Are scratchcards addictive? : two-year cumulative incidence and stability of pathological scratchcard gambling among Dutch scratchcard buyers

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Citation for published version (APA):

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Laura De Fuentes-Merillas was born in Valladolid, Spain, on the 19th of July 1975. In June 1997 she obtained her degree in Psychology from the “Universidad Pontificia” of Salamanca. During her psychology studies, she earned a European grant to spend the third year of her studies at the University of Hertfordshire at the Psychology Department in Hatfield. A European post-graduate grant brought her to the Netherlands in October 1997 to work as a researcher for HSK being posted at the Department of Clinical Psychology and Personality of the University of Nijmegen. From then on she has stayed in the Netherlands to conduct research in the field of addictive behaviours.

From 1998 until January 2000, she was involved in several alcohol research projects as a research fellow at the University of Nijmegen Research Group on Addictive Behaviours (UNRAB).

In 2000, she was a lecturer in the course on Clinical Psychology and she was also appointed as a researcher in a smoking cessation project (2000-2002), both at the Department of Clinical Psychology at the University of Nijmegen. Also in 2000, she acquired a position as a research fellow at the Department of Quality and Innovation at the Jellinek Clinic (Amsterdam), where she was involved in the process of developing treatment protocols for various addictions.

In November 2000 she was appointed as a research fellow at the Amsterdam Institute for Addiction Research (AIAR) to conduct a large-scale epidemiological project to evaluate the addictive potential of scratchcards, the results of which are described in this thesis. Besides she has been a peer reviewer for several international journals for gambling-related manuscripts.

From January 2003 until today, she has combined the completion of this thesis with her appointment as coordinator of a European project in Amsterdam aimed to explore, in nine European cities, the treatment needs of at-risk opiate users and to identify the barriers that prevent them from entering the treatment system (Risk Opiate users Study Europe –ROSE).

Currently, she holds a post-doc position at Novadic-Kentron (Network for Addiction Treatment Services) where she, in collaboration with the NISPA (Nijmegen Institute for Scientists-Practitioners in Addictions) and five treatment clinics, investigates whether the Community Reinforcement Approach combined with the use of vouchers can be successfully implemented with poly-drug cocaine users in the Netherlands. In addition, she is completing her post-graduate training to become a registered cognitive behavioural therapist.