



## Incidence of car surfing on the rise

By Rina Gupta, Ph.D. – International Centre for Youth Gambling Problems and High-Risk Behaviors

Surf's up! But don't bother seeking out totally tubular sets of ocean waves or picking out a fancy surfboard. This type of surfing won't even result in a golden tan. In fact, this type of surfing has less to do with hitting the waves and more to do with hitting the asphalt, most likely resulting in head injuries, broken bones, paralysis and even death. Over the course of this summer, two Montrealers, a 17-year-old girl and a 38-year-old man, died while attempting to ride the roof of moving vehicles. Another 16-year-old girl was se-

riously injured in a separate suspected incident of car surfing.

Car surfing originally gained mainstream exposure in the 1985 film, *Teenwolf*. However, it has only increased in popularity in recent years. The activity refers to riding outside of a vehicle while it is moving. SUVs and trucks are most popular because of their greater height and flatter roof tops. While someone else drives the car, the surfer climbs out of the window and onto a surface

the act for the Internet appears to be an important part of the whole experience.

So, one must ask themselves what would compel a person to risk being propelled off the rooftop of a moving vehicle? In order to better understand the motivation behind the act, we must backtrack and revisit what has continued to be known as the "Jackass phenomenon." The series of *Jackass* movies showcase young men who inflict pain on themselves and others

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of the car, usually the roof, but in some cases, the hood or trunk. Its moniker comes from the similarities to surfing in the balancing motion that is required to remain on the vehicle. If that is not risky enough, some surfers have been known to leap from one moving vehicle to another. A quick search on You Tube will provide anyone with ample examples of what car surfing is all about, as videotaping

while attempting high-risk stunts. Examples of these stunts include being branded by a red-hot iron, snorting wasabi through the nose, being dragged by a horse, and attaching leeches to one's eyeballs. In one stunt, a man pierced his cheek with a fish hook and was cast into the ocean as shark bait (he actually had to kick one shark away).

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The *Jackass* movies gained tremendous popularity, rendering these extreme risk-takers (for lack of a better descriptor) big celebrities. Teenagers are notorious for emulating their idols, be it musicians, actors, or athletes, and YouTube has served as a vehicle via which copy-cats can post their performances and achieve a certain level of notoriety for themselves. Car surfing has become a phenomenon by which certain individuals feel they can experience high levels of excitement, earn respect for their extreme risk-taking, and, in some cases, glimpses of fame.

An article in the *Journal of Pediatric Surgery* (Geiger, Newsted, Drongowski, & Lelli, 2001) reviewed the increasing number of visits to the emergency room of the Ann Arbor Children's hospital resulting from car surfing incidents. The authors treated 26 children in an eight-year period of time. Boys were twice as likely as girls to present with injuries from this high-risk behaviour, with a mean age of 15.75 altogether. The most common injuries were those related to the nervous system and head injuries, with 85% of patients requiring long-term care and 8% suffering from permanent paralysis. One child died. The authors rightfully called for prevention initiatives aimed at discouraging such high-risk behaviours in children and adolescents.

The sense of invulnerability typically felt by adolescents renders them more likely than adults to

attempt high-risk behaviors. The developing human brain is programmed to be that way, as it is through experimentation and pushing boundaries that young people become independent and evolve into the adults they are destined to become. However, the pressures faced by young people to be popular and to assert them-

being overbearing and overprotective.

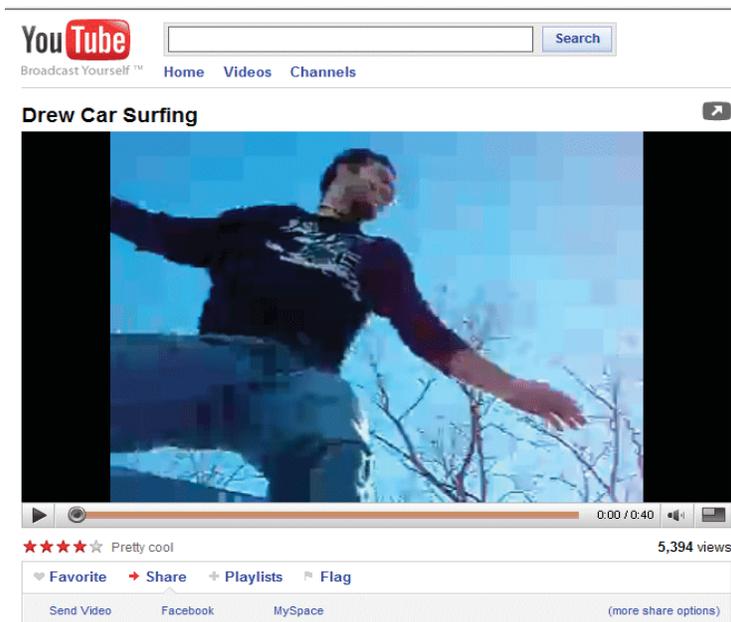
So what are parents/ guardians/ educators to do? The advice, while challenging to accomplish, is quite simple. Assume the exposure and prepare your children to make the right decisions for themselves in the face of such temptations. Raise children who feel equipped emotionally, who are confident, and who are not too susceptible to seeking recognition via high-risk activities. Open lines of communication are a must between parents and children and they should not be afraid to discuss topics that might have been taboo in the past. Teaching children to think critically and examine all sides of a situation before making a decision, as opposed to

simply forbidding them to do certain things, will go a long way towards making them feel empowered to stand up for their values and not succumb to peer pressure or the need to be recognized for extreme acts.

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Reference:

Geiger, J. D., Newsted, J., Drongowski, R. A., & Leilli, J. L. (2001). Car surfing: an underreported mechanism of serious injury in children and adolescents. *Journal of Pediatric Surgery*, 36 (1), 232-234. ♦



elves have heightened over the past decade, largely due their increased involvement with the Internet which exposes them to a wider range of influences across the globe. Chat rooms and webcams have opened doors to high-risk sexual activities and nearly limitless access to pornographic material has set examples that most youth would not have had in previous generations. In the past, parents simply had to worry about influences set by their children's friends, popular media and local community. Today, the range of influences on our youth is boundless and it is next to impossible to truly shield adolescents from this exposure without

# “Sick life”: Internet poker and the potential risks for youth from the perspective of a successful professional

By Will Shead, Ph.D. – International Centre for Youth Gambling Problems and High-Risk Behaviors

There have been hundreds of responses to 2eazy’s “brag post” on 2+2, a popular Internet poker forum, and there’s a common theme throughout the thread – people think 2eazy is sick. “Your life is so sick!” “Too sick,” and “Soooooo sick” are just a few of the responses.

Rest assured, 2eazy is in good health – all references to sickness are sincere declarations of envy. 2eazy (his 2+2 user name and online poker handle) has posted some seriously impressive results. And in the world of 2+2, a place where the colossal egos of opinionated poker players converge, collective covetousness is a bona fide miracle. He has reason to brag. In the post he displayed statistics showing the results of his last 650,000 hands of online poker which have yielded him a profit of nearly \$680,000 –

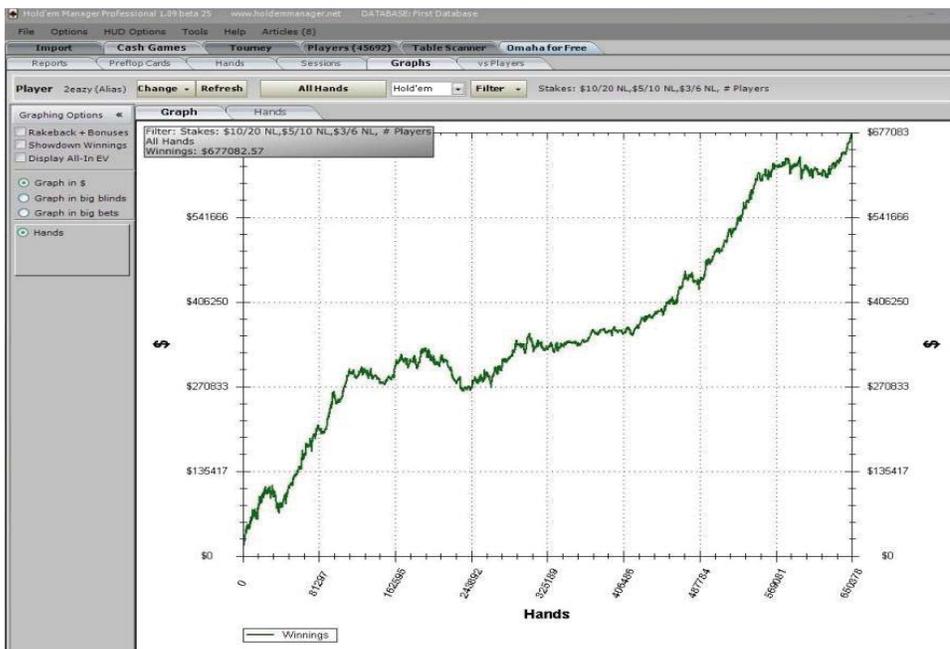
an astounding win rate over such a large sample of hands played. His profit graph (see Figure 1 below) resembles the stock index of an impossibly lucrative trading option. For good measure, he posted pictures of the luxury sports cars he has purchased using his poker winnings. Even more amazingly, these are not career statistics. They represent a mere 10 months out of a 5-year career as a poker professional that has seen him win in excess of \$3 million. And the kicker? He’s only 25 years old.

But do not let the term “brag post” fool you. In spite of his lavish lifestyle, 2eazy’s modesty quickly shines through upon meeting him in person. He is humble, soft spoken, and polite. “I’m not the most intelligent person. I’m pretty smart but not that smart,” he explains, taking pause from

the virtual tables to discuss his success as a professional online poker player at his townhouse in the posh neighbourhood of Montreal’s Old Port. “So I think it’s not that I’m super smart that I do well. It’s mostly work ethic.”

It seems his willingness to keep his ego in check is one of the tools that have served him well in his pursuits as a professional poker player. In a world filled with inflated egos he has avoided the bankroll-busting pitfalls that have befallen many failed pros who felt compelled to “prove themselves” by playing at the highest limits. 2eazy has found his wheelhouse – he plays “heads-up” (one-on-one) No Limit Texas Hold’em (NLH) on the Internet at mid- to high-stakes. And he’s been playing at these limits for the past four years. He leaves the “nosebleed stakes” to the players willing to endure million-dollar swings when their advantage is often, at best, razor-thin. Through intense studying and experience, 2eazy has developed his aggressive, unpredictable poker style to the point that he is confident he has an edge over most of his opponents. He even took on Daniel Negreanu, one of the most revered poker players in the world, in a heads-up challenge that garnered much attention within the poker community (2eazy was the unofficial victor of the match, profiting \$21,000 after 4,000 hands of play). In the

Figure 1 2eazy’s profit graph



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short run, he knows that anyone can win. However, much like a casino, if he plays a large enough sample of hands eventually his statistical edge will prevail to show a net profit.

Six years ago, 2eazy had no idea a poker career was in his future. He was a full-time student taking accounting at a university in Montreal when he was introduced to the game. "During the poker boom a buddy asked me if I wanted to play poker. So we played a \$10 game and I lost. So I'm really competitive and a bit obsessive about stuff so I picked up all the books I could pick up, read all the books I could read about poker. Then I deposited my first \$50 and I guess I was really lucky at first because after that \$50 I never redeposited again."

As he moved up in limits, it soon became apparent that school would be placed on the backburner. "For the first year I was still going to school, teaching tennis and playing poker, making three or four thousand a month which, at the time, was huge money. That first year I moved up pretty slow and then I was playing \$2-\$4 [small stakes] for five months which was quite a bit of time and I was doing well at that. I was winning \$10,000 to \$15,000 every month consistently. And then I won a big tournament - \$77,000 on Full Tilt [a poker site]. And from there I jumped up a lot higher. So it was a gradual move up. And then in the second year I made over half a million. So it was tough to go to school and take it seriously."

One is hard-pressed to find many stories on 2+2 about how poker

ruined their lives. But poker success stories, much like that of 2eazy, are plentiful and earn the respect of other forum members. Does 2eazy think there a potential danger in having success stories like his prominently on display for youth to read and use as inspiration? "It's probably not a good idea!" he laughs. "Because you'll get a ton of people trying

*"If you're going to make this your living you better be making a ton of money, put it aside, try to invest it because I don't think it's going to be around for that long. And if it is, I mean do you want to be 50 years old playing online poker?"*

to do the same thing. But also I want to motivate the \$1-\$2 [low stakes] grinder because I was once that guy who deposited \$50 and wanted to succeed; that it is possible. I'm not better than you. I'm not this kind of freak intelligent person that you can't relate to. You could do it if you put your mind to it."

On the one hand, many forum members understand that 2eazy is an outlier in the poker world. He is a unique talent whose achievements are extremely difficult to replicate. On the other hand, some forum members have treated his "brag post" as an inspirational message - "I'm gonna read this thread everyday for motivation," said one poster. 2+2 is full of young people with aspirations of mimicking the "balla" lifestyles of the relatively

few forum members who have gone on to accumulate millions in poker winnings. 2eazy is one of the few. However, he's not ready to jump on board as the spokesperson for online poker as a legitimate career path for young people. In fact, his sentiments have been unpopular with some 2+2ers grappling with the choice between pursuing

higher education and full-time poker. In one post he mused that the only time poker is an option over finishing school is if you are making over \$500,000 per year. "Yeah, I got a lot of flack just for putting that number out there," he says. "I just felt like, if you're going to make this your living you better be making a ton of money, put it aside, try to invest it because I don't think it's going to be around for that long. And if it is, I mean do you want to be 50 years old playing online poker? It's not really rewarding. You're not bringing anything to society."

2eazy struggles with this aspect of poker. While he readily admits that poker lacks meaningfulness as a pursuit, he has carefully weighed his options and tried to

keep things in perspective. “Well you have to bring some kind of value (to society). Maybe I’ll give back through teaching tennis or being a Big Brother kind of thing. Just feeling like you give something back. Right now I feel like this is an opportunity of a lifetime to be making the money I’m making. I’m concentrating on poker 100% and I’ll worry about it later in 5 years what I want to do. But I’m not worried that I’m not contributing to society right now.”

Apart from the feelings of emptiness that can build up after years of “grinding” the online poker tables, 2eazy acknowledges the social and emotional perils of professional poker.

“I lose social interaction skills I find, often just by playing poker all day too. Because I don’t interact with anyone you know. So that’s why it’s important to keep friends.” The wild swings inherent in high stakes poker also take a toll. “It’s really, really hard to lose \$40,000 in a day, win \$20,000. The emotional fluctuations are insane. Last month I lost \$100,000 in one day. And that was hard to take. And then to try to have personal interactions afterward. Having a girlfriend. It’s really, really, really hard. And sometimes I would take it out on my friends, or my girlfriend, or my parents. And that was really unfair of me.” After that day he lost \$100,000, he opined on 2+2 that poker was not an emotionally healthy way to make a living and that handling the swings inherent in the game is the hardest part. “Now I’ve gotten pretty good at it. But lately

I’ve found that I just don’t care about anything really, which is a negative I think. Because after poker, I feel it’s hard to relate to people too. People tell me they can’t afford their six hundred dollar rent and I can’t really relate to it. It makes me not really care as much anymore because poker made me emotionless.”

2eazy suggests that another important asset is his ability to drop down in limits when he is on a downswing. This strategy runs counter to the standard thought process of problem gamblers who tend to moving up in limits in order to chase losses. In poker, the process of playing poorly or at higher limits after losing is known as tilt – something that 2eazy has learned to avoid. “It took me a long time to learn that...because definitely when I’m losing I want to go jump and play higher – I’m a pretty emotional person...It’s hard. You have to pull yourself away. I’m not sure how I learned it. It’s not

something you can read. It’s just a bunch of trial and error. And knowing you can go broke. And trying to be reasonable and think the situation through.”

The qualities he possesses lie on the opposite end of the spectrum of characteristics typically exhibited by problem gamblers in the midst of a gambling episode. Problem gamblers don’t tend to think things through. They don’t consider the long-term consequences of their actions. They aren’t reasonable while gambling. And these qualities are particularly underdeveloped in youth which explains, in part, why youth show higher rates of gambling problems compared to adults. Despite the concern that involvement in poker can lead to potential problems among youth, 2eazy suggests that poker can be a viable pastime for youth. “Under the right guidelines I feel like poker would be a great hobby... (But) if somebody under 18 is going to be playing for money it



has to be controlled like crazy. I think 16 is enough that you could be playing for money...And only a few kinds of personalities would be able to control themselves."

Meanwhile, 2eazy maintains that youth should be dissuaded from pursuing poker as a career, "I definitely wouldn't recommend to anyone to be playing poker (professionally). And if I had a son, I probably would hide it from

"If a kid just starts playing poker, I think you have to educate him about the mindset right away because (they're) going to go try to play for money. If they play even poker on Facebook ... they're going to enjoy it and they're going to be thinking 'Oh, I'm beating all these people on Facebook I should be playing poker for money.' Because then they'll see somebody like me, 'Oh, he does it for money'

*"I try to push them away from playing poker. Just because it's so hard to succeed at it. It could be an awful thing."*

him that I'm playing poker for a living... Everybody who says 'I want to play poker' I try to push them away from playing poker. Just because it's so hard to succeed at it. It could be an awful thing. You could lose a lot of money doing it." Another issue that needs to be addressed is online poker regulation. Currently there are few safeguards protecting underage youth from accessing online poker sites, none of which are legally sanctioned by North American governments. "Only one site has said to me, 'can you send in an ID to verify your age'," admits 2eazy. "I think it should be more regulated for sure. I think if it's more legislated it will be better because it's the wild, wild west now."

For now, 2eazy believes that openly discussing poker with youth may be the key to protecting them from developing problems.

maybe I have this talent for poker." While he realizes that a professional poker player would likely never be invited into a school to discuss the realities of being a poker professional, 2eazy sees the approach as something that could be beneficial. "I think the kids would be very receptive to it and I think it would be a cool program...I don't want to push them into playing poker but I want to educate them about the downfalls and also the good things about poker."

Speaking with 2eazy, it is clear that he grapples with some cognitive dissonance related to his chosen profession. He dropped out of school to pursue poker, yet he discourages youth from doing the same. He sees poker as an unhealthy way to make a living, yet it has been his full time job for the past four years. He wants his accomplishments to inspire

others, yet he pushes others away from pursuing professional poker. These points of conflict are sure to cause some psychological discomfort for 2eazy but he has thought about them carefully. He does not over-rationalize his behaviour by adopting polarized attitudes about right and wrong; instead, he openly examines the contrasting viewpoints which likely helps resolve these tensions. And perhaps it is his willingness to honestly address his ambivalence that has helped him evolve into the successful poker player that he is.

2eazy does not always see himself as a poker player. "Poker is not something I'd like to do my whole life as a living. It's too hard to take emotionally. I don't know how long I'll be able to make money doing this." He has branched out into various business ventures that are overseen largely by his full-time personal assistant. He notes that it is difficult to start up companies without a lot of money and his poker winnings have provided that capital. Currently, he owns a coffee franchise and multiple rental properties. "I think some of the qualities I've developed from playing online poker - being able to take the proper risk and evaluate the situation - I think real estate might be something I could be good at."

In the meantime, 2eazy will stick with what he knows best - crushing high stakes poker games. He hopes his next "brag post" will be even more impressive than his last. The 2+2 community is waiting with baited breath. ♦

# The Long and Hard Road to Recovery

## 'America Anonymous: Eight Addicts in Search of a Life'

Benoit Denizet-Lewis

Simon & Schuster, New York, 2009

Reviewed by Renee St-Pierre, M.A. – International Centre for Youth Gambling Problems and High-Risk Behaviors

A recently published report estimates that in 2005, U.S. federal, state and local governments spent approximately \$467.7 billion on substance abuse-related costs, including health care, justice systems and family court, and child welfare (National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, 2009). However, despite a growing body of scientific evidence documenting the efficacy of pre-

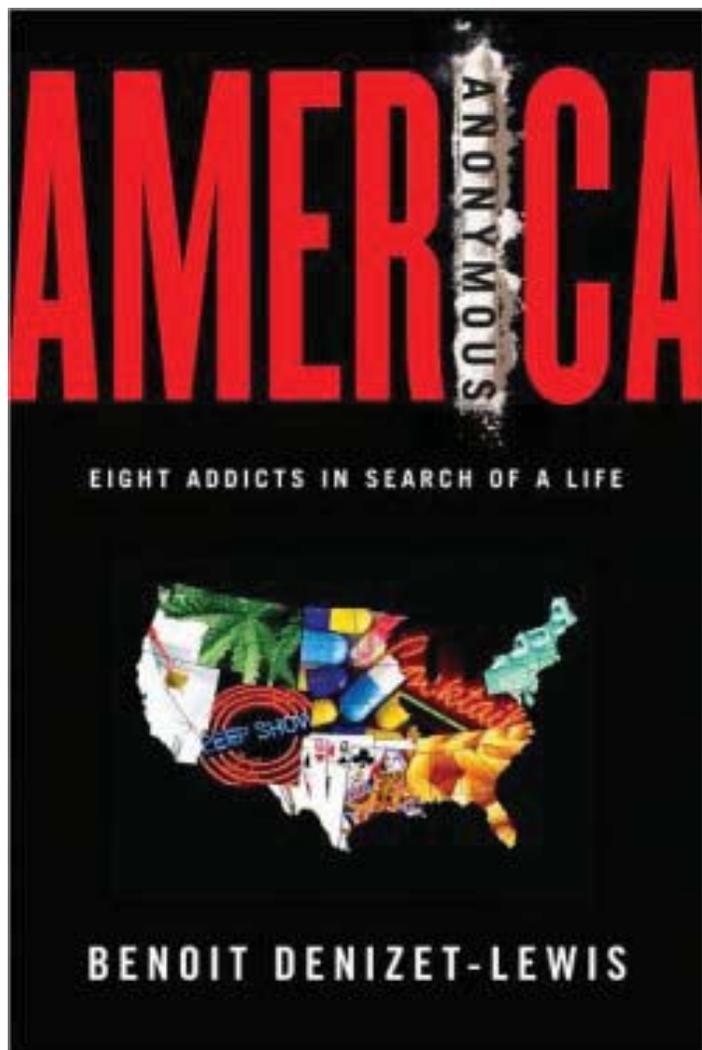
vention and intervention techniques, only 1.9 percent of the total expenditure was spent to fund prevention and treatment programs, with an additional 0.4 percent spent on addiction-related research. This report highlights the important economic costs associated with untreated substance abuse, but it also reveals how current public policy is "skewed" towards addressing the problems associated with un-

treated addiction (e.g., illness, injury, crime) rather than towards investing in effective approaches to prevent and minimize addiction and its consequences. To curb this inefficient spending of governmental resources, a clearer cultural understanding of the complexities of addiction and its treatment is needed.

In an effort to open an earnest public dialogue about addiction and recovery, Benoit Denizet-Lewis' (2009)

*America Anonymous* profiles eight men and women, with varying ages and occupations, grappling with addiction. Over the course of two to three years, Denizet-Lewis immerses himself into the lives of these men and women to uncover how they first became addicts, and chart their progress towards a life free of the "cattle prods and shackles" of addiction. The selection of candidates for this work of non-fiction, however, is not entirely unintentional. Consistent with the author's expanded characterization of addiction as beyond dependence on drugs and alcohol, the nature of the subjects' compulsions varies. There is a radio DJ addicted to food, a college student hooked on sex and pornography, a drug and gambling addiction counsellor struggling with his own dependence on crack, heroin, gambling, prescription medications, and nicotine, a homemaker with a compulsion for shoplifting, a grandmother with a 23-year crack addiction, an elderly alcoholic, a married bisexual bodybuilder and male escort dependent on steroids and crystal meth, and a heroin-addicted former boxer.

The book is structured as alternating chapters following a loose narrative arc, with each subject's story covered at each step. Using this technique to create intrigue



and develop anticipation (will he/she move one step closer to his/her goal of a life without addiction?), the author manages to preserve the audience's interest in each of the subjects, even those who are less than sympathetic. In addition to preserving the audience's attention, the book's structure also makes allowances for comparisons between the various addictions that are explored. One of Denizet-Lewis' central premises is that diverse manifestations of addiction, such as compulsive gambling and over-eating, are symptoms of the same underlying syndrome. Allowing for comparisons of the behavioural similarities of recognized conditions (e.g., substance abuse, compulsive gambling) with unofficial subtypes of compulsive behaviour (e.g., food addiction, sex addiction) may help broaden the general public's understanding of the nature of addiction. Despite the narrative usefulness of lumping various addictions together in this way, each presents unique characteristics that have serious implications for treatment and recovery. For example, while prolonged alcohol or drug abuse generally results in obvious health-compromising consequences, the same is not evident with respect to pathological gambling. Simply put, pathological and problem gamblers can engage in their compulsive behaviour without any outward physical symptoms, therefore enabling the addiction to often go undetected for longer periods of time than substance abuse or alcoholism. Although in Chapter 21 there is mention of a major difference between drug addicts and gamblers in the man-

ner in which they view the object of their dependence (problem vs. solution), other distinctions could have been highlighted in greater depth to encourage a clearer understanding of the complexities of different addictions and their treatment.

Another valuable element of the book is the manner in which Denizet-Lewis highlights the different stages of change that each addict goes through at one point in time or another, from contemplation that a problem exists and may require treatment, to maintenance of one's commitment to sobriety, and periods of relapse. One standout example is that of Bobby, the former boxer addicted to heroin. At the outset of the book, in the midst of a drug high, Bobby admits that eventually he'll tire of his life as an addict and return to treatment. By mid-volume, however, following a nine-month disappearance, Bobby resurfaces in a quest for anti-addiction medication to get clean. The reader quickly learns, nevertheless, that his pursuit of treatment is motivated less by a desire to change than by the simple fact that the drugs available on the streets of South Boston were not "working anymore." Finally, in the few remaining chapters, Bobby returns again and discloses that he's been actively working towards remaining drug- and alcohol-free via daily attendance of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) meetings, and living at a sober house with tri-weekly mandatory drug-testing. This presentation of addicts at different stages of change is crucial for an earnest discussion about addiction and recovery because it effectively

challenges the common misconception that recovery is characterized by a direct and relatively rapid shift from active addiction to sustained sobriety. More accurately, as Denizet-Lewis maintains, recovery from addiction follows a slow (and sometimes circular) progression.

Benoit Denizet-Lewis' *America Anonymous* provides an extremely useful in-depth narrative of the complexities of addiction and its treatment, by giving voice to eight individuals, of diverse ages, occupations, types of compulsive behaviour, and stages of change, who struggle everyday with the debilitating consequences of their addictions. The book does not shy away from challenging widely-held misconceptions that tend to detract from the development of effective addictions policies. The book will certainly be of interest to addicts and non-addicts alike who are interested in learning about addiction and recovery, treatment professionals interested in real-life accounts of the battles with different types of addiction, as well as the growing number of advocates lobbying federal and state agencies for additional research, prevention, and treatment funding.

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# Comic books teach youth about gambling and other issues

By Alissa Sklar, Ph.D. – International Centre for Youth Gambling Problems and High-Risk Behaviors

Brianna's having a rough time lately. She's moved with her family to a new town far away from her old friends, and she's fallen in with a new crowd of friends who like to play poker. All the time. Her grades have started to suffer, she's lost touch with her old friends back home and now she's sunk low enough to steal her little sister's piggybank to buy in to a big game.

Fortunately for Brianna, she recognizes her problem and seeks help at the local Indian Friendship Centre, where she gets the counselling and support she needs to beat her gambling problem. Fortunately for other Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth, Brianna's story can be read for awareness and inspiration in full-colour comic book format.

*On the Turn*, Brianna's story, was developed by the Healthy Aboriginal Network with a grant from a Canadian association called the Indian Friendship Centres. It is one of a line of beautifully illustrated graphic stories aimed at public health prevention and awareness, with a focus on Aboriginal characters, settings and cultural references. "Our mission is to create health literacy via resources that youth are open to and enjoy," explained Sean Muir, executive director of The Healthy Aboriginal

Network. "These are designed for Aboriginal youth but there's a lot of crossover."

Other products in their line-up include *Darkness Calls*, about teen suicide, *An Invited Threat*, about diabetes prevention and *Level Up*, about staying in school. Two new comics are in the works, on gang prevention and anxiety. All of these products are paid for with grants from various Aboriginal non-profit associations and government agencies.

Each of the comics is developed through extensive research and consultation with mental health experts, members of the Aboriginal community and the funding agency. The storytellers and illustrators used to develop the information into a convincing story format are always themselves Aboriginal. "These stories have to be written by someone with a like cultural reference," says Muir.

The ideas are then storyboarded with video editing software and put on YouTube, where a group of diverse readers, from

community elders to health professionals and youth workers worldwide are invited to comment and offer feedback. Teen readers are also given a chance to check them out. The comic is then edited according to feedback, the goals of the funding agency and to maintain the integrity of the issue.

To order copies of *On the Turn* and other comics, or to learn more about The Healthy Aboriginal, check them out online at <http://www.thehealthyaboriginal.net/>. ♦



# Strategic marketing used to lure smokers

By Amy Taylor, B.A. – International Centre for Youth Gambling Problems and High-Risk Behaviors

It is estimated that tobacco kills more than 5 million people per year. Despite the well-established finding that cigarette smoking is the leading cause of preventable death, cigarette companies continue to use strategic marketing methods to convince consumers that certain types of cigarettes are less harmful than others.

Laws have been established in over 40 countries preventing tobacco companies from using words including “light,” “mild,” and “low-tar” on packaging as these words are deemed deceptive and could lead consumers to believe that these cigarettes are somehow safer than those labelled otherwise. Despite these regulations, marketers have now turned to their thesauri for new descriptors that may be just as misleading.

A new study conducted among 603 smoking and non-smoking adults at the University of Waterloo (Hammond & Parkinson, 2009) sought to determine whether or not the words and design features currently found on cigarette packages can be as deceptive as those that are banned. The researchers developed replica cigarette packages that included words and design elements similar to those brands currently on the market. Additionally, each package included the standard Health Canada warnings.

Participants were presented with two fictitious packages at a time; each package was identical apart from a single element, either a descriptor in the name of the brand or the design of the package. For brand name descriptors, six pairs

of packages were compared, each with a different descriptor used in the brand name: “full flavour” versus “light,” “light” versus “ultra light,” “regular” versus “mild,” “regular” versus “smooth,” “full flavour” versus “silver” and the numbers “10” versus “6”. For package design elements, three pairs of packages were compared based on their design elements. A package with lighter blue shading was presented with one with darker blue shading, a package with a dark grey symbol versus a white symbol, and a package with an image of a cigarette filter, accompanied by the words, “charcoal filter.” After viewing the packages, participants were asked to answer three questions about which brand they would expect to deliver the least amount of tar, which package would have the smoothest taste, and which one would they purchase if they were trying to reduce the amount of risk to their health.

Researchers discovered that 80% of respondents believed that packaging with the word “smooth” on it would be less harmful to their health than one labelled “regular.” Additionally, 73% of participants also believed that brands displaying the word “silver” posed a smaller health risk than one labelled “full-flavour” and 84% considered packages with the number “6” healthier than those with the number “10” on them. Interestingly, these misconceptions were found more among the smokers than the non-smokers who participated. One reason for this finding could be that smokers who know that cigarettes are hazardous to health may rationalize their smoking by believing that smoking cer-

tain kinds of cigarettes are healthier than others.

Health concerns are the most common motivation to quit and smokers who perceive greater risks are more likely to attempt to quit and to remain abstinent. If tobacco companies are able to imply that their cigarettes are a ‘healthier’ option then perhaps smokers will not quit – they will simply switch brands believing they are making a healthy choice. These tactics are deceptive and potentially dangerous in terms of influencing the decisions people making about smoking. Adolescents may be swayed towards experimenting with “less harmful” brands of cigarettes when in fact they are just as hazardous to their health as other tobacco products on the market.

The researchers of the study believed that their findings clearly demonstrate that there is no “safe” way to advertise smoking. They concluded that there is a clear need for standardized packaging that would include solely the brand name and health warnings without superfluous descriptors. According to Hammond and Parkinson (2009), plain packaging is less attractive and could potentially reduce the overall appeal of smoking, particularly among youth.

Currently, no jurisdictions in North America have adopted such plain packaging regulations. Lawmakers would be wise to consider enforcing standardized rules for cigarette packages to eliminate the potential that misleading descriptors detract from health warnings and to reinforce the message that there is no safe way to smoke. ♦

# Regulating alcohol ads to decrease teen drinking

In the United States, more than 4,600 people under the legal drinking age die each year as a result of alcohol use (Jernigan, 2009). In the hope of decreasing these numbers, measures have been taken to cut back alcohol exposure to adolescents. Regulations have been implemented to ensure that alcohol marketing refrains from displaying messages that appeal specifically to those under the legal drinking age. In Australia, for example, the government implemented a code of conduct for the industry forbidding them from including any evident appeal of alcohol to children and adolescents. In Canada, both federal and provincial governments have the authority to regulate alcohol advertising for television and radio. Currently, the Broadcasters Act prohibits advertisements that appeal to minors, that encourage the general consumption of alcohol (over one specific brand), and depict alcohol consumption in the context of other high-risk activities (Hovius & Solomon, 2001). However, recent findings suggest that exposure to alcohol marketing continues to be associated with increased levels of teenage consumption.

A recent study done by the Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth in collaboration with UCLA revealed that despite advertisers pledging to avoid placing alcohol ads in programs with more than 30 percent of viewers under the legal drinking age, adolescents made up the second-

ary viewership for many shows to which the restrictions do not apply. In these cases, adolescents are exposed to an alarming rate of advertisements that are theoretically intended solely for adult viewing.

Gunter, Hansen, and Touri (2008) believe that along with alcohol advertisements and marketing strategies, peer pressure, parental influences, and attitudes towards alcohol are other contributing factors related to adolescent experimentation with alcohol. According to their recent findings, by the time an adolescent has reached their mid-teens at least one in two consume alcohol at least occasionally. Parents and adults who work with adolescents should be aware of the various elements that can influence a young person's desire to experiment with alcohol because it is often accompanied with other risk-taking behaviour. According to the U.S. Surgeon General, teens that start drinking earlier in life are more likely to have trouble in school, become addicted to alcohol, smoke cigarettes, and use drugs.

While some prevention work includes abstaining from peer pressure or rejecting the need to rebel against parents, there is a need for stricter guidelines when it comes to the depiction of alcohol consumption in advertisements. Alcohol commercials help young people become familiar with different brands and often illustrate attractive, young people having

fun, relaxing, and enjoying time with friends. Gunter, Hansen, and Touri believe that these elements are likely to encourage adolescent drinking.

Jernigan (2009) notes that previous studies have shown that the more alcohol advertisements that teenagers are exposed to, the more likely they are to drink. He clearly sees a need for stronger marketing regulations for the industry and believes that ads containing alcohol should be banned from all live sporting events as these have a strong adolescent viewership and he sees a need for further restrictions as to when alcohol advertisements can be broadcasted. Advertising restrictions that decrease exposure to the temptation of alcohol could potentially limit the desire for early onset of experimentation and aid parents, teachers, and those who work with adolescents in preventing the unnecessary harms associated with teenage drinking.

## References:

- Hovius, B., & Solomon, R.M. (2001). Alcohol advertising: A legal primer. 2nd Ed. Report prepared for the University of Western Ontario.
- Gunter, B., Hansen, A., & Touri, M. (2008). The representation and reception of meaning in alcohol advertising and young people's drinking. Report prepared for the University of Leicester.
- Jernigan D. H.(2009). Alcohol advertising regulation: Where to from here? *Addiction*, 104, 1166-1167. ◆

# Recent publications and presentations

## REFEREED PUBLICATIONS

Shead, N.W., Derevensky, J., & Gupta, R. (in press). Risk and protective factors associated with youth problem gambling. *International Journal of Adolescent Medicine and Health*.

Derevensky, J., Sklar, A., Gupta, R., & Messerlian, C. (in press). An empirical study examining the impact of gambling advertisements on adolescent gambling attitudes and behaviors. *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction*.

Felsher, J., Derevensky, J., & Gupta, R. (in press). Young adults with gambling problems: The impact of childhood maltreatment. *International Journal of Mental Health & Addiction*.

Gavriel-Fried, B., & Derevensky, J. (2009). The gestation and birth of the law prohibiting the sale of lottery tickets to Israeli minors (Amendment to the Penal Code): Some social policy issues. *International Gambling Studies*, 135-150.

Pagani, L., Derevensky, J., & Japel, C. (2009). Predicting gambling behavior in sixth grade from kindergarten impulsivity: A tale of developmental continuity. *Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine*, 163(3), 238-243.

McBride, J., & Derevensky, J. (2009). Internet gambling behaviour in a sample of on-line gamblers. *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction*, 7, 149-167.

## INVITED PRESENTATIONS

Derevensky, J. (2009). Internet gambling among youth: Another (unsupervised) venue... more problems? Paper to be presented at the Nova Scotia Responsible Gambling Conference, Halifax, October 2009.

Shead, N.W., Derevensky, J., Fong, T. & Gupta, R. (2009). Characteristics of Internet gambling among a sample of college students. Poster presented at the Quebec Symposium on Gambling and Addictions, Montreal, September.

Campbell, C., Derevensky, J., Meerkampfer, E., & Cutajar, J. (2009). Quebec parents' attitudes and perceptions of their child's gambling. Poster presented at the Quebec Symposium on Gambling and Addictions, Montreal, September. ♦



# News from the Centre...

## Spreading the news about our 2009 Holiday Campaign

Although we have not yet seen the peak of our fall foliage colours here in Montreal, we are already focused on our 2009 holiday campaign. Last year's initiative was our most successful ever, due in no small part to our partnership with the National Council on Problem Gambling in the United States. We are hoping to build on this momentum with an even greater showing of support for this holiday season, in which lottery companies assist us in asking parents and caregivers not to purchase lottery tickets and scratch cards as gifts for children and teens under the legal gambling age.

In 2008 we were able to garner formal support with a record number of lottery corporations on both sides of the border, as well as the NASPL Responsible Gaming sub-committee and the Canadian Gaming Association. We were thrilled that our original partners, Lotto Quebec and the Atlantic Lottery Corporation, continued to be a part of the campaign. We were also delighted to welcome the Nova Scotia Gambling Corporation, Ontario Lottery and Gaming, the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission, the Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Minnesota and Kentucky State Lotteries. The Massachusetts Council on Compulsive Gambling has also endorsed this campaign. In addition, the Centre and its partner lotteries have received great press coverage about this important prevention message, and helped spread their responsible gambling message. Many other lotteries endorsed our message informally, and news releases about their efforts often made their way back to our office to our sincere pleasure.

## JOIN THE HOLIDAY CAMPAIGN!

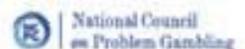
Send a positive responsible gaming message this holiday season.



The International Centre for Youth Gambling Problems and High-Risk Behaviors at McGill University and The National Council on Problem Gambling invite lottery corporations to join their colleagues in our annual holiday responsible gambling message for youth.

Don't gamble with a child's future:  
Lottery tickets are for adults...  
not for kids.

Christine Smith Wilson, Executive Director, National Council on Problem Gambling, 1-800-522-2244, [ncpg.org](http://ncpg.org) • Dr. Alissa Miller, Center Researcher and Communications Specialist, International Centre for Youth Gambling Problems and High-Risk Behaviors, McGill University, 514-398-2474, [www.itsg.mcgill.ca](http://www.itsg.mcgill.ca)



We are hoping to see continued progress on this initiative for the 2009 holiday season, and hope all of you can help spread the message that lottery tickets and scratch cards are not appropriate gifts for children or teens.

For more information, visit our website:  
[www.youthgambling.org](http://www.youthgambling.org).

## News from the Centre...

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### **Dr. Isabelle Martin leaving the Centre**

The entire staff of the Centre will miss Dr. Isabelle Martin, our Prevention Specialist, who is leaving the Centre after six years to work at the Université du Sherbrooke. We truly value all of her contributions to the Centre over the years and wish her continued success in the field.

Isabelle is joining a research team composed of Dr. Élise Roy, Dr. Magali Dufour, and Dr. Karine Bertrand, all members of the Service de toxicomanie of the Medical Faculty of Sherbrooke University, on the Longueuil Campus.

### **Jean Claude Moubarac moves to new position**

We also wish to send hearty congratulations to Jean-Claude Moubarac, who left the Centre in August to work as the coordinator of the Réseau Québécois de Recherche sur le Suicide (RQRS) (Quebec Suicide Research Network) for the Douglas Hospital in Verdun, QC. His new email is jean-claude.moubarac@douglas.mcgill.ca. Best wishes to him in this new position.

### **Colin Campbell completes Master's thesis**

A round of applause for Colin Campbell, who successfully completed his Master's thesis this September. His thesis was entitled "A national study examining parental attitudes toward adolescent gambling and other high risk behaviors." Colin will be moving on to his doctoral studies here at McGill's School/ Applied Child Psychology. Congratulations on a job well done!

### **Engagement announcement**

We are pleased to announce the engagement of Jessica McBride, one of our doctoral students to Christopher Blonar, Ph.D. They are planning a Montreal wedding in August 2010. Congratulations!

## Upcoming Events

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- **National Institute of Health and Welfare: Gambling, Gender and Society International Research Conference**  
September 24, 2009 - Helsinki, Finland
- **Council of Compulsive Gambling of New Jersey 27th Annual Statewide Conference on Compulsive Gambling**  
September 25, 2009 - Princeton, New Jersey, USA
- **Nova Scotia Gaming Corporation's Responsible Gambling Conference 2009**  
October 5 - 6, 2009 - Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada
- **NCRG Conference on Gambling and Addiction**  
November 15 - 17, 2009 - Las Vegas, Nevada, USA
- **National Association for Gambling Studies 19th Annual Conference**  
November 18 - 20, 2009 - Canberra, ACT, Australia
- **Problem Gambling Foundation of New Zealand 2010 International Gambling Conference**  
February 24 - 26, 2010 - Auckland City, New Zealand
- **National Council on Problem Gambling 24th National Annual Conference**  
June 10 - 12, 2010 - Portland, Oregon, U.S.A

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## YGI Newsletter

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**A Quarterly Publication by the International Centre for Youth Gambling Problems and High-Risk Behaviors**

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