Pathological Gambling
Report by Sean Quinn
Signs of pathological gambling

- A persistent and recurrent maladaptive gambling behavior is indicated by five or more of the following:
  - Is preoccupied with gambling
  - Needs to gamble with increasing amounts of money in order to achieve the desired excitement
  - Has repeated unsuccessful efforts to control, cut back, or stop gambling
  - Is restless or irritable when attempting to cut down or stop gambling
  - Gambles as a way of escape from problems or of relieving a dysphoric mood
  - After losing money gambling, often returns another day to get even
  - Lies to family members, therapists, or others to conceal the extent of involvement with gambling

(American Psychiatric Association[DSM-IV], 2000).
Signs of pathological gambling (cont.)

- Has committed illegal acts such as forgery, fraud, theft, or embezzlement to finance gambling
- Has jeopardized or lost a significant relationship, job, or educational or career opportunity because of gambling
- Relies on others to provide money to relieve a desperate financial situation caused by gambling

(American Psychiatric Association [DSM-IV], 2000)
Signs of Addiction

- Excessiveness
- Harm to others or oneself
- Craves their addiction
- Experiences distress when away from substance or activity
- Loss of control
- Priority of the activity increases in his or her life while other activities decrease
- The substance or activity continues on despite knowledge of the harm
What they’re attracted to

- Contrary to the belief that gamblers gamble for gain, they are actually motivated to gamble for the thrill of it.
- Even when they can not afford it, gamblers will gamble because they want the adrenaline rush that they associate with gambling.

(Steiker, 2008)
Reinforcement

- Gambling environment and structural characteristics of gambling devices help develop and maintain gambling behavior.
- Personality traits such as impulsiveness and sensation seeking have also contribute to this.
- Video poker and slot machines are the two most commonly referred to methods of gambling. These two methods of gambling rapidly accelerate the progression of pathological gambling. This is due to how quick these two methods deliver their outcomes.

(Jacobsen, Knudsen, Krogh, Moldge, & Pallesen, 2007).
Biological basis for gambling

- Heavy gamblers tend to have lower levels of norepinephrine than regular gamblers.
- This chemical is produced when one experiences stress, arousal, thrill, and excitement.
- Thus, a gambler may unknowingly gamble to increase these levels.

(Steiker, 2008)
Similarities to chemical dependency

- Both are preoccupied with their obsession
- Both experience an inability to control their compulsion
- Both go through denial
- Experience severe depression and mood swings
- Both seek immediate gratification
- Tend to experience low self-esteem

(Steiker, 2008)
Differences with chemical dependency

- Obsessive gambling does not have any physically identifiable attributes that are reminiscent of gamblers. For instance, smokers smell of cigarettes and cocaine addicts have needle punctures. Gamblers appear perfectly normal.
- They can not overdose
- More resources are available to treat chemical dependency, whereas there is little in the way of treatment for a gambler.
- Gamblers have a much higher suicide rate in comparison to alcoholics or drug addicts

(Steiker, 2008)
Society and Gambling

- Gambling is widely accepted in society
  - Gambling is now considered a part of the entertainment industry
- There is a wide availability of gambling
- There are cities and resorts that are dedicated to gambling (such as Las Vegas and Atlantic City)
- It is extremely easy to seek out gambling at home through the internet or television.
Video

- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M25kalpCT4E
- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZtxdRePAvzE
Pros to viewing Gambling as an Addiction

- There are physiological components to gambling (i.e. the deficiency of a norepinephrine).

- Gambling can be positively and negatively reinforced due to the nature of the action. Gamblers spend money in order to receive their thrills while either continuing to gamble to win back their money or to continue amassing wealth.

- Follows the guidelines of what an addiction is (such as loss of control, seeking gratification, etc.)
Cons to viewing Gambling as an Addiction

- Lacking a biological chemical does not mean someone is an addict. It merely means that they are more susceptible.
- Although gambling can be reinforced, not all gamblers become heavy gamblers. Only a small amount of the population actually have their gambling problem grow out of hand.
- Most pathological gamblers seek the excitement that they associate with gambling, not monetary gain. Therefore, they are addicted to the adrenaline rush. They only use gambling as a means to experience this adrenaline rush.
- Obsessive gambling could be due to co-morbidity.
References


References cont.


- Lecture notes