

TWO UP – WHEN AOD AND GAMBLING ISSUES CO-OCCUR

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Aim of Abstract: The aim of this symposium is to provide participants with the opportunity to explore the issues that face their AOD clients who have co-occurring gambling issues. Research undertaken by Odyssey House Victoria, the National Centre for Education and Training on Addiction and SANDAS shows that where AOD and gambling issues co-occur there can be significant barriers to addressing the gambling component of the client's problems. However there are also opportunities for AOD workers to address gambling as a co-occurring issue with beneficial effects on the client's AOD use, and vice versa. This symposium will describe the nature of the issues based on the findings of a literature review, explore practice implications through the use of case studies and finally present a new resource to support practice enhancement or change.

Nature of interactive element: This symposium will use a case study arising from clinical work undertaken with clients who have co-occurring AOD and gambling issues. The symposium will explore the client's issues, share the knowledge and experience of clinicians in the room and present a new workers resource developed by the project partners to support the implementation of targeted strategies for working with co-occurring gambling and AOD issues in practice.

Presentation 1 – Gambling and AOD – 'Same, same but different'

Introduction and Aims: Following the reassignment of problem gambling as an addictive disorder in DSM-5, this presentation provides a rationale for proactively addressing problem gambling in clients presenting with AOD issues. It includes an overview of the prevalence and harms of co-occurring gambling and AOD issues and some of the systemic barriers to addressing this co-occurrence.

Methods / Approach: Findings from a literature review will be presented.

Key Findings: Co-occurring problem gambling and substance abuse have high prevalence in Australia. In addition co-occurring mental health issues are also proportionally higher than in the general population. The harms associated with problem gambling are significant, affecting psychological, social, financial and other parts of a person's life and the risk of suicide is high, particularly in men. Secretiveness and shame about problem gambling and the lack of physical sequelae associated with this addictive behaviour results in clients often delaying treatment until the harms are extreme.

Discussion and Conclusions: AOD workers are well placed to identify problem gambling issues, skilled in practices that will assist the client to deal with them (CBT, motivational interviewing), or act as a warm referral point to a specialist gambling service. Early, sensitive investigation by alcohol and other drug clinicians provides an opportunity for early intervention with the potential to prevent/moderate escalating harms.

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Presentation 2 – Two Up – Case study exploring the co-occurrence of gambling and AOD issues

Introduction and Aims: This presentation will use a narrative case study derived from practice to explore the issues of co-occurring gambling and AOD issues. The case study will be presented by Stephen Andrew, a highly experienced clinician working across gambling and AOD.

Design and Methods: Stephen will lead a discussion of the case study, exploring how practitioners may recognise and address the complex issues that arise from the cases.

Key Findings: Problem gambling behaviour is a complex presentation of material from interconnecting contexts. When alcohol is part of this presentation, this complexity is amplified.

Discussion and Conclusions: Addressing gambling, which can be perceived by clients to have greater stigma than AOD issues can be challenging. However the complex interaction between gambling and substance use means that dealing with them in isolation is often less effective than addressing them together.

Implications for Practice or Policy: Better understanding of gambling as a co-occurring issue for clients can enhance a clinicians ability to assist clients with their AOD issues, some of which may be intrinsically linked with their gambling.

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Presentation 3 – Responding to co-occurring gambling issues

Introduction and Aims: This session will provide an overview of resources developed to support clinicians in dealing with co-occurring gambling and AOD issues, in particular a resource for AOD clinicians: 'Slots and Shots'. Copies of this resource will be available. It was developed by Odyssey House Victoria in collaboration with the National Centre for Education and Training on Addiction and SANDAS . The key aspects of using this resource will be highlighted and discussed.

Design and Methods: Interactive discussion of the worker resource and its application. This resource specifically supports AOD workers to address their clients' co-occurring gambling issues. Participants will be encouraged to share their experiences and challenges in identifying and working with co-occurring problem gambling and consider appropriate

strategies for addressing them. The resource considers the similarities, differences and interactions between substance use and problem gambling and identifies techniques, already available in the AOD clinician's repertoire, that are effective in treating clients experiencing problem gambling.

Discussion and Conclusions: There are sufficient parallels and interactions between substance abuse and problem gambling for AOD clinicians to be in a strong position to identify, raise awareness and intervene early to reduce the harms associated with problem gambling in a vulnerable population. Many standard evidence-based AOD treatments are also effective for reducing problem gambling and the generalisation of some treatments for substance use issues (e.g. cognitive behavioural therapy, relapse prevention and mindfulness) to include problem gambling has the potential to increase the effectiveness of that treatment on both. Available evidence indicates that incorporation of gambling-focused information and increased understanding of the interactions, similarities and differences between AOD use issues and problem gambling for AOD clinicians has good potential to increase early identification of problem gambling issues in AOD client population. This would have consequent benefits to those clients, their families and the wider community. However gambling is a different form of addiction to drug/alcohol misuse. For this reason AOD workers need to be professionally supported and their orientation to gambling carefully planned. In this way the risk of a flawed 'one size fits all' approach to addiction is reduced and AOD workers have a clear understanding of the rationale to support identification and attention to problem gambling in their existing client base.

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Implications for Practice or Policy: The reclassification of problem gambling as an 'addictive disorder' emphasises the commonalities between it and substance-related disorders, but there are critical differences in the approach to each which require some reorientation by clinicians who are more experienced with AOD interventions.

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