Technology, Internet and Addiction:
How Emerging Technologies Generate New Pathways for Compulsivity and Addiction

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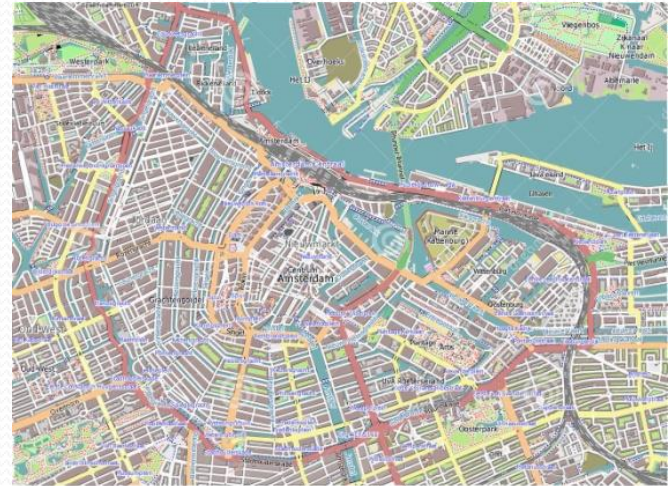
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I Want to Hear From You!

Two Perspectives

Clinical Experience

Research

Defining "Online Addition"

A minimum of three of the following symptoms over the period of twelve months:

- Tolerance
- Withdrawal
- Lack of control
- Relapse
- Large amounts of time spent online
- Negative consequences
- Continuation of use irrespective of problem awareness

What do I See in the Office?

- Reduced success or engagement in other key areas of life (social, work, educational)
- Online addiction as a way to avoid, numb out the real-world issues
- Caught acting out on the job
- Sleep disruption
- Angry partner (online pornography)
- Angry parents / teachers
- Pornography-Induced Erectile Dysfunction (PIED)
- Shame

Subtypes of Internet Addiction

- Cybersexual Addiction (pornography)
- Cyber-Relationship Addiction (Social Media, IM, chat)
- A.C.E. Model of Net Addiction (<u>A</u>ccess – <u>C</u>ontrol – <u>E</u>xcitement)
  - Console / PC games
  - Casual / smartphone games
  - Streaming video (Netflix)

Internet Addiction in Diagnostic Manuals

- DSM-5
  - **Not a Diagnosis**
  - "Internet Gaming Disorder" -- "Warrants more clinical research"
- ICD-10
  - **Impulse disorder, unspecified: F63.09**
  - Disorders whose essential features are the failure to resist an impulse, drive, or temptation to perform an act that is harmful to the individual or to others. Individuals experience an increased sense of tension prior to the act and pleasure, gratification or release of tension at the time of committing the act.
  - Mental disorders characterized by an intense need to gratify one's immediate desires and failure to resist the impulse or temptation

You Need to Ask!

- Use one of the checklists
  - I like Young's, but IAT has the most research, validation
- Ask how much time they spend online
- Ask what they're doing
- What are they procrastinating on / putting off?
- Are they ashamed or hiding behavior?

Assessment Tools

- **<u>Young's Diagnostic Questionnaire for Internet addiction</u>** Eight yes/no question survey of problematic Internet behavior
- The **<u>Internet Addiction Test</u>** (**<u>IAT</u>**) is a 20-item self-report scale that assesses Internet addiction as based on criteria for substance dependence and pathological gambling.
- **<u>Chen's Internet Addiction Scale (CIAS)</u>** is a 26-item self-report measurement scored on a 4-point Likert scale, assessing the core symptoms of Internet addiction, tolerance, compulsive use, and withdrawal, as well as related problems in terms of negative impact on social activities, interpersonal relationships, physical condition, and time management. In addition to this, it inquires into weekly online hours and Internet use experience.

Youth Prevalence

- Internet addiction prevalence rates ranged from <u>1.7%</u> of boys and <u>1.4%</u> of girls in a representative sample of Finnish adolescents to <u>26.4%</u> and <u>26.7%</u> in a longitudinal sample of adolescent students in Hong Kong, respectively.

Adult Prevalence

- The Internet Addiction Diagnostic Questionnaire was used in three adult samples. The reported Internet addiction prevalence rates in these studies were notably diverse as in a sample of Norwegian adults, **1.0%** and in a sample of 1,856 Iranian Internet users **22.8%** were found to be addicted to the Internet.

- Chen's Internet Addiction Scale was used in seven studies including adult samples. All samples included college or university students in Taiwan. Sample sizes ranged from 1,360 university freshmen to 4,456 college students. The studies that reported prevalence rates used teenage samples. Using the rather conservative cut-off of 67/68 on the CIAS, relatively similar prevalence rates of **12.9%** and **12.3%** have been reported by Yen et al. in Taiwan, ranging up to **17.9%** as reported by Tsai et al.

- North America (all ages): **6%**
    - 95% confidence interval **3.2%-12,9%**
- For comparison, In any given year,
    - 1 in 5 (20%) of Americans experience a mental illness
    - 1 in 25 (4%) experience a serious mental disorder.

There is no gold standard for Internet addiction diagnosis or assessment!

Points For and Against Using the Term

- For:
  - Behavioral elements of other addictions are present
  - Brain structure changes observed comparable to substance-based addictions (anterior cingulate cortex, left posterior cingulate cortex, left insula, and left lingual gyrus)
- Against:
  - Symptoms better explained by other disorders: anxiety, depression, impulse control disorder, compulsive gambling
  - EEG studies fail to find responses similar to substance abusers
  - Gives people an excuse for acting out
  - Precise definition of online addiction still forming

Treatment

- Psychological and pharmacological interventions are effective treatments for reducing symptoms of IA, time spent online, anxiety, and depression

- For psychological treatments alone, the pooled effect sizes for short-term efficacy for most outcome variables were large and robust, and were maintained over follow-up

Treatment Modalities

- Group counseling appears to be the predominant modality for treating addiction.

- Internet Addiction patients may benefit more from individual counseling.

- Group therapy may not become beneficial until patients overcome the barriers associated with social problems.

Modalities and Effectiveness

- No significant differences between CBT and the other psychological treatments in improving Internet addiction status

- CBT performed significantly better than other psychological treatments [for time spent online]

Treatment Centers, Online Communities and Self-Help

- reStart
  - Inpatient, 7-10 week
  - Abstinence-based
- noFap
  - Reddit group
  - Focus is on online pornography / masturbation
- Your Brain on Porn
  - http://yourbrainonporn.com/
  - Clearinghouse of research on effects of pornography
- SA (Sexaholics Anonymous)
  - 12-step approach to sex addiction (not exclusive to online)

What Works In My Practice

- Build the relationship
- Control / tune the environment
  - Site blocking / monitoring / accountability software
- Find the "big why"
- Find and mitigate "stinking thinking"
- Crowd out the bad stuff with better stuff
  - Exercise
  - Face-to-face socialization & support
- (Re)establish routine and self-care
- Establish realistic expectations for scholastic and professional performance
- Teach organization and self-management techniques

In Conclusion

- Internet Addiction is an emerging phenomenon.
- No widely-accepted definition for IA exists at this time.
- Prevalence is significant, but hard to quantify. It varies greatly based on definition and culture.
- Shame and stigma prevent many from seeking treatment.
- Ask <u>all of your clients</u> about Internet use and addiction!
- Technological change outraces research publication.
- Platforms change but human needs remain the same.
- Treatment for Internet Addiction helps, especially CBT, especially in individual therapy.

Resources

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