

A Call to Action: Examining Problem Gambling in the Military

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Issues related to problem gambling in the military are something that we, as a country, knew little about until fairly recently. However, new research is leading to a greater understanding of problem and pathological gambling among military personnel and veterans, and providing new opportunities to address the issue.

Kamini Shah, ScD, MHS, has studied gambling as an addictive behavior extensively throughout her career, and has also taught in universities and performed secondary data analysis. She served as project manager and data analyst for the study 'Pathological Gambling: Courses, Consequences and Causes,' conducted on behalf of the Vietnam Era Twin (VET) Registry, a network composed of approximately 7,000 middle-aged, male-male twins, both of whom served in the military during the time of the Vietnam conflict. Armed with this experience, she'll present a breakout session at the [National Conference on Problem Gambling](#) titled *Warriors at Risk: Gambling and Problem Gambling among the Military*.

Shah contends that, to combat problem gambling among military personnel and veterans, one must first understand the unique circumstances facing this societal group. Military personnel are often given frequent access to gambling opportunities, and while the military acknowledges and addresses several addiction and mental health issues, as well as problems associated with traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder, Shah adds that interventions and treatment for problem and pathological gambling have not yet been intrinsically integrated into the system.

During her presentation at the National Conference, Shah will explore information in support of the conclusion that minimizing the harmful consequences of gambling among military personnel will require improved awareness and targeted internal and legislative efforts. The breakout session will also aim to identify circumstances surrounding gambling in the military, how the prevailing military reaction to problematic gambling behavior differs from the ways in which other addictive behavior is addressed, and identify opportunities for improving the response to gambling problems within military settings and in Veterans Affairs Medical Centers.

Dr. Kamini Shah received her bachelor's degree in behavioral biology from the Johns Hopkins University School of Arts and Sciences, a Masters of Health Sciences in health finance & management, and a Doctorate of Science in social and behavioral sciences from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. For more information, visit the conference breakout page at the National Conference on Problem Gambling's [website](#).