

Chasing the pot of gold: Researchers study gambling subtypes and treatment outcomes

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Approximately two million adults in the United States meet criteria for pathological gambling, and another four to six million are considered problem gamblers, according to the National Council on Problem Gambling. A study by researchers at Wayne State University reveals that gambling addiction treatment is not one-size-fits-all, but it is difficult to predict which style of treatment is best for the various forms of gambling addiction.

According to David M. Ledgerwood, Ph.D., assistant professor of psychiatry and behavioral neurosciences at Wayne State University, there may be up to three different subtypes of people with serious gambling problems. One group, emotionally vulnerable (EV) gamblers, had higher psychiatric and gambling severity and were more likely to have a parent with [psychiatric problems](#) as compared to another subtype, behaviorally conditioned (BC) gamblers. BC gamblers are thought to start gambling because they get caught up in elements of reward associated with the game, rather than to soothe emotional problems.

"In addition, we found that antisocial impulsive (AI) gamblers also had elevated gambling and psychiatric severity when compared to BC gamblers," said Ledgerwood. "This group was most likely to have antisocial personality disorders, a history of [substance abuse treatment](#), and a parent with substance abuse or gambling problems."

Although the study included various levels of [gambling addiction](#) severity throughout treatment and follow-up, recovery patterns did not vary among the different groups. Therefore, subtyping gambling addiction does not predict treatment outcomes beyond a simple association with gambling severity.

More information: To view the full study, "Subtyping Pathological Gamblers Based on Impulsivity, Depression, and Anxiety," published in

the journal *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors*, visit psycnet.apa.org/journals/adb/24/4/

Provided by Wayne State University

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