

Video Transcript: Concurrent Disorders and Problem Gambling

This brief video will provide you with an overview of the prevalence of concurrent disorders in people with gambling problems.

Research shows that there are high levels of concurrent disorders among people with gambling problems. This includes co-occurring substance use disorders and various mental illnesses, such as mood and anxiety disorders and psychotic disorders. Awareness of this is particularly important, as gambling can influence mental illness, and, in turn, mental illness can influence gambling behaviours.

Although more research is needed to determine any cause and effect relationships between gambling and co-existing mental illness and substance use disorders, it is likely that a complex mix of biological and environmental factors contribute to this high prevalence.

Let's take a minute to look at the statistics.

Some studies have shown that about 38% of people with gambling problems also have a mood disorder. Examples of co-occurring mood disorders include dysthymia or mild persistent depression, bipolar disorder, and major depression, which alone affects 23% of people.

Studies have shown that the prevalence of people with concurrent anxiety disorders is 37%, almost the same as that of mood disorders. It is important to note that it is very common for someone who has a mood disorder to also have an anxiety disorder.

In terms of co-occurring substance use disorders, rates are elevated here as well, with alcohol disorders and nicotine dependence being the two most common.

Preliminary research has found elevated rates of problem gambling among people with schizophrenia and schizoaffective disorder.

Among individuals with personality disorders, problem gambling tends to occur more frequently in people with narcissistic, borderline, and antisocial personality disorders.

People who gamble excessively also experience higher rates of suicide. Research shows that there is a strong link between problem gambling and both suicidal ideation and attempts. This risk increases in people who have co-occurring mental illness or substance use issues.

The importance of highlighting these risks is to ensure we screen all people presenting with gambling problems for mental illnesses and substance use disorders. Conversely, we should also screen people with mental illness and substance use disorders for gambling problems.

Once a concurrent disorder has been identified, an integrated treatment approach is recommended.

Explore this section of ProblemGambling.ca for more detailed information on concurrent disorders, assessments and integrated treatment approaches.