

## **RURAL TREATMENT FOR GAMBLING: A HYBRID FACE TO FACE AND TELE-PSYCHOLOGY SERVICE IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA**

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**Introduction:** Disordered Gambling is an ongoing concern for rural and remote areas with significant unmet need. In these areas there is an acute shortage of psychologists and mental health professionals. The aim of this program is to provide an intensive cognitive behavioural therapy for gambling addiction in rural South Australian communities.

There was a need to move beyond inpatient behavioural modification treatment towards a socially inclusive and collaborative evidence based Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) program.

**Method:** The program includes 12 individual gambling based CBT sessions, including initial assessment, psycho-education, risk management, cognitive therapy, behavioural techniques, and exposure/desensitization. The client develops an understanding of how problems with gambling originate and maintain, and develop skills to manage gambling thoughts and urges. Clients have an in-person initial consultation in their local community (or closest major rural location) with follow-up appointments conducted through videoconferencing with flexible mid and end face-to-face visits.

**Key Findings:** The initial results from seven completed clients showed an 80.5% reduction in gambling urges, and a 54.5% reduction in gambling related cognitions. Clients mode of gambling included EGM, Sports Betting and Poker. The efficacy of this treatment program will be further investigated as the program continues to expand.

**Discussions and Conclusions:** Preliminary quantitative results are consistent of an effective service for the rural community in South Australia. The program is currently expanding to other locations as we form partnerships with local services and organizations. Our qualitative data combined with positive qualitative feedback suggests this program is expanding options for our rural and remote communities.

### **Disclosure of Interest Statement:**

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