



In the fifth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-5), Internet Gaming Disorder is identified in Section III as a condition warranting more clinical research and experience before it might be considered for inclusion in the main book as a formal disorder.

A New Phenomenon

The Internet is now an integral, even inescapable part of many people's daily lives; they turn to it to send messages, read news, conduct business and much more. But recent scientific reports have begun to focus on the preoccupation some people develop with certain aspects of the Internet, particularly online games. The "gamers" play compulsively, to the exclusion of other interests, and their persistent and recurrent online activity results in clinically significant impairment or distress. People with this condition endanger their academic or job functioning because of the amount of time they spend playing. They experience symptoms of withdrawal when kept from gaming.

Much of this literature stems from evidence from Asian countries and centers on young males. The studies suggest that when these individuals are engrossed in Internet games, certain pathways in their brains are triggered in the same direct and intense way that a drug addict's brain is affected by a particular substance. The gaming prompts a neurological response that influences feelings of pleasure and reward, and the result, in the extreme, is manifested as addictive behavior.

Further research will determine if the same patterns of excessive online gaming are detected using the proposed criteria. At this time, the criteria for this condition are limited to Internet gaming and do not include general use of the Internet, online gambling or social media.

By listing Internet Gaming Disorder in DSM's Section III, APA hopes to encourage research to determine whether the condition should be added to the manual as a disorder.

DSM is the manual used by clinicians and researchers to diagnose and classify mental disorders. The American Psychiatric Association (APA) will publish DSM-5 in 2013, culminating a 14-year revision process. For more information, go to www.DSM5.org.

APA is a national medical specialty society whose more than 37,000 physician members specialize in the diagnosis, treatment, prevention and research of mental illnesses, including substance use disorders. Visit the APA at www.psychiatry.org. For more information, please contact APA Communications at 703-907-8640 or press@psych.org.

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