Gay men likelier to gamble addictÂ-ively, study suggests

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Gay and biÂ-sexÂ-uÂ-al men may be unÂ-uÂ-suÂ-alÂ-ly prone to comÂ-pulÂ-sive gamÂ-bling, a small study has found, adding to growÂ-ing evÂ-iÂ-dence linkÂ-ing hoÂ-moÂ-sexÂ-uÂ-alÂ-ity to varÂ-iÂ-ous adÂ-dicÂ-tÂ-ions and menÂ-tal illÂ-nesses.

The results reÂ-quire conÂ-firÂ-maÂ-tion by fuÂ-ture studÂ-ies, reÂ-searchÂ-ers say, but unÂ-derÂ-score conÂ-cerns that gays and lesÂ-biÂ-ans might reÂ-quire speÂ-cial atÂ-tenÂ-tion and care for a range of menÂ-tal disÂ-orÂ-ders. The findÂ-ings could alÂ-so fuÂ-el a charged deÂ-bate over wheÂ-thÂ-er these conÂ-diÂ-tions stem from hoÂ-moÂ-sexÂ-uÂ-alÂ-ity itÂ-self, or rathÂ-er from the stress of sufÂ-ferÂ-ing anti-gay disÂ-crimÂ-iÂ-naÂ-tion. â€œGay and biÂ-sexÂ-uÂ-al male pathÂ-oÂ-logÂ-iÂ-cal gamÂ-bÂ-lers may reÂ-quire more inÂ-tenÂ-sive or speÂ-cialÂ-ized treatÂ-mentâ€• than othÂ-er ones, wrote the auÂ-thors of the stuÂ-dy, pubÂ-lished in the NoÂ-vÂ-emÂ-ber-DeÂ-cÂ-emÂ-ber isÂ-sue of the reÂ-search jourÂ-nal ComÂ-pÂ-reÂ-henÂ-sive PsyÂ-chiÂ-aÂ-try.Such therÂ-aÂ-pies may alÂ-so â€œneed to adÂ-dress a wide range of imÂ-pulÂ-sive beÂ-haÂ-vÂ-iors,â€• added the reÂ-searchÂ-ers, Jon Grant of the UniÂ-verÂ-siÂ-ty of MinÂ-neÂ-soÂ-ta MedÂ-iÂ-cal School in MinÂ-neÂ-apÂ-oÂ-lis, Minn., and Marc PoÂ-tenÂ-za of Yale UniÂ-verÂ-siÂ-ty MedÂ-iÂ-cal School in New HavÂ-en, Conn.ComÂ-pulÂ-sive gamÂ-bÂ-lingâ€”also called pathÂ-oÂ-logÂ-iÂ-cal or adÂ-dicÂ-tÂ-ive gamÂ-bÂ-lingâ€”is haÂ-biÂ-tÂ-uÂ-al, exÂ-cesÂ-sive betÂ-ting with seÂ-vere perÂ-sonÂ-al, soÂ-cial or leÂ-gal conÂ-seÂ-quencÂ-es. A brain disÂ-ease, it apÂ-pears siÂ-mÂ-iÂ-lar to disÂ-orÂ-ders such as alÂ-coÂ-holÂ-ism and drug adÂ-dicÂ-tion, acÂ-cordÂ-ing to the U.S. NaÂ-tionÂ-al InÂ-stiÂ-tutes of Health. These illÂ-nesses tend to inÂ-volve probÂ-lems in a brain reÂ-gion tied to beÂ-havÂ-iors such as eatÂ-ing and sex, someÂ-times called the â€œpleaÂ-sure cenÂ-ter,â€• and strongly asÂ-soÂ-ciÂ-atÂ-ed with a chemÂ-iÂ-cal mesÂ-senÂ-ger called dopamine. PathÂ-oÂ-logÂ-iÂ-cal gamÂ-blers, preÂ-domÂ-iÂ-nantly men, ofÂ-ten say theyâ€™re lookÂ-ing for â€œacÂ-tionâ€• or exÂ-citeÂ-ment in the acÂ-tÂ-iÂ-viÂ-ty. Grant and Potenza studÂ-ied 105 men who had sought treatÂ-ment for pathÂ-oÂ-logÂ-ical gamÂ-bling and had reÂ-sponded to ads or reÂ-ferÂ-rals to join the reÂ-search. TwenÂ-ty-two of these menâ€”21 perÂ-centâ€”iÂ-denÂ-tiÂ-fied themÂ-selves as gay or biÂ-sexÂ-uÂ-al, they found. Thatâ€™s four to sevÂ-en times highÂ-er than the perÂ-centÂ-age that these groups reÂ-preÂ-sent of the whole popÂ-uÂ-laÂ-tion, by most midÂ-dling esÂ-tiÂ-mates.Gays and biÂ-sexÂ-uÂ-als alÂ-so tended to be amÂ-ong the most adÂ-dictÂ-ed gamÂ-bÂ-lers, the reÂ-searchÂ-ers reÂ-portÂ-ed; these paÂ-tients were alÂ-so likeÂ-liÂ-er to sufÂ-fer adÂ-diÂ-tionÂ-al impulse-control or subÂ-stance-aÂ-buse conÂ-diÂ-tions, and to be sinÂ-gle. The group conÂ-sisÂ-ted of 15 gays and seÂ-vÂ-en biÂ-sexÂ-uals.LimÂ-iÂ-taÂ-tions of the stuÂ-dy, the sciÂ-enÂ-tists wrote, were its small size and its inÂ-cluÂ-sion of onÂ-ly treatÂ-ment-seeking men, who might be unÂ-repÂ-reÂ-sentÂ-aÂ-tive of the widÂ-er popÂ-uÂ-laÂ-tion.The results fit with a trend, though. Thereâ€™s a â€œgrowÂ-ing conÂ-cern that hoÂ-moÂ-sexÂ-uÂ-alÂ-ly acÂ-tive inÂ-diÂ-vidÂ-uÂ-als are at inÂ-creased risk for psyÂ-chiÂ-atÂ-ric morÂ-bidÂ-iÂ-ty,â€• or illÂ-ness, wrote anÂ-othÂ-er group of sciÂ-enÂ-tÂ-ists in the June 2001 isÂ-sue of the AmerÂ-iÂ-can JourÂ-nal of PubÂ-lic Health. â€œSevÂ-eral surÂ-veys have found elÂ-eÂ-vatÂ-ed rates of some anxÂ-iÂ-eÂ-ty disÂ-orÂ-ders, mood disÂ-orÂ-ders, and subÂ-stance use disÂ-orÂ-ders among hoÂ-moÂ-sexÂ-uÂ-als.â€•The reaÂ-sons are unÂ-clear, wrote the auÂ-thors, with HarÂ-vard MedÂ-iÂ-cal School in BosÂ-ton and othÂ-er inÂ-stiÂ-tuÂ-tions. One posÂ-siÂ-bilÂ-iÂ-ty, they added, is that gays and lesÂ-bians are more freÂ-quent vicÂ-tims of early-life abuse.A secÂ-ond, they conÂ-tinÂ-ued, is that â€œlesÂ-bians and gay men simpÂ-ly lead riskÂ-iÂ-er lives.â€• Yet anothÂ-er exÂ-plaÂ-naÂ-tion, for which they citÂ-ed subÂ-sÂ-tanÂ-tialÂ-ly more evÂ-iÂ-dence, was that â€œstigÂ-maÂ-tiÂ-zaÂ-tion and exÂ-poÂ-sure to disÂ-crimÂ-iÂ-naÂ-tory

beÂ-havÂ-ior lead to higher rates of menÂ-tal disÂ-orÂ-ders. This hyÂ-pothÂ-eÂ-sis is conÂ-sistÂ-ent with the findÂ-ing that lesÂ-bians and gay men exÂ-peÂ-riÂ-ence disÂ-crimÂ-iÂ-naÂ-tion in mulÂ-tiÂ-ple doÂ-mains of life,â€• which in turn is tied to psyÂ-choÂ-logÂ-ical disÂ-tress. OthÂ-er disÂ-adÂ-vanÂ-taged groups alÂ-so face highÂ-er-than-avÂ-erÂ-age risk for psyÂ-choÂ-logÂ-ical probÂ-lems, they wrote.The alternative exÂ-plaÂ-naÂ-tions are linked to deepÂ-ly, even bitÂ-terÂ-ly opÂ-posed poÂ-lÂ-iÂ-tiÂ-cal views. The idea that unÂ-healthy risk-taking is inÂ-herÂ-ent in hoÂ-moÂ-sexÂ-uÂ-alÂ-iÂ-ty tends to satÂ-isÂ-fy gay-rights opÂ-poÂ-nents, most of whom see same-sex oriÂ-enÂ-taÂ-tion as abÂ-norÂ-mal. The stigÂ-maÂ-tiÂ-zaÂ-tion hypÂ-oÂ-theÂ-sis pleases gay-rights supÂ-portÂ-ers, who view disÂ-crimÂ-iÂ-naÂ-tion, not hoÂ-moÂ-sexÂ-uÂ-alÂ-ity, as the probÂ-lem.The quesÂ-tion of what exÂ-plains the hoÂ-moÂ-sexÂ-uaÂ-liÂ-ty-adÂ-dicÂ-tion staÂ-tÂ-isÂ-tics is â€œthe big one,â€• wrote Grant in an eÂ-mail. â€œI donâ€™t think thereâ€™s eiÂ-ther an easy anÂ-swer or, based on our limÂ-itÂ-ed sciÂ-enÂ-tifÂ-ic knowlÂ-edge curÂ-rentÂ-ly, an anÂ-swer that doesÂ-nâ€™t have some sort of soÂ-ciÂ-oÂ-poÂ-liÂ-tiÂ-cal overÂ-tones. I think of this reÂ-search as a very small piece of the bigÂ-ger puzÂ-zle.â€•

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