



research reveals...

an update on gambling research in ALBERTA

About The Alberta Gaming Research Institute

The Alberta Gaming Research Institute is a consortium of the Universities of Alberta, Calgary, and Lethbridge. Its primary purpose is to support and promote research into gaming and gambling in the province. The Institute's identified research domains include bio-psychological and health care, socio-cultural, economic, and government and industry policy and practice. The Institute aims to achieve international recognition in gaming-related research. It is coordinated by a Board of Directors working in collaboration with the Alberta Gaming Research Council. The Ministry of Alberta Gaming provides funding to the Institute.

OUR MISSION:

To significantly improve Albertans' knowledge of how gambling affects society

Your comments and queries are welcome either by e-mail abgaming@ualberta.ca or phone 780.492.2856.

Alberta Gaming Research Institute Board of Directors, 2002

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Emerging researchers in gaming issues: Taranjeet Birdi

WHEN TARANJEET BIRDI completed her Master's degree in Public Health (MPH) at the University of Alberta in 2001, gaming research was not really part of her plans. Yet the research and academic work she did leading to her MPH, following the completion of her BA in Psychology in 1999, involved projects in health policy and management - the areas of specialization for her Master's degree — turned out to be well-suited to such research.

Projects that Taranjeet worked on include an examination of national and international trends in the continuing care sector for the Caritas Health Group in Edmonton, as well as several initiatives for the Capital Health Authority. Taranjeet also completed a project examining the rate of suicide among health professionals across Alberta.

Taranjeet has been Research Coordinator for the Service Integration Studies Unit (SISU) at the University of Alberta for more than a year, working on projects focused on improving continuity of care for at-risk populations. LINCS, a nationally funded research program whose Principal Investigator is Prof. Donna Lynn Smith, focuses on continuity of care and improving system and management decisions in the health care system and is based in SISU. One of the LINCS' Research Program's objectives is to build capacity for further research in the area of service integration and continuity of care. People with addictions, including problem gamblers, are among the populations for whom continuity of care is an important issue.

Taranjeet's academic background, previous research experience and her role in the LINCS program has enabled her to play a key role in the development and implementation of a study funded by the Alberta Gaming Research Institute in early 2002. "Opportunistic screening and intervention strategies for problem gamblers in the emergency department: an exploratory study," is a LINCS project whose co-principal investigators are Prof. Donna Lynn Smith and Dr. Sharon Ann Warren. The research team, says Taranjeet, saw problem gamblers as a group that could benefit from screening and early intervention to prevent downstream problems and discontinuity in care.

The LINCS problem gambling study is being carried out in the emergency department of Edmonton's Royal Alexandra Hospital in collaboration with an ongoing study led by Dr. Gerry Predy, the Medical Officer of Health for the Capital Health Authority. The latter study focuses on preventative screening for health risk behaviours among populations with chronic illness. A partnership between the two research teams was facilitated by Dr. Garnett Cummings, Director of the Hospital's Emergency Department, and a co-investigator in both studies.

"The focus of our research," says Taranjeet, "is interdisciplinary, and this is reflected in the team of investigators ... with backgrounds such as nursing, public health sciences, epidemiology, psychology, rehabilitation medicine, health policy and management, emergency medicine and community health."

Taranjeet's role in the research included organization of the initial proposal, and acting as a liaison between the ongoing Hospital project and the LINCS problem gambling study. She learned about the on-line health risk screening tool "The Surveyor" being used in the Hospital study, and worked with other members of the team to review



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instruments that could be used to screen for problem gambling, that could be incorporated into the surveyor. The Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI) developed by Drs. Harold Wynne and Garry Smith, was selected.

Taranjeet says that it has been interesting learning about the evolving area of health informatics in the realm of addictions and now, with this study, problem gambling. The prospect of using an electronic instrument where problem gamblers can be surveyed and identified to be at risk and immediately coordinated with treatment options provides many opportunities for research, prevention and treatment.

Taranjeet's interest in gaming research has definitely been piqued. "I have only recently been introduced to this area," she notes, "and am now aware of the vast areas of research in this field. I think that research in problem gambling is important, particularly in terms of prevention

[but] also from the perspective of the development of an integrated service pathway for problem gamblers to achieve continuity of care and effective treatment. These are our plans for future research, so yes; I do plan to participate in further gambling-related research."

Taranjeet also identifies problem gambling, youth and the Internet as an area of future interest. Studies conducted over the past decade suggest that gambling activities remain particularly attractive to today's youth and that its popularity is on the rise amongst both children and adolescents. "I think it would be an interesting area where researchers could intervene, particularly from the perspective of prevention. As more research focuses on gambling problems that begin at a young age, by incorporating effective screening tools, practitioners could intervene at an earlier stage, thereby increasing the likelihood of success with treatment."

government is to formulate gaming policies which will serve and protect its citizens and accurately reflect the general consensus of average Albertans on gaming issues. Ultimately, I suggest the objective should be to create a balanced and healthy approach to gaming which will maximize its benefits and minimize its detrimental consequences.

Fresh and innovative ideas on gaming research projects are consistently required if the Council is to play a valuable and meaningful role in the gaming research process and ensure community concerns and interests are considered. My term on the Council has been a rewarding experience and I am grateful for having been provided the opportunity to participate.

Robert H. (Bob) McDonald

The Alberta Gaming Research Council: a point of view from a Council member

I WAS APPOINTED to the Alberta Gaming Research Council (Council) by the Hon. Murray Smith, then Minister of Gaming, in September 1999. Thirteen other members as well as the Chair constitute the Council. The duties of Council members, who are appointed for a three-year term, include reviewing and making recommendations on research priorities and providing direction and guidance to the Alberta Gaming Research Institute (Institute) in accordance with the Agreement which established the Council, monitoring and assessing the research activities of the Institute, developing the Council's Business plan, acting as spokespersons for the Council when required and working to enhance relations between the community and the Council. Council members represent various segments of society, including youth, industry, the legal community, charities, aboriginals, non-profit organizations, individuals who have experienced addiction, the elderly, students, Alberta Health & Wellness, AADAC, and the Alberta Gaming Ministry. My background is in law enforcement.

Gaming is an issue which demands constant attention and scrutiny as the societal consequences of gaming are far-reaching. Although all people may not participate in gaming activities by actually playing the games, the consequences of gaming have a direct or indirect impact on all of us. Individuals or families benefitting from the financial proceeds of gaming through community projects or programs are impacted positively, whereas individuals who fall victim to gaming addiction suffer negative consequences. Industry benefits positively from gaming by realizing financial profits from the sale of gaming products or services and from establishing businesses in Alberta communities. Gaming venues can create opportunities for criminals, which have a negative impact on communities. We can therefore conclude that the positive and negative aspects associated with gaming make it a diverse, complex and fascinating field for research.

The Council's mission is to oversee research into the social and economic effects of gaming and ensure the results of this research are communicated to Albertans. The Council also ensures that issues of concern to average Albertans are raised for consideration in the Institute's research process. Similarly, it is equally essential that the results of research be easily understood by Albertans and that they ultimately benefit from the research. Genuine input is required from all stakeholders if the Alberta

Female bingo players over age 65 wanted

Women aged 65 or older who are frequent bingo players (playing 6 or more hours a week) are requested to volunteer for interviews. Researchers at the University of Alberta are seeking information on bingo as a positive contribution to lifestyle and the lived experience of being an older woman playing bingo. **Contact Sandy Cousins 780-492-1033, or Chad Witcher at 780-492-8507.** Interviews can be done in your home or at the research lab where privacy is insured.

For additional news about the Institute, visit our website: www.abgaminginstitute.ualberta.ca

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