Reviewer's report

**Title:** Concerned significant others of people with gambling problems in Finland: a cross-sectional population study

**Version:** 2  
**Date:** 24 March 2014

**Reviewer:** Francis Markham

**Reviewer's report:**

**Major compulsory revisions**

1. I probably should have picked this up on the first read, but rereading this manuscript, I'm sceptical about the key term “concerned significant others”. I realise that it is probably adopted from Hodgins et al. who in two 2007 publications looked at help-seeking significant others. I worry that this construct isn’t really appropriate, since this is a general population study of the significant others of problem gamblers, rather than concerned significant others per se. Nowhere in the question put to participants did concern (or help-seeking, which is useful proxy for concern) mentioned. The population of concerned significant others is likely to be systematically different to that of significant others as more broadly conceptualised in this manuscript. I would suggest that at this early stage in the research on the effects of gambling-related harm on the social relations of gamblers, a reconsideration of the term “CSO” is warranted. At the very least, the authors should justify their use of the term, although I would prefer that it replaced entirely.

**Minor Essential Revisions**

2. In the revised abstract, some of the phrasing is ambiguous. The authors say: “In the best fitting model, the odds ratio (95% CI) of being a male CSO was 2.03 (1.24–3.31) for past-year gambling problems...” I think they mean they mean to say “In the full model for males, the odds ratio (95% CI) of being a CSO for those who reported gambling problems in the past year was 2.03 (1.24–3.31)...”

3. You state in the second paragraph of the results section that “There were no gender differences in the proportion of the CSOs.” It might be better revised to say that there were no overall differences in proportions, because you go on to talk about the gender differences in their relationships to problem gamblers. It appears that this cancelling out may be coincidental.

**Discretionary Revisions**

4. Despite the substantial expansion of this topic in the Discussion section, the reasons for the gender differences in the prevalence of having social relations who are problem gamblers are not adequately investigated. Although you discuss differences from other studies (which is difficult because of the different measures used), there is no speculation as to why women are more likely to report family members with gambling problems but men are more likely to report...
friends with problems. One fairly obvious speculation (that could be confirmed with some basic modelling combining the current data set with data on Finnish family composition) is that this is because (in mostly places, presumably Finland included) men are more likely to have gambling problems than women. As such, women are more likely to be married to a problem gambler, or be the sibling of a problem gambler. Similarly, if men are more likely to be close friends with other men rather than other women and vice versa, we would expect that men will be more likely

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests