A cognitive group therapy for patients in case of Gambling Disorder: The utility of the dual-process model

Maria Anna Donati*, Adriana Iozzi**, Ginetta Fusi**, Giulia Franceschini**, Silvia Bonini**,

Bianca Pananti**, & Caterina Primi*

*NEUROFARBA Department, University of Florence, Italy

**UFC SerD C Zona 1 Firenze, Azienda USL Toscana Centro, Italy

With respect to other addictions, few persons with a diagnosis of Gambling Disorder (GD) access treatment and there are high rates of treatment dropout. Thus, it is important to develop effective clinical interventions. In this study, we aimed at developing and verifying the efficacy of a cognitive therapy for patients with GD, in a group format. The dual-process model explaining GD was selected for developing the intervention, acting on protective cognitive factors (i.e., probabilistic reasoning ability) and risk affective factors (i.e., superstitious thinking) for cognitive distortions related to gambling (GRCDs) (Toplak et al., 2007). We aimed at reducing patients' GRCDs. Eight weekly, 2-h group sessions, conducted by psychologists and educators, were implemented at the *National Health Drugs Services* (Ser.D. C) of Florence (Zone 1). A pre- and post-test design was organized by administering the *Gambling Related Cognitions Scale*. Thirty-nine patients (79% males, $M_{age} = 48.23$, $SD = 12.89$) participated. The majority (78%) were regular gamblers and the gambling activities most frequently engaged were Slot-Machines (81%). Non-parametric tests showed a significant reduction of GRCDs ($p = .014$). Findings suggest the utility of employing the dual-process model in clinical treatments for GD.