PROBLEMATIC INTERNET USE IN JAPAN: CURRENT SITUATION AND FUTURE ISSUES

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The Internet was originally designed to facilitate communication and research activities. However, there has been a dramatic increase in the use of the Internet in recent years for commerce, education, and entertainment, including video games. Problematic Internet use is a significant behavioral problem. Over the past decade, internet addiction and related behaviors have been attracting the attention of mental health researchers and clinicians, although this field is still in its infancy. Behavioral addictions can induce symptoms similar to substance-related addictions such as excessive use, loss of control, craving, tolerance, and negative repercussions. These negative repercussions can range from poor achievement and social isolation to dysfunction in the family unit and even greater rates of intimate partner violence. Though there has been relatively little research on the neurobiology of behavioral addictions, studies mostly involving pathological gambling have suggested parallels with substance-related addictions. Social isolation has increasingly become a problem in Japan and has been hypothesized to be related to internet addiction. Particularly amongst students, problematic internet use may be a major factor of social withdrawal. In this presentation, I will describe aspects of behavioral addictions such as pathological Internet use and gaming including the epidemiology of such behaviors, their clinical assessment and treatment and their public health ramifications.