

PUTTING WOMEN ON THE AGENDA!



What's new in research and clinical treatment for women suffering from Gambling Disorder and other Behavioural Addictions? Join our trans-cultural network – starting from a female point of view!

Share new ideas and research projects that you would like to present at upcoming ICBA conferences in our **WOMEN SESSIONS!**

Please use the following link / email address to join the network and get updates on all our proposals and activities: fulvia.prever@gmail.com

We are at the beginning of new exciting experiences in gender-specific research with a focus on women!

(2023 update)

It becomes more and more obvious that a **gendered approach to research, prevention and treatment is highly relevant** to gain a better understanding of and be more responsive to female-specific aspects of behavioural addiction.

Literature and studies on Women and Gambling Disorder and other Behavioural Addiction are scarce, both in Europe and all over the world. Moreover, the existing data is not specific to women but inferred from mostly male samples. Nevertheless, more and more women are affected by pathological gambling and other non-substance related addictions.

Obviously, women have a crucial role in family and society, and their gambling or other addictive behaviours, which are often underestimated, may have a deep impact on their social and personal life. One key issue is that women often experience great difficulty in finding appropriate treatment services. Most of health clinics are not “female friendly”, and treatment programs very rarely offer female-specific treatment approaches.

That is why it is so important to learn from your experiences as researchers and clinicians and to gather data from all over the world to enrich our shared understanding of these issues. That is our aspiration and our aim: to gather all our efforts, to compare, discuss and improve research and treatment for the women on whose behalf we are working on.

With this idea in mind, Fulvia Prever, together with many other female colleagues, started a trans-cultural network. The first product of this network is the book “Women and Gambling Disorder. An International

Female Perspective on Clinic and Research,” which was published in 2017 (for details see: <https://www.routledge.com/Gambling-Disorders-in-Women-An-International-Female-Perspective-on-Treatment/Bowden-Jones-Prever/p/book/9781138188327>).

We organized **several successful "women sessions" at international conferences over the past years**, and we are confident that these sessions are a fruitful opportunity to exchange knowledge.

For ICBA 2017 in Haifa, we prepared our first session dedicated to women with professionals from all over the world who face gambling problems from a female-specific perspective. In addition, we promoted the idea of having increased female representation within the International Society for the Study of Behavioural Addictions (ISSBA) board to better to deal with this delicate topic.

At ICBA 2018 in Cologne, we suggested to have a slot dedicated to women on the ISSBA website to facilitate connections, share your ideas and join this network.

At ICBA 2019 in Tokyo we had many interesting presentations about women and Behavioural addictions, but it was not possible to combine them all in one symposium. This emphasized the need to have a specific meeting space at future conferences.

In 2020, we were preparing for a worldwide, impressive and exiting women session and women round table, gathering many of the most engaged female professionals in this field—then a pandemic struck all over the world.

It deeply affected our lives and existence, our physical and mental health, in many ways. Behavioural addictions played an important role in women’s life during the various COVID-19 lockdowns. Women paid high costs in this period, and taking care of their health is now even more important.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, with prolonged lockdowns and increased anxiety and depression, women have a special role in their families and carry a particular burden. Many were working while handling children care, elderly care, and often facing difficult relationship. This led to an increase of domestic violence in many countries and could provoke an urge to escape from a tough reality. The long period of closure of casinos and other gambling venues could be seen as an opportunity for some female problem gamblers – but it might also provoke a shift to online gambling, gaming, and other behavioural addictions and to new or intensified related problems.

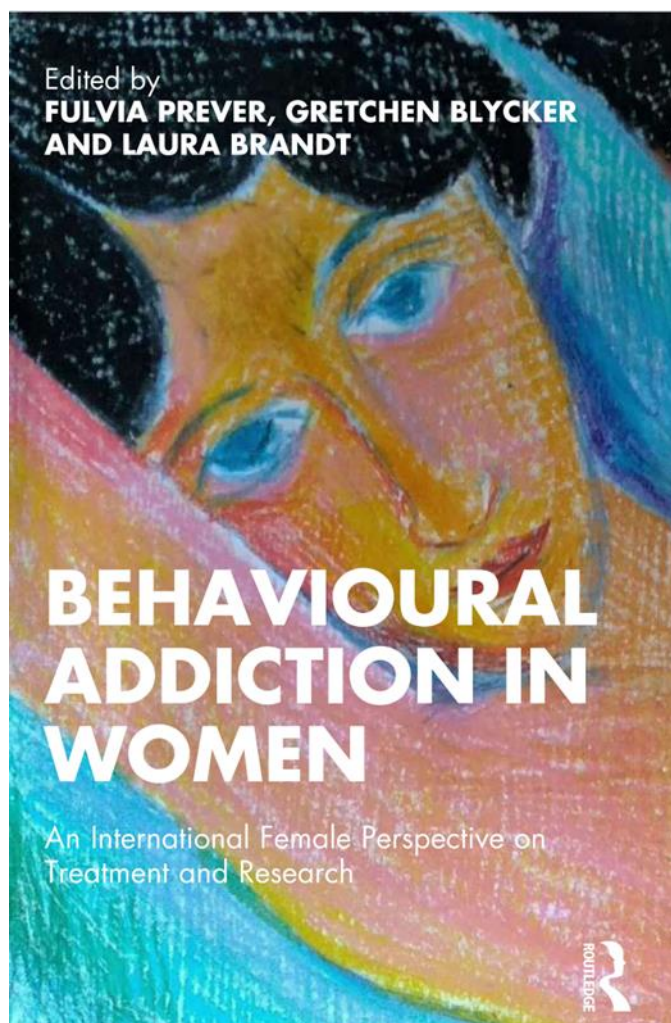
*As far as gambling disorder is concerned, we experienced, for the first time, a **universal and complete closure of "in-person" gambling** and we observed what was happening to women in treatment. Many female gamblers reported a sense of relief – finally, they did not have to struggle to stay away from gambling venues and were able to concentrate on their treatment and explore new (and more adaptive) coping mechanisms. Very few Italian women – like those from Mediterranean countries and South America – shifted to online gambling and many perceived this time as an opportunity to overcome their gambling problems. Women with gambling problems who were not receiving treatment during pandemic, often caught in a stressful situation, might shift to other maladaptive coping mechanisms such as eating problems, alcohol, or legal drugs abuse: indeed, prescription requests for antidepressants have increased during this period. As clinicians, we were tasked with finding new ways to engage with our patients and clients to support them from a (physical) distance. For example, in our women’s treatment group in Milano, we produced videos to describe our shared experience of this unprecedented time. Our network is here – engaged and connected – sharing observations and ideas from each country and continent.*

We tried **to find new tools, from a female perspective**, to support women and improve research to be able to provide evidence-based treatment options tailored to the specific needs of women with gambling problems and other addictive disorders respectively.

If ICBA 2022 in Nottingham was the beginning of a new “re-start” experience in gender-specific research with a focus on women, ICBA 2023 in Seoul will consolidate and improve this experience and show how this focus is getting more and more relevant in the international research landscape.

In those times, when international in-person conferences and meetings were difficult to organize, we explored new ways to keep in touch, support ourselves during pandemic and promote our studies; that's how a **new book on women's behavioural addictions** was born, and will be published in **June 2023!**

<https://www.routledge.com/Behavioural-Addiction-in-Women-An-International-Female-Perspective-on-Treatment/Prever-Blycker-Brandt/p/book/9781032067025#>



Our project involved "Behavioural Addiction in Women: An international Female Perspective on Treatment and Research". A great three years collective work, now came out, to give hopefully new hints on women health care and research, that will be presented in Seoul!

We cordially invite you to take part in the upcoming ICBA SEOUL Women Symposium and Round Table. We hope that this network will help you to find strong partners for further research on the topic.

We will continue pursuing a global perspective on female-specific aspects of behavioural addiction. To achieve this goal, **we will need all of you**, all of us, sharing our experiences and knowledge to continue this important and adventurous path!

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ICBA international referral for Women's Behavioural addictions

EASG international referral for Women and Gambling Disorders

ALEA (Association of Studies on Gambling and Risky Behaviours) past General Secretary

AISDiCo (Italian Academy of Science of Behavioural Addiction) Board member