



The Impact of Sports Gambling on Athletes

Timothy Fong MD

Professor of Psychiatry

UCLA Gambling Studies Program

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You do not have to have a
gambling problem to
experience problems from
gambling.

Case: Shortstop

- 24 year old professional baseball player
 - Spring Training 2020; MLB hopeful
- Pandemic starts
 - Career placed on immediate hold
 - By June 2020, he is uncertain about future
 - Lives in state with mobile sports gambling (regulated)
 - Begins gambling in Fall 2020 out of boredom, financial need, curiosity, need for action

Shortstop

- By end of fall 2020, net losses ~ \$1000
- Contests a single game bet when he did not get paid
- State gambling regulators recognize he is a professional athlete and report his name to parent organization
- Placed on administrative leave, pending “investigation” – 18 months

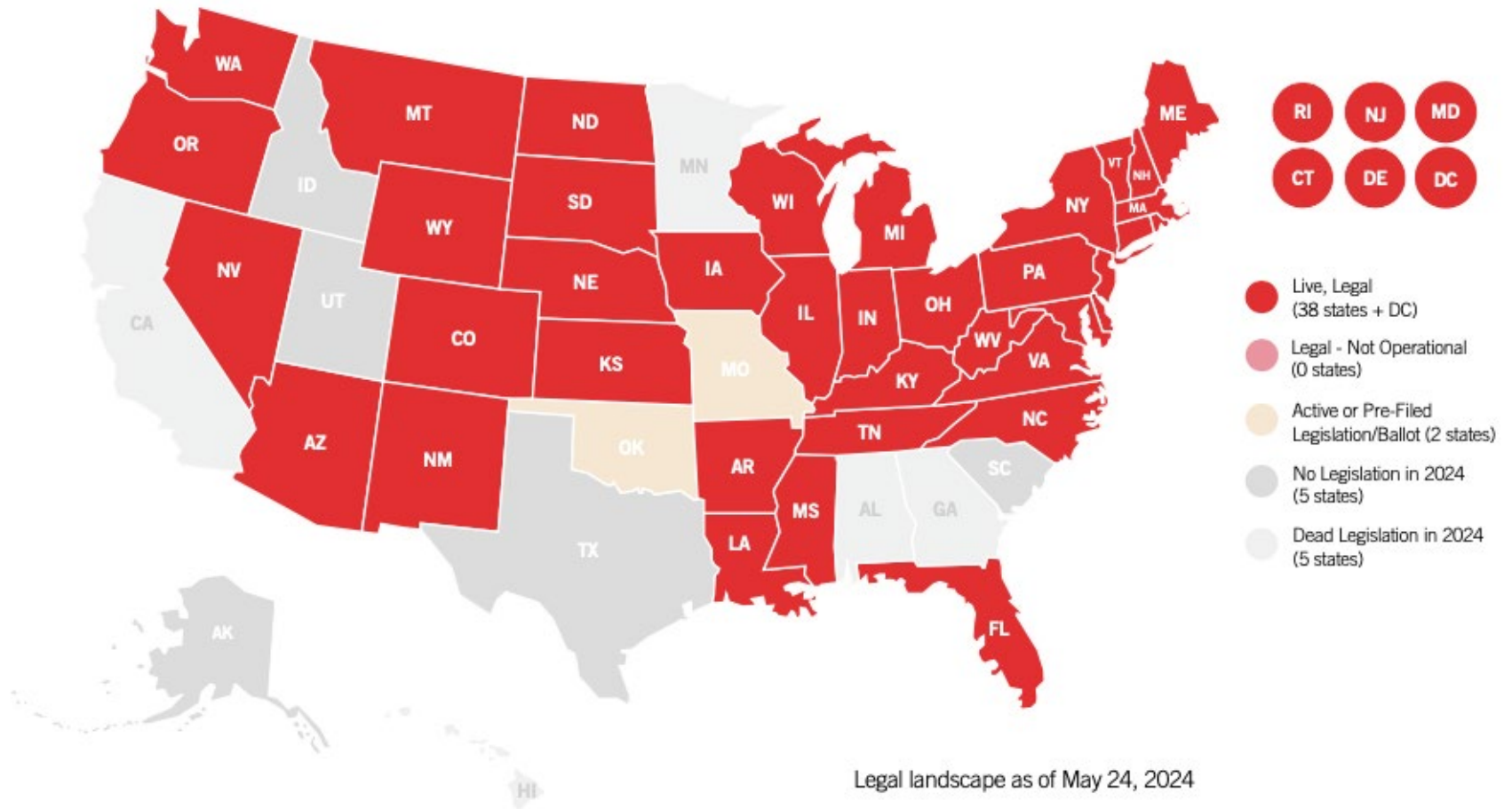
Shortstop

- On further examination
 - He did bet on baseball games (thought he wasn't part of the league anymore)
 - Gambling was a way to solve problems, financially and emotionally
 - Gambling wasn't a form of entertainment
 - There were harmful consequences due to continued pattern of gambling

Shortstop

- Why did he gamble, despite knowing the risks?
- If he were your client, what should be done with him?
- What, possibly, could have been done to prevent this or intervene earlier?
- What was the outcome?

U.S. Legal Sports Betting



Sports Gambling and Athletes

How does sports betting impact athletes?

- Gambling Disorder
- Sport Integrity
- Athlete Well-Being
 - Harassment

Gambling and Athletes

- Acceptability of sports gambling at highest-ever level – no longer “taboo”
- Access –unregulated and regulated
- Time on hands – address boredom
- Make money quickly
- Peer and family pressure

All in: a scoping review of the association between gambling and athletic participation

Sarah E. Nelson^{a,b}, John M. Slabczynski^a, Taylor G. Lee^a and Debi A. LaPlante^{a,b}

^aDivision on Addiction, Cambridge Health Alliance, Boston, MA, USA; ^bDepartment of Psychiatry, Harvard Medical School, Boston, MA, USA

ABSTRACT

The barriers between sport and gambling recently have eroded in the US. While this presents economic opportunities, it may also increase the risk of gambling problems among athletes, particularly if athletes are already more susceptible to gambling problems than others. We conducted a scoping review of the literature that sought to characterize what is known about the relationship between participation in athletics and gambling. We identified 45 studies that met our inclusion criteria. The majority (56%) sampled athletes at the collegiate level. More than half of the studies did not include a non-athlete control group. Among the studies that did compare athletes to non-athletes, findings were mixed. Half of the studies that examined gambling involvement found that athletes had higher involvement than non-athletes, while half found no relationship. About 23% of studies that examined gambling problems found a positive relationship between being an athlete and experiencing gambling problems; 69% found no relationship, and 8% found a negative relationship. In some cases, gender appeared to moderate these relationships; in others, there was no interaction with gender. Future research should include rigorous studies that examine these relationships at diverse levels of play, include non-athlete controls, and test what mechanisms explain these relationships.

ARTICLE HISTORY

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KEYWORDS

Gambling; problem gambling; sports; athletes; sports gambling

Gambling Disorder in Athletes

- Globally, prevalence rates of GD higher in athletes, than non-athletes
 - Student-Athletes
 - Professional Athletes (inconclusive?)
 - Gender differences (solid signal; $M > F$);
 - Which sports?

NCAA Survey

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DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4309/jgi.2019.41.5>

Trends in gambling behavior among college student-athletes: A comparison of 2004, 2008, 2012 and 2016 NCAA survey data

Jérémie Richard,¹ Thomas S. Paskus,² & Jeffrey L. Derevensky¹

¹International Centre for Youth Gambling Problems and High Risk Behaviors,
McGill University, Montreal, QC, Canada

²National Collegiate Athletics Association, Indianapolis, IN, United States

Abstract

Student-athletes represent a vulnerable subgroup of the college student population with regards to engagement in high-risk behaviours. Four large samples of National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) student-athletes in 2004 ($N = 20,587$), 2008 ($N = 19,942$), 2012 ($N = 22,935$) and 2016 ($N = 22,388$) were surveyed about their gambling behaviours and attitudes. A cross-sectional study was conducted to gain insight into changing gambling behaviours and attitudes among college student-athletes. Findings revealed gender differences in participation rates of gambling with men consistently engaging in all gambling activities at higher rates than women (55% of men versus 38% women in 2016). Despite gender differences, the results suggest that participation rates for most gambling activities have generally decreased over the twelve-year span. The proportion of student-athletes at-risk or meeting criteria for pathological gambling between 2004 and 2016 has also decreased among men (4% in 2004 versus 2% in 2016) while remaining relatively consistent among women (<1% across all years). Furthermore, attitudes towards various forms of gambling appear to have changed over time, with a greater number of student-athletes in 2016 believing that sports wagering is unacceptable and a potentially harmful activity. Taken together, the results suggest that gambling behaviours among student-athletes may be on a downward trend despite the increased accessibility and availability of gambling opportunities.

Keywords: Gambling, problem gambling, college student-athletes, gender

NCAA Survey

Table 4

Problem gambling severity among men and women based on DSM-IV-TR classification in 2004, 2008, 2012 and 2016

DSM classification	Men (%)				Women (%)			
	2004	2008	2012	2016	2004	2008	2012	2016
Non-gambler	29.3	33.7 _a	42.3 _{ab}	45.3 _{abc}	51.1	61.4 _a	61.3 _a	62.4 _a
Social gambler	66.7	62.5 _a	55.8 _{ab}	52.8 _{abc}	48.6	38.2 _a	38.6 _a	37.5 _a
At-risk gambler	2.9	1.8	1.2 _a	1.1 _a	0.3	0.2	<0.1	<0.1
Probable pathological gambler	1.1	2.0	0.7 _b	0.7 _b	<0.1	0.2	<0.1	<0.1

Note. 2x2 Pearson chi-square tests ($df = 1$) compared the 2004, 2008, 2012 and 2016 sampling distributions of respondents. a = significantly different from 2004 at $p < 0.001$; b = significantly different from 2008 at $p < 0.001$; c = significantly different from 2012 at $p < 0.001$; d = significantly different from 2016 at $p < 0.001$

Empirical Article

Young male athletes at risk for problem gambling: Findings from a cross-sectional study in Sweden

MARIA VINBERG,¹ NATALIE DURBEEJ² and INGVAR ROSENDAHL³

¹*The Swedish Gambling Authority, Strängnäs, Sweden*

²*Child Health and Parenting (CHAP), Department of Public Health and Caring Sciences, Uppsala University, Uppsala, Sweden*

³*Centre for Psychiatry Research, Department of Clinical Neuroscience, Stockholm County Council, Karolinska Institutet, Stockholm Health Care Services, Stockholm, Sweden*

Vinberg, M., Durbeej, N. & Rosendahl, I. (2023). Young male athletes at risk for problem gambling: Findings from a cross-sectional study in Sweden. *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology*, 64, 766–775.

Previous research has shown that male athletes at the elite level in Sweden have a higher proportion of gambling problems than the average male population in the country. However, there is a knowledge gap in the prevalence of gambling problems among young athletes. To address this gap, this study aimed to explore gambling behavior among young athletes and to examine the associations between individual and environmental factors and problem gambling. The cross-sectional survey comprised questions from the Problem Gambling Severity Index and the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test, in addition to self-constructed items on individual and environmental factors. The data were derived from a sample of 1,636 students from the National Sports Education Program (NIU) and 816 grassroots athletes of the same age (16–20 years old). The results showed that male athletes had a higher prevalence of problem gambling compared to female athletes, and that a large proportion of male athletes had gambled during school hours. The prevalence of problem gambling was almost zero for women. The prevalence of problem gambling among male athletes over 18 years of age was 9% in NIU athletes and 3.6% in grassroots athletes, while for men under 18 years of age, the prevalence was 4.9% in NIU athletes and 1.3% in grassroots athletes. The study highlights the importance of considering contextual factors such as the school and team environment in preventing problem gambling among young male athletes.

Key words: Youth gambling, athletes' gambling, sports betting, problem gambling.

Gambling Disorder in Athletes

– Personality traits to consider

- Highly competitive,
- impulsive,
- risk-taking tendencies
- difficulty dealing with loss,
- Obsessional / detail oriented / compulsive
- Confidence
- Believe in "insider knowledge"

Evidence-Based Treatments for Gambling Disorder

- Medications (No FDA-Approved)
- Brief Interventions
 - Helplines, Self-Help Workbooks, 1-2 sessions,
- Psychotherapy
 - CBT, MI, Psychodynamic, Supportive
- Gambler's Anonymous

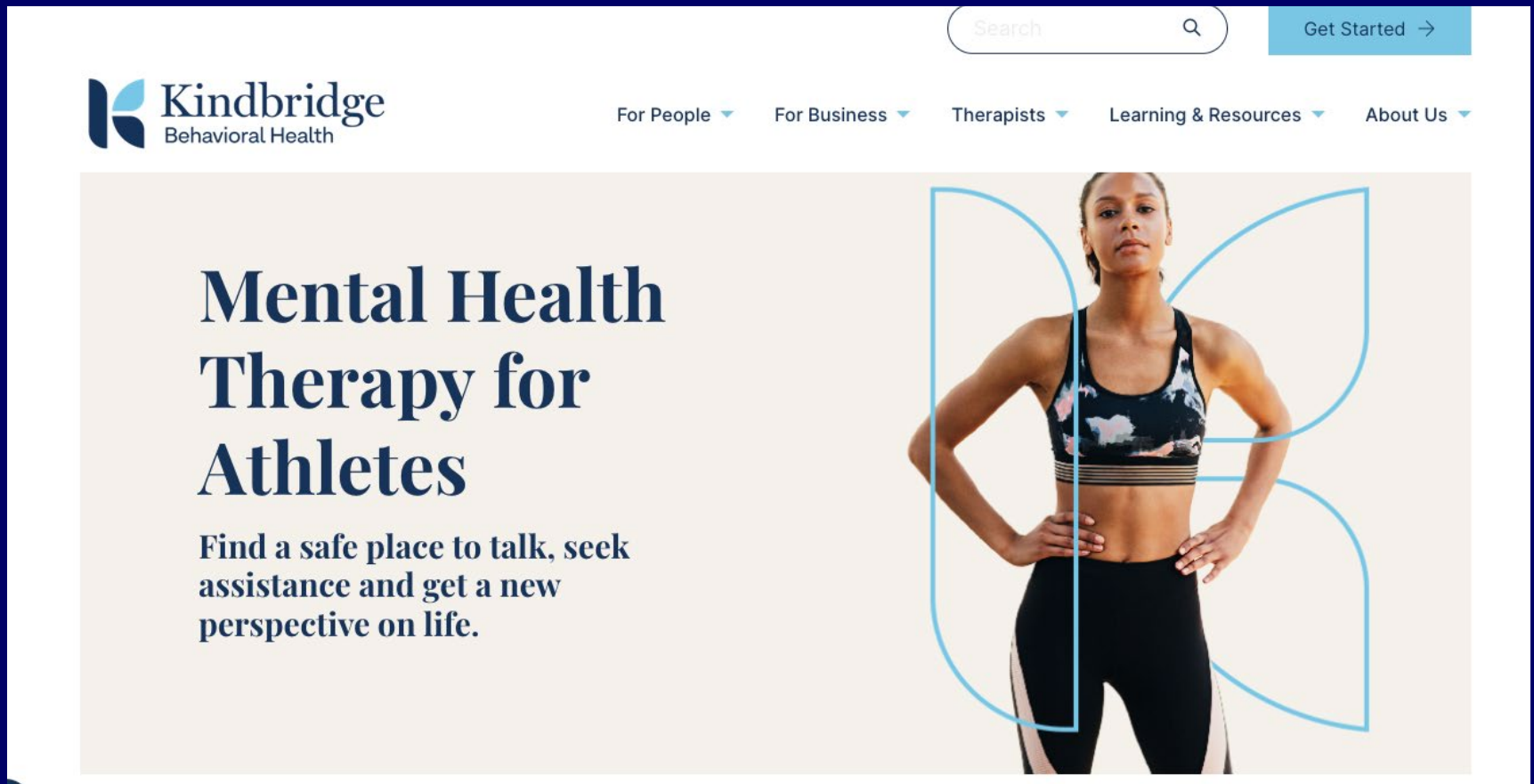
Petry, N. M., Ginley, M. K., & Rash, C. J. (2017). A systematic review of treatments for problem gambling. *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors*, 31(8), 951.

Treatment Principles of Gambling Disorder in Athletes


- Medications; side effects magnified
- Treat co-occurring disorders
 - Commonly missed: ADHD, Mood, PTSD
- Seeking treatment in confidential, accessible fashion, with trust
- Who provides oversight (unlike established SUD programs)
- Group support?

Resources

Kindbridge Athlete Well-Being Program



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Expert help for crypto/trading, sports betting and gaming addiction



What We Offer

Westside Gambling Treatment offers high-quality, no-cost enhanced outpatient (EOP) group treatment for California residents with problem online gaming, stock/crypto trading, and sports betting behavior. With program options geared for working and non-working adults, a typical weekly schedule comprises eight hours of group programming with a single individual meeting with certified problem gambling specialist. Curriculum is based on state provided treatment manuals and includes the following topic areas:

- Financial literacy
- Coping with gambling urges and cravings
- Healthy relationship with money
- Communication skills/Setting boundaries
- Rebuilding trust in relationships

No Cost for our Services?

Gambling Disorder and Athletes

- Which types of sports gambling are the riskiest for athletes?
 - SGP, Player Props,
- Which sports are at the greatest risk for GD?
- At what stage of the athlete's career is the greatest risk?
- Who is responsible for screening, education, prevention, treatment?

Sports Gambling and Integrity

Historical View of Sports Gambling and Integrity

- "Purity of sports" as an ideal
- Fair and equal competition
 - Corrupted effort if gambling involved
- Involved stakeholders (fans, teammates) invested in drama of uncertain outcome
- Anger at "rigged" outcomes when it comes to sport but not other forms of "sport entertainment"

Sports Betting and Sports Integrity

- Expansion of betting and newfound partnerships between sports organization and betting operators has led to
 - Intensified fan engagement
 - Concerns about fixing / corruption / fairness
 - Ethical and exploitative concerns (athletes as commodity)
 - New areas of regulation and policies for athletes
 - (can I bet, should I bet , where can I bet?)

Sports Gambling and Harassment

Sports Betting has Increased Athlete Harassment

- Since 2018 ---
 - Significant rise in harassment and abuse of athletes related to sports betting
 - Digital: social media, comments, direct messages
 - In-person threats ; at games, in real life
 - Critical, physical, sexual, objectifying
 - Precise numbers are opaque but the trends are clear and a response must be developed
 - How could this end up?

NCAA Survey (2024)

- One in 3 high-profile athletes receive abusive messages from someone with a betting interest.
- Higher-profile events with sports betting markets attract increased volumes of abuse or threats.
- Ninety percent of harassment is generated online or through social media.
- In sports with high volumes of betting, 15%-25% of all abuse surrounding that competition is betting related.
- During March Madness, Signify covered nearly 1,000 Division I men's and women's basketball student-athletes, 64 teams, over 280 coaches and 120 NCAA match officials.
- Across the Division I Men's and Women's Basketball Championships, over 54,000 posts/comments were flagged by Signify's AI for potential abuse or threats and reviewed by human in-house analysts.
- Of those 54,000, 4,000 were confirmed as abusive or threatening and reported to the relevant social media platforms, with some elevated to law enforcement.
- More than 540 abusive betting-related messages were directed at men's and women's basketball student-athletes, including death threats.
- Women's basketball student-athletes received approximately three times more threats than men's basketball student-athletes.
- Student-athletes are not the only group experiencing these threats and abuse. Game officials, administrators and other athletics employees have been harassed related to their respective involvement in competitions.

Reasons for Harassment

- Anger intensifies when it collides with fandom, greed, competitiveness
- Viewing sports betting as
 - A way to make money,
- Losses are personalized and not acceptable
 - “not possible for me to be wrong”
- Gambler’s fallacy in sports betting

Ideas Moving Forward

Gambling Disorder and Athletes

- Establish clear, firm and consistent gambling policies for all athletes
 - informed by athletes
- Increase education of staff, trainers, coaches, front offices, owners, league officials
- Make resources and treatment accessible, available, in-demand

Integrity

- Restore public trust by reducing perceive hypocrisy, shadowy partnerships
- Transparency of revenue
- Use player data and tracking to identify problem gamblers and anomalous gambling patterns
- Does reducing advertising and embedded odds increase trust?

Harassment

- Elimination of player prop bets –
 - What type of impact?
- Strengthening real-time reporting to authorities
- Changing the messaging of what sports gambling is about?
- Develop strong digital safety practices

Gambling as a part of athletic training experience

- Gambling impacts body, brain and mind performance
- Gambling behavior, even recreationally, can put athletes into risky situations
- Education, screening, referral to treatment, consistently communicating and adhering to gambling policies
- Increasing therapist skills and abilities around gambling behaviors

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The Hot New Form Of Fantasy Sports Is Probably Addictive, Potentially Illegal And Completely Unregulated

Dr. Fong discusses the rise of paid fantasy sports

Sacha Feinman and Josh Isreal interview Dr. Timothy Fong for an article on fantasy sports betting for Think Progress

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Freedom from Problem Gambling

The UCLA Gambling Studies Program (UGSP) is a non-profit organization within the Department of Psychiatry and Biobehavioral Sciences at the University of California, Los Angeles. Our mission is to reduce the individual, familial, and societal harm caused by pathological gambling. Since 2005, we have been engaged in conducting research, providing cost-effective prevention and treatment services, and offering education and training opportunities to healthcare providers and the community at large.

Research

UGSP is committed to the advancement of research. We use a wide range of research methods to continually investigate the biological, psychological, and

Treatment

UGSP has a number of outpatient treatment options available for problem gamblers and their families. Our team of experts understand and treat problematic

Education

UGSP provides educational and training opportunities for mental health providers across Southern California. We also welcome local and international volunteers,

Acknowledgements

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CCPG

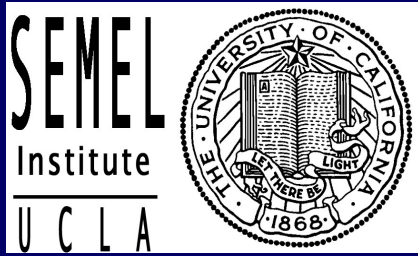
NCPG

RSBIHC

Vision y Compromiso

Friday Night Live

Q and A



Contact Information

Timothy Fong MD

UCLA Gambling
Studies Program

310-488-3916

tfong@mednet.ucla.edu

[twitter: @fongster98](https://twitter.com/fongster98)

