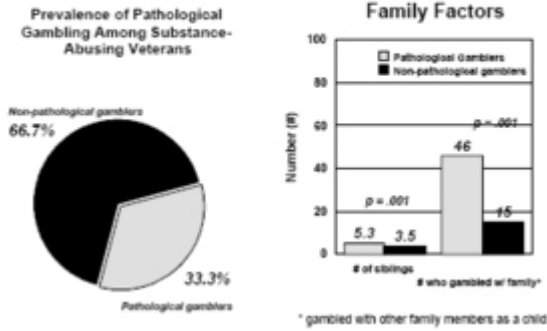


# **The WAGER, Vol. 1(45) - Re-examining comorbidity: Pathological gambling & substance abuse among veterans**

November 5, 1996

A recent study conducted at a Veterans Affairs (VA) hospital sought to examine 1) the prevalence of pathological gambling among hospitalized substance-abusing patients, and 2) unique patterns of comorbidity among this population. The study included 276 (of 344 consecutively admitted patients) who agreed, within their first 3 days of hospitalization, to participate in the study. Using the South Oaks Gambling Screen to determine pathological gambling status, and the DSM-III-R to determine substance abuse status, researchers found 33% met criteria for both conditions. Several differences in substance use and family factors were found between subsets of pathological gamblers (SOGS  $\geq 5$ ) and non-pathological gamblers (SOGS  $< 5$ ), all of whom were substance abusers. Pathological gamblers had significantly larger families; in addition, over three times as many pathological gamblers as non-pathological gamblers reported having gambled with other family members as children. Pathological gamblers began using drugs at a significantly earlier age than non-pathological gamblers, and currently used alcohol significantly more days per month than non-pathological gamblers. Daghestani et al. (1996) suggest that their findings support the possibility of a common familial mechanism (social and/or biological) in both gambling and substance abuse. For example, alcohol could increase risk-taking behavior and decrease rational thinking; alternatively, gambling and alcohol use often occur concurrently in specific social settings. Further research is necessary to better understand these relationships.

**Prevalence & Family Factors of Pathological Gambling Among Substance Abusers**



**Source:** Daghestani, A.N., Elenz, E., & Crayton, J.W. (1996). Pathological gambling in hospitalized substance abusing veterans. *Journal of Clinical Psychiatry*, 57, 360-363.

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