

Mr Suresh Anantha

The National Problem Gambling Helpline

The National Addictions Management Service (NAMS) has been operating the national gambling helpline (1800-6-668-668) since Dec 2007, in collaboration with the National Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG). NAMS is located at the Institute of Mental Health, and includes the Serenity Ward for residential treatment, and the CAMP Specialist Outpatient Clinic. NAMS treats problem and pathological gamblers in a multi-disciplinary setting that includes doctors, nurses, counselors, social workers, and psychologists.

The helpline may in most cases be the first point of contact for the gambler or family members to seek information and assistance. It is therefore a vital service that provides phone-based assessment, counseling, information, and referral. The average call lasts for about 9 minutes. Callers are assured of confidentiality and anonymity from the onset of the call. The number of callers has steadily increased in the last year and a half of the helpline's operation.

The presentation will provide an overview of the helpline operation, its services, and profile of callers. Also discussed would be the challenges of running a helpline, inappropriate calls and how they are handled, and future plans for the helpline.