

Self-help not effective for problem gamblers

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(Medical Xpress) -- Australia's first guidelines for the diagnosis and treatment of problem gamblers highlight the importance of professional help for the thousands of Australians who struggle to control their gambling.

State Minister for Gaming, Michael O'Brien will launch the Guideline for Screening, Assessment and Treatment of Problem Gambling on Friday as part of the National Association of Gambling Studies annual conference.

The guide was developed by the [Problem Gambling](#) Research and Treatment Centre (PGRTC), a collaboration between Monash University, the University of Melbourne and the Victorian Government. It was based on a review of peer-reviewed research.

Recommendations emphasise the effectiveness of psychological interventions delivered by qualified health practitioners, such as cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), rather than self-help treatments.

Other recommended treatments include motivational interviewing, group therapies and the use of anti-addiction drug Naltrexone in some circumstances. The guidelines note that antidepressant medications should not be expected to reduce gambling severity in people with gambling problems alone.

Director of the PGRTC, Monash University's Professor Shane Thomas said the guide was developed for problem gambling services, practitioners and policy-makers.

"It's the first comprehensive, evidence-based guide for tackling problem gambling," Professor Thomas said.

"We expect the guidelines to consolidate current practices. CBT, the most highly recommended intervention, is already widely practiced."

The Productivity Commission estimated that 2.1 per cent of [Australians](#) have difficulty controlling their gambling.

The guide, which has been approved by the National Health and Medical Research Council, will be reviewed and updated every three to five years to incorporate the latest research.

An outline of the recommendations has been published in the [Medical Journal of Australia](#), ahead of the release of the full [guidelines](#) on Friday.

Provided by Monash University

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