The late Associate Professor Michael Walker established the Gambling Treatment Clinic in 1999 with financial support provided by the NSW Government through its Casino Community Benefit Fund, and in later years, the Responsible Gambling Fund. The Clinic, located within the School of Psychology, The University of Sydney, offers cognitive-behavioural based counselling services to individuals experiencing gambling-related difficulties by psychologists and clinical psychologists. A clinic was set up initially at Darlington but with additional funding, the service was extended to include satellite clinics Parramatta/Lidcombe and Campbelltown. During its first decade, the clinic completed a series of research projects evaluating treatment effectiveness, diagnostic criteria and measurement of pathological gambling, and eight annual surveys of NSW government funded counselling services.

In 2010, Professor Alexander Blaszczynski was appointed as the Director. Over the next few years, a strategic plan was evolved to align the operations of the clinic more closely to the teaching/training and research objectives of the University of Sydney. The primary aim was to offer placements for postgraduate clinical psychology students, and training options for NSW government funded counsellors and others in cognitive therapies, with supplemental resources and support for clinicians involved in the treatment of gamblers. The mission of the clinic is to provide and promote high quality evidence based interventions for gamblers experiencing problems, and their families. The clinic provides a program to assist indigenous community members with gambling-related harms.

Research plays a central role in the operation of the clinic, with a focus on understanding the psychology of gambling behaviours, evaluating traditional and online interventions and clinical outcomes, defining concepts of recovery and harm, and the effectiveness of responsible gambling initiatives and strategies. To emphasise the importance of the integration of research and clinical services the clinic was renamed as the GTRC in 2017.

In 2013, a generous $1.2 million deed of gift given by ClubsNSW over three years provided the opportunity to expand the research capacity of the clinic. This funding enabled the appointment of two doctoral students to carry out a retrospective and prospective evaluation of an innovative multi-venue self-exclusion program, a chaplaincy program implemented within clubs jointly with the Salvation Army, and how recovery in gambling is defined and measured. Collaboration and support of industry partners is critical in conducting research with actual gamblers in real venues compared to current practices of studying first year university students in laboratory settings. As can be seen in this newsletter, a diverse range of gambling-related research is being conducted.

With strong international collaborative links and available visiting scholarships and internships, the clinic is poised to continue its significant work advancing best-practice quality treatments and responsible gambling initiatives to minimize gambling related harms in the community. This newsletter is intended to highlight the work conducted within the clinic and to inform individuals of potential opportunities to collaborate with staff members on various research and clinical programs.
Our Clinic by Dr. Christopher John Hunt

Here at the GTRC we’re very proud of the clinical service we provide and it has been at the centre of our work since the clinic opened. Currently, we provide treatment to problem gamblers in four locations: At our main office in Camperdown, at Parramatta, at Lidcombe and at Campbelltown. While the core of our clinical work remains helping problem gamblers reduce or stop their gambling, we have also expanded to include a variety of other clinical programmes. These include counselling services for friends and family members affected by problem gambling, dialectical behaviour therapy groups for those with difficulties with emotion regulation, and outreach services to conduct therapy groups in vulnerable populations. All of our clinical services are provided free of charge to the community. We offer early and late appointments, and appointments on Saturdays to ensure that we can reach as many individuals as possible.

As part of our clinic, we also offer training programmes to help promote evidence-based treatments for problem gambling. Internally, this takes the form of our intern programme. Here, we offer internships to provisional psychologists and postgraduate clinical psychology students to train them in the treatment of problem gambling. As part of this programme we have taken on provisional psychologists from a range of universities and training colleges, including the University of Sydney, UTS, the University of Wollongong, Western Sydney University, and the Australian College of Applied Psychology, as well as taking on intern psychologists directly who have a particular interest in gambling. To date we have provided supervision and training to over 35 provisional psychologists since commencing our intern programme in July 2011. In addition to this, we also conduct a bi-monthly Journal Club, where we invite clinical practitioners working with problem gamblers to attend a session where we discuss the latest research on problem gambling, and then to listen to a talk from an invited speaker on a related topic. Through both of these initiatives, we hope to spread evidence-based practice for the treatment of problem gambling as widely as possible.

The GTRC is also proud to be building partnerships with Marrin Weejali Aboriginal Corporation, Ngallu Wal Aboriginal Child and Family Centre, and the Emerton Men’s Shed to reach members of the Aboriginal Community. GTRC psychologist, Marty Wieczorek, is currently running and promoting DBT groups at these important community centres, and also offering treatment for individuals suffering from problem gambling and related issues. We’re proud to be providing our services to these important communities.

Education and Training

Journal Club

Clinical practitioners and researchers convened on March 9th to see a presentation on Motivational Interviewing by Dr. Michael Cavanagh. Participants practiced using motivational interviewing skills under Dr. Cavanagh’s supervision. The group also discussed an article by Jennifer A. Lyke (2008) called Insight, But Not Self-Reflection, is Related to Subjective Well-Being. Discussion involved defining the concepts of “insight” and “self-reflection” and their relevance to therapy. The Journal Club is arranged by Dr. Christopher John Hunt and happens bi-monthly. The next meeting will be held on May 11th, and will be looking at gambling in the context of probation and parole. To sign up to this edition, please contact christopher.hunt@sydney.edu.au.

The Science Talented Student Program (TSP)

The Talented Students Program offered through The University of Sydney, is an excellent way to maximize academic potential and gain unique insight into a particular Faculty. Currently, Dr. Sally Gainsbury and Professor Alex Blaszczynski are mentoring high achieving 1st year students with a 3rd year supervisor in order to help them develop exceptional skills in the area of gambling research. Dr. Gainsbury and Prof. Blaszczynski are providing personalised guidance and advice along with additional challenging material to further the students merit within the Faculty of Psychology. For further information regarding the TSP please go to the website.

Cognitive Deconstructional Therapy training

Dr. Fadi Anjoul recently provided training on his Cognitive Deconstructional Therapy to clinical and research interns at the GTRC. The therapy is one of the leading treatments among clinicians at the GTRC and is enabling the new interns to have a better understanding of the etiology, features and treatments in problem gambling.
Opportunities for involvement

For more detailed information, collaboration opportunities, or if you are interested in participating in any of our research, please let us know! Here are some current opportunities available:

**Open Call for Research Interns and Student Exchange**

The University of Sydney GTRC is pleased to present an internship program for early career researchers interested in learning about gambling and gaining research and clinical experience. Successful applicants will be involved in aspects of research and clinical work and have the opportunity to apply for research funding and contribute to peer-review publications under the supervision of world leading researchers. Our aim is to provide the most promising early career 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 a limited of placement available for 2017.

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

**Call for Visiting Scholars**

The University of Sydney GTRC is pleased to present two exciting opportunities for active researchers within the gambling field to become a Visiting Scholar. We believe in the power of networks and partnerships and are seeking to work collaboratively with national and international gambling researchers that enable research to understand gambling and minimise gambling-related harm. The partnerships will extend beyond the period of visitation and are intended to establish ongoing and productive collaborative relationships between research centres.

Successful applicants will apply for an adjunct position within the School of Psychology and work collaboratively with researchers from the GTRC on a project of mutual interest. Visiting scholars are usually on leave from their university or research centre. They are expected to visit the GTRC for a minimum of two months where they will make a contribution to the academic life of the School through such things as giving seminars or lectures, or providing training to other staff or postgraduate students in their area of expertise. Here they will have the opportunity to network with relevant stakeholders and attend local conferences. Applicants must have a PhD, a track record of obtaining external funding, conducting research and writing high impact publications. Financial support of up to $10,000 is available to the Visiting Scholar. The deadline for applications is May 20, 2017.

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

**Research and Supervision**

Dr. Gainsbury is interested in working with students who wish to conduct research on the topics of disordered gambling and online risk taking and is available as a PhD Supervisor.

**Call for participants**

We are currently looking for participants to partake in a study on the nature of gambling recovery. If you are a gambler in treatment, or a family member of a gambler, and are interested in getting involved please contact PhD researcher Dylan Pickering.

---

**Recent Presentations**

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

As part of the integration between the Brain and Mind Centre, Brittany Keen presented her PhD research at the Early Career Research Seminar Series. Her research aims to test problem gambling prevention strategies in young adults and adolescents. The turnout brought colleagues from various disciplines within the BMC and allowed Miss Keen to showcase the pivotal research being done at the Gambling Treatment and Research Clinic. If you would like to know more about her research please click here.
Our Research

Here at the Gambling Treatment and Research Clinic (GTRC), one of our main goals is to conduct and disseminate high quality research on gambling. These are the current projects we are involved in. For more detailed information, please check out our website.

The influence of features of the online environment on risk taking: Unravelling the impact of social cues
Dr. Sally Gainsbury is aiming to understand the psychological processes underlying risk taking online. This project aims to shed light on how specific online environmental cues can impact risk taking. This will enhance our understanding of how websites can encourage risk taking and steps that can be taken to reduce associated harms such as cybercrime, overspending, and oversharing personal information, which is highly important in this digital age. Anticipated outcomes will directly benefit policy-makers by identifying how sites can be made safer and how to educate people to avoid sites that may encourage them to take risks or engage in anti-social behaviours and enhance capacity for safe decision making online. This project is funded by an Australian Research Council Discovery Early Career Researcher Award.

Multi-Venue Self-Exclusion
Alex Blaszczynski and Dylan Pickering are working with ClubsNSW to evaluate their online Multi-Venue Self-Exclusion (MVSE) system, which allows people to self-exclude from up to 35 venues at once, privately with a counsellor. Findings will be used to break down barriers that may prevent problem gamblers from joining the program and to foster positive outcomes that are associated with self-exclusion.

EGM Study:
A current issue of concern is that while there has been a reduction in electronic gaming machine (EGM) use, there has not been a comparable reduction in expenditure in some venues, such as registered clubs. The purpose of this research is to map the extent of any decline in EGM use in NSW clubs, and determine if this is motivated by a shift toward other forms of gambling, or if gambling-related expenditure is being spent on other forms of entertainment within club venues. This project is being completed by Professor Alex Blaszczynski, Brittany Keen and Lanhowe Chen and is being funded by ClubsNSW.

Sports Betting & Daily Fantasy Sports in Australia
In light of the controversy in the U.S. regarding the legality of Daily Fantasy Sports (DFS) competitions, the National Association for Gambling Studies (NAGS) has funded Alex Blaszczynski, Dylan Pickering, and Brittany Keen to compare Australian sports bettors and DFS players. The aim of this study is to determine whether there are any differential impacts associated with involvement in one activity relative to the other.

Problem gambling prevention in young adults and adolescents:
This research aims to test the effectiveness of a brief video explaining key concepts of gaming machines, how they operate, why they are unprofitable in the long term, and how people can develop related misconceptions. The intervention will be trialled with university students, adolescents, and young adult gaming machine gamblers, and compared to a traditional risk-awareness approach, as well as an information-only approach. Brittany Keen is completing this research under the supervision of Professor Alex Blaszczynski and Dr. Fadi Anjoul. It is being funded by the Gaming Technologies Association.

What does it mean to recovery from a gambling disorder?
There is currently no agreed upon operational definition for recovery in the gambling disorders field. This leads to significant variability in the outcomes reported by treatment studies, which precludes cross-comparisons of studies. Dylan Pickering, supervised by Professor Alex Blaszczynski and Dr. Sally Gainsbury, is currently working to develop a multidimensional self-report scale of recovery comprising diagnostic-specific domains and broader quality of life domains.

Empirical evaluation of the ClubsNSW Chaplaincy Program
Professor Alex Blaszczynski, Melanie Hartmann, Lanhowe Chen and Michelle Beckett are researching the key short and long term benefits of having a uniformed Salvation Army Chaplain on-site at various ClubsNSW locations. As a way of providing prevention and treatment strategies for problem
Gambling, the Chaplaincy Program focuses on addressing various health-related issues club members may be facing. The research thus far includes collecting self-reported data from various chaplains and club patrons.

**Investigation of the impact of the Interactive Gambling Amendment Bill 2016**

Dr. Sally Gainsbury and Professor Alex Blaszczynski are conducting research to investigate the impact of the Interactive Gambling Amendment Bill 2016. This includes completing a survey of how Australian's are currently using Internet gambling, including the use of offshore gambling sites and apps. This will enable a follow-up survey to be conducted to evaluate the impact of any changes based on the new legislation.

**SG: Understanding interactive gambling**

Dr. Gainsbury and Professor Blaszczynski are also working with Professor Nerilee Hing and Dr. Alex Russell (Central Queensland University) to analyse previously completed research to determine the motivations and characteristics of gamblers who use offshore sites as compared to sites licensed in Australia. This project is funded by the Australian Communications and Media Authority.

---

**Recent Conferences**

**Who ‘Likes’ Gambling? The Impact of Social Media Marketing**

Gambling companies are increasingly using digital marketing strategies, including social media to advertise to consumers. Licensed gambling companies use social media platforms to communicate with consumers, including direct and indirect gambling promotions. Many advertising codes of conduct fail to include specific consideration of social media marketing, and it’s often possible for offshore gambling companies to work around restrictions and advertise directly to users. Furthermore, vulnerable gamblers may be influenced by social media promotions and experienced increased gambling and exacerbation of problems as a result. Age gates are generally ineffective meaning that adolescents may also be exposed to gambling marketing on social media.

This presentation outlined the results of an online survey completed by 850 Australian adults and 560 adolescents who use social media. Despite the increased investment of gambling operators in social media, most participants only engaged passively with companies through these platforms. Nonetheless, some participants, including adolescents, were motivated to engage with operators and a minority report their gambling has increased because of social media promotions. This presentation also included a discussion of what considerations are needed to reduce the potential harm related to social media marketing by gambling companies.

To view more on this presentation, please go to the [New Horizons website](https://www.newhorizons.com.au).

---

**Recent publications**


GTRC in the Media

The idea that adolescents have more access to gambling via online gaming sites has been a prime topic the media recently. Dr. Sally Gainsbury has contributed to the discourse and provided insight into the current research offering some support to the concern. In recent media publications and interviews, Dr. Gainsbury discussed the empirical evidence available suggesting the impact of social media networks on the gaming behaviour and gambling exposure to adolescents. She also highlighted that gambling regulators and parents have limited awareness of this exposure at the New Horizons in Responsible Gambling conference in Vancouver, Canada.

In line with some of these issues, Dr. Christopher John Hunt has recently been in the media discussing the “gamblification” of sport. He highlighted how pre-game reporting now includes things like gambling prices and odds along with player statistics. He also suggested the research indicating that gambling-related ads during sporting events may impact problem gamblers. Dr. Hunt draws parallels between the effectiveness of banning advertising on decreasing smoking among youth and the potential benefits of banning gambling advertising on problem gamblers.

To view some of these articles and to listen to relating interviews, please visit:


A Recent Visit from a Professor at The University of Hamburg

Professor Thorsten Teichert, Chair of Marketing and Innovation, University of Hamburg, was invited to become an Honorary Associate with the University of Sydney and visited the GTRC in March. The aim of the visit was to continue collaborative research with Dr. Gainsbury and commence two new studies that will involve Professor Blaszczynski, Ms. Beckett, Dr. Gainsbury, and a research assistant in the Psychology Honors program. Using Professor Teichert’s expertise in marketing, an experiment will be run to understand implicit cognition in gambling. That is, the associations people hold towards gambling activities, such as the role of skill vs. chance. Experiments will also be conducted to understand the decision making processes in selecting online gambling sites. This research will continue throughout the year.

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 researchgate. Or check us out on Twitter!

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

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