

MEDIA RELEASE

NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

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ATTENTION: Chiefs of Staff, News Directors



Problem gamblers impact on extended family

New research by the UTAS School of Sociology and Social Work has shown that problem gambling has a ripple effect on not only immediate, but also extended family members.

The study by senior lecturer Dr Janet Patford - recently published in the Australian Journal of Primary Health - concentrates on how parents and parents-in-law experience, understand and respond to an adult child's gambling addiction.

Dr Patford interviewed 15 participants and found problem gambling impacted on the emotional and financial stability of the extended families of the gambler.

“Findings indicate that the repercussions of an adult child's gambling may damage parents and parents-in-law financially, complicate their family relationships and erode their health and well-being.

“This study aims to develop a deeper understanding of the various ways in which parents and parents-in-law experience and understand adult children's gambling problems,” Dr Patford said.

Dr Patford found that the parents and parents-in-law of problem gamblers have strong emotional reactions to their child's behaviour, with participants in the study reporting health problems such as depression, high blood pressure, dermatitis and asthma.

“Findings suggest that the lives of the parents and parents-in-law are disrupted and diminished by an adult child's gambling.

“These family members may nonetheless feel love and concern for the gambler and provide ongoing help and care,” Dr Patford said.

Dr Patford said her study provided a platform for the development of community education programs and clinical training, and generated topics for further research, including how formal services can best assist the families of gambling addicts.

Australia’s participation in gambling is high by international standards, with around 2.1 per cent of Australian adults having a moderate to severe gambling problem. Older people and women are also more likely to participate in gambling.

- Dr Patford (Launceston campus) is available for interview after 11am today – please contact the Media Office.

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