

Stakes are high for problem gamblers

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Credit: Marina Burity http://www.flickr.com/people/burity_/

(Medical Xpress) -- People with gambling problems are unlikely to identify as having a problem or to seek help unless they have experienced serious impacts or harms, according to new research released today.

Dr. Tanya Davidson the Director of the Centre for [Gambling](#) Research at The Australian National University is one of the authors of two new reports profiling help-seeking and problem gambling in the ACT.

She said that the first report found that less than 10 per cent of all people reporting problem gambling symptoms – and only 21 per cent of those with the most severe gambling problems – had ever accessed support services.

“In addition, our study determined that nearly a quarter of people reporting problem gambling symptoms identified as having problems, but had never accessed help,” she said. “This demonstrates that we need to better understand the experiences and views of people developing gambling problems to ensure that early intervention strategies are attractive and appropriate.

“We also found that people were more likely to seek help for the consequences of their gambling, like relationship issues, money problems or co-occurring problems such as substance abuse, before seeking help for their gambling problems.

“Better identification and engagement of people with gambling problems who seek help for other problems may also provide opportunities for earlier intervention.”

Dr. Davidson said that the second report found that the highest risk of problem gambling was amongst people who played electronic gaming machines (EGMs) 100 times a year or more or who lost more than \$40 per week.

“This is the first study to investigate whether gambling on combinations of activities or specific activities increases the risk of problems. This takes into account the fact that people with gambling problems tend to bet on a wide range of activities,” she said.

“Other activities like gambling using the internet and playing table games at a casino, had a very high risk of [problem gambling](#) symptoms. However, the number of people taking part was small and the overlap with playing EGMs was substantial.

“The other thing that is new about our study is that we looked at how socioeconomic and demographic risk factors work together, and we

found that there was about a 26-fold difference in risk of gambling problems between some subgroups in the community. Younger men, for example, with low levels of education, who had never married or had a history of divorce, had very high risk.

“Knowing which population subgroups are most at risk is immensely valuable for adapting gambling education, awareness and harm reduction strategies and targeting them appropriately.”

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Provided by Australian National University

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