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# The determinants of addiction: a case-study of multidisciplinary working to develop understanding of substance use & gambling

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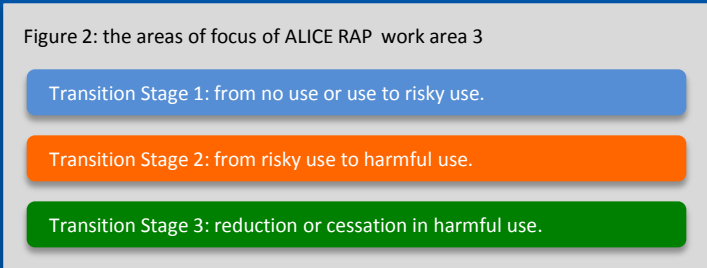
**Aim:** to explore some of the challenges of conducting multidisciplinary work in the addictions field.

**Case study:** what allows some people to use substances or gamble without developing problems, whilst others experience serious difficulties? Work area 3 of ALICE RAP (Addiction and Lifestyles in Contemporary Europe – Reframing Addictions Programme) is exploring the determinants of addiction from a multidisciplinary perspective.

**Methods:** experts from a range of disciplines (see Fig. 1) review the determinants of substance use & gambling for 3 transition stages (see Fig. 2). Discipline reviews are synthesised by a science writer who identifies areas of convergence & divergence.

**Findings** are negotiated through whole team meetings, individual meetings between the science writer & discipline experts, teleconferences & email. Results are used to produce a synthesis report & logic models.

Figure 1: disciplines involved in ALICE RAP work area 3



We have identified 6 key challenges in our work:

1. Contrasting worldviews of different disciplines
2. Managing dominant epistemologies
3. Reconciling differing disciplinary languages that can hinder effective communication
4. Negotiating diverse voices when making decisions
5. Maintaining active engagement from partners in a geographically disparate team
6. Developing informative logic models that recognise the complex relationships at play



## Conclusions

Sharing learning from multidisciplinary projects will facilitate future multidisciplinary work in the addictions field.

Key recommendations from this experience:

1. Frequent communication in different formats between disciplinary partners is essential (e.g. face-to-face meetings, teleconferences and emails)
2. Shared definitions of key concepts (such as 'determinant' and 'risk') should be negotiated from the outset
3. Multiple approaches should be used to translate initial open-mindedness into multidisciplinary output, with team members encouraged to circulate ideas, questions, comments and concerns about all aspects of the work
4. A science writer can be used to synthesise evidence but it must be acknowledged they bring their own disciplinary biases

