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TWELVE-MONTH FOLLOW-UP STUDY OF DRUG TREATMENT IN PATHOLOGICAL GAMBLERS

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Background: Pathological Gambling (PG) is a relatively common and highly disabling impulse control disorder. A range of psychotherapeutic agents including selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs), antiepileptic drugs, and opioid antagonists are shown to be effective in the short-term treatment of PG. The use of a wide range pf pharmacologic treatments for PG is consistent with the observation that PG shares features of obsessive-compulsive spectrum disorders, impulse control disorders, and addictive disorders. The aim of the study is to assess the rate of relapse in treatment-responder pathological gamblers after discontinuation of the active treatment.

Methods: The 43 full -responders were then followed prospectively for an additional 9 months, which included a 3-month open-label continuation phase and a 6-month medication-free, follow-up phase. Raters were blind to the previous drug treatment.

Results: The majority of patients did not relapse during the 6-month medication- free follow-up phase. Three out of six patients with fluvoxamine, three out of nine with topiramate, seven out of eighteen with bupropion SR , and four out of ten with naltrexone relapsed. Relapse was strictly defined as gambling behavior at any time during the 6-month medication- free follow- up period. Most of the patients did not gamble during the follow- up period, and the patients that did gamble reported a decrease in gambling losses.

Conclusion: This naturalistic, long-term follow-up outcome study demonstrates that among pathological gamblers who respond to a six- month trial of medication, the majority of patients appear to maintain full-response during a six-month medication- free follow-up phase.

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