CHAIRMAN JAMES: Let's begin with Dr. Eades.

DR. EADES: Good morning, Chairperson James and distinguished panel members. I want to talk just a moment about treatment of pathological gambling; however, I think a caveat is in need as I begin.

Pathological gambling implies there's such a condition as normal gambling which further implies that gambling is acceptable behavior on behalf of the general population. Well, these implications have been fostered by various state governments with the underlying rationalizations that gambling revenues allow for more services to be delivered to its citizens.

We have moved from a position where gambling was illegal in most states to a situation where gambling is condoned and promoted. While it may be true that we cannot legislate morality, the consequences of gambling problems beg the question of whether we have legislated some type of immorality. Current levels of gambling addiction indicate a problem of perhaps epidemic proportions, with subsequent damage to the individual, the family and society in general.

The problem I see with implying that gambling is normal, acceptable behavior is that it undermines the only sure preventive measure that I know of to ensure an individual will not become addicted to gambling, and that particular measure is simply never to gamble. However, if a person is already gambling, then early detection and intervention regarding the potential problem is as valuable as it is in the treatment of physical disease.
Most casinos issue player's cards which are then used by the gambler to accumulate points that can be redeemed for cash and comps. For example, a player card may be inserted into a slot machine where a computer record is kept that indicates date, time played, and money taken in or paid out by the machine. Obviously, those that spend the most money gambling receive better comps from the casinos and are on special mailing lists for casino promotions.

When I work with some who is gambling addicted, I have him or her request printouts from the casinos they frequent. Usually if a person requests these printouts for tax purposes, there is no problem in obtaining them. These printouts are very useful for dissipating the patient's denial as they allow the progression of the addiction to be objectified. The patients can see what dates they gambled, how long they gambled, and how much money was won or lost. It is very dramatic when a patient sees the progression from four days of gambling per month to 19, from 20 hours per month to 150 hours of gambling, and from losing $175 to $3,000 per month.

If we extrapolate this concept, it seems to me that the casinos would truly be doing a great preventive service by sending their preferred gambling customers printouts of their gambling behavior patterns with each mailing. I do believe this would have an impact on earlier recognition of an impending gambling problem and could bring reality to bear in a most forceful manner on the recipient.

As regards treatment, I concur with Henry James, the famed Harvard psychologist who said that permanent behavior
change only comes from having a spiritual transformation. From 20 years of working with alcohol and drug addicted individuals and observing them over time, I've found that those who had the healthiest recovery were those who returned to active participation in a church and a firm belief in God.

It is true that I have seen many addicts recover from their primary addiction who do not develop their spirituality. Unfortunately, most of them become addicted to something else, while the quality of their lives, as well as their basic character, was not significantly altered.

The gambling addict needs tools for living. In our society, these tools were forged on the amble of Christianity. Honesty, service, simplicity, responsibility, self denial, perseverance, tolerance, reverence, faith, wisdom, and love of oneself, neighbor and God provides the necessary tools to build a new and healthy life for the gambling addict.

Gambling addicts are broke and broken; I know this for certain. Therapy and support groups are necessary but not sufficient. To deny the very real and awesome power of spiritual transformation in the recovery process is perhaps the greatest denial any addict or therapist must overcome.

I had a good trip getting here last night. I borrowed a car to get here; I had a friend of mine call and make the reservation on his credit card, and the reason why is that I am a recovering gambling addict. My life has literally been destroyed economically. I will never be able to retire, I'm currently in bankruptcy, I'm a Chapter 13, and I do live from payday to payday. Economic impact has been tremendous; economic
consequences are such that I lost the extent of five years gross
salary gambling.

Like anybody else, I believe that gambling addiction
is like alcoholism or any other addiction is an accidental
illness that nobody plans on happening to them, and the only sure
way to make sure it doesn't happen to you is never gamble.

I have seen the horror of watching my wife attempt
suicide by taking an overdose of Xanex, and I have taken her to
the hospital and I sit there as the police come and make their
mandatory suicide report, and I see the shame and hurt and
numbness in her.

I have grown children who have called upon me in the
last several months with some help with some medical problems,
and I have no money to be able to help them, and as a father I'm
ashamed of that. I have 15 credit cards which I ran up; I sold
cars, boats, motors, guns, you name it, in order to support my
addiction.

I understand the gambling addict: I know what it's
like for your car to go faster as you cross the bridge into
Biloxi; I know what it's like to fill up your gas tank in your
car because you know when you finish gambling there will be no
money for gas; I know what it's like to sit playing slot machines
all day long and not eat and getting up only rarely to go relieve
myself because that's what gambling addicts do; I know what it's
like to put your credit cards and your money in the trunk of your
car and only take in $200 in cash and when you lose that you go
back out and unlock the trunk of the car.
Gambling addicts are broke but they're also broken. Emotional pain has been the hardest thing that I know of -- for me. I have seen what all I've worked for for over 30 years of my marriage destroyed; I have no economic security; I have hurt the people that I love.

And you know, even after I went public with my gambling addiction -- which was not a very popular decision in many places; people wanted me to keep quiet about it -- I would go into casinos and gamble even after my name was in the paper and after my picture was in the paper, and never, not once, has anyone in any casino ever said to me, Do you have a gambling problem?

I would say to you that if our states are so crippled financially that they have to support themselves by straddling the shattered souls of problem gamblers and their families, then I submit to you that I see nothing at all on the horizon except more heartache for the citizens of each state. Thank you very much.

CHAIRMAN JAMES: Thank you, Dr. Eades.