

# HOW CAN LONGITUDINAL RESEARCH IMPROVE OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE CAUSES AND CURE OF PROBLEM GAMBLING?

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# Gambling regulation in the UK: the Gambling Commission

- Preventing Gambling from being a source of crime or disorder
- Keeping gambling fair and open
- Protecting children and other vulnerable people from gambling related harm

# What do we know? [1]

- British Gambling Prevalence Study
- 1999 and 2007
- 9000 adults (over 16)
- 2007: 0.5% of adult population are problem gamblers (4+ on CPGI)
- No increase in problem gambling since 1999
- ‘at risk’ gamblers: 2% of population
- Problem gambling – a serious social issue, but not out of control

# What do we know? [2]

- Demographic profiles, from Prevalence Study
- Much qualitative research: psychological profiling
- Outcomes of counselling and treatment
- Effects of different types of gambling activity: accessibility, perceived skill, continuity etc

# What don't we know? [1]

- The 9000 interview prevalence study produced 52 problem gamblers
- So we know:
- Total numbers
- Men and women
- Age
- Not much else

# What don't we know? [2]

- With that sample size, nothing usable about:
- What types of gambling are more/less likely to involve problems? Accessibility, frequency, repetition, stakes and prizes, speed of play, skill?
- Demographic profiles of problem gamblers [except more men!]

# What don't we know? [3]

- With that questionnaire, nothing usable about
- Psychological profile of problem gamblers
- Co-occurring disorders
- Awareness and use of help: counselling, treatment
- Origins of problems: family, society
- Effects of problem gambling: family, job, debt, crime, health

# What don't we know? [4]

- With a single interview survey:
- The origins – and results – of gambling problems in the life of individuals –
- How individuals started gambling, and started to have problems
- How they get out of problems: self-help, family and friends, medical, debt counselling, psychological/behavioural treatment

# What don't we know? [5]

- In other words:
- If we don't understand problem gambling, the size and nature of the problem, we can't do anything useful to deal with it

# What we should do [1]

- Screen a huge representative sample of the adult population – gambling activity, screen for incidence of problem gambling [CPGI/mini-screen] to
- Set up panels of
  - Problem gamblers
  - At-risk gamblers
  - Gamblers without problems
  - Non-gamblers

# What we should do [2]

- Interview –at least 1 hour - the panels at regular intervals over at least five years:
  - Individual – not aggregate – movement into and out of gambling and gambling problems
  - Demographic and psychological profiles
  - Triggers and causes: individual, environment, form of gambling
  - Effects: personal, health, social, crime etc
  - Experience of counselling and treatment
  - Co-occurring disorders: drugs, alcohol, psychological disorders etc

# There are obstacles

- Problem gamblers are rare beasts: 52 in 9,000, 500 – absolute minimum needed – in 100,000
- Sample must be representative of adult population
- Need to cover young people – but huge extra cost
- Need to cover all types of potentially problem gambling
- The right screening – CPGI? Short screen?
- Non-response: non-recognition, denial, shame

# But it must be done

- The UK government promised to monitor the effects of the legislation
- Disposable income for leisure activities is increasing
- Gambling opportunities – especially remote gambling – are increasing
- Need to know the level of public resources need to tackle problems
- Need to know what education and public awareness works and what doesn't
- Need to know what treatment works and what doesn't
- It's a public health as well a a social welfare issue