



Establishing Best Treatment Practices For Pathological Gamblers

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INTRODUCTION

- 4% of the population have a current gambling disorder and 8% will experience one in their lifetime (Shaffer & Korn, 2002)
- DSM-IV defines pathological gambling as 'persistent and recurrent maladaptive gambling behavior indicated by five or more criteria (APA, 1994)
- The annual societal cost for pathological gambling is \$5 billion per year with an additional \$40 billion in lifetime costs for productivity reductions, social service, and creditor losses (Gerstein et al., 1999)
- Behavioral interventions, compared to pharmacological approaches, are more effective in treating gambling disorders (Fong, 2009)

OBJECTIVE: To determine the efficacy of a newly created six-session Manualized Behavioral Therapy (MBT) for pathological gamblers.

METHODS

- Subjects recruited from the community were randomized into two treatment groups: MBT and treatment as usual (TAU)
- Both groups underwent 6 individual 1-hour sessions with a psychologist for 6 weeks
- The MBT group received a 6-chapter workbook intended to guide the psychologist and client. Each chapter provided information and exercises dealing with different aspects of the gamblers' life as it related to gambling (Table 1).
- TAU consisted of a licensed psychologist trained in gambling addiction providing individual psychotherapy
- Treatment efficacy was analyzed with outcome measures assessing gambling behavior, cravings to gamble, abstinence, and treatment completion.

Table 1: MBT Workbook: Goals Per Chapter

- 1: Assessment**
 - Learn more about gambling problems
 - Consider gambling goals
 - Outline a path for moving forward with treatment
- 2: Dealing With Consequences of Gambling**
 - Help be honest with family about the money owed
 - Determine the most pressing debts that have been accumulated and how to deal with them
 - Dealing with legal problems created by gambling
 - Dealing with work/employers
- 3: Why It Is So Hard to Stop**
 - Learn about the distorted thoughts about gambling
 - Acknowledge the problems erroneous thought can cause
 - Learn why superstitions are not true
- 4: Dealing With Urges And Triggers**
 - Learn the difference between gambling urges and triggers
 - Learn ways to deal with gambling urges and triggers
- 5: Lifestyle Changes**
 - Consider what issues in life aren't directly related to gambling
 - Identify those issues and consider strategies for dealing with them
 - Learn problem solving skills for dealing with the stress of daily life, so that the stress does not impede recovery
- 6: Preventing Relapse**
 - Understand difference between slip and relapse
 - How to prevent a slip or relapse from occurring

RESULTS

Figure 1: Flow Diagram

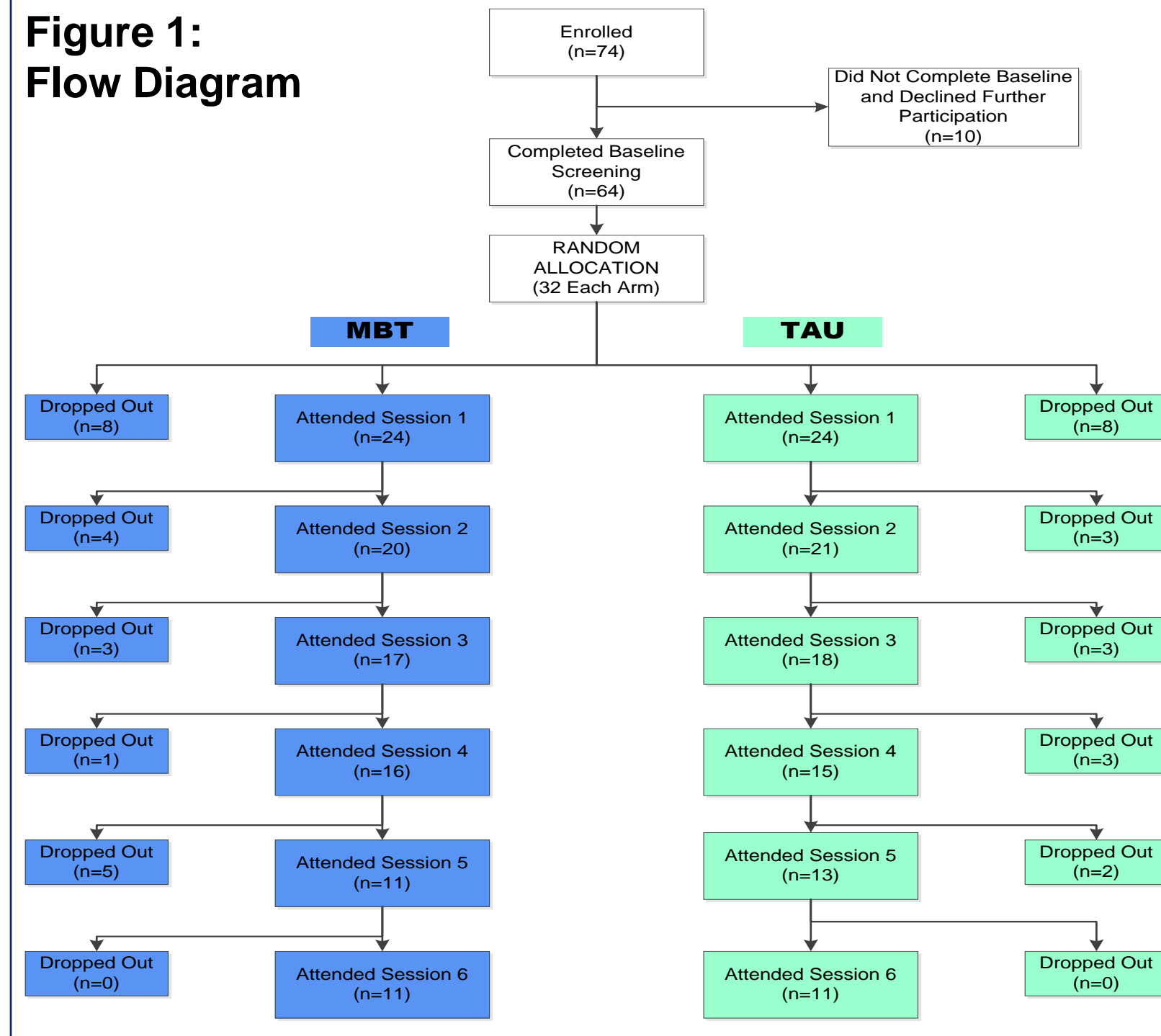
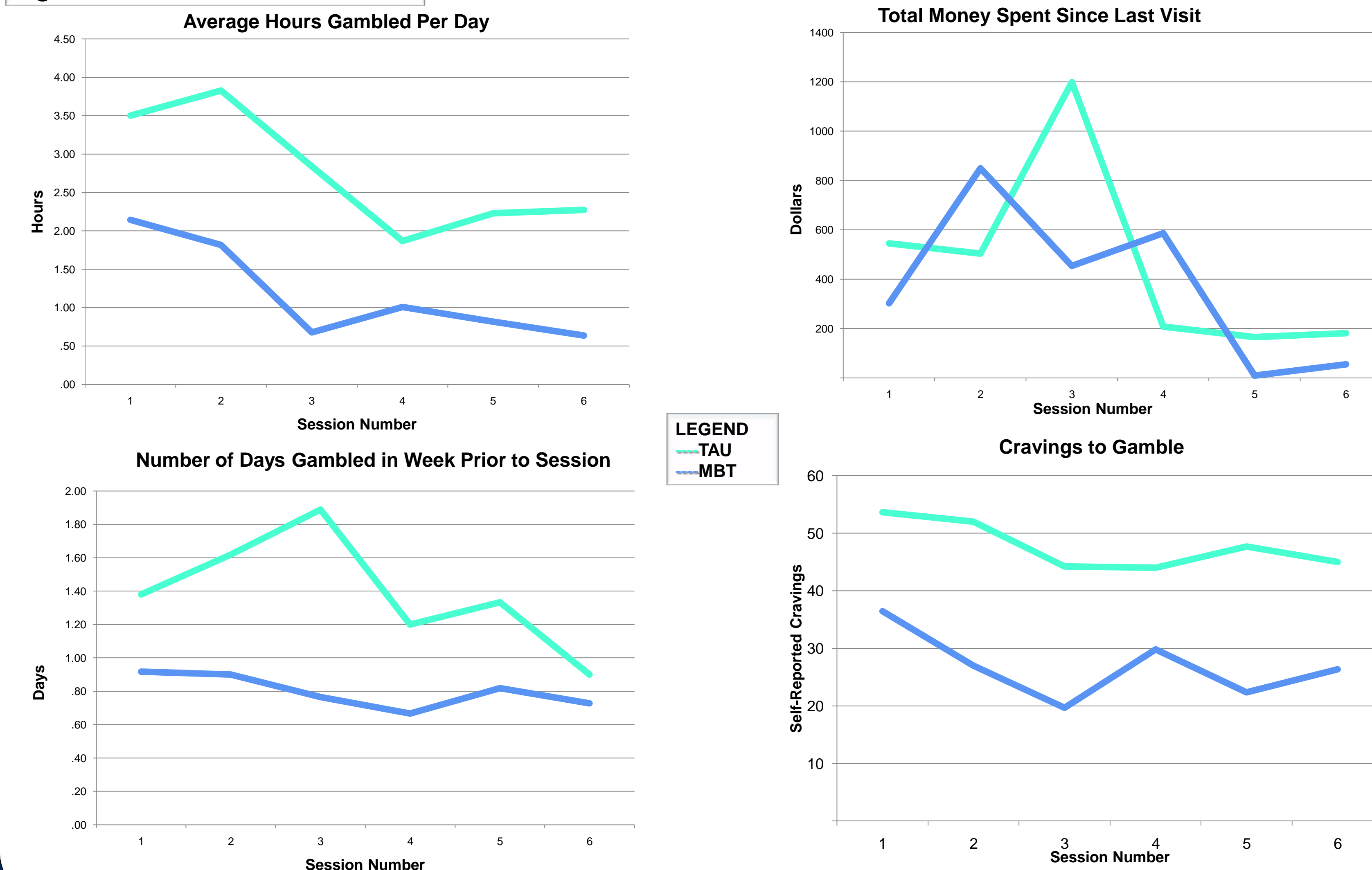


Table 2: Sample Characteristics, % (N=74)

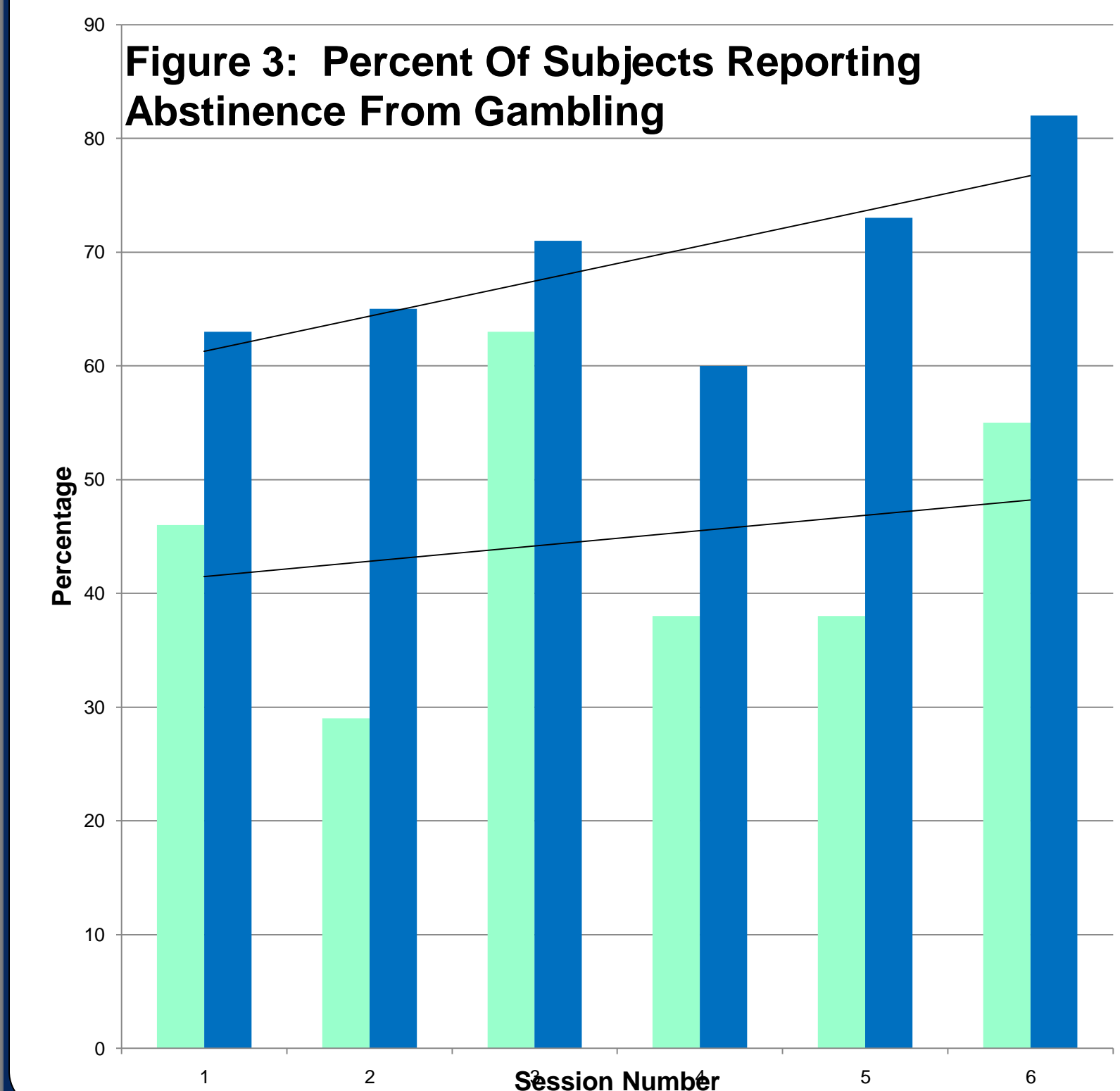
Characteristic	Mean (s.d.)	Percentage
Age, years	44.6 (11.7)	
Sex		Male: 68.9, Female: 31.1
Race		Asian: 21.6, African American: 17.6, Hispanic: 9.5, White: 41.9, Other: 9.5
Income		\$0-49,999: 59.5, \$50,00-99,999: 23.0, \$100,000 or above: 14.9, Unknown: 2.7
Relationship		Never Married: 54.1, Married or With Romantic Partner: 24.3, Separated/Divorced: 20.3, Unknown: 1.4
Education		Less Than H.S.: 8.1, H.S. Degree: 13.5, Some College: 33.8, Bachelors Degree: 31.1, Master's Or Higher: 12.2, Unknown: 1.4
Comorbid Psychiatric Disorders		Mood Disorders: 17.6, Anxiety Disorders: 17.6, Substance Disorders: 13.5, Suicidality: 8.1, Eating Disorders: 4.1, Antisocial Personality Disorder: 1.4
DSM-IV Criteria Met	Mean (s.d.)	8.3 (1.6)
Primary Gambling Activity		Black Jack: 17.6, Lottery: 6.8, Poker: 29.7, Sports/Horse Betting: 12.2, Slots: 21.6, Other: 6.8, Missing: 5.4
Gambling Behavior in Last Month, mean (S.D.)		Days Gambled: 10.5 (9.0), Hours Per Gambling Episode: 7.8 (10.2), Dollars Per Gambling Episode: \$1,578 (\$3,567), Net Loss: \$6,907 (\$25,058), Hours Preoccupied with Gambling Daily: 6.9 (6.8)
		Age First Gambled: 18.1 (7.6), Age First Gambling Problem: 28.2 (12.0), Length Of Gambling Problem: 14.5 (11.0), Total Gambling Debt: \$19,801.4 (\$71,199), Days Since Last Gambled: 7.6 (7.7)

Figure 2: Outcome Measures



RESULTS

Figure 3: Percent Of Subjects Reporting Abstinence From Gambling



CONCLUSIONS

- Preliminary findings suggest that both MBT and TAU are beneficial for pathological gamblers
- While statistical differences were not observed between the two groups, findings indicate that MBT is not harmful, does not negatively affect pathological gamblers, and may produce more positive treatment outcomes related to gambling abstinence

LITERATURE CITED

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 Gerstein, D. et al. (1999). Gambling Impact and Behavior Study. *National Gambling Impact Study Commission*, (1 April).
 Shaffer, H & Korn, D. (2002). Gambling and related Mental Disorders: A Public Health Analysis. *Annual Reviews*, 23, 171-212.

For more information about this ongoing study, our treatment study, or our program, please contact us at:
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