

## Problem Gambling Information for Healthcare Providers

### How Prevalent are Gambling Problems?

Approximately 1 in 10 persons entering a primary care setting are likely to have a gambling problem. However, of the thousands of problem gamblers that receive a medical intervention every year, less than 5% of them are ever diagnosed with a gambling disorder. Although most health care providers are aware of problem gambling, studies find that very few ask patients about problem gambling.

### How is Problem Gambling Related to Patient Health?

Problem gambling can impact many aspects of a gamblers' life potentially resulting in financial, personal legal and physical and mental health problems. Studies have documented the relationship between problem gambling and several specific physical and mental health issues.

#### Mental Health:

Several studies placed problem gamblers at increased risk for dysthymia, major depression, anti-social personality disorder, phobias, and other mental conditions. Problem gamblers were also identified as being at increased risk for alcohol, nicotine, and other drug abuse.

#### Cardiac Arrest:

Studies generally found problem gamblers at increased risk for cardiac arrest due to sustained stress and hypertension.

#### Stress Related Diagnoses:

Problem gamblers report higher than average levels of stress-related physical problems. Conditions may include: migraine headache, tension headache, irritable bowel syndrome, peptic ulcer, GERD WHICH IS?, insomnia, sexual dysfunction, myalgias, and neurotic dermatitis.

### How to Help?

Increased awareness and early intervention are the keys to reducing the impact of problem gambling. Physicians can play an integral role in this process by recognizing early signs of problems, motivating patients to seek help, and readily providing useful referral resources. Consider using a simple screening tool such as the two question Lie-Bet Questionnaire: 1) Have you ever felt the need to bet more and more money? 2) Have you ever had to lie to people important to you about how much you gambled? If a patient answers 'yes' to one or both of the questions above, further assessment is indicated. Patients suspected of a gambling problem should be encouraged to seek specialized treatment and be provided with a referral. Individuals interested in learning more about gambling and/or problem gambling should contact The Gambling Clinic at 901-678-7867 or the Tennessee Redline: 800-889-9789.

*\*materials adapted with permission from the National Council on Problem Gambling*

### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

The Gambling Clinic A Center for Self-Change  
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