CIGARETTES AND CELLPHONES

The increased dependence of college students on digital electronic media, primarily smartphones and laptop computers, is raising health concerns among educators, parents, and public health professionals. The problem is worsening with the advent of social media, online retailers (e.g., Amazon), and streaming services (e.g., Netflix). The tobacco industry has historically denied a causal relationship between smoking and cancer, yet the online media industry is funding almost entirely by the major media corporations (e.g., Google, Microsoft, Facebook Apple, Netflix) and online retailers (e.g., Amazon).

A GROWING THREAT TO ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Islamic State's global media arm, which is increasing among college students and that the problem has not been addressed by universities. As dependence on digital media grows, adverse consequences are likely to intensify.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that infants age 0 to 12 spend 5 to 10 hours per day consuming media; teenagers, 6 to 9 hours per day.24-26

- Ubiquity of pornography
- Less exercise
- Privacy concerns
- Fewer interactions

INCIVILITY

Phone users are less polite, attentive, and honest in face-to-face conversation.22, 40

- Conversation quality is perceived as lower when one individual is using their cellphone.40
- Checking messages during conversations can damage the impression another person has of that individual.64 Men and the 18-34 year age group, find texting more appropriate in any context.24, 40
- People are poor multitaskers.67, 68, 69

LACK OF RECOGNITION BY UNIVERSITIES

Examples of colleges and universities that either acknowledge or address students’ growing digital media dependency are few and far between. Liberty University has created a WiFi-free Center for Digital Wellness, which plays a role in awareness, education, and prevention of technology overuse.76

CONCLUSIONS

A growing body of evidence suggests that digital media addiction is increasing among college students and that the problem has not been addressed by universities. As dependence on digital media grows, adverse consequences are likely to intensify.

The telegraph, a device that uses electric signals to send simple messages, is invented.9

1837- Samuel Morse creates the first practical telegraphic code.9

1876- Alexander Graham Bell invents the telephone.10

1964 - The Ferranti Mark I becomes the first commercially available general-purpose computer.11

1962- The touch tone phone, with a numerical keypad, is created.12

1973- Talkomatic is invented, and is widely credited as the first online chat device.13

1965- The Ferranti Mark I becomes the first commercially available general-purpose computer.14

1968- ARPANET, the earliest version of the Internet, develops.15

1964- The first commercial video game is sold on an AT&T Pictophone.16

1973- Motorola releases the first commercial cellular phone (DynaTAC 8000X).17

1973- Telmatics is invented, and is widely credited as the first online chat room.18

1984- The Apple Macintosh becomes a popular consumer computer.19

1991 - The Apple Macintosh becomes a popular consumer computer.19

2003- The World Wide Web is developed.20

2007- The Apple iPhone is introduced.21

2010- Facebook reaches 500 million users.22

2014- The number of active users on Facebook reaches 2 billion.23

2016- The number of active users on Facebook reaches 2.5 billion.24

A Generation in Denial?

An October 2017 bill in Honolulu has been introduced that sets a three-day fine for those caught playing games on their cellphone while driving.25

DECLINE IN SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

ADVERSE EFFECTS OF DIGITAL MEDIA

Heavy media multitaskers perform worse at controlling their impulses and decisions.24, 40

People are poor multitaskers.67, 68, 69

PHYSICAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

Text messaging can lead to neck text, which is the unnatural curvature of the upper spine due to constantly looking down one’s cellphone.26, 37, 38

Digital media use can cause computer vision syndrome, a term for various forms of eye strain or damage.25, 40

Technology overuse can result in poor sleep quality and decreased sleep time when used immediately before going to sleep.22, 43

MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

Young adults with a higher frequency of Internet and cellphone use have greater rates of depression and stress.25, 45, 46

High levels of texting can result in burnout and depression in college students.24, 40

Individuals who experience anxiety in social situations use electronic media, particularly texting, more than those who do not feel anxious.27, 48

The influence of multitasking on the brain.26

Digital Media Addiction: An Emerging Problem Among College Students

A Generation in Denial?

Tomasz Gruchala, Catherine J. Randall Research Scholars Program, The University of Alabama
Alan Blum, MD, Center for the Study of Tobacco and Society, The University of Alabama

INTRODUCTION: RECOGNITION OF A SOCIETAL ISSUE

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