Gambling continues to represent a public health issue with proposed changes to regulatory requirements affecting on-shore and off-shore regulated and unregulated online products, proposals to legalise sports betting in the United States, and the global influence of social media and general risk taking in online environments. Expressed concerns include the potential impact on problem gambling and social costs associated with the growth of sports betting, innovative products such as virtual and augmented reality, skins betting, eSports, loot boxes, and interactive gaming machines. The extent to which the shifting dynamic gambling environment will impact on social and personal harms remains unclear. Understanding the psychology of these new forms and delivery platforms will assist in translating research findings into policies that minimise gambling-related harms within populations.

In addition to early prevention public health education and related policies, there is a need to continue refining and improving treatment interventions for individuals, couples and families, and investigating motivations and factors that promote entry into and compliance with self-exclusion programs. The development of online training modules for interns and counsellors in cognitive behavioural interventions represents a cost-effective approach in teaching skills to metropolitan and rural health professionals. These can be supplemented by online modules explaining the fundamentals and probabilities of all forms of gambling to the wider population of recreational and high-risk gamblers.

Recent changes to the diagnostic classification of pathological gambling as a gambling disorder within the category of non-substance behavioural addictions has significant implications affecting a range of other repetitive behaviours. The World Health Organisation is moving towards including excessive video gaming play as an addiction in its next version of ICD-11, and the peer review literature is now resplendent with publications describing a host of behavioural addictions, including but not limited to smart phone, selfies, salsa and tango dancing, and fortune telling addictions.

There is also an increasing trend towards setting aside prevalence rates of problem gambling to identifying the specific nature and extent of harms experienced. This has occurred in response to the growing recognition that serious harms affect only a minority of gamblers, but that less serious impacts that reduce quality of life affect a large proportion of recreational gamblers. The implications of these findings act to introduce strategies to de-stigmatise gambling and encourage individuals to modify their behaviour that improves their overall health and well-being.

Given the above, it is pleasing to see that the GTRC is leading the way in developing training modules for clinicians and counsellors, evaluating early intervention educational preventative programs for adolescents, investigating online risk taking behaviours across a broad range of Internet related behaviours, social media, defining the concept of recovery in gambling disorders, how courts respond to and manage individuals convicted of gambling-related criminal offences, and psychological factors that contribute to excessive gambling behaviours. The outcome of these research programs will contribute to transformational knowledge shaping public health preventative and tertiary service delivery policies and interventions.

Alexander Blaszczynski, Director
The Brain and Mind Centre is situated in Camperdown and is part of the University of Sydney Campus. It houses various academic teams focusing on developing leading research for some of the most complex human conditions. The Gambling Treatment and Research Clinic operates out of the modern facilities giving the clinic better access to interdisciplinary collaborations.

Our clinic by Dr. Christopher Hunt

The clinic operations of the GTRC consistently move from strength to strength. We continue to offer free individual counselling for those affected by gambling, and have seen steady increases in client numbers across our three locations: Camperdown, Parramatta and Campbelltown. In the past year, we have focused on developing manuals that detail the novel approaches used here, which will be rolled out in 2018. First amongst these are new manuals based on the unique cognitive therapy that we deliver to clients here at the GTRC, developed by our deputy clinic director Dr Fadi Anjoul. This new manual will include modern and innovative approaches to treatment delivery and training of clinicians, that includes multimedia tools and demonstrations. Work has continued focusing on new ways of working with affected family and friends of problem gamblers, based on the “5-Step Program” developed overseas and spearheaded in the GTRC by intern Jessica Lam.

Our clinical intern program also continues in the new year, with three new clinical interns with a strong interest in gambling starting in the clinic this summer. As evidence of the success of these programs, two of our former interns will also be returning as clinical staff members in 2018, demonstrating how the intern program that we provide often leads to deep and continuing interests in gambling.

Recent publications


Core research

The influence of features of the online environment on risk taking: Unravelling the impact of social cues

Dr. Sally Gainsbury is researching how websites use features and social cues to encourage risky decisions. This research will inform policy makers on how sites can be made safer for the public. It is funded by an Australian Research Council Discovery Early Career Researcher Award (DECRA; 2016–2019).

This research involves looking at multiple aspects of online risk taking using various methodologies. In 2017, Dr. Gainsbury supervised two Psychology Honours students who both received First Class Honours for their theses. Holly Cameron examined the psychological factors that predict use of explicit language on social networking sites and Fe Donaghue examined how people choose which websites to use for online purchases, including the role of security factors and concerns about privacy.

Dr. Gainsbury supervised Sunny Nong, an intern visiting from China, who completed an audit of Australia’s most popular websites in order to comprise a list of the ways in which various industries encourage social interaction with and between online users. This research was presented at the 2017 National Association for Gambling Studies (NAGS) Annual Conference in Melbourne. Another visiting intern, Christina Rash, is completing her Psychology degree at the University of Calgary. Christina analysed the results of a large survey of Australian Internet users to understand why people experience regret after making posts on social networking sites, particularly considering the differences between regrets of online text vs. photos. Christina also presented her research at the NAGS conference and was awarded a student scholarship to attend this event.

Another project of the DECRA research involves analysing data from a large survey of Australian Internet users to understand online risk taking. Dr. Gainsbury has been collaborating with Dr. Rebecca Pinkus, a lecturer in the School of Psychology, and was awarded School seed funding to employ intern Jessica Lam to continue this work. They have developed a conceptual model of the relationship between Internet Privacy Concerns and online aggression to understand online victimisation and perpetration of crimes and acts of aggression online. Dr. Gainsbury is also collaborating with Dr. Matthew Browne at Central Queensland University to develop a definition of online risk taking by examining how various online activities relate to the experience of negative outcomes.

Finally, Dr. Gainsbury is collaborating with Professor Thorsten Teichert from the University of Hamburg to conduct an experimental study to understand the factors that individuals consider and prioritise when choosing which online gambling websites to use. This project is being assisted by GTRC project manager, Michelle Beckett, and summer intern, Kelly Dann.

Potential harms of regular daily fantasy sports participation: an investigation of the Australian market

The 2016–17 National Association for Gambling Studies (NAGS) annual research grant, awarded to Dylan Pickering, Brittany Keen, and Alex Blaszczynski, was completed on November 1. The authors delivered a comprehensive 30-page report detailing the potential harms associated with daily fantasy sports (DFS) participation to the NAGS committee. This study was the first in the gambling field to look at this topic in the Australian community and has significant policy implications in terms of the most appropriate way to regulate DFS websites. Online survey responses from a sample of 620 DFS players and/or conventional sports bettors were examined. Overall, DFS participation was associated with significantly less harm than sports betting. Additionally, the few harms linked to DFS were characterised by a loss of work productivity or the neglect of a relationship, rather than financially-related problems. The findings raise the question of whether it is appropriate to regulate DFS under the same online wagering laws as sports betting, which is the current practice. On 22nd November, Dylan presented the study results to an audience at the NAGS annual conference at the Novotel, Melbourne. Piquing interest from a public audience, Dylan appeared on the ABC Radio National breakfast program to speak on the emergence of DFS in Australia. An article was also published in The Conversation exploring how problem gambling in Australia could be affected by proliferation of online DFS providers. DFS is rapidly expanding on an international level, and the GTRC has established a strong research presence in this new field.
Our research

In accordance with our strategic plan for 2017-2020, the Gambling Treatment and Research Clinic is moving to address a number of strategic research and clinical priorities. Here is an update on our current research:

New Technology

**Online gambling – the use of domestic and offshore websites by Australians**

Dr. Sally Gainsbury, Dr. Doug Angus, and Professor Alex Blaszczynski are analysing results of a survey that reviewed 1,000 Australian past-month online gamblers to investigate the use of online gambling sites. The team are currently preparing publications focusing on understanding the relation of problem gambling with use of offshore vs. domestic gambling sites as well as analyses to understand the factors that predict whether online gamblers will use offshore as opposed to domestic gambling sites. This research aims to inform policy to minimise gambling-related harms as well as to enhance the understanding of why gamblers use risky offshore sites. The GTRC have also received funding from the Australian Communication and Media Authority (ACMA) to prepare a report to advise how Australians are engaging with offshore gambling sites.

**Problem gambling prevention in young adults and adolescents**

PhD candidate Brittany Keen, under the supervision of Professor Alex Blaszczynski and Dr. Fadi Anjoul, is evaluating the effects of different educational material aimed at preventing gambling-related misconceptions that lead to problems. A systematic review on school-based education programs has been published thus far, and Brittany is starting recruitment of first-year psychology students in March 2018 and has already completed recruitment of gaming machine players at seven club venues in NSW and the ACT. **Recruitment** for gaming machine players is ongoing and gambling venues are encouraged to contact Brittany Keen if they would like to be a part of the research study. This study is funded by a grant from the Gaming Technologies Association.

Defining Gambling-Related Harm

**Gambling Effects Measure**

Psychologist and Clinic Manager Kirsten Shannon, Professor Alex Blaszczynski, and Dr. Fadi Anjoul are researching and developing a measure to assess the type, severity and extent of harms related to gambling. A manuscript on the psychometric evaluation was published in 2017 and the research has currently been extended to international populations. Defining the specific harms caused by gambling is important as it allows public health campaigns to develop programs designed to target individual harms and use changes in the prevalence and severity of harms as a metric to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of responsible gambling programs.

Recovery

**Development of the Recovery Index for Gambling Disorder**

PhD candidate Dylan Pickering, under the supervision of Professor Alex Blaszczynski and Dr. Sally Gainsbury, is developing a multidimensional self-report scale that captures a range of key indicators of recovery in the gambling disorder context. A systematic review evaluating the types of treatment outcomes applied to gambling disorder research was published in 2017 in *Addiction*. This paper concluded that given the high degree of inconsistency in outcome selection, the gambling field would benefit immensely from a unified approach to measuring treatment success. Based on the results of these research activities, items are currently being formulated for inclusion in the recovery index, which will subsequently be reviewed by a sample of experts in the gambling field.

We are currently seeking (a) Gambling psychologists/counsellors and (b) Gambling Researchers (PhD) to provide their expert review of the scale. If you are eligible and interested to be a part of this project, please contact Dylan.
Treatment and Interventions

Multi-venue self-exclusion (MVSE) as a harm minimisation strategy

PhD candidates Dylan Pickering and Zhenzhen Nong, and Dr. Sally Gainsbury, and Professor Alex Blaszczynski, and have conducted a qualitative analysis of a multi-venue self-exclusion (MVSE) process from the user-perspective. The results of this study may inform program updates designed to increase uptake and improve user outcomes. A manuscript of this study is currently under review with an international journal. The findings and recommendations were presented at the Responsible Gambling Fund Counsellors Conference which was held at the Novotel, Brighton le Sands. A publication based on a retrospective quantitative evaluation of the MVSE program will also feature in the next issue of the Journal of Gambling Issues. In 2018, we turn our attention to a large longitudinal evaluation of MVSE with data from more than 200 participants already recorded. All research activities in this section are funded by ClubsNSW.

Evaluation of enhanced staff training in responsible gambling

The GTRC is currently developing an enhanced staff training program in responsible gambling with education expert Janine Robinson from the RG+ division of the Responsible Gambling Council in Canada. This program is informed by established methods developed by Janine for other jurisdictions and by recent analyses and focus groups completed on current staff training throughout gaming venues. Research will be conducted during the process to examine program effectiveness in addressing gambling related harms in NSW Clubs. The project is funded by ClubsNSW.

Other projects

Electronic Gaming Machines

Professor Alex Blaszczynski and PhD candidate Brittany Keen are investigating the extent of the decline in EGM users and its causes. The results of this study indicated that EGM play may be intensifying in NSW Club venues. The findings indicate a 9% decrease in expressed preferences for gaming machine play in clubs, however, self-reported gaming machine expenditure did not decline at the same rate, indicating increased spending among remaining players. The findings of this study will be submitted for academic publication in the coming months.

The role of financial institutions in gambling

Under the supervision of Dr Sally Gainsbury, intern Tom Swanton is investigating the role of financial institutions in gambling. After conducting an environmental scan incorporating both peer-reviewed literature and non-academic documents, the findings will be presented in a literature review. The review will consider financial institutions’ existing policies on gambling, their role as intermediaries in gambling-related transactions, and their role in promoting customer well-being. Existing policy and practice will be evaluated and future directions discussed based on the theoretical framework of behavioural economics.

Investigating the Influence of Social Cues on Online Risk Taking Behaviour

Master of Clinical Psychology student, Roisin Lynch, under the supervision of Dr. Sally Gainsbury is investigating the influence of social cues on online risk taking behaviour. The researchers are collaborating with Professor Matthew Rockloff and Associate Professor Matthew Browne from Central Queensland University to investigate the influence of both evaluative and competitive social cues on online gambling behaviour using a computer simulation of a conventional 3-reel EGM. This research aims to improve understanding of the psychological processes that underlie risk taking online and will inform policy makers on how sites can be made safer for the public. This research is supported by an Australian Research Council Discovery Early Career Research Award [DE1060100459] awarded to Dr. Sally Gainsbury.
Meet our newest member, Dr. Angus

The Gambling Treatment and Research Clinic has recently hired a new colleague. A University of New South Wales alumni, Dr. Doug Angus brings a wealth of statistical and methodological experience in psychological research. We are excited to have him on board as our Research Officer. Plus, he has a great sense of humour!

In a recent interview, Dr. Angus fills us in on his hidden talents.

**What are your research interests?**

In general, I’m interested in how we process rewards. In particular, I’m interested in the relationship between our motivations to seek out rewards, the way we learn about which actions are successful (or unsuccessful) in obtaining rewards, and the emotional responses to receiving rewards (or non-rewards).

**What qualifications do you bring to the GTRC?**

I have a Bachelor of Science, Postgraduate Diploma, and Master of Science from The University of Auckland. I was recently awarded my PhD in Psychology by The University of New South Wales.

**What research did you do for your PhD?**

For my PhD, I examined how manipulations of motivation, affect, and learning alter neural activity that occurs during the processing of rewards. Some of the important findings that came from this research were: 1) motivation rather than affect modulates neural activity during feedback processing; 2) that the perception of control modulates neural activity involved in reinforcement learning; and 3) that separate and distinct processes occur during the anticipation of reward, during learning about rewards, and during reward delivery.

**What research do you want to do while with the GTRC?**

In the short term, I’m interested in online gambling: there’s still a lot that isn’t known about how people use online gambling services, and what implications their use has. In the long term, I’m interested in using psychophysiological techniques to improve our understanding of problem gambling.

**What expertise do you bring to the GTRC?**

I’ve been lucky enough to have the opportunity to develop a wide range of skills, all of which are useful in my role at the GTRC. These include study design, protocol development, automating the processing of large datasets, and performing appropriate statistical analyses.

**What projects are you working on at the moment?**

At the moment, I’m working on a couple of projects looking at the problems and motivations associated with different types of online gambling. I’m also providing statistical advice to a few research interns, research assistants and PhD students who are working in the GTRC.

**Where did you grow up?**

I grew up in Blenheim, a small town in New Zealand. But I’ve lived all around New Zealand, and have been in Sydney for the past five years.

**What’s the last book you read and why did you like it?**

Understanding Psychology as a Science: An Introduction to Scientific and Statistical Inference by Zoltan Dienes. It’s a short and easy read, and mandatory for anyone interested in conducting or interpreting psychological research.

**What’s the best part about being the newest member of the GTRC?**

Definitely the lab culture of the GTRC – it’s a great, welcoming environment to do research within.

**What’s your best purchase under $100 that had a significant impact on your life?**

Glasses because I am slightly nearsighted. Those glasses have now broken... And I am sad.

**Hidden talent?**

I have a debilitating capacity to be unable to tell believable lies.
Opportunities for involvement

Journal Club

The Gambling Treatment and Research Clinic prides itself on its Gambling Journal Club. This event, held 5 times per year, is a chance for the greater community to gather together to discuss important topics relating to gambling. The journal club provides a great opportunity for persons interested in discourse with Australia’s only gambling clinic associated with a university. For 2018, we have an innovative and varied program of events, ranging from talks on clinical techniques, debates on controversial topics surrounding gambling, and discussions on related social issues.

Our next journal club is scheduled for 8th February, and will focus on the issue of how the Internet is changing gambling. It will include a talk from visiting researcher, Dr. Stephanie Baggio from the University of Lausanne, Switzerland. Dr. Baggio will be speaking about her research on risks associated with online gambling, following a lively discussion amongst practitioners about how the Internet is changing their clinical practice. If you would like to attend the upcoming journal club, or would like more information on our meetings, please contact Dr. Christopher Hunt.

Research and Supervision

Dr. Sally Gainsbury is available as a PhD supervisor for candidates wishing to undertake a PhD in the School of Psychology at the University of Sydney. Her primary areas of research include online risk taking, the technological transformation of gambling, and minimising gambling-related harms. Interested students should refer to her supervisor profile (https://sydney.edu.au/research/opportunities/supervisors/1820), academic profile (http://sydney.edu.au/science/people/sally.gainsbury.php) and email her directly with their CV and an outline of their area of research interests.

In particular, Dr. Gainsbury is looking for a PhD candidate in Psychology interested in researching online risk taking. See the call for candidates here.

Call for Research Participation

PhD candidate Dylan Pickering is currently seeking (a) Gambling psychologists/counsellors and (b) Gambling Researchers (PhD) to provide their expert review of the Recovery Index for Gambling Disorders (RIGD) scale. This involves completing an online survey including all draft scale items and questions about their comprehensibility and relevance. There is also space in the survey for open comments. If you are eligible and interested to be a part of this project, please email Dylan at dylan.pickering@sydney.edu.au.

Recruitment for gaming machine players is ongoing and gambling venues are encouraged to contact PhD candidate Brittany Keen, at brittany.keen@sydney.edu.au, if they would like to be a part of the research study. The research involves participants watching a short video and completing a questionnaire.

Open Call for Clinical Interns

The GTRC is continually accepting applications for the Clinical Intern Placement Program. Open to 5th and 6th year psychology students, the program is offered to improve service provision to clients and foster continued involvement in the field of gambling treatment. Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive from past students. The program continues to see students accepted into clinical master’s programs or use their internship at the GTRC to obtain registration as a psychologist.

Successful applicants into the Clinical Intern Placement Program receive intensive training, weekly supervision and have the opportunity to participate in co-therapy. During the second half of the program, interns are responsible for their own client load and learn to maintain client files with Titanium client software. Interns in the program will gain practical experience from leading clinicians in the gambling treatment field, and be given the opportunity to learn clinical skills in modern facilities.

For more information about the placement program, please contact Kirsten Shannon.
Open Call for Research Interns and Student Exchange

The GTRC is continually accepting applications to the Research Interns and Student Exchange program for post-graduate researchers. The new program has seen highly motivated interns and exchange students pass through its doors from various institutions, thus far, and encourages candidates interested in learning about gambling research to apply. Successful applicants will be involved in all aspects of research and clinical work and contribute to peer-review publications under the supervision of world-leading researchers. Our aim is to provide the most promising post-graduate researchers with experience that would aid in developing an independent research career.

To be eligible, the candidate must have a minimum of a 4-year undergraduate degree in psychology, which includes a significant independent research project and training in statistics. Applicants may be currently enrolled in a Masters or PhD program, or intending to enrol in a postgraduate program and seeking further research and clinical experience. Applications are accepted on a rolling basis, but please note there are limited spaces available for 2018.

For more information please take a look at our website (http://sydney.edu.au/science/psychology/gambling_treatment_clinic/), or contact either Professor Alex Blaszczynski (alex.blaszczynski@sydney.edu.au), GTRC Director, or Dr. Sally Gainsbury (sally.gainsbury@sydney.edu.au), GTRC Deputy Director.

Visiting researchers

The GTRC always endeavours to increase national and international collaborations. Soon the Clinic will host a Visiting Scholar from Switzerland who specialises in Internet addiction, epidemiology and statistical analysis. Dr. Stephanie Baggio will be working with Dr. Sally Gainsbury and Dr. Doug Angus on the analysis of large datasets. During her time with the GTRC she will also be delivering a workshop in R statistical programming and a presentation on her existing research on internet gambling.

Workshop: Network analysis: studying concepts at the network-level using R.

The network analysis is a recent and growing method used in psychology and medicine. It considers concepts (for example, mental health disorders) as a complex network of connected objects (e.g., symptoms). This workshop first presents the conceptual and methodological principles of the network analysis. Then, moving to practice, we will analyse a database using R (estimating, plotting, testing hypotheses, verifying assumptions). Finally, the workshop will provide recommendations to publish results of a network analysis. A basic knowledge of R is needed.

When: February 2, 1:00pm – 5:00pm, please contact Michelle Beckett (michelle.beckett@sydney.edu.au) for details.

Presentation: Pathways to addiction: Trajectories, comorbidities, and vulnerability in substance use.

Preventing substance use among young people is a major health concern in public health research because substance use has several long-lasting detrimental consequences covering a large range of life aspects. It is crucial to understand how and why adolescents start to use substances, how they progress through the drug course, and the correlates of substance use. This presentation aims to provide evidence for the identification of vulnerable groups of youths and the understanding of comorbidity of substance use disorders.

When: February 15, 9:00pm – 10:00am, please contact Michelle Beckett (michelle.beckett@sydney.edu.au) for details.

Interested in collaborating with the Gambling Treatment and Research Clinic? Please contact Dr. Sally Gainsbury (sally.gainsbury@sydney.edu.au) or Professor Alex Blaszczynski (alex.blaszczynski@sydney.edu.au).

Check out our website for more ways to get involved.
As part of our core mission, the Gambling Treatment and Research Clinic is dedicated to exchanging knowledge gained by disseminating high-quality research, and being active in training and educating clinicians in the gambling treatment sector. The GTRC aims to be a leader in translational research and gambling treatment, and is a visible member in the gambling field.

Keynote Presentations

Dr. Sally Gainsbury was busy towards the end of 2017 with several invitations to provide keynote addresses to various stakeholder groups. In October, she gave the opening keynote presentation on the topic of online gambling at the Financial and Consumer Rights Council Conference held in Lorne, Victoria. She also presented a keynote address on the implications of technology for consumer entertainment at the Community Clubs Victoria Conference in Melbourne.

And in December, Dr. Gainsbury gave a keynote presentation at the 5th annual GambleAware conference in London on the topic of ‘Access, Awareness and Appeal: How the Internet is changing young people’s engagement with gambling’. Dr. Gainsbury also participated in a panel on this topic and a panel discussing social gambling games. Over 300 delegates attended the event representing a diverse audience of treatment providers, regulators, researchers, community stakeholders, and the gambling industry. While in the UK, Dr. Gainsbury met with several domestic and international colleagues for collaborative discussions.

Presentations and Panel Discussions

In August 2017, Dr. Gainsbury spoke on the topic of onshore vs. offshore gambling and participated in a panel on e-sports betting as well as a panel on regulatory updates at the Sydney-based Gaming, Racing and Wagering Australia Conference. Dylan Pickering was also invited to participate in a panel discussion and spoke about the potential impacts of an online self-exclusion register promised as part of a suite of new consumer protection measures designed to address problem gambling online. The conference was attended by land based gaming operators, marketing experts, sports betting operators, sports and racing bodies, and key legislators from state and federal governments.

In November, Dr. Gainsbury travelled to Singapore as part of her role on the International Academic Advisory Council for the National Council for Problem Gambling (NCPG). She gave presentations and participated in discussions for several days with the NCPG and key stakeholders and presented a keynote address at the NCPG Responsible Gambling Seminar (November 8, 2017). Some of the topics for presentations included e-gaming and Internet gambling among youth, public health strategies to minimise gambling harms, and the use of warning messages.

In recognition of International Fraud Prevention Week, Dr. Gainsbury was invited to participate in a panel discussion hosted by McGrathNicol, Sydney. Including a presentation by former AFL Sydney Swans AFL player and convicted fraud offender Darren Creswell, the panel discussed experiences and challenges for Australian businesses managing risk arising from employee fraud and corruption. Dr. Gainsbury was able to highlight the importance of providing support services for employees dealing with gambling-related issues and being mindful of hosting gambling-related events within business environments.

Journal Club

Last year the GTRC continued our run of successful Journal Club meetings, with the most recent held in September 2017. We had a great turn out for our session that focused on the process of clinical supervision. During this meeting, we discussed an article that highlighted both the good and bad aspects of supervision, and how it can impact on our clients. We then heard from Alice Shires, who discussed some of the latest research and theory on how supervision works best.
In November 2017, clinicians and researchers at the GTRC delivered training programs and presentations to government-funded counsellors working in the area of problem gambling as part of the NSW Responsible Gambling Fund’s Manager & Professional Development Forum. Each seminar was delivered over two days.

Kirsten Shannon and Kerrie Macalister conducted a training module introducing counsellors to commonly used evidence-based treatments for problem gambling. It formed part of the face-to-face component of the workforce development program for counsellors working in the problem gambling sector. The program had three broad aims: to improve the knowledge and skills of the Gambling Help workforce in NSW, to increase the use of evidence-based interventions, and to improve client outcomes by using the most effective intervention for the treatments for problem gambling.

Dr. Christopher Hunt delivered a training program, entitled “Health Literacy on the Most Common Co-Morbidities Related to Problem Gambling”. The aim of the program was to increase knowledge of common co-morbidities and how to screen for them. Counsellors were made aware of which co-morbidities are commonly seen amongst problem gambling clients, most notably depression, anxiety disorders, substance use disorders, and personality disorders, and what the common symptoms seen with each of these are. Dr. Hunt also provided helpful questions to ask during assessment to help counsellors identify the presence of such disorders, and where they can get more assistance with clients who present with them.

Martin Wieczorek, Psychologist and Outreach Officer at the Gambling and Treatment Research Clinic, delivered a training workshop in Aboriginal cultural competency. The workshop discussed the impacts of the historical context on Aboriginal Mental Health, explored the diversity of Aboriginal culture, and discussed ways in which mental health professionals can tailor their practice to better service the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.

Dylan Pickering presented the most recent findings from the multi-venue self-exclusion research program during the RGF training. The talk highlighted the strengths and weaknesses of the current self-exclusion process and invited counsellor attendees to share their perspectives on overcoming the challenges identified.

Jessica Lam was invited to co-train the 5-step method with founders Professor Richard Velleman and Gill Velleman as part of The Checkmate project, funded by the Commonwealth Department of Health. The aim of the training was to inform practitioners about assisting family members and friends of people who are using crystal methamphetamine to take better care of themselves. It was held in Frankston, Victoria and over 30 counsellors attended. The training was well received and many attendees were interested in adopting this method into their work with affected families.

The Gambling Treatment and Research Clinic aims to be a leader in translational research and always endeavors to host national and international delegates to discuss and collaborate with. Last November, the GTRC hosted visitors from the Japan Society for Behavioral Addiction. The Society was interested in gaining expert advice on gambling research and treatment to help inform Japanese legislation in lieu of the potential expansion of gambling markets within Japan.

Professor Su, from the University of Macau, recently visited the GTRC in November 2017. His visit included a meeting with the ClubSafe team and a meeting with the GTRC research team to learn the latest research and intervention approaches that could act to alleviate the rising concern of casino gambling and lottery distribution in China and Macau. Professor Su shared his knowledge of China’s lottery products, the future trend in Chinese government policies, and the intervention and self-exclusion programs currently existing in Macau. The meeting was informative and productive, with Professor Su expressing interest in future collaborations with the GTRC.
University of Sydney Collaborations: Online Risk-Taking

The University of Sydney heavily invests in research excellence. Part of the strategic focus is to enhance multidisciplinary research initiatives. Recently, the Gambling Treatment and Research Clinic, with the support from the Brain and Mind Centre, has initiated a new collaboration to examine Online Risk-Taking Behaviour. This has become a highly important area of study as it has broad and significant implications for individuals, organisations, and society.

In November 2017, Dr. Sally Gainsbury and Professor Alex Blaszczynski led a roundtable discussion with other prominent academics from the University. Attendees included faculty members from Science, Arts and Social Sciences, Business, Law, Medicine, and Health. Specialisations ranged across areas such as: psychology, economics, government and international relations, media and communications, marketing, criminology, bioethics, and psychiatry. The roundtable provided a forum for collaborative discussions to highlight real world problems relating to online risk-taking and its relevant research. The meeting successfully resulted in outlining a list of common goals: interdisciplinary collaboration, policy contributions, and resource sharing.

In February, the academics will meet again for an Online Risk-Taking Behaviour Symposium held at the Brain and Mind Centre. Members will present their current research and receive feedback during the open discussion period. The meetings will continue throughout the year with the aim to host events for external members to get involved.

If you are interested in receiving more information regarding the collaboration, please contact Dr. Sally Gainsbury.

Brain and Mind Centre Symposium

The Brain and Mind Centre (BMC) at the University of Sydney brings leading researchers across disciplines together to examine the complexities of the brain and the mind. On October 13, 2017, the BMC held their inaugural symposium which hosted presentations from clinicians and academics within the Centre and from partner organisations. The symposium boasted over 300 registrants and provided an excellent opportunity for the Gambling Treatment and Research Clinic to exhibit their research.

Dylan Pickering presented a poster on a recent study which systematically reviewed the outcome variables researchers employ to evaluate treatment programs for gambling disorders. Dylan’s poster received ample attention from attendees. The multidisciplinary nature of the symposium provided insights from different fields relating to the core criteria for ‘recovery’.

Brittany Keen presented a poster that reported on the results of the Electronic Gaming Machine mapping study recently conducted. Results showed that gaming machine play intensified in NSW club venues. Her poster received much attention and highlighted the need for targeted interventions in gambling venues.

Michelle Beckett displayed the findings from a recent study examining the Chaplaincy Program within gaming venues in NSW clubs. Research evaluated the chaplains’ experiences and perspectives of their role in assisting club patrons. The poster provided exposure for the Chaplaincy Program and highlighted the importance of effective staff training in responsible gambling.
National Association for Gambling Studies

The 27th annual conference for the National Association for Gambling Studies was held in Melbourne in November, 2017. Chaired by Professor Alex Blaszczynski, this year’s conference centred on big data, social media, and online developments. Members of the GTRC were accepted to present on relevant research.

Dr. Gainsbury presented on consumer engagement with and perceptions of offshore online gambling sites. She also chaired a session on the use of new technology and gambling.

PhD candidate Dylan Pickering presented findings on daily fantasy sports with the NAGS grant received during last year’s conference (see Core Projects). Zhenzhen Nong provided an excellent summary of her findings from a scoping review of the effectiveness of gambling behavioural feedback tools used to help gamblers make well-informed decisions. Michelle Beckett introduced delegates to the upcoming enhanced staff training program in responsible gambling that is being developed by the Responsible Gambling Council in partnership with the GTRC.

Brittany Keen, PhD candidate, along with visiting Masters student, Christina Rash, won student scholarships to attend and present. Brittany presented a paper on gaming machine play intensification in NSW club venues and Christina presented her findings on a mediation analysis to determine their relationship between gambling expectations, motives and gambling disorder.

Other Talks and Podcasts

Dr. Gainsbury has represented the University of Sydney at several major events in 2017. These include being one of 20 academics to present as part of Raising the Bar, with her sell out talk titled ‘When games become gambling’. The talk was highly successful with many attendees waiting patiently to speak to Dr. Gainsbury after the talk and many more emailing for further discussion after the event. For one night only, Raising the Bar brings the classroom to the bar to encourage people to unlearn the old and to explore ideas consolidated by new research. This talk is available as a podcast. Dr. Gainsbury also joined a panel with Director of the Brain and Mind Centre, Professor Ian Hickie, and international research experts to discuss ‘Your smartphone and you: how technology can affect our mental health’. This was a Sydney Ideas event, which is open to the public to bring academic discourse into public knowledge. To listen to this event, go to the podcast.
Upcoming Knowledge Exchange

Dr. Gainsbury is frequently invited to present to government groups and organisations. In October, she presented to the Office of Liquor and Gaming New South Wales on the topic of skilled video gambling games. She has been asked to extend this with further conversations with the OLG in 2018.

After successfully hosting several delegates from Japan in 2017, Dr. Sally Gainsbury and Professor Alex Blaszczynski have been invited to give keynote addresses at the International Conference on Scientific Analysis and Approach of Gambling Addiction to be held in Tokyo on January 20, 2018. This event is hosted by the Japan Medical Society for Behavioral Addiction. Dr. Gainsbury will give the opening keynote speech on the scientific approach to minimising gambling harms as well as participate in a panel discussion. Dr. Blaszczynski will provide a summary of the initial presentations and also participate in a panel discussion. This event is extremely important to guide the development of policies related to minimising gambling-related harms given that Japan is in the process of legalizing casino gambling.

In February, 2018, Dr. Sally Gainsbury will present at the EGR Australian Power Summit in Sydney. She will discuss how to balance effective responsible gambling measures with business growth. This event is attended by executives from the Australian online wagering sector’s leading operators and Dr. Gainsbury is the only academic currently invited to present.

April will see Dr. Gainsbury presenting on the topic of the technological transformation of gambling at the upcoming Alberta Gambling Research Institute’s 17th Annual Conference in Banff, Canada. The topic of the conference is Current Issues in Gambling Research and it is expected to be attended by leading international researchers as well as Canadian regulators and other stakeholders.

Dr. Sally Gainsbury has also been invited to speak at a series of events hosted at all major national cities in 2018 by Generation Next, a grass-roots not-for profit organisation providing education and information about the prevention and management of mental illness in youth to professionals, young people and the wider community. Dr. Gainsbury will speak on the topics of Internet gambling and the convergence of gambling and gaming with a focus on the impacts on young people and how professionals can minimise harms. The Mental Health & Wellbeing of Young People events will be held in Brisbane, Perth, Melbourne, Canberra, Adelaide, and Sydney in 2018. The events are usually attended by over 6,000 delegates and count towards professional development points for teachers, nurses, social workers, counsellors, and psychologists.

Professional development

In the second half of 2017, the GTRC team were highly involved in training and professional development opportunities provided by the University and other various organisations.

• Australasian Gaming Expo – Aug. 15-16, 2017
• “Time and risk matter less when outcomes differ: Unimodal and cross-modal choices” - Behavioural Economics workshop with Professor Daniel Reads of Warwick Business School – Sept. 12, 2017

• Australian Association for Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (AACBT) conference – Oct. 26-27, 2017
• “To P or not to P?” – Bayesian breakfast lecture with Professor Sally Crisp – Nov. 1, 2017.
• Exploratory and Confirmatory Factor Analysis workshop with Assoc. Professor Sabina Kleitman – July 14-15, 2017
• “Introduction to Media” workshop provided by Sydney University’s Media Office – Aug. 18, 2017

Introduction to R

On behalf of the GTRC, Dylan Pickering organised the Sydney University Informatics Hub to conduct a 3-day workshop series at the Brain & Mind Centre to teach the principles of R programming for statistical analyses in psychology. R is a part of the open-source software movement that is becoming an essential skill for researchers in modern academia. The workshops, attended by students and staff of the BMC, were sold out across all three sessions.
GTRC in the media

Our Reach

Last August, the GTRC received its quarterly report showing results of media coverage the clinic received between the April and June 2017. We were excited to see that members of the GTRC were actively promoting our research and clinical practice, while adding to the broader discussion on gambling topics. GTRC researchers and clinicians engaged in various media outlets including: online blogposts, online news articles, TV and radio interviews, and newspaper articles. Media coverage reached a cumulative audience of 406,870. Among all the different outlets, online news articles were most numerous, while TV interviews reached the highest cumulative audience – roughly 234,000 viewers. For example, Dr Christopher Hunt’s interview on ABC News in April 2017, where he talked about the shift in gambling behaviour due to advancements in technology, and the need for appropriate government regulation, reached an audience of 78,000 people.

Recently in the Media

In the last four months, Professor Alex Blaszczynski, Dr. Sally Gainsbury, Dr. Christopher Hunt and Ph.D. candidate Dylan Pickering continued to conduct numerous in-depth interviews which raised awareness among policymakers about the potential impacts of unregulated online gambling. The conversation even stretched out to discuss whether new technologies associated with gambling may induce a higher risk of gambling behaviour in adolescents.

In August 2017, while a controversial debate spread across the nation concerning whether the proliferation of in-play online pokies should be banned, Professor Alex Blaszczynski and Dr. Sally Gainsbury submitted a submission to parliament. They suggested that the regulation of legalised online poker sites and advertising may better protect regular poker players against unlicensed sites which involve cybercrimes. Elements of their submission appeared in major media outlets, such as the Sydney Morning Herald, Triple J, Channel 7, and online media outlets, including onlinecasino.com.au, casinopedia.org, calvinayre.com, and pokernews.com.

The Australian Senate eventually passed the Interactive Gambling Amendment Bill (IGA), in 2017, which singled out online sports betting as the only dominant online gambling activity allowed under Australian law. Dr. Sally Gainsbury continued to engage in public discussion and cautioned policymakers to be mindful of other interactive online gambling forms available as they pose different risks to players. Her suggestion is to recognize that online gambling is not homogenous and that governments differentiate between the various forms within the IGA.

In relation to the discussion about online gambling, other new technologies are also receiving media attention due to their impact on gambling related issues. Dr. Sally Gainsbury recently wrote a blogpost for the Australian and New Zealand Mental Health Association how new technology, such as video gaming and virtual reality, may generate a new cohort of problem gamblers. Younger male adults aged 18–30, especially those from diverse cultural backgrounds, appear to be at greatest risk of experiencing online gambling problems which may become the focus of regulatory attention. Dr. Sally Gainsbury shared research on Weekend Sunrise, Channel 7, showing that 1/3 of adolescents were found to have moved to online gambling after being exposed to video game associated with gambling scenarios. Her research suggests that new technologies potentially affect cohorts across different generations.

Furthermore, Dr. Sally Gainsbury was featured on Triple J radio talking about how operators induce online betting through incentives and may create the illusion of early gambling success. Research suggests these early successes may increase the probability of gambling related problems. She also explained on Pedestrian that when people signed up for an online bookmaker offer, the follow-up advertising stimulates them psychologically and encourages members to keep placing bets in the long run.

Dylan Pickering also talked about new technology shaping gambling forms such as the advent of daily fantasy sports tournaments in an interview with ABC Radio National. This was sparked by his previous article in The Conversation.

Dr. Christopher Hunt appeared on a radio program on Triple J discussing how relationships could be affected by problem gambling among younger populations. Dr. Hunt explained that partners and family members can provide a platform for gamblers to openly discuss their issue by remaining non-judgemental. He debunked the myth that gamblers experiencing problems have no control over their gambling behaviour. He further suggested that therapy could help to reduce people’s misunderstanding and encourage strength for them to tackle the issue.
Current Interns and Exchange Students

Currently the GTRC is lucky to have six interns and one exchange student from various backgrounds:

**Georgia Grattan** is an undergraduate student of the University of Sydney and is working with Dr Sally Gainsbury, Professor Alex Blaszczynski, and Dr Kahil Philander of Washington State University, to investigate skill-based gaming machines. A survey was developed to assess intentions to play and illusions of control associated with skill-based gaming machines, and how this compares to intentions to play and illusions of control associated with regular slot machines. Data has recently been collected from approximately 200 American participants using Amazon Mechanical Turk. The results are currently being analysed and a report is being prepared. After her undergraduate degree is completed, she would like to apply for the Master of Clinical Psychology program.

**Sarah Li** is a fourth-year student at the University of Sydney, undertaking her honours in psychology this year. As a recipient of the Denison Scholarship, Sarah is currently working as an intern with Dr. Sally Gainsbury, on examining internet privacy concerns and privacy behaviours on social media sites. Sarah plans to pursue a Master’s in Clinical Psychology in the future.

**Sincere Hui** was born in Hong Kong and commenced a bachelor’s degree in psychology at University of Sydney in 2016 where she has focused her interests on the interaction between smell, context conditioning, and memory. She is also interested in how oxytocin and social acceptance might better equip people to overcome relapse of substance addiction. In 2017, she was supervised by Prof. Robert Boakes in an independent animal experiment on flavour preference conditioning. In 2018, led by Prof Alex Blaszczynski, Sincere is now preparing a literature review concerning the current debate on whether tolerance is a valid construct for gambling disorder. Research in this area may change the diagnostic criteria for gambling disorder in future versions of the DSM. In the forthcoming years, she is hoping to study a Master of Clinical Psychology and participate in research on substance or behavioural addiction.

**Tom Swanton** returned to the University of Sydney in 2017 to study a Graduate Diploma in Psychology, after completing a Bachelor of Liberal Studies (International) majoring in French Studies and Cell Pathology in 2011. He was attracted to the GTRC internship program by the opportunity to be involved in first-hand applied psychology research in a clinical setting. Currently, Tom is focused on writing a literature review on the role of financial institutions in gambling under the supervision of Dr Sally Gainsbury. He is also involved in a research project led by Prof Alex Blaszczynski investigating club staff members’ perspectives on staff training in responsible gambling. Looking forward, Tom is interested in pursuing a Master of Clinical Psychology and continuing to participate actively in related research.

**Kelly Dann** is a Bachelor of Psychology student at the University of Sydney in her honours year. Her background is in product development and ethical compliance management, and she hopes to study clinical psychology. Currently, as an intern supervised by Dr. Sally Gainsbury, Kelly is preparing a literature review for an empirical investigation into the environmental factors which influence online risk-taking. This project combines her interest in understanding core cognitive processes with the opportunity to work within a collaborative team of researchers and clinicians.

**Michael Spoelma** holds a bachelor degree in mathematics, and is currently a third-year Bachelor of Psychology student at the University of Sydney. He has a keen interest in clinical psychology and psychiatry, particularly with regards to neuropsychology, and the modelling of psychopathology from both computational and psychometric perspectives. Currently he is being supervised by Prof Alex Blaszczynski, and is assisting Dylan Pickering with his research into the conceptualisation of recovery in the gambling disorders field. Specifically, he is conducting a qualitative analysis of interviews with individuals seeking treatment at the GTRC. The aim is to use this information to inform the creation of a multidimensional self-report scale designed to assess recovery. Michael hopes to build upon the skills he learns at the GTRC to pursue a career in academic research.
Occasional, the GTRC hosts students from high school wanting to gain experience working in psychology research:

Last May, Natasha Huang spent time as a work experience student at the GTRC and the University's School of Psychology. She has an interest in psychology, especially social psychology, and is currently exploring possible career paths as she goes into Year 11. In January, she returned to further experience what a career in research is like. Here's what she says about her time at the Clinic, "I relished every moment; from assisting with follow-up calls, preparing and formatting academic content, talking to everyone about their experience and projects, going for the occasional coffee run, feeling important sitting at a desk in an office, and even the long journeys on public transport where I could reflect on my day. Although spending a few days of the holidays at a research centre might not seem ideal, I was so grateful for the opportunity to work with numerous interns and students under the guidance of Dr. Sally Gainsbury. It was such a valuable opportunity and it reinforced my passion for psychology and interest in pursuing this as a career. I look forward to any further psychology opportunities in the future..."
Awards and grants

**Franklin Women's 2017 Carer's Travel Scholarship**

Dr. Gainsbury was awarded the **Franklin Women's 2017 Carer's Travel Scholarship** to assist her in travelling to London to give a keynote address at the GambleAware conference. This scholarship provides financial support to assist in the care of children while researchers attend a major conference. The intention is to allow primary carers to continue to network and build their careers, while managing carer responsibilities.

**University of Sydney and Commonwealth Bank Industry and Community Engagement Seed Funding**

Dr. Sally Gainsbury and Professor Alex Blaszczynski were successful in their application for funding from the University of Sydney that was matched by industry partner Commonwealth Bank. The aim of the partner project is to improve gambler’s financial wellbeing through developing strategies to assist CBA customers to control their gambling at appropriate levels. The project involves working with Professor Bob Slonim and Dr. Stephanie Heger from the University of Sydney's Business School, department of Economics, an expert in behavioural economics. The intention of this initial project is to develop an application for an Australian Research Council Linkage grant and continue the partnership between CBA and USYD.

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GTRC social scene

All work and no play is never good for mental health. The GTRC maintains a social environment through various events, sometimes hosted by other organisations.

In September, ClubsNSW invited members of the GTRC to attend the annual Lifeline Sapphire Gala Ball held at The Westin Sydney. It was an evening to support the crisis support line and was filled with moving presentations and lighthearted entertainment.

The holiday season was marked with many celebrations. As part of the Brain and Mind Centre, the GTRC was invited for celebrations and congratulations at Deus Ex Machina. The School of Psychology also hosted an event fit for an epicurean at Porteño. To finish the year off, however, the GTRC took off their shoes and put on sunscreen and a hat for a fun-filled afternoon of lawn bowls at the South Coogee Bowling Club. Nice cradle grip, Hanna! And of course, we are never shy of a few silly photos.

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Be in touch:

If you would like to know more about the Gambling Treatment and Research Clinic at the University of Sydney, check out our [website](#)! Other research by researchers and clinicians at the GTRC is also available by connecting with us through [academia.edu](#) and [research gate](#). Or check us out on Twitter!

- @DrSalGainsbury
- @BrainMind_Usyd
- @dylanpic0
- @Krittany_Been
- @BrainMind_Usyd

If you are interested in receiving our newsletter, or would like to be taken off our mailing list, please email psych.gtrc@sydney.edu.au.