



**UCLA
GAMBLING STUDIES PROGRAM**

Updates on Clinical Strategies for Sports Bettors
with Gambling Disorder

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Disclosures

- Consultant
 - Connections in Recovery
 - eVIVE
 - Kindbridge Research Institute
 - Lilly

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Goals and Objectives

- Illustrate how the expansion of sports betting has impacted state public health issues related to gambling behaviors
- Develop three techniques and strategies for screening and assessment of sports bettors who may be at risk for gambling disorder
- Name three treatment strategies that should be applied to sports bettors with gambling disorder
- Form future strategies for advocacy and community engagement around the issue of sports betting

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Discuss



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Case Example: Greg

- Greg is a 39 year old male who has been a patient of mine since 2018
- Alcohol Use Disorder, Anxiety Disorder (Generalized and Social)
- Responded very well to treatment and recovery story remarkable

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Greg

- Moved to New York in 2019 for a new career, started a family, bought a home
- Continues to be seen remotely every few months for medication, brief therapy and support

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Greg

- New York launches online sports betting in January 2022
- Greg starts "playing" during NFL Playoffs and Super Bowl
- Starts out \$40-80 per week
 - Single game bets, no "exotics"
 - Watches the games he bets on
 - Wife "kind of" aware

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Greg

- March Madness 2022 / MLB Baseball Season
- Greg continues to "casually" bet and wins a 5-leg parlay = ~\$2,500
- Betting frequency increases, betting amounts increase, betting types become more varied
 - "Just really exciting"

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Greg

- By August 2022 -- Greg has:
 - Spent (or lost?) \$2500 + \$5000 of his own money leading him to
 - Lie
 - Chase
 - Preoccupied
 - Not able to cut down
 - More anxiety

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Greg

- By September 2022,
 - Wife discovers expenses and relationship nearly ends
 - Emotional pain escalates to near suicidality
 - Alcohol use returns
- Tells Dr. Fong during the last 30 secs of regular appointment

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Greg's Mindset about Gambling

- Not an escape
- Action-oriented: Increase Dopamine
 - Enhanced the entertainment experience
- Goal-oriented: To Make Money
- Liked competition: Show off "knowledge"
- Chasing losses wasn't to cover finances but to "get money back from corporations"

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Clinical Issues Raised

- What were his vulnerabilities?
 - AUD, Apps, Culture of Betting?
- What could have prevented this?
- How could have sought help sooner?
- Treatment principles
 - Will tried and true treatment strategies work?
 - What needs to be done differently?

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- ## Sports Betting
- In-Person Sportsbooks
 - Online Betting Apps
 - Plethora of types of bets
 - Most popular: Same-Game Parlay
 - Trending: In-Game Betting
 - Regulated vs. Unregulated
 - Fantasy Sports Games
 - 1.0 vs 2.0

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- ## Since 2018 and PASPA
- Massive expansion (mobile sports betting)
 - Colossal partnerships (sports, entertainment, gambling operators)
 - Advancing technology (offer up never-before-seen- wager)
 - Unchecked advertising
 - Is it a demand or manufactured demand?
 - State-level management with minimal federal guidance

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Why should sports betting be regulated?

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- ## Why should sports betting be regulated?
- Ensure the games / bets are fair
 - Ensure the bets get paid out
 - Collect taxes for government
 - Make sure no one "launders money" / move money around
 - Protect the public

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NerdWallet Survey

The December 2024 survey of more than 2,000 U.S. adults, commissioned by NerdWallet and conducted online by The Harris Poll, asked Americans whether they placed a sports bet over the past 12 months. (Those who did are referred to as "sports bettors" throughout this report.) We also asked how much they spend on gambling and their reasons for participating in sports betting.

Key findings

- **Sports bettors gamble thousands, on average, per year.** Americans who bet on sports in the past 12 months say they've spent \$3,284, on average, on gambling during this time, which could be a combination of sports betting and other gambling. (The median spending is lower, at \$750.) The top motivation for sports bettors? The survey found 65% participate to make extra money.
- **Some are taking on debt to gamble; others consider it an investment.** Around 1 in 7 sports bettors (14%) say they've gone into debt to gamble. And close to a third of sports bettors (31%) view gambling as an investment.
- **Some sports bettors resolve to bet more in the new year.** Nearly 3 in 10 sports bettors (29%) plan to increase the amount they bet this year compared to 2024.

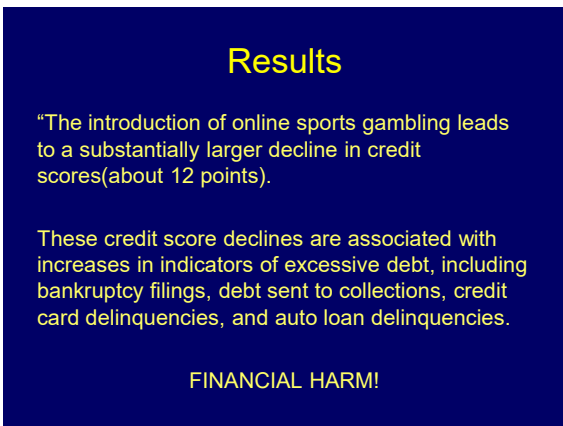
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Can you make money betting on sports?

- A bettor would need to win 52.4% of the time to beat the casinos fees and break even. (traditional sports bets)

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Language

- Sports Wagering
- Sports Betting
- Sports Gambling
- Sports Gaming
- Sports entertainment
- Words baked into everyday usage
 - Parlay, over/under, bet. . . .

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Range of Gambling Behavior

Gambling Disorder
 Persistent, recurrent and sometimes progressive maladaptive gambling behavior despite the negative consequences

Subthreshold Gambling Disorder
 Encounter gambling related problems but don't reach diagnostic threshold

Recreational Gambling
 No gambling related repercussions



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DSM-5 : Gambling Disorder

- Formerly known as:
pathological gambling, compulsive gambling, gambling addiction
- Formerly housed in Impulse Control Disorder
- Currently housed in Substance Related and Addictive Disorders

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Summary of DSM-5 Criteria for Gambling Disorder

A. Persistent and recurrent maladaptive gambling behavior as indicated by five (or more) of the following:

- | | |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| Preoccupation | Lying |
| Tolerance | Withdrawal |
| Chases | Bailed Out |
| Can't stop | Lost opportunities |
| Gambles to escape | |

Gambling Disorder, Sports Betting

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Gambling Disorder

- Prevalences rates go up with
 - Increased access
 - Earlier onset
- Prevalence rates go down with
 - Education + Awareness
 - Screening and early detection
 - Early intervention

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What have we seen in the gambling field since 2018?

- Increase in calls to gambling helpline
 - Related to sports betting
- More media coverage
 - Next epidemic or sensationalism?
- Athlete well-being, sports integrity , gambling “scandals”
- Trend toward mobile gambling as the norm (no “boomer” betting)

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Questions to Consider about Sports Betting

- Emergence of same-game parlay as dominant, preferred type of bet – why?
- Where does the tax money go and at what cost?
- Which populations and communities are at greatest risk?
- What are best practices for education, prevention, protection, harm reduction?

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Trends in Sports Bettors

- As legalization and normalization increase
 - More first-time bettors
 - Young bettors
 - Decreased perception of harm
 - Unequal and inconsistency prevention / financial literacy / risk preparation done at younger levels (who is teaching young people?)

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Trends in Sports Bettors

- Sports bettors who bet frequently (compared to non-sports bettors), tend to:
 - Bet with more depth
 - Bet with more breadth
 - Drink more while gambling

Grubbs JB, Kraus SW. The relative risks of different forms of sports betting in a U.S. sample: A brief report. *Compr Psychiatry*. 2023 Nov;127:152420. doi: 10.1016/j.comppsy.2023.152420. Epub 2023 Sep 9. PMID: 37696095.

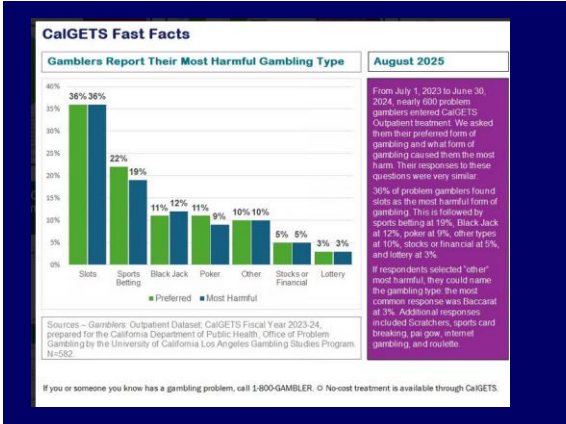
Grubbs JB, Kraus SW. The relative risks of different forms of sports betting in a U.S. sample: A brief report. *Compr Psychiatry*. 2023 Nov;127:152420. doi: 10.1016/j.comppsy.2023.152420. Epub 2023 Sep 9. PMID: 37696095.

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Clinical Experience With Sports Bettors (at UCLA)

- Since start of 2020
 - Male
 - Educated
 - Ages 18-35
 - Caucasian
 - Loved watching sports or playing sports
 - Technologically very capable
 - Resistant / dismissive of GA
 - Supportive but absent families
 - Psychologically aware
- Therefore, what types of treatment work for them?

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Treatment Considerations With Sports Bettors

How does this population
respond to standard treatment
approaches?

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Biopsychosocial Treatment Planning

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Evidence-Based Treatments for Gambling Disorder

- Medications (No FDA-Approved)
- Brief Interventions
 - Helplines, Self-Help Workbooks, 1-2 sessions,
- Psychotherapy
 - CBT, MI, Psychodynamic, Supportive
- Gambler's Anonymous

Petry, N. M., Ginley, M. K., & Rash, C. J. (2017). A systematic review of treatments for problem gambling. *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors*, 31(8), 951.

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Psychological Treatments

- No form of psychotherapy has been shown to superior to others
- Predictors of good outcome (traditional)
 - Length of time in treatment
 - "Capacity for honesty"
 - Commitment to doing the recovery work
 - Involvement of others in treatment

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Social Treatments

- Self-Exclusion (from what?)
- Software blockers
- Gambler's Anonymous
 - Online vs In-person
 - Sport only?
 - Sponsor PLUS Commitment
- Podcast "Fellowship"
 - Craig Carton, Brian Hatch, Rob Minnick

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Treatment Approaches

- Use digital innovations / digital health tools
 - Gam-Ban / Bet Blocker
 - Self-Exclusion / Limitation tools
 - Responsible Gambling Tools
 - Healthy Device Management Practices
 - Mobile apps (eVIVE)
 - Podcasts and online recovery community

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Treatment Considerations

- Can I still watch sports as entertainment?
 - Worthy of deeper discussion
 - Focus on how will it build connection, mental health impact, meaning
- Where else can I find competition?
 - Managing expectations of spectacular success
- How do you manage FOMO?
 - Breaking distortions / establishing healthier goals

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Treatment Considerations

- Must identify and manage sources of financial capital
 - Increasingly complex and sophisticated
 - Credit cards
 - Cryptocurrency / Fin Tech Applications
 - Online loans
 - Addressing Enticements from Apps
 - Can drain accounts without creating debt

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Treatment Considerations: Cognitive Distortions in Sports Bettors

- Gambling is a reliable way of making money
- Everyone else is winning
- I have a system that works, if only . . .
- Sports betting is a game of skill
- I know these teams / players inside out, therefore my knowledge translates (this is investing NOT gambling)

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Responsible Gaming Responsible Gambling Tools

- **Deposit Limits:** Limit the amount of funds you can deposit into your account by choosing an amount over a daily, weekly, and monthly period.
 - **Entries Limits:** Set the maximum number of entries you want to enter each week for Fantasy Sports and Pick6.
 - **Entry Fee Limits:** Set your maximum entry fee per contest for Fantasy Sports and Pick6.
 - **Wagering Limits:** Select how much you can wager on DraftKings Sportsbook and Casino.
 - **Max Wager Limits:** Select a limit on the maximum amount of any single wager you can place on DraftKings Sportsbook and Casino.
 - **Time Limits:** Select a time limit to restrict the amount of time in a day you can spend on the site.
- In addition to setting player limits, you can also [Cool Off](#) or [Self-Exclude](#) from participating on

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Feedback (Data) Helps

My Stat Sheet - Overview (US)

- My Stat Sheet is a Responsible Gaming tool available to you to track your gameplay on DraftKings products. This Responsible Gaming tool allows you to review the following:
- Time Spent (Specific to DraftKings Sportsbook & Casino)
 - Your Net Total of Spent & Won Funds by DraftKings Products.
 - Your activity on DraftKings, including:
 - Deposits
 - Withdrawals
 - Contests (Specific to Fantasy Sports & Pick6)
 - Wagers (Specific to Sportsbook & Casino)
 - Your Responsible Gaming Limit Progress

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Things I've Learned In the Last Year

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Sports betting is NOT a reliable way of making money

It is not a job.

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Clinical Observations

- Reframe language around betting
 - Money SPENT vs. Money LOST
- Skill in sports betting is less evident (more randomness)
- Footprint of AI and the Algorithm for Engagement is strong (it knows what you want before you do)
- Commoditizing life = dehumanizing

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Resources

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Westside Gambling Treatment (Telehealth, California)

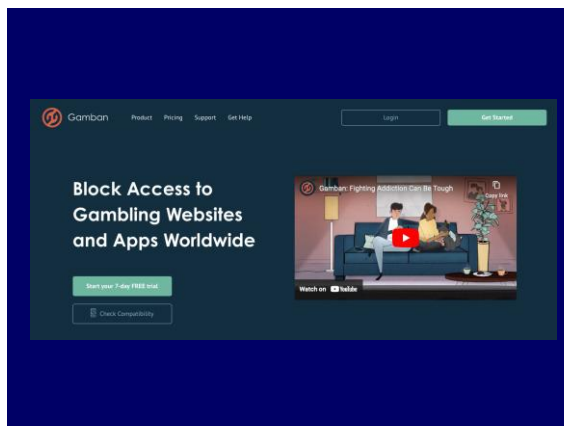


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Founded 2023

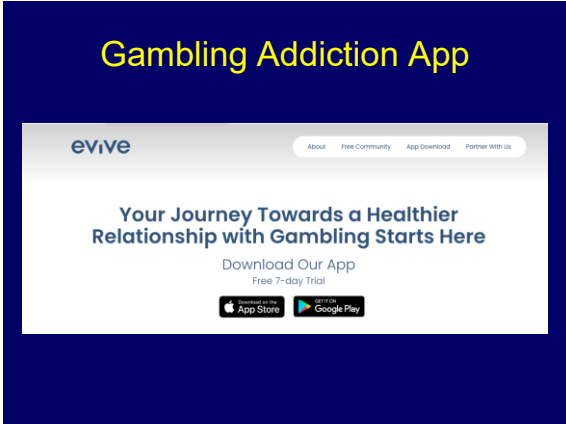
- Cohorts of 8-10; closed group
- 7 weeks, three times a week for 2-3 hours
 - Support groups
 - Didactics / Established curriculum
 - Accountability to each other
 - 42 sessions in total
 - Telehealth with IRL meeting at the end

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Gambling Addiction App



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Freedom From Problem Gambling Workbook



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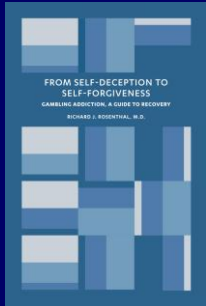
California Gambling Education and Treatment Services (CALGETS)

problemgambling.ca.gov



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<https://www.amazon.com/Self-Deception-Self-Forgiveness-Gambling-Addiction-Recovery/dp/B0DSC39NWN?source=ps-sl-shoppingads-lpcontext&smid=ATVPDKIKX0DER>



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fsrcinitiative.org



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uclagamblingprogram.org



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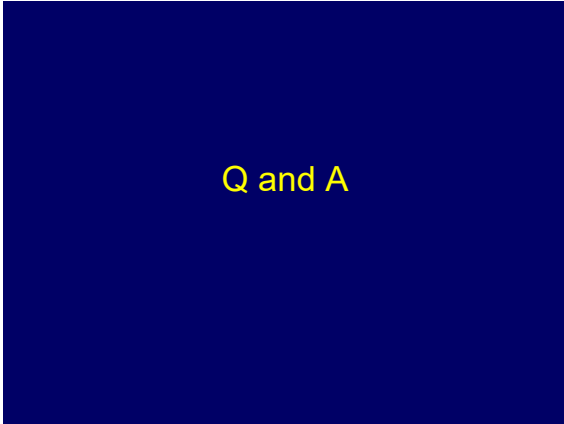
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 CCPG
 RSBHC
 Vision y Compromiso
 Friday Night Live

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Q and A



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