

MT-5

“It evens my line”: A qualitative study of video game addiction as harm reduction among veterans with substance addiction and/or mental health problems

MICHELLE COLDER CARRAS, ANNA KALBARCZYK, KURRIE WELLS, JAIME BANKS, RACHEL KOWERT, COLLEEN KOONCE, CARL LATKIN*

*Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, and Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center within the VA Healthcare Veterans Integrated Service Network 4, USA;
E-Mail: mcarras@jhu.edu

Background: While abstinence is the primary goal of substance addiction treatment, preventive interventions may include harm reduction strategies such as substitute addictions. We explored how individuals who were currently in behavioral and/or mental treatment used gaming to manage symptoms. *Methods:* We interviewed 20 military veterans who played video games and received mental or behavioral health treatment. We used open coding to

develop codes for an analytic framework then summarized data into an analytic framework matrix. *Results*: Six gamers described using games to manage symptoms and discussed how gaming reduced their use of addictive substances or kept aggressive behaviors in check. Of those, two felt addicted to games. Gaming was described as a way to calm the mind when other strategies were not accessible or a way to distract from cravings, e.g for alcohol and heroin. One individual used gaming binges to prevent heroin use. *Discussion*: Replacing substance use or aggressive behaviors with video games, even when gaming is excessive or problematic, may reduce the harms of substance addiction and be a useful part of recovery.

MT-6

Perception of family interactions and parental behaviour – a comparison of youth with and without gambling related problems

*DORA DODIG HUNDRIC**, *NEVEN RICIJAS*

*University of Zagreb, Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation Sciences, Croatia;
E-Mail: doradodig@gmail.com

Contemporary studies emphasize the importance of family variables in explaining problem gambling, especially in adolescent age when family plays a key role. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to contribute to this body of knowledge through gaining insight into potential differences in adolescents' perception of parental behavior regarding the severity of their gambling. The study was conducted with a convenient sample of $n = 244$ male adolescents from all three types of high-schools. The method of data collection was Paper-and-Pencil Self-Administered Questionnaire which comprised: General socio-demographic data, General Problem Severity Subscale as a part of Canadian Adolescent Gambling Inventory (Wiebe et al., 2010), Questionnaire on family interaction (Vulic-Prtoric, 2002), Questionnaire on parental behaviour (Kuterovac-Jagodic, Kerestes & Brkovic, 2002) and Questionnaire on probability of parents' sanctioning children's risky behaviours. The results show that all students equally perceive family interactions, but differ in their perception of parental behavior. Specifically, young people without gambling-related problems perceive their parents as less intrusive, punishing, permissive and restrictive. When it comes to parental sanctioning, problem gamblers perceive their parents as less prone to punishing some risky behaviors. This research confirms the importance of family variables in understanding this phenomenon. Practical implications of results will also be discussed.