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Health Care Research I

Sunset Center, Promenade Lobby

TITLE: TRANSPARENT REPORTING OF GAMBLING EFFECTIVENESS STUDIES

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Purpose of Study: Gambling disorders are a significant health concern because they are associated with cardiovascular disease, major depression, substance abuse, financial troubles, and crime. This study systematically reviews the transparency of reports on interventions to ameliorate the adverse consequences of problem and pathological gambling. Transparent reporting is essential to the assessment of study quality.

Methods Used: Using specific inclusion and exclusion criteria, we identified 25 articles from Pub Med, PsycINFO, and the Web of Science published between January 2000 and August 2010. Two researchers independently reviewed each article's reporting using 58 items adapted from the American Public Health Association's and CDC's TREND (Transparent Reporting of Evaluations of Nonrandomized Designs) Statement. Twenty-two items represent particularly important criteria, and all should be reported. Differences in interpretation between reviewers were adjudicated by a third reviewer.

Summary of Results: Only 8 articles met at least 70% of the 58 general reporting criteria, (median= 64%; range: 41 – 84 %). None of the studies met all 22 of the important reporting criteria. Examples of particularly important criteria met by at least half the studies include descriptions of eligibility rules for participation, methods for handling missing data, and methods for establishing baseline study group equivalence. Fewer than half the studies described the barriers encountered in implementing the experimental interventions, methods for increasing compliance, and methods for addressing differences in baseline characteristics of participants who were lost to follow-up compared to those who were retained. No differences in transparency were found between articles published before and after the initial dissemination of the TREND criteria (2004).

Conclusions: Published studies reporting on the effectiveness of interventions for gambling related disorders tend to vary in their transparency with many important reporting criteria unmet. Transparent reporting is a prerequisite for determining if evidence is available to support implementing specific programs or treatments to address gambling disorders and the untoward medical and social consequences with which they are associated.