



N e w s R e l e a s e

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Contact: Holly Thomsen
202-530-4508

**Scientists Honored for Outstanding Contributions to
Pathological Gambling Research**

NCRG Scientific Achievement Awards Recognize Young Investigator, Treatment Legend

LAS VEGAS – The late Robert Custer, a pioneer in the field of problem gambling, and Nancy Petry, an up-and-coming researcher in the field, were honored Monday at the inaugural National Center for Responsible Gaming (NCRG) Awards for Scientific Achievement in Gambling Studies.

The awards, presented at the annual conference sponsored by the NCRG and the Harvard Institute for Research on Pathological Gambling and Related Disorders, recognize outstanding contributions to the study of problem gambling and gambling-related problems.

“This year’s honorees represent both the distinguished past and bright future of pathological gambling research,” said Maj. Gen. Paul A. Harvey (Ret.), chairman of the NCRG. “Dr. Custer’s early work laid the foundations for our field, putting problem gambling as an issue on the map and inspiring countless scientists and treatment professionals. Dr. Petry’s work shows just how far we’ve come, and her research is leading to exciting new discoveries that are already making a tremendous impact. Together, their contributions are undeniable.”

Dr. Custer, whose groundbreaking work led to the recognition of pathological gambling as a mental health disorder, was honored with the NCRG’s 2002 Career Achievement Award. A board-certified psychiatrist, Custer served as chief of treatment services of the Mental Health and Behavioral Science Service of the U.S. Veterans Administration. He established the first inpatient treatment center for disordered gambling at the VA Hospital in Brecksville, Ohio, and, along with Msgr. Joseph A. Dunne and Irving Sacher, founded the National Council on Compulsive Gambling, today recognized as the National Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG). The NCPG is a national organization with 34 state affiliates that are dedicated to increasing public awareness of gambling disorders and promoting prevention and treatment.

Custer was the first to suggest that pathological gambling is a treatable disorder. Through his efforts, in 1980, the American Psychiatric Association classified pathological gambling as a psychiatric disorder in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-III). This official diagnosis has served as an essential element of treatment and research programs.

Custer also created and served as the executive director of the National Foundation for the Study and Treatment of Pathological Gambling, and he helped organize a compulsive gambling treatment center at The Johns Hopkins University in Maryland.

More...

P.O. BOX 25366 KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI 64119
PHONE 816 / 453 / 9964
CONTACT@NCRG.ORG

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Although she has only held her doctorate for eight years, Nancy Petry, recipient of the 2002 NCRG Young Investigator Achievement Award, already has made an impact through her efforts to find effective treatment for pathological gambling.

Petry, an associate professor of psychiatry at the University of Connecticut School of Medicine, has received more than \$2 million from the federal government and the private sector in support of research on gambling disorders. Her recent grant to study treatment for pathological gambling was the first of its kind to be awarded by the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH). This investigation is studying the efficacy of a cognitive-behavioral treatment manual, developed by Petry, in comparison to Gamblers Anonymous. She has also received funding from the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) to examine strategies to reduce gambling and HIV risk behaviors in substance abusers and has obtained funding to evaluate brief interventions for heavy, non-pathological gamblers.

In addition to numerous other research projects, Petry is a mentor to a number of fellows and students interested in the field of problem gambling and serves as a consultant or mentor on a number of grant applications for junior faculty throughout the country. She is a regular member of the NIDA Treatment Research Subcommittee and also reviews grants on gambling for the NIMH and the Alberta Gaming Association. She is on the editorial boards of four journals and also reviews gambling research for a number of other publications.

Petry has published 18 peer-reviewed articles directly related to her gambling research. Her gambling research has appeared in a number of prestigious journals, including *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, *Psychology of Addictive Behavior*, and *Addiction*. Her writings have also been featured in *USA Today*, *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, the Associated Press, Reuters, the BBC, and NBC News with Tom Brokaw.

The NCRG Scientific Achievement Awards are sponsored by Argosy Gaming Company, Boyd Gaming Corporation, Harrah's Entertainment, Inc., Isle of Capri Casinos, Inc., Mandalay Resort Group, MGM MIRAGE™ and Station Casinos, Inc. Award-winners were selected by an independent committee of distinguished leaders in the field of addictions and gambling research chaired by Dr. Joseph Coyle, Harvard Medical School.

The NCRG, the only national organization devoted exclusively to public education and funding of peer-reviewed research on pathological gambling, was established in 1996 to address the need for a greater understanding of pathological gambling and related disorders. In six years, the NCRG has transformed the gambling research field by supporting only the highest quality investigations of problem gambling selected through an independent and rigorous peer review process. In the year 2000, the NCRG awarded a \$2.4 million contract to Harvard Medical School's Division on Addictions to establish the Institute for Research on Pathological Gambling and Related Disorders to carry out the research initiatives first established by the NCRG. For more information, visit www.ncrg.org.

P.O. BOX 25366 KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI 64119
PHONE 816 / 453 / 9964
CONTACT@NCRG.ORG