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A festschrift in honor of Henry R. Lesieur



By *Rena M. Nora*
University of Nevada School of Medicine
Las Vegas, Nevada, U.S.A.
E-mail: renanora@msn.com

This festschrift is a tribute to Henry R. Lesieur and to his monumental contributions to studies in the field of pathological gambling. He is rightly considered to be one of the few preeminent researchers and writers who greatly influenced significant developments in the field of problem gambling during the past 30 years. Much of his empirical and conceptual work continues to be frequently cited and referenced; not only his major work *The Chase: Career of the Compulsive Gambler* (1977; 2nd edition, 1984), but, as well, 21 book chapters and 44 journal articles on crime, pathological gambling and impulse control disorders. He and Sheila B. Blume, MD, co-authored the South Oaks Gambling Screen (SOGS), an instrument for identifying pathological gamblers that has been translated in over 35 different languages and has been used internationally in surveys and treatment facilities. He is well known for his contributions as a member of the Working Group for the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV and DSM-IV-TR), Section on Impulse Control Disorders of the American Psychiatric Association. He is currently president of the Institute of Problem Gambling, a position he has held since 1997. He has given numerous presentations and trained other therapists in how to screen, assess and treat pathological gamblers, in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Spain, Australia and New Zealand. He continues to serve as a consultant to attorneys and as a certified expert on pathological gambling.

I first met Henry in 1983 when we were both invited to conduct in-service training for the clinical staff at Rockland County Hospital in New York.

Through the years, I continue to be impressed and inspired by his evolving work and accomplishments, especially those of the past three decades, often characterized as the era of "medicalization" of pathological gambling.

Dr. Lesieur's knowledge and interest in the maladaptive behaviors and life impairments of problem gamblers date back to his teenage years. While he was a senior in high school and later at Providence College in Rhode Island, he worked in a gas station two miles from Narragansett Racetrack. His boss went to the racetrack frequently and asked Henry to work extra hours. His boss also used to get nervous about the money he placed on the horses and he and his wife argued about his gambling. During his five years working at the gas station, gambling was the main topic of conversation. Henry had interesting encounters with local bookmakers and their operations, men who sold stolen car parts, and the guys who passed bad checks because they had lost their money gambling. The gamblers, jockeys, trainers and horse owners who frequently came to the gas station provided Henry with his early "education" in gambling and in pathological gambling, and heightened his awareness about the consequences of this disorder.

In 1965, Dr. Lesieur met his wife, Helen, during a religious retreat. They married in 1968 just before his military tour of duty in Vietnam. His son Matthew was born while Henry was still in active duty in Vietnam. While overseas, he learned that his ex-boss had died of a heart attack while at the racetrack. This sparked his interest in problem gambling as a devastating disorder.

After returning to the United States, he studied and obtained a PhD from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst in 1976. Dr. Lesieur began as a sociologist and taught for 14 years as a professor in the department of sociology and anthropology at St. John's University, New York.

He was also visiting assistant professor at the University of Vermont and McGill University in Montreal, Quebec, Canada. He was a consultant and member of the Gambling Treatment Team at South Oaks Hospital, in Amityville, New York from 1983 to 1992. In 1992, Dr. Lesieur moved to Illinois and served as professor and chair of the department of criminal justice sciences at the Illinois State University.

By 1997, Dr. Lesieur had decided to return to the East Coast and eventually went to Massachusetts School of Professional Psychology where he obtained his second doctorate degree, this time in psychology. His psychology practicum involved hands-on care of mentally ill patients and their families at numerous facilities.

Dr. Lesieur has been distinguished with many awards, including the Robert L. Custer Award of the National Council on Problem Gambling for research and for founding the *Journal of Gambling Studies*, which he

edited for 12 years.

He also received the Professional Award given by the Connecticut Council on Problem Gambling for groundbreaking contributions to the field of problem gambling in the areas of research, assessment and public policy, and the Person of the Year Award from the New Jersey Council on Compulsive Gambling.

Dr. Lesieur currently treats pathological gamblers, spouses, partners and parents in the Rhode Island Gambling Treatment Program. With his involvement in research and clinical work, Dr. Lesieur feels his professional, personal and family life is in better balance. His son lives in Astoria, New York, and his daughter will soon move to Sonoma, California. Dr. Lesieur and his wife enjoy hiking, kayaking, attending theatre and dining out, horseback riding and going ballooning. It has been a long way from that gas station near the Narragansett Racetrack, but Dr. Lesieur's practice with problem gamblers can offer hope through practical and compassionate treatment to allow a functional and fulfilling life.

Submitted: December 1, 2003

For correspondence:

*Rena M. Nora, MD
Clinical Professor of Psychiatry,
University of Nevada School of Medicine
2916 Sterling Cove Drive
Las Vegas, Nevada, U.S.A. 89128*

*Tel: (702) 256-3419
Fax: (702) 256-5027*

Email: renanora@msn.com

Rena M. Nora, MD is a clinical professor in the department of psychiatry of the University of Nevada School of Medicine. She is currently director of the intensive outpatient program for pathological gambling at the VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System in Las Vegas. Dr. Nora is also a commissioner of the Governor's Commission on Mental Health and Developmental Services and a member of the state board of examiners for alcohol, drug abuse and gambling counselors in Nevada. She serves on the board of directors of the National Council on Problem Gambling and is president of the National Gambling Counselor Certification Board. Dr. Nora's areas of expertise and experience include over 25 years of working with problem gamblers and their families and other special areas relating to suicide, posttraumatic stress disorder and administrative psychiatry.

issue 10 — february 2004



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