

Gambling – Concurrent Sessions

Thursday 19 September
2.00 – 3.00pm

A potent business alliance: Gaming and gambling as a new addiction risk

Sean Sullivan, Research Director, Abacus Counselling Training and Supervision Ltd

Online gaming participation has expanded substantially over the past decade, both in supply and demand, accessible 24 hours a day, and normalised in children and young adults as the internet becomes an integral part of our lives.

Gaming harm has been recently recognised in diagnostic manuals, although access therapy remains limited. The gambling industry has become aware of opportunities to integrate gambling into gaming, while the gaming industry has identified opportunities to charge for items and skill upgrades.

Where a chance to win valuable items with uncertain outcomes is offered, the process of reinforcement can mirror risk found in gambling disorder. These include loss of substantial sums of money (albeit in small increments), excessive continuous gaming, stressors when unable to game, and mental health risk.

Because of the normalisation of gaming amongst these young gamers, awareness of harm may be low, while gambling harm may arise through chasing desirable items unable to be directly purchased or being offered tokens during gaming to spend on allied gambling websites.

Technology advances have enhanced risk, while harm from new addictions can be mitigated through early, proactive strategies. Addressing gaps in the Gambling Act, raising public awareness of this new risk, enabling gambling treatment services to address gaming issues, and brief screening of those affected by depression, anxiety and sleep issues can all mitigate this rapidly growing risk. A brief two-question screen may identify problems arising from gaming that may include unidentified gambling harm arising from a new gambling/gaming alliance.

Biography of presenting author

Sean is a psychologist and is the research director of ABACUS. He completed his PhD at Auckland University in the School of Medicine, focusing on GP interventions for gambling harm. He has published widely in the gambling harm field and was one of the original directors and therapist of the first gambling treatment service in NZ. He assists in training and development of the gambling treatment workforce, and also works with a client case load of people affected by addiction and mental health issues. He has taught gambling issues in tertiary institutions and participates in research.

War against Gambling – A South-East Asian client’s story

Choi Foong Kew, Practice Leader, Asian Family Services

In the 1970s, several wars broke out in South East Asia that created turmoil among the citizens of those countries. Hundreds and thousands died, and many families were torn apart due to displacements. How did those traumatic experiences affect a child who grew up to be addicted to gambling? This presentation relates the story of a client who had gone through the terror of war and did not realise that gambling had become a form of ‘comfort’ for him when he came to New Zealand. Through counselling, he developed insight into how those significant traumatic experiences of his childhood could be a contributing factor to his developing problem gambling behaviour.

Biography of presenting author

Choi Foong Kew is the Practice Leader of Asian Family Services. She migrated to New Zealand from Singapore. She is a Registered Practitioner with Dapaanz and comes with more than 20 years of counselling experience. In Singapore, she worked with the National Addictions Management Service as a Senior Counsellor. She obtained her Master of Social Science in Professional Counselling from Swinburne University of Technology (Australia). She is fluent in English and Mandarin, and also speaks Chinese dialects such as Fujian (Taiwanese), Chaozhou (Teochew) and Cantonese.

Trauma: Looking back but moving forward with the 5-step method

Bonnie Lovich-Howitt, Counsellor, PGF Services

In this presentation I will highlight and discuss the benefits of using the 5-step method with family affected by addiction to look back at trauma but move forward towards change.

“An important principle of the model is that living with a highly stressful experience, such as the impact of an addiction problem in the family, may lead to psychological and physical symptoms of ill health for the family members other than the user of substances.” (Copello & Velleman, 2010)

Step 1: How the problem affects you and your family: The sharing of Sally’s lived experience (as the mother of a gambler and methamphetamine user) and how this led to Sally becoming the victim of identity theft and a home invasion.

Step 2: Getting information: What information does Sally want or need? What additional information might be helpful?

Step 3: Responding to situations: What coping styles does Sally use? What are the advantages and disadvantages? How does Sally want to cope?

Step 4: Support: Support is crucial to recovery. It is normal to find that the people supporting the person in recovery feel alone. Who supports Sally? What new forms of support are available that could be beneficial to Sally and her family?

Step 5: Further help: This is an opportunity for Sally to identify any additional support and/or information she needs.

At the end of this presentation, I hope you have a renewed passion to work with family members within a structured intervention utilised to facilitate change.

Biography of presenting author

Bonnie is an accredited 5-step method practitioner. She has a Bachelor of Social Practice with a major in Counselling from Unitec and a Graduate Certificate in Health Sciences from AUT. Bonnie gained experience as a student working with the Problem Gambling Foundation of New Zealand (now trading as PGF Group) and Community Alcohol and Drug Services (CADS). She worked for two years for Odyssey House as a practitioner at Auckland Regional Prison's DTU. Bonnie currently works as a gambling counsellor for PGF Services in Palmerston North and loves supporting people to reclaim their self-confidence and develop resilience.