

# Gambling & Parkinson's

**In recent years, there has been more evidence presented about the link between dopamine agonists and impulse control disorders (manifestations include: problem gambling, hypersexuality and compulsive shopping).**

The PD Society UK, suggests that up to 7 per cent of people on dopamine agonists experience impulse control disorders. (People who have a history or family history of addiction are at a higher risk).

In most cases, when people with Parkinson's present with compulsive gambling behaviours, it is related to a side effect from their medication, and the problem can be resolved by changing the dosage, and classes of medication they take.

## What can I do to help?

If you are experiencing difficulties with problem gambling, we encourage you to speak to people about the problem, both professional (neurologist) or personal (family, friends, support network). Make an immediate appointment with your neurologist and tell him/her about what you have been experiencing. They will most likely change your medication so that the impulse control disorder is resolved.

It's also encouraged that you seek professional support. You may need to engage with a counselling service to help repair some of the psychological/financial problems that the problem gambling has caused.

There are free specialist services available that can provide financial and emotional counselling to help you get back on your feet. Referral details to services are available from Parkinson's Victoria.

Until the problem is resolved, you may decide to engage in *harm minimisation techniques* such as:

- Giving control of your financial matters to someone you trust (e.g a partner).
- Tell those around you about the gambling as a form of public accountability.
- Never carry huge sums of cash on you or engage in jobs that gives you access to large sums of cash
- If you do decide to continue gambling, always set limits and keep an eye on how much you are spending.

Finally, it's important to remember that this is a **drug reaction** and not a problem with the person

or a personality flaw.

Many people would never expect to develop a problem with gambling or become hypersexual from a medication they are taking to improve their mobility – yet it can happen in some cases.

Therefore, if you ever experience anything out of the ordinary in relation to your behaviour, feel free to contact Parkinson's Victoria, who can provide you with information that can help.

## What is being done?

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency - UK (**MHRA**) recently reviewed the issues associated with dopamine agonists and impulse control disorders, and has recommended more prominent and special warnings on packages.

In 2005, the Adverse Drug Reactions Advisory Committee - Australia (**ADRAC**) suggested in their bulletin that prescribers should be alert for its occurrence in patients who are taking combinations of levodopa and dopamine receptor agonists.

As of 2005, ADRAC had only received 4 reports of gambling as a problem, and yet anecdotal evidence suggests that it has a much higher prevalence. As with any negative side effects of medication, the more people who report their experience, the greater the pressure is on decision makers and manufacturers to look into solutions, and investigate further.

People who experience gambling as a problem should report it to ADRAC: Download and complete a "Blue Form" from the internet ([www.tga.gov.au](http://www.tga.gov.au)). For reporting enquiries contact the Consumer Adverse Medication Events line: 1300 134 237.

**Finally, the majority of people who take dopamine agonists will not experience impulse control disorders as a result of their therapy.** We encourage people to be aware of any behavioural changes and to keep a diary. This is a good communication tool to use during neurology appointments, and to talk about any changes with their doctor.

If you would like to talk about a gambling problem or request further information on this subject or references, contact Parkinson's Victoria.