

Gambling Harm UK: Advancing medical education

Gambling Harm in the UK

Based on the available evidence, gambling harm is one of the top five modifiable risk factors for health – alongside diet, alcohol misuse, smoking, and physical inactivity. Gambling harm stands out as a public health concern with a relatively high burden of harm experienced by children and individuals who do not gamble.

According to OHID data published in December 2023, in England, there are almost 1.6 million adults who gamble who may benefit from some type of treatment or support for harmful gambling. Furthermore, there are 912,805 children living in a household with an adult who may benefit from treatment. Despite an estimation already involving around 3.5% of adults and 8.5% of children, these numbers are likely to underestimate the total population harmed due to omission of adult affected others, children who have gambled, and legacy harm.

What?

We believe that all medical professionals should develop and maintain gambling harm related competencies (knowledge, skills, and attitudes) that allow them to competently prevent, tackle, and safeguard patients against gambling harm.

How?

Our mission is to advance gambling harm medical education by developing and distributing high-quality, impactful resources, ultimately aiming to enhance healthcare professionals' understanding and ability to address gambling harm effectively. These resources would span across a range of specialties including general practice, clinical communication skills, paediatrics, public health, and ethics.

We are working on developing:

- an e-learning resource that aims to cover 'Making Every Contact Count' (MECC)
- case presentations that illustrate how gambling harm can manifest and present in a variety of ways
- OSCE-styled guides that demonstrate how a healthcare professional may take a history and offer support for gambling harm (these are in the final stages of editing)

Why?

We estimate that less than 5% of those significantly harmed from gambling benefit from formal treatment and support options. Furthermore, referrals from health and social care contribute only around 3% of those accessing treatment. Given that gambling harm is widely omitted from undergraduate and postgraduate medical education, we believe that there is a huge opportunity to improve these statistics.

We believe that efforts in gambling harm medical education would help maximise the impact of upcoming NICE guidelines on gambling harm which are due to be published for the first time in 2024.

Next steps?

If you may be interested in helping us towards building a portfolio of effective and industry-independent medical education resources, please contact: tristan@gamblingharm.com and kishan@gamblingharm.com stating whether you would be interested in 1) being interviewed on camera for use in e-learning resources 2) sharing detailed real or potential experiences that you may have had with health professionals where gambling harm could have been identified and helped 3) providing feedback and advising us on how to make this initiative a success.

We will then follow up with further details and next steps for involvement.