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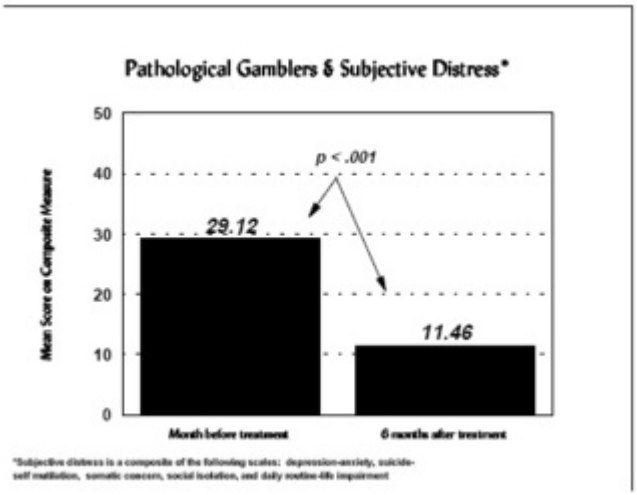
Several studies have found that pathological gamblers have higher rates of depression than non-pathological gamblers. However, among the general population (from non-gamblers to pathological gamblers), do more frequent gamblers experience depression at a higher rate than non-gamblers? A recent study addressed this question by exploring whether there was a relationship between depression and gambling among a random sample of 400 adult residents of Omaha, Nebraska. Thorson et al.* measured depression with the CES-Depression scale, a valid and reliable instrument which contains 20 items assessing major elements of depression. Following the methods of previous studies using the CES-Depression scale, these researchers found that 12.7% of the adult sample were depressed. There was no relationship found between the frequency of gambling (never, infrequently, monthly, or weekly) and depression in this general population study. This result might have changed with a larger sample. Focusing on a different question, Taber et al.** examined the effect of treatment on levels of depression among pathological gamblers. Their follow-up study was conducted among a group of 66 pathological gamblers entering an inpatient gambling treatment program at a VA medical center. Researchers measured “subjective distress” among this cohort of gamblers one month before entering treatment and six months after discharge. The study found that, on average, the pathological gamblers had significantly lower scores of subjective distress six months after completing treatment. There is some support for the hypothesis that problem gambling induces depression, instead of depression leading to gambling. There is also evidence that both depression and problem gambling are treatable disorders.



Sources adapted from:

*Thorson, J.A., Powell, F.C., & Hilt, M. (1994). Epidemiology of gambling and depression in an adult sample. Psychological Reports, 74, 987-99.

**Taber, J.I., McCormick, R.A., Russo, A.M., Adkins, B.J., & Ramirez, L.F. (1987). Follow-up of pathological gamblers after treatment. American Journal of Psychiatry, 144(6), 757-761.

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