Never too old to start
Gambling-related problems among older adults: risk factors and experimental treatment with focus on women

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INTRODUCTION

Population ageing driven by increasing longevity and low fertility rates is a global phenomenon. Gambling participation among older adults appears to be on the growth in recent decades. Due to this rise, problem gambling in this demographic is becoming a significant public health concern.

Do elderly gamble more than young people?
≠ 4 aspects: age, type of games, motivation and frequencies. It diminishes with the age (Petry 2002, Desai 2010). Games which implies no skills VLT, SLOTS (Lister and Nower 2014) (cards if they did it in young age), escape motivation, not to win (Desai 2004, Clark&Clarkson 2008), griefs and sorrow.

So less gamblers but they gamble much more frequently.

Which are consequences of gambling impact in elderly life?
Since 1976 (Kallick et al.) lower rate of gambling activities 23% over 65, vs 60/73% of younger. The gap gets lower in 1999 (NORC-USA) 50% over 65 vs 64/67, depending on major interest of industries and more gambling opportunities.

In Italy we are always late.. Even if highest rate of old population and of gambling diffusion-! But now ISS (National Health Superior Institute 2018)

AUSER (2013) age 65/96
ASL BERGAMO → Ifc-CNR, National Council of Research (2015) age 65/84 (tot population 59.394.207, over 65 → 11.600.000 !! → 44% gambled at least once, in last year

Old people don’t ask for help in Italy, they rather go for family doctor to cure their depression, anxiety, so this pathology is under esteemed and don’t get the right attention and therapy
Prevalenza dei giocatori adulti in Italia

**GENERE**
- 43,7%: 10.557.179
- 29,8%: 7.892.510

**CLASSE DI ETA'**
- 18-24 anni: 27,3%
- 25-39 anni: 36,6%
- 40-49 anni: 41,1%
- 50-64 anni: 41,0%
- 65-79 anni: 30,6%
- 80 anni e più: 19,5%

Giocatori Italia=36,4%

**AREE GEOGRAFICHE**
- Nord-ovest: 39,3%
- Nord-est: 29,3%
- Centro: 42,7%
- Sud: 33,8%
- Isole: 35,8%
WHAT ARE RISK FACTORS AND SPECIFIC BEHAVIORAL MARKERS TO PREDICT GAMBLING DISORDERS IN THE ELDERLY?

How wide spread is it the problem in over 65? (Medeiros 2015, Potenza 2006)
Several studies confirm international findings that the elderly gambling diminishes with age, especially among men. They further discover important issues influencing – either positively or negatively – such gambling: having children nearby (especially for 65-74-year-olds); attending recreation clubs (where lotteries and raffles can often be found), especially for women and among over-80s; close involvement in handling grandchildren and other family members, mainly among older adults (men); and the number of hours spent watching television, mainly among women. On the other hand, having a hobby is a strong deterrent factor, particularly among men and those aged 65 and above.
Prevalenza dei giocatori problematici

Giocatori problematici Italia=3,0%

**GENERE**

- **Uomo**: 3,6%
- **Donna**: 2,5%

**FASCE D’ETA’**

- 18-24 anni: 2,1%
- 25-39 anni: 3,3%
- 40-49 anni: 3,4%
- 50-64 anni: 3,5%
- 65-79 anni: 2,3%
- 80 anni e più: 0,4%

**AREE GEOGRAFICHE**

- **Totale giocatori**
  - 39,3%
  - 42,7%
  - 33,8%
  - 35,8%

- **Giocatori problematici**
  - 3,0%
  - 4,6%
  - 5,8%
  - 1,7%
  - 0,8%
I canali di gioco

Giocatori adulti in Italia 36,4%

Solo in luogo fisico 94,5%

Solo on-line 1,7%

Entrambi 3,8%

5,5%
GENDER

Gender was found significantly related to gambling (eds. H. Bowden-Jones & F. Prever, Routledge, 2017). Women mainly fall into the trap, whether by attending bingo halls and gaming machines, taking bus-trips to casinos, guests of nursing homes for the elderly, disabled people, those with a low income and/or educational level, the single, the widowed and the isolated who have no safety nets. Unfortunately, much of what is known about problem gambling and gambling disorders in female comes from studies of male pathological gamblers and very often limited to English-language;
Giocatori d’azzardo per tipologia di gioco e genere

- Lotterie istantanee o in tempo reale: 27,9%
- Giochi numerici a totalizzatore: 14,6%
- Lotto e lotterie a esito differito: 13,9%
- Slot-Machine: 11,7%
- Scommesse sportive: 9,1%
- Altri giochi a base sportiva: 8,1%
- Video Lottery Terminal (VLT): 3,9%
- Scommesse virtuali: 1,6%
- Giochi di abilità a distanza: 1,4%
- Altri giochi da casinò: 0,6%
HOW MIGHT GENDER DIFFERENCES AFFECT OLDER GAMBLERS?

This remains largely unknown. Thus, while male older gamblers were reported to exert what they felt was their right, as the main income earner in the family to spend money in whatever way they wanted (Zheng, Walker & Blaszczynski, 2010), older female gamblers were found to enjoy their freedom and their revenge in later life through gambling participation. The large proportions of older gamblers females in the literature coincided with argument about the “feminization of gambling”: according to Volberg (2003) this expression refers to the idea that “more women are gambling, developing problems and seeking help for problems related to gambling than in the past”. The feminization of gambling and problem gambling has been linked to the availability of gaming machines and Bingo. In Italian G.Clinics, W. pathological gamblers in treatment, mainly over 60 (Serpelloni DPA 2012).
Gamblers in treatment c/o NHS, year 2012: gender and age distribution (Serpelloni, DPA)
TOWARDS INTEGRATIVE FORMS OF PREVENTION/INTERVENTION

In general there is an absence of understanding of older adult gambling, of age-specific vulnerabilities and risk markers in both male and female gamblers. Cinderella topic, as women & gambling is Longitudinal studies with a life-course perspective to understanding gambling in later life are also lacking. Current gambling research focusing on social aspects, especially with particular subgroups, is largely descriptive and exploratory.

Collaborative research combining epidemiological, psychological and sociological efforts will greatly benefit theoretical development in this area (D’Agati)
THE POINT

To link clinical, social and educational levels as it may be fundamental to develop effective treatments for this population. After this brief literature review in order to identify risk factors and specific behavioral markers to predict gambling-related problems, our presentation provides suggestions for developing Preventive programs and effective treatments for older people.
SOME ITALIAN EXAMPLES

A cooperation with Milan Social Service underlines this useful path: finding new indicators, building family and social support, using money control as an instrument to avoid financial collapse.

A user help line service: my supervision was aimed to integrate their daily social work, giving some advises to catch from phone calls all risk elements.
A SPECIFIC AND EMPIRICAL FOCUS

A clinical intervention in “Gioco di donne”*, an Italian experimental gender group, is presented and discussed. The attention is motivated by the strong connection age/women/gambling, and by relevance of this first and unique group experience in Europe, which is also at the origin of the innovative project of the book "Gambling Disorders in Women. An International Female Perspective on Treatment and research" [1] (eds. H. Bowden-Jones & F. Prever, Routledge, 2017).

* "Women Game", gender group, Hazard&Women project, SUN(N)COOP
It's in the dream to escape from daily life fatigue, just for a while.
Normalization of gambling, pervasive and ubiquitous venues possibility of gambling being unnoticed, allowed women to overcome social stigma, giving to it a positive, even emancipatory connotation!

SO...

The Gambler isn’t anymore a risk-taking MAN, going for money, beautiful women, thrilling situation and adventure...
She’s rather a MIDDLE AGE LADY, even in her seventies, both italian or immigrated, fighting against daily life burden of family and work, against depression and loneliness.

So, where is the adventure?

It’s in the dream to escape from daily life fatigue, just for a while.
Normalization of gambling, pervasive and ubiquitous venues possibility of gambling being unnoticed, allowed women to overcome social stigma, giving to it a positive, even emancipatory connotation!

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What we do know

- Problem gambling in women is clearly now a big issue, in Italy as in Europe and worldwide.
- Nevertheless we still have little literature and studies all over the world, and the few data and researches aren't specific but either derived from general data with no consideration of gender characterization or inferred from studies conducted in men.
What should we know

Women are crucial in the family and the society, and their gambling problems, often underestimated, can have a deep impact not only on their personal and social life, but on community level too.

Most women have to face many problems when seeking for treatment and most health clinics are neither women friendly oriented or offer treatments specifically developed for female patients.
What’s the difference?

It's more and more evident that research itself has to be conducted in a different, innovative way and should be more responsive to women approach to gambling and respectful of their way of thinking. (use of different age span, >64 and different techniques: as deep interviews, Holdsworth, Hing & Breen 2012)

So, who could better understand their point of view, if not women researcher and clinicians?

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ALL AROUND THE WORLD

However, at an international level, few very interesting studies produced good quality data on treatment for GD in women, but they remain unknown to most of field operators and professionals, limiting their influence for a different diffuse culture of gambling addiction treatment in women.

Our wish and aim: to gather most of the best and original clinical experiences and researches, from both small working groups and well recognized University teams, to compare their methodology, to improve research and develop new strategies.

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We started to build a professional network, the first **European/International Network about Women and Gambling Studies**, where to exchange ideas and research projects; with some colleagues from Austria, Laura Brandt (Univie), Germany (Andrea Woehr) and UK (H.Bowden Jones), we tried to converge on this topic: we got a whole session dedicated to women and problem gambling in EASG 2014, EASG 2016 and ICBA HAIFA 2017. We gathered many more contributes, starting from newborn net, and we decided to collect all of them in a **special book**. This was my secret wish.

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THE BOOK

Problem Gambling in Women.
An international Female Perspective on treatment and Research

Edited by HENRIETTA BOWDEN-JONES and FULVIA PREVER

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... around the world

• The Austrian and German contribution by Laura Brandt and Andrea Woehr underlines the rates of women’s approaching treatment in these two countries and which factors may influence an easier help request and a better outcome (Cross cultural research with Italy, importance of family support)

• The impact of gambling in Austrian women’s lives needs further investigation to develop new instruments to estimate the problem.

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In Italy, is it Still A Hidden Addiction,?

- The problem of gambling in women is an **invisible addiction**, according to a few data collected at gambling clinics in Italy; how this may **affect research interest** in our country?
- The possibility to develope a gambling addiction seems to be **the double** for men than for women (La Barbera, 2010)
- However, **prevalence** is anyway highly influenced by **increasing and accessibility** of new forms of gambling;
- It's a highly growing problem, due to both italian **economic crisis** and the attraction, well supported by suitable **advertisement**, that these form of gambling have on our female population.

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Do the ask for treatment?

- Unlikely what happens in Australia (Del Fabbro 2009), in **Italy women don’t get to gamling clinics**, they don’t ask for treatment easily;
- they represent only the **20%** of pathological gamblers in treatment, and they are mainly over 60 (Serpelloni DPA 2012)
- a **cross cultural investigation** was held on this issue, (Italy, Austria & Germany) 2014, Brandt, Woehr, Prever
- 2017, same authors. work in progress
WHY?

• Too difficult to admit they have got a problem (different in other pathologies)
• Too difficult for them to ask for others’ support instead of relying on their own
• Coming out is impossible for them, both within than outside their families
• No time to devote to themselves and to their own therapy
Internal and external obstacles

- **Few** specific clinics, not well known, (no advertising in women daily places) and often quite **distant** and difficult to reach
- **Negative connotation**: highly drug addiction and male prevalence
- **Setting and time** not adequate to their needs, not **women friendly**, no gender groups
- **Shame, guilty feelings, social stigma**
- **Fear to lose children custody**
- **Fear not to be understood** in one's women troubles
- **Fear not to be safe; privacy need**
- **Partners or families who deny, under estimate and obstacle** their call for help

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SINCE 2010 we offer a free gender group pilot experience with as systemic relational integrative approach, (choice not to use CBT only)

**Azzardo&Donne Project**
**di Milano – SUN(N)COOP**
Fulvia Prever, Monica Minci, Elize Haggiag
Milan Gender Group

- 10♀, 44 to 75 (64 medium age) → Castelfranco Group ≠ age and sex orientation, role of gambling (identification) & love addiction central experience (gender group Dissemination)
- Twice a week, two co-therapists, central location
- Privacy, no connotation
- Free help line 📞 (all week long for counseling)
- Our group → Privileged Observatory → Italian specific background & female gambling evolution → social and political implications (marketing policy → Italian state policy)

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Starting point
our clinical work

• Starting from Italian specific background and female gambling evolution (social and political implications), we use our experimental therapeutic group as a Privileged Observatory- Clinical reflections on:
  • Integrative systemic approach, best clinical approach to ♀?
  • Video and specific DBT clinical tool (soothing box), → past violence and trauma
  • role playing to face their family relationship

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Tools & topics

- **EMDR**, a new treatment indication → female gamblers?
- Focus → help seeking - Role of family dynamics in women’s therapy approach, treatment, retention and outcome (comparative research, I. A. De)
- Women → domestic violence → gambling, "positive coping role" of gambling in handling their past and present experience of suffering, love addiction, guilty feelings, self-forgiveness & repairing experiences → THEMES OF OUR CLINICAL WORK, AS A HINT TO FURTHER INVESTIGATIONS) (book chapter & researches)

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New tools

- **Sophrology** (active relaxation), as parallel activity to cope & reduce stress
- **Mindfulness**, discharge tension before or after group session → access to images, flash back.
- **Next** → **dark sensorial experience**, to see how you can start from a deprivation experience of blind people, (repairing experience) enhance resources and resilience through all the 5 senses, new emotions

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New tools

- Implement external joyful & socializing moments (happy hour, movie, art exhibition, theatre, music)
- Residencial short WE to deepen intensity of treatment experience
- Specific health problem more frequently present in older women (both psychological and physical), require specific tools and social network intervention!

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A Clinical integrated approach

M.D'AGATI
→ specialist clinical intervention, from a sociological point of view, in our gender group: brainstorming on these main themes

1) losing their social roles because of retiring and re negotiation of roles among males and females.

2) gambling as a way of coping with daily boring tasks, isolation and lack of active performance, loneliness and narrow social relationships

3) erroneous thoughts
BY showing them three video very powerful in Italian reality:

“my Sundays with Ughina” (Fantozzi get retired)
“Fantozzi wins the SuperEnalotto” (Fantozzi the clonation)
“Casa Vianello” ending theme scene (Sandra Mondaini & Edmondo Vianello)

“How boring, how boring..
BiBLIOGRAPHY


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THANKS FOR YOUR ATTENTION

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stay in touch for information about our International Women & Gambling Network!

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