

MEDIA RELEASE

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ATTENTION: Chiefs of Staff, News Directors



Men suffer double bind in helping partners with gambling addiction

A new study into the impact of problem gambling on male partners has found they struggle with the double bind of often enabling their loved one to gamble, while also trying to stop the habit.

Dr Janet Patford, senior lecturer in the UTAS School of Sociology and Social Work, has recently published the results of her study into the experiences of the male partners of problem gamblers as part of ongoing research into the impact of gambling.

Dr Patford said her study was the first she was aware of that focused on male partners rather than female.

The study, *For Poorer: How men experience, understand and respond to problematic aspects of a partner's gambling*, included in-depth interviews with a diverse group of 13 men who had concerns about their partner's gambling, and explored their experiences and responses to the partner's addiction.

“Gamblers’ marital and de facto partners are obviously likely to be affected by problem gambling, especially when they are financially and emotionally dependent on the gambler.

“However, findings indicate that men are likely to be both victims *and* the enablers of their partner's gambling,” Dr Patford said.

For example, several said they had initially felt sympathy for their partner, and on the assumption that the gambling would stop, had offered loans and paid off gambling debts.

Four participants in the study said that they had separated from their partners, partly because of gambling addiction and the related problems.

“Partners used a range of strategies to try and control their partners’ gambling but these strategies had negative side effects and did not guarantee peace of mind,” Dr Patford said.

These strategies included:

- challenging their partner's ideas about winning;
- negotiating limits on gambling expenditure;
- retrieving their partner from gambling venues;
- avoiding gambling venues on social occasions;

- cancelling their partner's credit card and closing joint accounts;
- closely controlling and monitoring joint finances and obligations.

Dr Patford said a key question for policy makers and service providers was how men affected by problem gambling could best be helped and supported, with recent data from the Victorian *Break Even* counselling service showing men were under-represented as clients.

Implications for community education programs, formal counselling services, targeted advertising campaigns and legal reforms are also discussed in the study.

Dr Janet Patford is available for interviews today between 10 and 12.30pm on (03) 6324 3664.

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