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PATHOLOGICAL MEDIA USE WITHIN A POPULATION OF PATIENTS WITH DEPRESSION

A. Vukicevic¹, C. Janssen², I. Putzig³, B.T. te Wildt¹

¹Klinik für Sozialpsychiatrie, Psychiatrie und Psychotherapie, Medizinische Hochschule Hannover, Hannover, ²Leuphana Universität Lüneburg, Lüneburg, ³Klinik für Psychiatrie, Psychosomatik und Psychotherapie des Kindes- und Jugendalters, Aachen, Germany

Former studies show that Internet addiction goes along with a high comorbidity rate of depression and anxiety disorders. Since the Internet offers a possibility to attain social contacts safely and anonymously, depressed individuals may be at a higher risk to develop an Internet addiction. Patients with a confirmed diagnosis of depression have been recruited from the psychiatric department of Hanover Medical School. The participants were compared with a control group concerning their media use. The two groups consisted of 25 subjects, each with 56% females and mean ages of 34,4 years (patients) and 32,4 years (controls). The depressed subjects estimate themselves more frequently to be Internet addicted and are significantly ($p \leq 0,05$) less satisfied with the quantity of their media consumption. Three of the depressed fulfil the criteria for Internet addiction from Young and Beard and three more hit the softer criteria from Young. The results of the Internet addiction scale (ISS) show one subject with Internet addiction and three at a high risk. The depressed patients scored significantly higher in the ISS ($p \leq 0,01$). In total, the examination found six (24%) subjects among the depressed with a problematic or pathological Internet use. For further discussion, it is remarkable that 50% of the depressive patients agreed to the criterion "uses the Internet as a way of escaping from problems or of relieving an unpleasant mood". This may contribute to the notion, that excessive use of Internet may be interpreted as a potentially pathological compensation of depressed patients' inner conflicts.