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Computer Addiction: Clinical Picture, Dynamics, Primary Clinical Forms

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Introduction: the rapid growth of Computer Addiction (CA) induces to study it in detail.

Aims and objectives: to study the structural, phenomenological, clinical and dynamical features of CA and discriminate its primary clinical forms.

Methods: clinical, mathematical, statistical. 49 patients were examined (45 males, 4 females). The mean age was 20.1 ± 6.7 years. The inclusion criterion was the pathological inclination to computer use, on the basis of F63.8 (ICD-10). Patients were divided into 2 groups: A - CA as isolated disorder (40.81%), B – CA with another psychiatric disorder (59.18%).

Results: all patients reported having a strong desire of using computer, constant mental return to positive emotions related with virtual activities. All of them had psychic comfort while using computer and psychic discomfort in its absence. All the individuals had difficulty in controlling time limit while using computer and feelings of tachychronia. Suppression of vital functions was observed in all cases. Poor memory and concentration problems were detected in 89.79% cases. 91.83% patients had physical discomfort in absence of computer usage. Many behavior problems related to restriction of computer usage were detected: progressive social isolation – 100%, conflicts with relatives – 100%, robbing – 22.44%, suicidal behavior – 4.08%. Two stages of CA development were identified: initial and stage of expanded clinical picture. Two clinical forms were recognized: primary and secondary.

Conclusions: CA has staging, progressive course. Clinical phenomenological structure of CA includes syndromes of changed reactivity, psychophysical dependence and changed personality.