

Massive spike in football shirt advertising by betting companies raises health concerns

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There has been a massive spike in football shirt advertising by betting companies leading to public health concerns, research by the University of Glasgow and Healthy Stadia published today (18 January 2018) has revealed.

A total of 95 percent (75/79) of football shirt sponsorship deals with English clubs included in the study were struck since 2005 legislation was passed.

As football becomes more visibly entwined with gambling marketing there are growing concerns that gambling is being "normalised" through sport. The Institute of Public Policy Research recently estimated that the burden gambling places on the public purse in the UK could be as great as £1.16bn per year.

The research is recommending that UK legislators and governing bodies of sport urgently revisit the relationship between football and gambling industry sponsorship.

The findings are published in the journal *Soccer & Society*, and is titled "Shirt Sponsorship by Gambling Companies in the English and Scottish Premier Leagues: global reach and public health concerns."

Dr. Chris Bunn, of the Institute of Health and Wellbeing at the University of Glasgow, said: "The number of gambling firms sponsoring the shirts of major football clubs has increased dramatically since

legislation was relaxed in 2005. Before the legislation, we could only find four shirt sponsorship deals between English clubs and gambling companies in our dataset. After the 2005 legislation, we identified 75 deals.

"Sports gambling is also growing faster than other types of gambling and potentially has a much more significant impact on younger and more vulnerable people, including those in the global south. The intensification of the relationship between football and gambling advertising is highly likely to contribute to the normalisation of gambling, or what some have called the 'gamblification' of sports.

"We should be concerned and circumspect about this trend, given the consequence and cost disordered gambling can have for individuals, families and society writ large. When sponsorship crosses borders, as in the case of the Premier League which has as many as 3 billion viewers globally, it can have costs and consequences for societies less equipped than ours to assist those whose gambling becomes problematic."

Robin Ireland, Director of Research at Healthy Stadia said: "We need to be clear that gambling is a public health issue with a significant burden of harm associated with it. The Gambling Commission estimate that the number of British adults with gambling problems is in excess of 400,000, with a further two million at risk of gambling-related harm.

"There is a huge potential for harm in the future with new technological devices driving forms of remote gambling, 24 hours a day. Whilst we are aware of high profile footballers who have voiced their concerns, it is now reported that more young football fans bet on the sport than play in a team.

"We suggest that the relationship between football and gambling is now very unhealthy. Both legislators and governing bodies of sport should re-

visit the relationship between football in the UK and the sponsorship it receives from the gambling industry with a view to responsible codes of practice."

The Glasgow academics, based at the University's Institute of Health and Wellbeing, analysed shirt sponsorship since the English Premier League's inaugural season of 1992/1993 to present day. And since the start of the Scottish Premier League in 1998/99.

The research suggests that gambling companies responded to the relaxation of the gambling legislation in the UK by investing heavily in shirt sponsorship. After the 2005 Act came into effect, the UK gross gambling yield growing from £8.4bn to £13.6bn. Gross gambling yield (GGY) – is the amount retained by operators after the payment of winnings but before the deduction of the costs of the operation.

The first gambling sponsor appeared on an English Premier League club shirt in 2002/03 and 2014/15 season in the Scottish Premier League. In 2005, before the new gambling legislation, only three clubs in the English Premier League had received shirt sponsorship from betting firms.

By 2016/17 Season 50 percent of the 20 Premier League members carried gambling sponsorship on their shirts. In contrast to this only 2 out of 12 SPL members had gambling sponsors on their shirts in 2016/17.

In the Scottish Premier League, there is not as much [shirt](#) sponsorship but in other areas there is less difference. Gambling companies sponsor the top four leagues in Scotland and the league cup.

In England, the same is true of all three tiers of the English Football League from Championship down to League Two, but not in the English Premier League which has refrained from selling name rights to the

league since 2016.

The work was funded by the University of Glasgow, Medical Research Council (MRC) and the Scottish Government Chief Scientist Office. The Institute of Health and Wellbeing at the University of Glasgow aims to improve population health and wellbeing and reduce inequalities in health.

Healthy Stadia supports professional sports clubs, league operators, and governing bodies of sport to develop their stadia as health-promoting environments. The organisation does this through the development of policy guidance documents and implementation of health interventions in support of the health and wellbeing of fans, staff and local communities –

The Gambling Act 2005 sets out how gambling in Great Britain should be regulated, including arcades, betting, bingo, casinos, gaming machines, society lotteries and remote [gambling](#) operations. The Gambling Act 2005 came fully into force on 1 September 2007.

More information: Christopher Bunn et al. Shirt sponsorship by gambling companies in the English and Scottish Premier Leagues: global reach and public health concerns, *Soccer & Society* (2018). [DOI: 10.1080/14660970.2018.1425682](#)

Provided by University of Glasgow

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