Trenton Taylor

English 165

**A Network of Addicts, Technology and Internet addiction and the damage it is causing.**

Our constant reliance on modern technology has begun to turn us into a network of addicts. Technology has become incredibly widespread and part of the mainstream life. We incorporate it into our daily lives for and use it for so many things, from entertainment to incorporating it into medical practice. We even use it to treat addiction to substances like drugs, alcohol, etc… to great effect. However, excessive use of technology can give rise to a new form of addiction, one hardly discussed due to its relative infancy as a legitimate medical diagnosis. Technology and Internet addiction is a form of addiction that is very similar to a dependence on other substances, except due to it being technology based, it is much harder to stay away from the substance. This, along with how mainstream technology use is, makes it significantly harder to treat the addiction in an individual.

Internet addiction is a very recent problem that first showed itself in 1996 in a research paper by Kimberly Young, in which she suggested that problematic technology use meets the conditions to qualify as an addiction, and should be included in the most recent version of the DSM. Since the first proposal in 1996, there have been variations in both the name and the criteria have been proposed the issue, which is currently called internet addiction disorder. It has since been found since then that symptoms of internet addiction match up with symptoms of other addictions to substances like tobacco and alcohol. Those being phycsicaly symptoms suchs as enegry levels depending on when the addicting substance was last used, behavioral symptoms such as missing school or work or being secretive about activities, and emotional symptoms such as irritability and inability to deal with stress In order for a diagnosis of internet addiction, the following criteria must be met. The person in question is very preoccupied with the internet, must use the internet in larger increments than before, unsussesfuc attempts to cut back on internet use were made, expresses symptoms of depression when attempting to lower internet use, and stays online longer than intended. In addition to these five criteria, one of the following must be met. They have risked the the loss of a relationship because of the internet, they have lied to family members to hide the amount of time they have been on the internet, and uses the internet as a way of escaping from problems of real life. Surveys have been conducted in the United States and Europe that place the prevalence rate of Internet addiction between 1.5% and 8.2%.

While Internet addiction may be a recent problem, it has in recent years become a growing problem for teens and adolescents all across the world. Many teens are never taught proper online etiquette by their parents simply because parents don’t have the experience with the internet or other technologies that their kids do. Parents usually just try and cut out the technology all at once instead of attempting to go in with a plan, which will lead to parents giving in and giving their child back the technology, which will only further the problem “Just removing the technology without the treatment plan and without an IT person involved in really manmanging it in a sophisticated way, what happens is that the parents usually give in.” (Anon, 2019). As an example of just how bad of a problem internet addiction can become, I would like to discuss the details of a man's addiction to Google Glass. A 31 year old man who has had a history of various mental disorders, including past addictions to alcohol and tobacco was exhibiting problematic use of Google Glass. The man was taken to the Navy’s Substance Abuse and Recovery Program for his alcohol use disorder. During the mans stay, he exhibited extreme frustration and and irritability due to his inability to use Google Glass. The man was shown to have an involuntary movement of his hand to his temple, tapping it with his forehead where the Google Glass accessory would be located. The man also noted that if he wasn’t able to wear it at work, he would experience a great deal of irritability. While he did experience a reduction of these symptoms over a 35 day treatment plan, the man still experiences dreams as if he is looking through the device. While this man has improved since receiving the treatment, this example shows that internet addiction can have lifelong consequences to one’s overall physical and mental health, and that this is a problem that needs to be treated effectively.

While the most effective form of treatment for internet addiction is hotly debated to this day, it is generally agreed on that total abstinence from using the internet is not the goal of treatment. Instead, the goal of treatment should be to establish a balanced use of the internet. Various medications have been shown effective in treatment of those with internet addiction, in particular, selective serotonin-reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) have been frequently used due to internet addiction sharing similar symptoms with depression and anxiety for which SSRIs have been found to be effective in treating. Various SSRI’s were used to treat 14 subjects with impulsive use of the internet. Internet use went down from 36.8 hours per week to a baseline of 16.5 hours per week in these 14 people, showing that various medications can show in a significant amount of progress for those seeking treatment for their internet addiction. It has also been mentioned by some authors that an increase in exercise can help make up for the lack of dopamine due to decreased internet usage in combination with group therapy. Interventions with family members or other people close to the person with the addiction have been suggested in increasing the motivation of the addicted to cut back on their internet use, although no studies currently yet exist proving this as fact. Reality training, which are sessions that show clients that addiction is a choice, trains in time management, and introduces substitutions to the problematic internet use has been shown to help the addicted commit to changing their behavior. RT therapy is widely used in other forms of addiction, and was shown that the treatment reduced the level of addiction and improved the self-esteem of 25 Internet-addicted university students in Korea. While there is still a large amount of debate over the most effective treatment plan for internet addiction, various treatments do exist that have been proven effective in treating the addiction in someone.

The rist in technology has lead to a very dangerous problem in internet addiction, something that can cause irreversible physical and psychological damage on the victims if we do not take action as soon as possible. We need to spread information about the growing problem of internet addiction and encourage those who have this problem to seek treatment to improve their lives as a whole. This addiction had already begun to damage society, but we can work together to begin to repair the damage done, and to forge a better future for new generations.

Work Cited

*Digitalparentpodcast.com*, digitalparentpodcast.com/internet-addiction-parents/.

Cash, Hilarie et al. “Internet Addiction: A Brief Summary of Research and Practice” *Current psychiatry reviews* vol. 8,4 (2012): 292-298.

Yung, Kathryn, et al. “Internet Addiction Disorder and Problematic Use of Google Glass™ in Patient Treated at a Residential Substance Abuse Treatment Program.” 10 Feb. 2019.

“Symptoms & Signs of Addiction – Physical, Behavioral & Emotional.” *MARR Addiction Treatment Center*, www.marrinc.org/signs-and-symptoms/.