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*Book review: Pathological gambling: etiology, comorbidity, and treatment by Nancy Petry. American Psychological Association, Washington, DC*

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## **Pathological gambling: Etiology, comorbidity, and treatment**

Nancy M. Petry

American Psychological Association, Washington, DC, 2004.

This is a good reference book on the treatment of pathological/problem gambling. This book may be appealing to a wide range of readers including students, practitioners, and researchers.

The book contains 16 chapters. Chapter 1-3 primarily focuses on definition and assessment of problem gambling. Chapter 4-6 describe correlates, comorbidity and neurobiological basis to explore aetiology of pathological gambling. Chapter 7-12 reviews intervention/treatment research. In particular, Chapter 12 on Cognitive Biases and Cognitive Therapy includes up-to-date reviews of currently available evidence although the verdict is yet to come due to the scarcity of well controlled research design to investigate this issue. Chapter 13 provides a brief overview/review of cognitive behavioural therapy as a treatment model for problem gambling. Practitioners may find this chapter helpful since applications of Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy were illustrated through the presentation of extensive case studies. Chapter 14 discusses the brief and motivational interventions. The final section of the book includes Prevention focusing on youth and young adult gambling (Chapter 15), an appropriate introduction to the subject but not conclusive, and a

brief conclusion chapter (Chapter 16). Finally, the appendices contain many useful practical resources for gambling counsellors and psychologists.

This book would be, therefore, a good textbook for graduate as well as advanced undergraduate students interested in research on gambling treatment and intervention. One of the impressive aspects of the book is that it summarises a wide range of relevant current research in detail. Although the primary focus is on North American research, gambling research from other jurisdiction is referenced widely. The other useful aspect of the book is that abundant clinical examples are included. These examples provide readers a perspective on how theory of treatment and intervention can be translated into practice in a clinical setting.

A few details in the book may need to be elaborated. For example, readers would appreciate it if more contextual information regarding case studies is provided. If a composite from multiple clinical cases is included, that should be noted clearly. While the author describes many original research articles in detail, her reviews are at times not particularly evaluative. Further, although research findings on proximal causes of pathological gambling are clearly explained, discussion regarding distal causes or concomitant factors may also need to be included. For instance, while cultural influence on pathological gambling is discussed, migrant adjustment process and stress, which may be a possible key cause, needs to be elucidated.

A number of areas that warrant further investigation may include commonalities and differences between problem gambling and other addictive behaviours. For example, are cognitive biases or distortions apparent in non-problem gamblers as well as problem/pathological ones? What are the determinants/predictors of attitudes towards gambling? Is the decision making process towards gambling cessation similar to other forms of behavioural addiction? Is the research framework on recidivism useful to understand gambling relapse? These questions can be fully answered by linking gambling research findings with the research evidence in other areas. Considering the scope of this book is ambitious as it is, addressing these issues may have to wait for the next edition. However, these minor concerns should not deter readers from reading this readable book.

Gambling research is often regarded as peripheral, perhaps due to the scarcity of research evidence and a lack of connection to more general mainstream findings. The onus appears to be on gambling researchers to show research significance until this area becomes a focal research area in its own right. In this book, relevant pathological/problem gambling research findings are described and interpreted in detail. Considering the fact that clinical findings in this research area are still forthcoming, the author has done an excellent job of presenting the converging evidence available so far. Overall, I recommend this book to any reader who is interested in gambling research and the treatment of pathological gambling.

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