multi-component websites and personalised feedback and analysis of studies demonstrated mixed results regarding efficacy of treatments. In comparison to programs with ongoing therapist assistance, the interventions with minimal therapist contact appeared to be more efficacious with gains maintained over time, suggesting that therapist contact may not be necessary to modify alcohol-use behaviour and related attitudes.

### **Internet therapy and online interventions for problem gambling**

Although Internet interventions are being increasingly implemented and evaluated to reduce some high-risk behaviours amongst youth, there is little empirical evidence supporting the use of online interventions for gambling-related problems for youth. Based on the evidence presented above, it is reasonable to conclude that Internet interventions may likely be an acceptable form of treatment for gambling-related issues and preferred to traditional face-to-face or self-help alternatives. Internet therapy has been introduced to treat adults with gambling problems in Australia, Canada, Finland, New Zealand, Sweden, Norway, Germany and the U.K. Although evidence is preliminary, positive results have been found indicating that Internet therapy, using self-guided interactive exercises combined with therapeutic support via telephone or email, is effective compared to wait-list controls, reaches individuals who would not otherwise present for treatment and is viewed positively by clients (70-75).

*Gambling Help Online* is an Internet-based counselling service available in Australia offering live chat-based counselling (24 hours a day, seven days a week) and short term (approximately 6 weeks) email therapy, branded as support. The site includes self-assessment pages for gambling-related problems and faulty cognitions, educational content, self-help information and strategies in addition to the therapeutic services offered. Analysis of the first 12 months of the online intervention found that first contacts were generally crisis-driven, and clients also sought help for relapse prevention, as an adjunct to treatment, to seek strategies and information or discuss another person's gambling problems (76). Although the program is not intended as a youth intervention, the highest proportion of clients using the chat services was under the age of 30. Further analysis indicates an age by gender interaction as the chat clients under 30 years of age were significantly more likely to be male, while those aged over 40 or 50 were significantly more likely to be female. For example, 85% of males with sports betting concerns were under the age of 30. Although young males were generally problem gamblers, they appeared to have significantly lower problem-gambling severity scores than older males. Analysis of clients seeking email support again found that males were more likely to be under the age of 30.

Problem gambling has a significant impact beyond the negative consequences experienced by the problem gambler. Families and friends also face significant negative consequences and require help and support. Approximately 16% of individuals seeking assistance from *Gambling Help Online* were family and friends of gamblers (76). In the first 12 months of operation, 47% of these were under the age of 30 and 19% reported being the son or daughter of a problem gambler. The high usage of Internet-based services by young adults, despite the availability of telephone and face-to-face support, indicates that online interventions are preferable to this population for help-seeking. This is further demonstrated by results from an evaluation of gamblers seeking help through Victoria's problem gambling counselling services between 1995 and 2000 (77). This study reported that clients were typically over the age of 30 and despite being the most likely to experience problem gambling, the under-25 age group was the least represented in treatment services.

There does not currently appear to be any online services specifically aimed at youth with gambling problems. However, a pilot project, conducted in Canada by the International Centre for Youth Gambling Problems and High-Risk Behaviors at McGill University, aimed to provide online help for adolescents and young adults with gambling problems. An online platform offered individual and group chats with various topics focusing on gambling and problems associated with gambling. Separate teen and young adult sites were widely promoted throughout Canadian high schools, universities, health care providers and in popular media. From January through June, 2007 the site had 2,161 different visitors; 4,102 visits; and 1,031,893 hits. In total, from inception (November 2005) through the end of June 2007 the site received almost 2 million hits. Although the website received a large number of visitors, and strong endorsement from the clinical and educational community, the number of adolescents and young adults who engaged in this service was minimal. Upon completion of the pilot project funding was not continued and the websites are no longer operational.

Although the pilot project described above was not successful in attracting large numbers of adolescents with gambling problems, those who did respond viewed the information and help as invaluable. Lessons from the development of online smoking cessation and hazardous drinking sites aimed at adolescents and young adults may aid in the development of a more effective youth-oriented online problem gambling intervention. Components of online interventions with some success include tailored feedback directing clients to relevant information and resources, interactive exercises and quizzes with automatic feedback, email reminders and prompts, email communication with therapists and content and formatting relevant to a youth audience (whether adolescent or young adult). Due to the apparent reluctance of youth to recognise the seriousness of their gambling-related problems, an important component of an online gambling treatment for youth may be an Internet-based assessment with automatic, personalised normative feedback. Receiving feedback on how their own gambling behaviour compares with their peers may encourage adolescents and young adults to consider taking steps to modify their gambling involvement. Furthermore, recruitment strategies can be used to encourage all youth to complete online assessments and these can be actively encouraged or mandated within schools and universities and by health care providers.

The absence of youth from traditional gambling treatment services suggests both the perceived inaccessibility of existing services for youth and the reluctance to recognise gambling-related problems (78). To overcome these barriers to help-seeking online support services may be used in educational settings whereby youth use the services as part of structured school or college class activities. In educational terms, the Internet is being increasingly used as a media for progressive learning that appears to have some advantages over traditional teaching methods. For example, groups of online learners can motivate and support each other's learning experiences. Such an approach can communicate gambling prevention information to youth, as well as information on how to spot the signs of a gambling problem and how/where to seek help.

Given the limited evidence on the utility of providing online support for youth gambling problems it is premature to determine whether such a program would be effective. However, based on the successful implementation of online interventions for other high-risk behaviours, this treatment option deserves further consideration and research, particularly given the success of this approach with adults.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Online therapeutic support services appear to have a great deal of potential to assist youth in dealing with gambling related problems given their access to and familiarity with the media and the anonymous capabilities of such services. This is evidenced in their use of online therapeutic support for other health related issues and high risk behaviours. In particular, this type of support may be one way that could potentially help to bridge the gap between the few youth that seek help and the much larger number identified as experiencing problems overall. Certainly, existing evidence suggests that Internet-based interventions do already appear to help youth reduce smoking and

heavy drinking. Furthermore, adult problem gamblers, who are often otherwise reluctant to seek support, have experienced positive effects of online gambling therapy. The key challenge lies in designing appropriate online services and communication strategies that will appeal to and be accessible by youth. Whilst at the same time, ensuring that youth are aware of both the problems they may face in relation to their gambling behaviour and the availability of such online services to assist them. Important design elements include ease of access (e.g. via emailed hyperlinks to a target population, hyperlinks on other highly accessed websites or easily searchable), reduced length, ease of navigation, non-judgmental language, brief assessments with personalised normative feedback, and tailored content where appropriate and links to other services. Programs should emphasise the anonymity and privacy of users by encouraging non-identifiable user names and anonymous emails to be used. Only careful attempts at engaging youth in this way will ultimately demonstrate the utility of online therapeutic support for helping youth overcome gambling problems, paired with evaluation studies to help further shape what does and doesn't work in this emerging branch of therapeutic support.

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# The 'Expert Witness' at Trials Involving Gambling Addiction

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## Introduction

This article deals with my experience as an 'expert witness' in gambling-related court cases, particularly those involving citizens charged with a criminal offence in the context of a gambling addiction. This review is aimed at gambling studies researchers who may be asked to perform this task. Included here is a discussion of expert witness duties and how they relate to the defense strategy. Also covered are issues associated with addicted gambler trials such as sentencing considerations. The paper concludes with reflections on the unbalanced nature of these trials; that is, how there is no mandated duty of care for gamblers and how governments and the gambling industry are complicit in encouraging a dangerous form of consumption, yet face no consequences in a court of law.

Defendants in these cases typically plead guilty to a non-violent financial crime such as fraud, theft or embezzlement. The expert witness's primary role is to provide the court with empirical information about gambling addiction, which the judge may be unfamiliar with. Other functions commonly performed by the expert witness are confirming the defendant meets the clinical criteria for disordered gambling; explaining how and why gambling can be an addictive behavior; and indicating how the offender's dysfunctional gambling factored in to committing the crime. The expert witness is meant to educate the judge about gambling addiction in hopes the disorder is seen as a mitigating factor and results in a lighter sentence. Seldom is there adversarial expert testimony in these trials because that would mean trying to show there is no such thing as gambling addiction, and/or if there is, that it has no bearing on the commission of the crime.

## Retaining the Expert Witness

The first consideration of the defense lawyer in this regard, is whether or not an expert witness can appreciably help the cause. The defense lawyer should make the client aware of the potential costs and benefits of employing an expert witness. Several factors are at play here, including: a) the cost, most addicted gamblers are short of funds and reluctant to add to their legal representation bill. b) The expert's background; will he/she qualify as an expert, can the expert witness articulate his or her knowledge effectively, and does the expert witness have the poise and confidence to withstand a tough cross examination? d) The expert's availability to prepare for his/her testimony. And e), the probability of getting a reduced sentence with or without an expert witness.

If an expert witness is required, the defense lawyer will look for individuals who have formal training and experience with gambling addiction. Typically these are university based gambling studies

researchers or gambling addiction treatment specialists, preferably someone who has been qualified in similar court cases and comes highly recommended by lawyers who have used them.

### **Trial Preparation and Performance**

The expert witness ordinarily conducts an in-depth client interview, and based on the interview, writes a report for the defense lawyer that is also provided to the judge and prosecution. The report details the defendant's relevant health history, his/her psychosocial context surrounding the criminal behavior, a clinical diagnosis for problem gambling, and perceptions of the client's behavior during the interview as to emotional state, feelings of remorse, steps undertaken to get one's life back on track and so forth.

The expert witness report should authenticate that the offender has a gambling addiction, assess the severity of the addiction, and explain how the addiction affected the offender's behavior. The diagnosis for a gambling addiction is usually made using the DSM IV criteria for gambling addiction and/or a widely accepted measuring tool such as the Canadian Problem Gambling Index. Beresh (2002) notes that this expertise can be essential to the defense strategy because often the conduct of the gambling addicted offender in perpetrating the crime is no different than that of an offender motivated simply by greed.

Defense lawyers often put the expert witness through a practice session, whereby questions that will be asked in court are posed, followed by an analysis of the responses. The lawyer's critique seldom centers on the expert witness's knowledge of addiction, but deals more with how answers are delivered and responder body language. Advice such as the following is common:

- "You're being too technical; remember your testimony is meant to help the court, you need to make it understandable to a layperson."
- "Counsel is looking for impartial testimony, biased testimony will be disregarded and hurt our case."
- "Don't respond too quickly, review the question in your mind, plan your answer, and then proceed."
- "Face the judge when responding so that your answers are clearly heard and understood."
- "Answer only the question asked, do not volunteer additional information."
- "Don't bicker with the cross examiner. If a legitimate weakness in your analysis is pointed out, don't try to squirm out of it. It's better to candidly concede the point."

Preparation for cross examination may also involve the defense lawyer asking questions expected to be raised by the prosecution. This scenario is often role played, in that questions are delivered in the manner of a hard hitting cross examiner. This rehearsal is designed to familiarize the witness with the courtroom atmosphere; deal with pressure while keeping one's composure; and expose any weaknesses in the defense strategy.

Prior to testifying in court the expert witness must be qualified. The judge and prosecution need to be convinced that the witness is indeed an expert; that is, has the knowledge, background or credentials to provide testimony that will shed light on the case. The expert witness may be asked to

document his/her educational background, job experience, academic publishing record, other times he/she has been qualified in court or any other relevant criteria. In general, the better qualified the witness the greater the perceived credibility. On the other hand, if the judge is not satisfied with the proposed witness's qualifications the witness may be excluded from the proceedings.

### **Defense Issues and Sentencing Considerations**

Since the addicted gambler client almost always pleads guilty, the lawyer has little choice but to argue the link between the addiction and the resulting crime. This approach was generally unsuccessful twenty years ago because the court did not view gambling as an addiction in the same way it perceived excessive drug or alcohol use. Back then, electronic gambling machines were new and few judges were aware of their addictive potency. Moreover, reliable scientific measuring tools were available to determine levels of substance abuse (e.g., blood tests and breathalyzers); whereas assessing gambling addiction is dependent on self-reporting. Because less exacting screens are used to detect gambling addiction, defense lawyers also use corroborating verification such as depleted bank accounts and retirement savings, maxed out credit cards, encumbered property and so forth. 'Gambling addiction' has yet to be accepted as a full criminal defense. However, since the widespread emergence of electronic gambling formats, which are known to induce irresponsible behavior (Dow Schull, 2012, 274); Canadian courts have lately been more lenient with EGM addicted offenders. Accumulated expert evidence over the past two decades appears to have helped soften sentences, as judges are now more conversant with how a gambling addiction operates and how it affects one's mental processes. (Beresh, 2002, 7).

The sentencing process requires a judge to deliberate on the nature of the crime, the context in which it occurred as well as any pertinent aggravating or mitigating factors (Beresh, 2002, 16). In determining an appropriate sentence, judges weigh punishment, deterrence, denunciation and rehabilitative factors while attempting to arrive at a decision that is fair, consistent and just (Allen Consulting Group, 2011, 16).

### **Types of sentences**

Sentencing varies in cases involving a gambling addict according to the seriousness of the crime (e.g., the amount of money taken, length of time over which the crime occurred, and who was victimized), as well as offender characteristics (e.g., degree of remorse, willingness to make restitution and receive treatment). The more serious the offense the more likely a *punishment and deterrent* sentence (lengthy imprisonment). The addiction may be seen as a mitigating factor, but the court has a duty to express the community's denunciation of the crime and provide a sentence that will deter other potential offenders. Taylor (2004) makes a cogent point against deterrent sentences for gambling addicts, in that, non addicted gamblers are unlikely to commit gambling-related crimes and addicted gamblers are by definition out of control and therefore likely immune to deterrents involving excessive gambling. There is also the consideration that sending a gambling addict to jail may worsen the situation; to wit, the offender may not get adequate addiction therapy, learn bad

habits from harder-core inmates, and find their outside life unravelling. For example, having no job means not paying restitution and there may be child custody issues for single parents.

*Rehabilitative sentences* known in Canada as conditional sentences are now more the norm for gambling addicted offenders. Conditional sentencing emerged in 1995 as a response to prison overcrowding and refers to non-custodial punishment for crime. The convicted offender, must however, meet conditions such as adhere to curfews, receive treatment for the addiction and perform community service. A breach of the conditions will result in completing the sentence in prison. Conditional sentences are common for property crimes where the judge feels the person is not a threat to the community—gambling addicted offenders are a good fit with this description.

### **Reflections on how the Justice System Treats Addicted Gamblers**

In my experience gambling addicted offenders are not what are commonly thought of as criminal types; that is, they hold jobs, have families, lead relatively normal lives and have had no prior brushes with the criminal law. Gambling addicted offenders rarely intend to commit crimes, in their cognitively distorted minds they think they are ‘borrowing the money’ (albeit without permission) until they win, in which case they will pay it all back (Allen Consulting Group, 2011). Their progressive and excessive gambling (all eight clients I have worked with had a preoccupation with electronic gambling machines [EGMs])<sup>27</sup> caused such financial and personal turmoil that they eventually resorted to desperate measures that ordinarily they never would have considered. To a person, these admitted criminals were embarrassed, ashamed and contrite. As an onlooker it was disheartening to see people who were otherwise crime free, drawn into a so-called “harmless form of entertainment” only to lose their funds, families, jobs, and ultimately, their self-respect.

Some facts about EGMs that demonstrate their addictive nature include: a) a major segment (70% or more) of the problem gambling population in a province say that EGMs are their preferred gambling format (Smith & Wynne, 2004). b) Only 21% of adult Albertans play EGMs in a given year, yet EGM activity accounts for 71% of the total provincial gambling revenues (Williams, Belanger & Arthur, 2011). Moreover, EGM players have 3 to 4 times higher rates of problem gambling than those who prefer other gambling formats (Williams, et al., 2011). And c), in Alberta a highly disproportionate share of EGM revenues (77% for VLTs and 72% for slots) is extracted from the 4% of the adult population that register as problem gamblers (Williams, et al., 2011, 110).

Canadian provincial governments have yet to accept moral responsibility for this troubling situation. While social responsibility measures have been introduced in an attempt to moderate the damage caused by reckless EGM play,<sup>28</sup> the measures taken have not been robust enough to make a serious

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<sup>27</sup> EGMs refer to both VLTs (video lottery terminals) and slot machines. Although the machines are identical they are distinguished by location. VLTs are found in premises with liquor licenses (bars and lounges), whereas slot machines are located in designated gambling venues (casinos and racetracks) (Smith, & Campbell, 2007, 87).

<sup>28</sup> Examples of social responsibility initiatives used on EGMs include: equipping EGMs with ‘responsible gambling features’ such as clocks, cumulative wagering totals, slowing the speed of play; capping and/or reducing the number of EGMs provincially, regionally or by establishment; abolishing retailer incentive systems

dent in the problem (Williams, West & Simpson, 2012). Presumably, this is because governments believe that strong preventive measures will reduce EGM revenues. Orford (2011, 180) challenges the notion of government promoted responsible gambling initiatives on the following grounds:

- The onus is on players to be responsible, not governments or the gambling industry. Problem gambling is seen to be the fault of the individual and not the gambling device or environment.
- Responsible gambling involves informed consumers; in EGM play there is no way of knowing what the overall odds and payout percentages are, let alone the odds of a given spin.<sup>29</sup>
- Governments are unwilling to question the nature and extent of gambling itself; it is taken for granted that the status quo is acceptable and where possible innovation and expansion should be considered.

Given this oxymoronic, not to mention ethically challenged situation; that is, governments and the gambling industry providing and profiting from an activity that it knows harms the populace it was elected to serve (Simpson, 2012). How can crimes committed by addicted EGM players be reduced? And, how can governments and the gambling industry be made more accountable for their role in furthering gambling addiction? There would be fewer addicted EGM players, and hence less associated criminal behavior if a) it was mandatory to use 'smart cards' with responsible gambling features to activate EGMs. These features to include pre-committing to money and time limits per gambling session; tracking player frequency of visits, gambling losses and duration of play to detect 'high risk' gambling, followed by interventions and suspension of play if necessary. A system that identifies gamblers in distress such as Schellinck and Schrans (2004) "taxonomy of visual clues" would save some EGM players from financial ruin. b) Low maximum bet limits; the Australian Productivity Commission (2010) recommended a maximum bet limit of \$1 on EGMs as the highest priority step for moderating problem gambling. And c), consideration given to eliminating bill acceptors on machines and removing bank machines from EGM establishments as these have been linked with excessive play (Dow Schull, 2012).

Certainly EGM addicts bear a burden of responsibility for their actions and must be answerable in a court of law. The legal system, however, must also recognize that just as there are problem gamblers, there are problem machines, problem gambling environments, and problem business practices. Accountability for governments and the gambling industry for abetting gambling addiction would be settled if a duty of care policy for gambling consumers existed; similar to what applies with the sale of alcohol. Governments continue striving to maximize gambling profits while disregarding consumer protection (Simpson, 2012), and as Dow Schull (2012) notes, EGMs are designed to addict;

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based on EGM yearly revenue totals; and allowing communities to vote on whether to retain or remove EGMs (Smith & Campbell, 2007, 93).

<sup>29</sup> A recent book by an addicted Alberta EGM player details her struggle with the Alberta government to learn the hold percentage for EGMs. Over years of telephone and e-mail inquiries and face-to-face meetings, the government refused to divulge the annual cash-in and cash-out totals for EGMs, information that should be readily accessible in its annual report. Through this back and forth the government insisted the EGM payout percentage was 8%, but would not reveal the hold percentage which was 30%; that is, over a year machines retain 30% of the total amount wagered (Jubenville, 2012, 75).

the objective of machine manufacturers is “to get people to gamble longer, faster and more intensively...to turn casual players into repeat players” (21).

Governments and the gambling industry are confederates in fostering EGM addiction. For example, when governments test new machines under consideration for purchase, “revenue per available customer” (REVPAC) is the gold standard (Dow Schull, 2012, 21). Hence, manufacturers are driven to supply machines that meet this benchmark. EGMs are not tested for their addictive potency because this is a non-factor in deciding which machines to buy. Machine testing focuses on whether the device is operating properly in terms of the technology (e.g., programming, special effects, buttons, touch screens, etc.); no determination is made of how player control may be affected. Obviously, independent and more rigorous testing of EGMs is required and machines that facilitate the addictive experience should not be placed in the public domain.

Considering the ‘hard core’ nature of EGMs, perhaps the format should be given a ‘dangerous rating,’ as is the case for certain drugs. Furthermore, frequency and quantity ‘safe limits’ for EGM play, beyond which it is deemed risky behavior, could be implemented—similar to excessive alcohol consumption.

Collateral damage is another issue not adequately addressed in trials where gambling addiction is a factor. The reference here is to blameless third parties victimized by an offender’s improvident gambling and subsequent criminal behavior. The offenders’ spouses, children and employers may undergo a severe financial setback as well as emotional stress, yet receive no compensation. For example, the husband goes to jail for embezzling \$200,000 from his employer to feed his EGM addiction. The wife takes on two jobs to support the family, the children need counseling because the father is incarcerated and the employer may lose his small business because of the actions of a trusted employee. The irony in all this is that the government has the proceeds of crime, as most of the stolen money was pumped into EGMs. Knowing what we do about the motives of governments and the gambling industry, is this a fair outcome?

Luck of the draw can be a factor in whether an addicted gambler is charged with a crime. Unless the amount stolen meets a threshold of say \$100,000, financial institutions such as banks, insurance companies, brokerage firms, etc. often do not press charges because they wish to avoid the associated negative publicity. The offender is quietly let go and escapes a criminal record.

The Canadian judicial system has begun to heed the advice of expert witnesses and accept gambling addiction as a mitigating factor in sentencing offenders who have admitted to committing non-violent property crimes. Social justice would be furthered if consumer protection legislation was applied to gambling and if precedent setting legal rulings spelled out the duty of care owed EGM players by governments and the gambling industry.

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# The Isle of Man Gambling Prevalence Survey 2012

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## The Isle of Man Gambling Prevalence Survey 2012: a comparison with the British Gambling Prevalence Survey 2010

This article summarises the findings from the first ever Isle of Man Gambling Prevalence Survey conducted in 2012 and provides a brief comparison of the main results against the British Gambling Prevalence Survey 2010.

### Background

The Isle of Man has a variety of *in situ* gambling environments which allow inhabitants on the Island to participate in a variety of gambling activities. These on island facilities include various betting shops and a large casino. As well as attending gambling establishments individuals are able purchase tickets for the UK's National Lottery and the Irish Lottery and are also able to access peripheral gambling activities such as slot machines. The development of easily accessible gambling websites has also provided further opportunities for individuals to participate in gambling. The Isle of Man Gambling Supervision Commission also provides licenses to over forty online gambling organisations and hosts a variety of other gambling related businesses each of which bring considerable industry to the Island.<sup>(30)</sup>

As a result of the increased number of gambling related businesses based on the Island the gambling landscape has changed and evolved over the last five years. 2010 saw the introduction of the Gambling Supervision Act which encompassed several regulatory changes and existing, previous Acts. This new Act was designed to manage the large and growing variety of gambling activity on the Island.<sup>(31)</sup>

The Isle of Man government's 2010 Gambling Supervision Act states that the regulatory objectives are:

5. (b) protecting children and other vulnerable persons from being harmed or exploited by gambling: and
5. (c) preventing gambling from being –

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<sup>30</sup> <http://www.gov.im/gambling/licenses/>

<sup>31</sup> Other acts include the Gambling (Amendment) Act 1984, the Casino Act 1986, the Gaming, Betting and Lotteries Act 1988, the Online Gambling Regulation Act 2001, the Gambling (Amendment) Act 2006

A source of crime or disorder,

Associated with crime or disorder, or

Used to support crime

As part of the implementation of this Act and in order to address the area of social responsibility and gambling on the Island the Isle of Man Gambling Supervision Commission commissioned an exploratory pilot study to begin to understand gambling behaviour on the Island. *Exploring the Prevalence of Problem Gambling on the Isle of Man* (32) explored the level of service provision, i.e. help for problem gamblers and their significant others on the Isle of Man by interviewing relevant and potential service providers based on the Island. As part of the pilot a series of recommendations were given, including consideration of a population study to further explore gambling behaviours.

The *Isle of Man Gambling Prevalence Survey 2012* was commissioned by the Alcohol Advisory Service as a result of this pilot. The study is the first of its kind developed explicitly to explore, document and further understand the gambling landscape on the Isle of Man.

## Method

Data was collected via a postal questionnaire which was sent to 4,000 randomly selected addresses chosen from the Small Users Postcode Address File. Of the 4,000 questionnaires sent out, 1,942 were included in the final analysis. After omitting addresses of ineligible households (i.e. business and unoccupied premises) the final percentage of returns represents an overall response rate of 51%. This was substantially higher than the response rate for the British Gambling Prevalence Survey 2010 which gave a conservative estimate of 47%. (33)

The profile of respondents were a near perfect match to the census data by sex, but there were slightly fewer responses from younger people and slightly more older people. To account for this and where possible, the sample was weighted. The IOM 2012 non-response weights were based on results from the Isle of Man census 2011. Primary useful demographic information from this Census is listed below.<sup>(34)</sup>

Resident population: 84,497

Number of residents over the age of 15: 70,459 (the IOM 2012 age criteria is 16. This has been taken in to account when developing non-response weights)

Male population: 41,971

Female population: 42,526

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32 Exploring the prevalence of Problem Gambling on the Isle of Man, A scoping Study (Askari 2009)

33 British Gambling Prevalence Survey 2010 , NatCen

34 Isle of Man Census 2011 Summary Results. Economic Affairs Division, Isle of Man Government

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Gambling Participation**

Overall, 78% of the population had participated in an activity in the previous 12 months (compared to 73% for the British Gambling Prevalence survey 2010). The most popular gambling activity was the National Lottery Draw. On the Isle of Man in 2012 69% of respondents had bought a National Lottery Draw ticket in the previous 12 months. This was 10% more than the same observed behaviour in the British Gambling Prevalence Survey 2010. Apart from the National Lottery Draw the next most popular gambling activities on the Isle of Man were scratchcards, (32%), other lotteries (19%) and horse racing (15%).

Other than the top four activities, the gambling activity men most participated in was private betting (16%). Apart from the top four activities, the gambling activity women most participated in was bingo (12%). Men over the age of 16 on the Isle of Man participated in an average of 2.1 activities in the past 12 months whereas for women it was 1.8 activities.

### **Gambling Participation – The Isle of Man Gambling Prevalence Survey 2012 in comparison to the British Gambling Prevalence Survey 2010**

In the BGPS 2010 73% of the population had participated in a gambling activity in the previous 12 months, a slightly lower figure than the IOM 2012 outcome of 78%. Both the BGPS 2010 and the IOM 2012 found that the National Lottery Draw was the most popular form of gambling activity. The BGPS 2010 reported an overall participation rate of 59% which was 10% less than the same participation figures for the Isle of Man (69%). The BGPS 2010 showed a higher rate of participation for the next most popular gambling activity, other lotteries, 25%, in comparison to 19% for the general population of the Isle of Man.

Population participation in the next two activities, the football pools and bingo elicited the same responses for both the BGPS 2010 and the IOM 2012 (4% and 9% respectively) whilst the level of participation for slot machines showed a difference of only 1%. Other similarities in response were playing poker in a pub/club (2%), spread betting (1%) and horse races (1% difference).

Men on the Isle of Man were 10% more likely to participate in the National Lottery Draw whilst women on the Isle of Man were 12% more like to participate. Similarly 28% of men and 36% of women were more likely to buy a scratchcard in comparison to the BGPS 2010 figures of 23% and 25% respectively.

The results for gambling participation by age were similar between the BGPS 2010 and the IOM 2012. The BGPS 2010 found that the highest mean, that is the group most likely to participate in a higher number of gambling activities in a 12 month period than any other age group was the 25-44 age group. A similar result was found in the IOM 2012 study. The BGPS 2010 also found a decrease in individual activities as the age groups increased, another trend seen in the IOM 2012 data.

The IOM 2012 cohort showed similar patterns to the BGPS 2010 with married and separated or divorced individuals more likely to participate in a gambling activity than their single counterparts. Similarly the BGPS 2010 found that single people were more likely to take part in a greater number of gambling activities and were less like to take part in the national lottery than their married counterparts.

### **Problem Gambling**

For the purposes of the IOM 2012 individuals considered ‘at risk’ of problem gambling were documented. Overall, 3.9% of men and 1.9% of women over the age of 16 on the Isle of Man were in the ‘at risk’ category for problem gambling (that is, scoring either 1 or 2 on the DSM-IV scale). 0.2% of men and 0.1% of women presented a score of above 5 which put them in the pathological gambler category. Overall, those who lived in a household as a couple were more likely to score on the DSM-IV scale (3.2%). Those who were unemployed and unable to work due to long term disability were the most likely to score on the DSM-IV scale with 7.8% scoring 1 and 2.5% scoring 2, putting them in the ‘at risk’ category. The most commonly cited DSM-IV category was a preoccupation with gambling.

### **Problem Gambling – The Isle of Man Gambling Prevalence Survey 2012 in comparison to the British Gambling Prevalence Survey 2010**

The table below shows a comparison between the IOM 2012 and the BGPS 2010. The BGPS 2010 data scored across the spectrum however this is not shown on the comparative table as only relevant scores are shown. Whilst the BGPS sample population was far greater than the IOM 2012 study, some comparisons can be made.

<b>DSM-IV score by sex</b>	<b>IOM 2012</b>			<b>BGPS 2010 (EXTRACT)</b>		
	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>0</b>	<b>95.9</b>	<b>98.0</b>	<b>97.0</b>	<b>93.3</b>	<b>96.7</b>	<b>95</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>2.4</b>	<b>4.1</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>3.3</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>0.1</b>	<b>0.5</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>0.5</b>	<b>0.8</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>0.2</b>	<b>0.1</b>	<b>0.2</b>	<b>0.2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.1</b>
<b>Bases (weighted)</b>	<b>938</b>	<b>970</b>	<b>1942</b>	<b>3791</b>	<b>3956</b>	<b>7747</b>
<b>Bases (un-weighted)</b>	<b>932</b>	<b>976</b>	<b>1942</b>	<b>3570</b>	<b>4178</b>	<b>7748</b>

Overall the total percentage of non-gamblers on the Isle of Man was 2% higher than the BGPS sample equivalent (97% non-gamblers in the IOM 2012 compared to 95%). The BGPS 2010 data showed a higher overall total score of 1 in comparison to the IOM 2012 (3.3% against 2.4%). The IOM 2012 produced far less variation in scores, (0, 1, 2 or 6) whilst the BGPS 2010, probably due to

the large sample produced scores across the spectrum. Scores were generally lower for the IOM 2012 than the BGPS 2010 equivalent with 3% of men scoring 1 against 4.1% of men in the BGPS 2010. Similarly 1.8% of women scored 1 on the IOM 2012 study in comparison to 2.5% of women in the BGPS 2010.

### **Attitudes to Gambling**

Using the following scoring mechanisms neutral = 24, negative = less than 24 and positive = more than 24 attitudes towards gambling were generally negative with respondents averaging a score of 23. Women were slightly more negative than men (22.7 for women against 23.7 for men) and widows presented the most negative attitude by marital status towards gambling with a score of 22.34. Individuals waiting to take up paid employment presented the most negative attitude towards gambling by economic status (21.21). Those who were already in paid employment were the most positive 23.67 although still leaning to the negative side of the neutral 24.

Taking into account a standard deviation of 3.16% and with a neutral score of 3, the average score for 5 of the items lay to the negative (less than 3) and 3 of the items were on the positive side (too many opportunities to gamble, sensible gambling, banning gambling). The overall mean for men was 23.7 and for women 22.7 with an average of 23. Bearing in mind a neutral view point of 24 this indicates that attitudes towards gambling lean slightly towards the negative. Women were slightly more negative than men over all (a score of 22.73 for women Vs. 23.68 for men).

### **Attitudes to Gambling - The Isle of Man Gambling Prevalence Survey 2012 in comparison to the British Gambling Prevalence Survey 2010**

Overall attitude scores were relatively similar. 23.7 for the IOM 2012 study in comparison to 23.2 for the BGPS 2010 survey, tending towards the negative.

### **Significant Others**

8% of individuals stated that they had, at some point in the previous 12 months advised a family member, friend or acquaintance to gamble less. Women were more likely to do this (9.2% compared to 6.9% of men). Women were most likely to advise a close family member whilst men were most likely to advise a close friend. Overall advice was most often given to close friends (56.8%). 7.5% of individuals stated that either a spouse or partner, parent, child or close relative had a gambling problem in the past. 16-24 year olds were most likely to have advised someone to gamble less in the previous 12 months. Those ages 75+ were least likely. 35-44 year olds were most likely to identify problem gambling in a significant other. 28% of separated individuals had advised someone to gamble less in the previous 12 months in comparison to 5.4% of married couples. Individuals who did not live as a couple were most likely to advise a close friend. Individuals who did live as a couple were most likely to advise a close family member. Those individuals who were unemployed and had long term disability were most likely to identify problem gambling in a 'significant other'.

6.9% of men and 9.2% of women; an overall average of 8%. Women are more likely to advise someone to gamble less. Of the 8% who stated that they had at some point in the previous 12 months advised someone to stop gambling 48% stated that it was a close family member, 26.8% stated another family member and 56.8% stated that it was a close friend. Note that respondents were able to tick more than one category; this means that the percentage groups may not add up to 100%. There is a significant difference between men and women with women most likely to advise a close family member to gamble less (55.6%) and men most likely to advise a close friend (72.6%). On average the most common advice group is the close friend category (56.8%).

When asked *'Do you feel that your spouse/partner, parent or child have ever had a gambling problem'* more women than men stated yes (5% for women compared to 2.6% for men). When asked *'Do you feel that a close relative has ever had a gambling problem'* more women than men stated yes (7.8% for women compared to 7.1% for men).

Interestingly the number of positive responses to the question *'In the last 12 months have you advised any family member's friends or acquaintances to gamble less'* decreased as the age group increased. 16-24 year olds are over twice as likely to have advised someone to gamble less in the previous 12 months than both the 65-74 age group and the 75+ age group (10.7% compared to 4.1% and 3.8%). There is a noticeable percentage drop between the 55-64 age groups and the 65-74 age group (a drop of 3.9% from 8% to 4.1%).

There are some differences in the types of people who were advised according to age group. Individuals between the age of 35 and 74 are most likely to advise a close family member whilst interestingly the two age groups at each end of the spectrum 16-24 and 75+ are most likely to advise a close friend.

Again there were significant differences in advice given by marital status. 28% of separated individuals had given advice to someone they knew in the previous 12 months compared to 5.4% of married or widowed respondents. Of the separated respondents most gave advice to a close family member followed by a close friend. Individuals who are married are least likely to give advice to another family member but are most likely to give advice to a close family member. Conversely those that are single are least likely to give advice to a close family member but most likely to advise a close friend. The BGPS 2010 didn't look at the role of significant others therefore no comparison is available.

## **A Sense of 'Women and Problem Gambling': Therapeutic Insights into Addiction and Treatment**

Liz Karter, Therapist specialising in gambling and women. Author of *Women and Problem Gambling* (Routledge, 2013)

We live in a world where it is now possible to find answers to most of our questions. Thanks to the ever advancing field of science and the growing enthusiasm for research, we discover, or, at the very least, identify areas of speculation regarding the reasons for the things which puzzle and trouble us. Even the most diverse aspects of human behaviour are rationalised, as we gain ever greater insight into our brain chemistry. As a result we have more ways to treat our malaise through medication and more complex treatment methodology. It is important to have respect for and to value the findings and advances of scientific research. Perhaps though we should also beware moving on so far and so fast that in doing so we lose sight of the fact sometimes the truth still lies where it has always done. There may well be some undeniably timeless existential truths, which remain unchanged even though we may advance scientifically and through technology, truths such as our feelings in response to fear, how we process loss, how we desire acceptance and love.

Our means of communicating and relating to each other have changed dramatically, but the reasons for our need to relate in our personal lives remain constant. The impact of being either denied the opportunity to make healthy attachments with others, either through absence of appropriate individuals, or because we fear the consequences of emotional and psychological intimacy, remain the same: we are isolated, we are lonely, we become anxious and depressed in the absence of a trusted other with whom to share the burdens life might pile upon us. We even need others with whom to share the joyful moments and have them reflected back. Alone, we are more vulnerable to seeking ways of coping which might help us to suppress our uncomfortable feelings, be it drinking a little too much to 'drown our sorrows', using drugs, prescribed or otherwise, to alter our emotional experience, or comforting ourselves through over-eating, or using forms of gambling which we find offer complete absorption, offering respite from our most troubling thoughts and feelings.

Since 2001 I have worked with both men and women who have developed problems with gambling, developing a specialisation in the treatment of women. I realise we often debate correct terminology for what has come to be known commonly as 'problem gambling', fearing to use the word "addiction" before it has been properly categorised as such. What I do know from listening to hundreds of women over hundreds of hours, is that, to them, a gambling problem *feels* like addiction. They are often in a position to comment from personal experience, having been addicted to drugs or to alcohol; they know the unmistakable signs of a seemingly uncontrollable and irrational drive to satisfy a craving at all costs, to get their fix of whatever they feel they need in order to get through another day. However irrational they know it may be, however much they know that the consequences will be that their life, and their physical, psychological and emotional health will be a little bit worse than before, for them this is a price worth paying. Life already feels so

intolerable that the time spent on the gambling experience enables them to switch off the spiralling pattern of over- thinking and the associated painful emotions attached to those thoughts.

In my therapeutic work I contract with my client to 'make sense' of their excessive gambling. Themes which constantly recur throughout the years of my clinical practice include isolation, loneliness, anxiety and depression. The woman who develops an addiction to gambling does not do so merely because of the availability of a female- friendly gambling product or because of a change in advertising policies since the Gambling Act (2005). Rather, she does so because she feels disconnected from healthy means of support for, and expression of, her feelings through close, supportive relationships. The pattern of cross-addiction that she reports lends weight to this theory as we often discover that although she has managed to change the patterns of past addictive behaviour, what does remain unchanged is the pattern and structure of her, at best, unsatisfactory and, at worst, painful or dangerous life outside the impermeable bubble of addiction in which she has sealed herself.

'There's always been something. I've been addicted to drugs, drink, then it was painkillers and now it's gambling. Anything to take the edge off, but I guess looking back I've had lots of reasons to want to escape my life.' (Woman in treatment, age 36 years, gambling online.)

When first seeking treatment, the woman may often be distracted from what it is that has been the underlying motivation for her gambling addiction by surface factors such as the level of debt she may be struggling with. She may be convinced that if she can just get that back under control she will be fine and she will then have her gambling back under control. She may also be very aware and critical of the prevalence of gambling advertising or the availability of products. She has, albeit unconsciously, managed to achieve her aim: to block out what the *true* reason for her excessive gambling is. Does it not make sense that she should attempt to do so? After all, it was because she experienced whatever she is avoiding facing as intolerable and imagining it as unchangeable that she lost herself in the distraction of gambling. My role as therapist is to facilitate the making sense of her addictive gambling behaviour, by gradually peeling back the surface layers which are the symptoms of debt and the gambling behaviour itself and to identify the underlying cause.

I wonder, if in our understandable quest to find ever more precise and complex reasons for problem gambling, sometimes we too inadvertently behave just as the woman entering treatment outlined above? We too can become distracted by the surface layer, on the symptoms of her gambling problem, and focus exclusively on the debt which is caused by gambling to excess. For example, a government report states that the children of addicts are more likely to grow up in poverty because of their parents' addiction (*Daily Mail* , 01,13). Could it not be that the stress and misery of poverty is a trigger for the mood-changing experience of addictive behaviour, including gambling addiction? We can be distracted by worrying about the nature and prevalence of gambling products themselves and become so busy trying to work out whether there is too much of this and not enough of the other, that we can lose sight of the *reasons* for her gambling to excess. When considering reasons for the increase in women gambling problematically rising from 0.2 per cent 0.3 per cent we surely have to take into account that recent reports claim that the mental health of women is in decline with three quarters of women having taken anti-depressants for ten years or more (Platform 51 (2011)).

'I have realised since being in this women's group, that if we weren't gambling, we would be doing something else. Drinking or something.' (Women's group member, age 46, in third month of treatment.)

Society is increasingly stressful, our families are ever more fragmented. There is less time for friendships and those friendships we do have are often of the remotest form, via social media. The Chief Scientist recently predicted that soon we shall be spending most of our time on line, blurring our identities and the boundary between the real world and the online world (Twitter 1.13). Findings from my practice indicate that we cannot separate the influence of society from addiction. How we think, feel or behave in relation to others is key to whether or not we are vulnerable to addictive behaviours.

This brings us back to the beginning of the article, when we touched on the value of sometimes keeping things simple. Often the truth lies in simplicity and for the majority of women who gamble problematically the reason for their addiction lies in one of the most simple and yet paradoxically one of the most complex areas of all: that of human relationship. Not having relationships and feeling lonely and isolated, or conversely having relationships which are damaging and destructive is an ever-present theme for women in my consulting room. Of course, here you might rightly say I am oversimplifying things and I do so to allow for the limitations of this article. Indeed there are many complex and subtle issues which are gently unearthed in the treatment process. Yet I maintain that my findings throughout my practice have been that significant difficulties in relationship with others, resulting in poor sense of self, lack of life-skills and relational skills, are almost always the core reason for a woman's gambling spiralling out of control. Gambling and other addictions or self-harming behaviours have been used as escapism, as a means of altering mood, as a means of feeling connected to *something* rather than *somebody*, of suppressing thoughts and feelings rather than taking the perceived risk of expressing in relationship.

From my clinical experience, I have learned that for the many women I treat with damaged ability to relate - bearing in mind that 84 per cent of women I have treated in women's groups since 2009 have been the survivors of child abuse or have experienced domestic violence - effective treatment methods for problematic gambling behaviour need a strong relational component, with the personal influence of the therapist being at least as powerful for change as the therapeutic techniques employed. Lambert and Ogles (2004) state that learning to relate, to build trust in the emotional, psychological and practical support offered by more intimate relationships are vital to the process of long term abstinence and to break the cycle of cross-addiction.

Over six years ago I established the first UK therapeutic group exclusively for women who were gambling problematically and have since had the honour of setting up and facilitating women's groups for all leading UK problem gambling treatment agencies. Now in my established private practice too, women's groups are still proving an invaluable addition to successful treatment outcomes with 82 per cent of women who complete the one-year group process reporting that they remain gambling-free one year after leaving the group. In the women's groups the members are facing what are often their deepest fears: revealing themselves as a woman with a gambling problem and risking what they fear will be the judgements of others, not only for the gambling

behaviour, but also its consequences such as debts, poor self-care and sometimes the neglect of their children.

By far the greatest perceived risk, however, is reported by the woman starting out in group therapy as that of being in close relationship with others again. If she finds the courage to remain with the group process, facing this fear in particular has a hugely positive influence on recovery, as, gradually, relational skills learned within the group are put into practice in life outside the group. This enhanced ability to relate greatly increases her chances of forming healthier relationships at home, in her social life and in the world of work. It increases the odds of her having support when life gets tough and, equally as important, of having a life which is a little richer in terms of being more interesting and enjoyable and a generally more pleasant place to be. It sounds over-simplified, but surely that is what we all seek? Does it not make sense that when we have those things in place we do not feel so strongly the urge to escape through picking up whatever might be our own not “quite so healthy” way of coping?

# Recollections of a Career in Gaming: Grand Bahama Island 1975

Chris Moore, Independent casino consultant

**This article first appeared in *Casino Life* magazine (December 2012) and is republished here with the kind permission of the publisher, Glyn Thomas, and the author.**

## El Casino, Freeport, Grand Bahama Island - 1975

I arrived in Freeport on a warm tropical afternoon in December 1975. The Bahamas was like nothing I had ever experienced. The warm breeze, crystalline light, rumbling ocean sounds and intoxicating smells combined to create an unforgettable first impression. The taxi ride from the airport revealed a series of dreamlike white sand beaches and spectacular, turquoise ocean views around every bend in the coast hugging road. I quickly reached the conclusion that I had arrived in paradise.

In the early seventies the Bahamas was one of the most sought after dealing jobs in the world. The island chain was home to two huge American style casinos, one in Nassau the other in Freeport. The customers and management were American, the dealers and supervisors European. All employees, except a handful of local cocktail waitresses, were male. El Casino itself was an unusual structure, designed with an incongruous Arabian façade and a huge American style interior. The gaming floor was crammed with a hundred gaming tables amid a sea of brightly lit, chattering slot machines.

Upon arrival our small group of new dealers were randomly assigned to one of only three casino games; Blackjack, American Roulette or Craps. Curiously we were all asked to state our age before being directed to a game, due evidently to a strange local rule, Blackjack dealers had to be 21 whilst Roulette and Craps dealers only needed to be 18. Once assigned to a particular game, we rarely dealt any other and promotion to supervisor was not an option for 5 years. Perhaps it was the monotony of dealing the same game, or the absence of any kind of career path that had led to the renaming of the casino by the dealers to "El Factory".

The unfamiliar art of generating tips was a learning curve that needed to be mastered quickly. As newcomers, our fellow dealers tracked our progress carefully in the knowledge that any underachievers in the tipping stakes would effectively lower their personal income. Everyone was expected to work unrelentingly to extract as much in gratuities as was humanly possible. Tips very quickly became the driving force behind every dealer's work ethic. Each time a tip was received anywhere in the casino, a loud announcement was made by the recipient, "for the boys". All tip money was collected, counted and distributed by a small committee of dealers that also ruled on such issues as compassionate leave of absence and dealer's sick-pay.

El Casino paid its dealers a basic wage of \$25 per shift with double shifts paid at the same rate. Tips in the summer season averaged around \$250 per week. Tips in the winter season averaged around \$500 per week. The cost of living was very high, with all consumables being imported from America. There were plenty of reasonably priced modern, resort-style apartments with community pools and sea views. Cars were an absolute minefield, all were imported and over-priced, most were dilapidated and unreliable. As a naïve, new driver I spent a great deal of money during my first year on a series of cars that looked cool, but turned out to be dangerous wrecks. In 1975 a pint of beer at the Winston Churchill Pub cost \$3 and an exotic local cocktail such as a Yellowbird cost \$5. Most of us smoked, nearly all of us drank. A typical dealer's average weekly bar bill would run to around \$150.

Whilst the tourist trade was very robust during the winter season, the casino derived the majority of its revenues from year-round junkets. It was an entirely new experience dealing to players that had flown in just for the night, to gamble, smoke and drink. Free drinks and cigarettes were handed out all night by the local Bahamian cocktail waitresses who, it was rumoured, took home over a \$1,000 a week. In the 1970's the only legal casino operations in America were in Nevada, leaving the entire East Coast as a catchment target for the Bahamian casinos. Grand Bahama Island, only 56 miles off of the coast of Florida, was a very popular gambling destination. Day junkets would usually arrive at the casino at around 7pm and head back to the airport around 5am. The casino's well-oiled junket program ensured that most gaming tables were busy most of the time.

As a dealer it quickly became apparent why the casino had been christened "El Factory." Dealing for most of the year was an arduous 6 day-a-week grind. As new Blackjack dealers we spent much of our time working in what was affectionately referred to as the "Iron Foundry." Consisting of a collection of \$2 minimum tables at the end of the enormous Blackjack Pit, it was so nicknamed because virtually the entire float on every table consisted of heavy metal dollar tokens. Customers kept their tokens in huge plastic slot cups. When they cashed out, the dealer would have to chip up the tokens that they poured onto the table, then cut them down and arrange them into stacks. After a double shift in the Iron Foundry your fingers would ache for hours afterwards.

There was a core Italian contingent that had been working at El Casino since the Sixties. They were a cool bunch of characters that had developed their own island lifestyle. They worked the same shifts as everyone else but instead of drinking habitually after work they rose early to take advantage of what the island had to offer. A few of them invited me to go lobster fishing with them one day. The trip turned out to be my first exposure to what the Islands were really all about. We met early, boarded their boat and motored out into a sparkling turquoise sea. Within half an hour we had reached the area that my new friends informed me was prime lobster territory. A buzz of exhilaration spread as the boat slowed and they slipped on their snorkelling gear. I was designated to drive the boat in slow figures of eight as they each grabbed a spear and slipped over the side. One behind the other they hung from loops tied in the long rope trailing from the back of the boat. As they spotted their prey they would signal for me to put the boat's engine into neutral. They would then dive down to 30 or 40 feet in chase of the lobsters scuttling across the seabed. Periodically one of them would emerge with a spiny creature impaled on a spear. We got back to the dock in the afternoon feeling tired but happy. They divided up the catch equally amongst everyone on the boat,

including the apprentice boat driver. For weeks afterward I ate lobster in every form imaginable, including lobster shepherd's pie and lobster bolognese.

As was normal in those days, the casino employed an array of older characters with colourful pasts. A charismatic supervisor recounted a story one night about an incident that happened to him when he was a dealer in Steubenville Ohio. A Blackjack player, who had been drinking and losing heavily all night, pulled a gun, pointed it at the dealer's head and pulled the trigger. His life flashed before him but miraculously the gun jammed and security wrestled the player to the floor. He smiled as he admitted that he had recalled the event every day since. He confided that the near death experience had simply instilled in him an appreciation of life and a fierce determination to enjoy every moment. Other characters shared stories about the early years in Nevada as the amazing town emerged from the desert and grew into the most magnetic gambling destination in the world. The place that had seemingly been the most compelling was Cuba in the 1950's. The few characters that I met that had actually worked in Havana at its peak unreservedly shared the opinion that it was the most amazingly exciting, casino environment that ever existed. Listening to their recollections, it seemed as though everyone from the customers to the staff and management were permanently embroiled in the most grandiose party on the planet.

In 1967 *Life* magazine published a dramatic expose on the "*Beautiful but Corrupt Bahamas.*" Eight years later the subject of the Mafia's involvement in the island's casinos was still a regular topic of discussion. I remember meeting a charming older woman who owned the apartment above where we were staying in Lucaya Beach. Over a few cocktails one evening she recounted to us how she had spent a very pleasant evening ten years earlier, only a stone's throw down the beach, with Mayer Lansky. Lansky was a legendary Mafia boss who had developed the Mob's casino interests in Las Vegas, Cuba and, if the rumours were to be believed, the Bahamas. Throughout my time on the islands, the subject of the Mafia's involvement in Freeport's casinos was a constant subject for discussion and heated debate. It was even argued by a small minority that the casino was still partly owned by the Mafia in the mid 1970's. Perhaps the rumours were true, perhaps they were not, but at least the discussions and debates were entertaining.

Early in 1977 a dispute flared up between the dealers and the casino owners. The owners tried to force us to pay a ten-fold increase in our annual work permit fee, even though our contracts clearly stated that the owners were responsible for the cost. They arrogantly and illegally cancelled our existing contracts and tried to force us to sign new ones. At midnight one Saturday night, the dispute came to a head when the owners summoned the first of us into their office and ordered him to sign the new contract. As had been agreed by all of us, he refused to sign and was fired on the spot. He came out of the office and drew his index finger across his throat triggering the entire dealing staff to walk out on strike. The owners reacted as expected and within a week we were all unemployed on a flight back to London.

On reflection I would say that the Bahamas was the toughest job I ever had, in the most idyllic place I ever lived.

## **The Importance of Good PR in the Casino Sector – An Australian Tale**

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The value of pro-active public relations policies as well as responsive customer service programs was recently brought home to me during a visit 'Down Under'. My son had moved to Brisbane, Australia, and I was anxious to see him, his wife, and my new grand-daughter. As I have written about casino history, law, and operations in myriad nations on six continents, I was also eager to visit the local casino and to learn its story. I had read that it was in the historical treasury building which dated to the nineteenth century, and was originally the structure housing the first government of Queensland Territory (now state). That building is now surrounded by steel and concrete behemoths that serve as the commercial center for all the north-eastern coast of Australia. I could imagine that the ageing Treasury building had been a candidate for the wrecking ball and I was anxious to find a story of how a casino had preserved a part of history—I was sure the details would make a great article. That is the story I wanted to write in this article.

On the first morning of my two week visit, I quickly arose, albeit slightly jet-lagged, put on my best clothes, consumed my white coffee and a roll, and headed out the door of my son's Southside apartment. I walked the mile up Melbourne Street past the Convention Center and Queensland Museum and across the Victoria Bridge, coming almost to the door of the casino. There I was greeted by two uniformed guards who smiled and directed me to the customer service desk after I said I was a professor who studied casinos and I wished to speak to a manager about the property.

I was carrying a copy of my *Casino Customer Service* book (written with Michele Comeau) as I approached a young man at a service window. I gave him my university business card, and I told him about my mission. He was quite friendly as he informed me I should talk with a certain member of the staff in the advertising office. He phoned her desk, but he was told that she was in a meeting and couldn't see me at that moment. I indicated I would be downtown for the morning, and I could come back. He checked and told me she would be busy all morning, but she would call me later. I autographed my book for her, and left it with the young man who assured me she would get it. I left my son's number and went about doing some sightseeing along the beautiful river front park area which was developed for Brisbane's 1988 World's Fair. I did not receive a call, and so, three days later I called the casino asking for the staff member and again indicating my mission, and that I had personally been to the casino and had left off a book for her. Again I was told that she would be busy all day and that she could not answer the phone or see me that day.

The next Monday, I decided to give it another try as I was near downtown visiting the art museum. I walked over the bridge to the casino customer service desk once more. This time I was greeted by another young man who seemed to have an altogether different attitude. He informed me that the casino did not do interviews for the media. I corrected him about my mission, and he reiterated that the casino did not do interviews for professors either. I pressed him just a bit, telling him that I had

written several books about casinos around the world, and he told me I might wish to talk to the director of personnel. I said that would be fine. He called her office, and informed me that she was not available that day. I asked if I could make an appointment, and I was told that I could only do that over email. I begged that I did not have a computer, and asked if he might do that for me from his desk's computer. He declined and he told me that four blocks away there was an email café I could use. As that was the best I could do, off walking I went searching for a computer and a cup of coffee.

I sent an email to the personnel director indicating my "educational" mission, leaving the computer address of my website which contained my biography, and requesting fifteen minutes of her time. Over the course of the week, I received no reply. The day before I was to leave Brisbane to return to Las Vegas, I gave it one more try. I emailed her office again. The next morning a few hours before my departure, I was able to check my messages one last time. She had replied saying they were too busy and would not have time to see me.

I can understand that people in organizations are busy. I hope they are. They are, after all, being paid to work. That said, I have personally visited at least 500 casinos in sixty countries. At these casinos I have talked with players, dealers, supervisors, managers, and even owners. When I am overseas, I am burdened with uncertain schedules, a lack of good access to telephones and computers, miniscule foreign language skills, and troubles figuring out maps. I have a simple strategy for my research. I carry one of my books, and I carry my business cards, as well as my passport. I simply go to the casino, and I ask if I may speak to someone—indeed anyone—who could tell me "about" the casino. Guess what—the strategy works. Quite often, in fact, the Las Vegas university business card "excites" my hosts. Rarely have I been refused the opportunity to speak to someone. In fact, I can remember it happening only one other time—that is one time out of hundreds of unannounced "house calls." That time I was in Nottingham, England. After my request was denied there, I was told I had to leave, and I was escorted to the door. The next year I read that the casino had been closed down by the government for various improprieties.

So what am I to think about the Brisbane Treasury? What am I to write in this article? I visited the local university and spoke with their professor of "gaming," actually recreational studies. His reaction to my treatment was expressed bluntly, "I wonder what they have to hide?" He told me that he had taken students on a tour of the casino, and they were shocked to learn that the casino kept no records on demographics of players, and that they had no marketing plan. He concurred with my observation (I did walk around the casino) that the casino seemed to cater only to local "downmarket" players. The lack of outdoor signage was a good indication that they did not seek out tourists. Two local tour books made absolutely no mention of the casino. A third book described the historic Treasury building in a major paragraph, then ended with words to the effect, "for a conservative town it is ironic that the building is now a casino."

I didn't give up on my search for some background on the casino. As I had been sent to an email café (by the casino), I lingered over the computer and searched for the casino on "Australia Google." Alas there was no history of the property. I did find two somewhat vague stories when I hit "Brisbane Treasury Casino." It seems a few years ago a young player hit a big jackpot, and proceeded to get inebriated. He and his friend then drove home, but their car hit a tree and one of

them was killed. Another story said that organized criminals and welfare recipients had engaged in a money laundering scheme at the casino. No more details. So what am I to write about this casino? I had thought I could have told a story similar to how the casino at Scheveningen, Netherlands had been authorized as a scheme to save the historic Kurhaus building, or how the establishment of casinos at Adelaide and Regina saved historic railway terminals from the wrecking ball, or how Deadwood's history was preserved by gambling halls. No, alas the story about a Brisbane casino is just a story about players getting drunk and money laundering, and yes—one other thing, the bottom line: it is very important for casinos to have proactive public relation policies and responsive customer service programs.