USING MISCONCEPTIONS TO IMPROVE EDUCATION PROGRAMS THAT AIM TO PREVENT GAMBLING PROBLEMS

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Abstract: Paper presentation
Educational programs that aim to prevent gambling problems typically focus on the risks and consequences associated with gambling. However, young people tend not to engage with fear-based messaging as they cannot personally relate to the individuals described. Gambling-related misconceptions play a key role in the development and maintenance of gambling problems. These misconceptions may improve gambling education by providing a developmental account of gambling problems, which may increase young people’s perceived relevance to the issue. Additionally, the pedagogical literature suggests misconceptions are important in learning complex new material (i.e. probabilities, statistics). This research aimed to test if educating young people about poker machine misconceptions improves their engagement and understanding of the content. A secondary aim was to evaluate if the same educational material might have corrective effects in adult poker machine gamblers. Three educational animations were developed: risk awareness, information only, and cognitive misconceptions. The dependent variables included engagement, understanding of randomness and return to player per cent, misconceptions, perceived effectiveness, and gambling behaviour and problems. Results indicated the misconceptions video condition produced corrective effects amongst gamblers, but not amongst adolescents. Possible explanations for the inconsistent findings between samples are considered, in addition to the implications for future educational programs.

Implications of presentation
Gambling education programs are resource and cost intensive, and their outcomes for prevention of gambling problems are modest. This research provides new insights into the use of cognitive and developmental theories of problem gambling in preventing gambling-related harm.

**Author bios**

**Brittany Keen, BA Psych, PostGradDip Psych, MASc (Research), PhD Candidate**, is a 3rd-year PhD candidate and employee at the Gambling Treatment and Research Clinic at the University of Sydney. Her research focuses on problem gambling education particularly among young people; and she is interested in the psychology of gambling, conceptual issues in the field, and harm reduction research more broadly.

**Professor Alex Blaszczynski BA, MA, Dip. Psych., PhD, MAPs**, is the director of the Gambling Research and Treatment Clinic, and a clinical psychologist by training. Professor Blaszczynski has in excess of thirty years extensive clinical and research experience in understanding the psychology of gambling. He has published in excess of 160 peer-reviewed articles, has received multiple grants in excess of $3 million, has authored or co-authored four books on gambling, and developed a conceptual pathways model explaining the aetiology of pathological gamblers.

**Dr Fadi Anjoul PhD, MPychol, BSc**, has been working in problem gambling for the past 17 years and is currently the Deputy Director at the University of Sydney Gambling Treatment Clinic. His main responsibilities are education, research, training and supervision. His work has been published in scientific journals and books. He has presented at leading international and national conferences on problem gambling, and has frequently appeared as a guest expert on public radio and television.