

## Characteristics associated with problem gambling behaviour among people entering alcohol and other drug treatment

Tara Alcorn<sup>1,2</sup>, Gabrielle Campbell<sup>1,2,3</sup>, Anthony Dyer<sup>1</sup>, Nina Pocuca<sup>1,2</sup>, Rhiannon Ellem<sup>1,2</sup>, Holly Stokes<sup>1,4</sup>, Leanne Hides<sup>1,2,4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*School of Psychology, The University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia.* <sup>2</sup>*National Centre for Youth Substance Use Research, The University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia.*

<sup>3</sup>*National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia.* <sup>4</sup>*Lives Lived Well, Brisbane, Australia.*

**Introduction:** Problem gambling presents a rising public health challenge which has been examined broadly in emerging research; however, limited evidence has examined the prevalence of problem gambling behaviour among people entering alcohol and other drug (AOD) treatment. This study examined the prevalence of problem gambling and associated characteristics in people entering AOD services.

**Methods:** Between November 2020 and April 2024, 13,365 people ( $M_{\text{age}}=34.4$ ,  $SD_{\text{age}}=11.9$ ; 59.1% male) enrolled in AOD treatment at Lives Lived Well and completed outcome measures, including the Problem Gambling Severity Index. The prevalence of problem gambling behaviour and associations with AOD use, mental health and quality of life outcomes were examined.

**Results:** Approximately 11% of the sample ( $n=1511$ ) met the criteria for problem gambling, while 5% scored moderate risk ( $n=659$ ), 12% low risk ( $n=1552$ ) and 72% no risk ( $n=9643$ ). People who met the criteria for problem gambling were more likely to be male (63% vs 59%), Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (24% vs 19%), and less likely to be working or studying (40% vs 49%), though there was no difference in mean age. Problem gambling was associated with higher substance use severity scores for alcohol, cannabis and methamphetamine. Depression (63% vs 46%) and anxiety (64% vs 43%) were more common in people meeting the criteria for problem gambling. Problem gambling was associated with lower odds of attending the first treatment session (57% vs 64%) or additional treatment sessions.

**Discussions and Conclusions:** Problem gambling behaviour is prevalent among people entering AOD treatment and is associated with more complex presentations, including high risk substance use, co-occurring mental health symptoms and lower treatment attendance.

**Implications for Practice or Policy:** Assessing problem gambling risk at AOD treatment entry is recommended. Opportunities for tailored treatment for clients with co-occurring substance use and problem gambling should be considered.

**Disclosure of Interest Statement:** *This work was supported by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Meaningful Outcomes in Substance Use Treatment Centre of Research Excellence and Lives Lived Well. TA and the National Centre for Youth Substance Use Research are supported by funding from the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care. Funding bodies had no role in the study design, data analysis, interpretation or collection, or writing of this abstract.*