

VALIDATION OF A DIAGNOSTIC QUESTIONNAIRE BASED ON DSM-IV CRITERIA FOR GAMBLING

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Introduction: Different questionnaires were formulated in order to assess the severity of gambling. The most used questionnaire is the South Oaks Gambling Screen (SOGS), based on DSM-III criteria for gambling, even though it has poor specificity, because overestimates the prevalence of the disorder when used in general population.

Objectives: Try to overcome SOGS limits using a questionnaire based on DSM-IV criteria for gambling.

Aims: Validate the questionnaire based on DSM-IV criteria, using as gold standard the clinical interview developed through the SOGS.

Methods: The sample used is formed by 71 subjects, 58 men (81.7%) and 13 women (18.3%), recruited from the Psychiatric Department of Gemelli General Hospital in Rome, who were asked to fill out both questionnaires.

Results: The sensitivity of our questionnaire was 93% (compared to 100% in the SOGS); the specificity was 100% (97.1% in the SOGS). False negatives were 7%, while they were absent in the SOGS ; false positives were absent in the DSM-IV questionnaire, while they were 2.9% in the SOGS.

We also determined the prevalence of each item of DSM-IV questionnaire in all gamblers identified (66 subjects): the most relevant item was "chasing one's losses"(item6), instead the least one was "committing illegal acts such as forgery, fraud, theft, or embezzlement to finance gambling"(item8).

Conclusions: Our data confirm the greater specificity of the questionnaire of DSM-IV criteria for gambling compared to the SOGS. We suggest its use for the identification of gamblers in a sample formed by general population.