



**Letter to the Editor**  
*JBS. 2016 Sep.; 3(3):31-32*

# Journal of Biomedical Sciences

## *Official Publication of NHRWS*

### Addiction of smart phone and its health implications

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### Cite this Article

van Teijlingen ER, Sathian B. Addiction of smart phone and its health implications. Journal of Biomedical Sciences. 2016;3(3):31-32.

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# Addiction of smart phone and its health implications

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## *Information about the article*

Received: Oct. 3, 2017

Revised: Jan. 24, 2018

Accepted: Feb. 10, 2018

Published online: Apr. 14, 2018

Dear Sir,

Smart phones are a wonderful technological innovation, its connectivity with the internet offers endless new opportunities, including many in the health field. However, like all innovations they have their down side. Smart phone addiction is a growing problem in modern society. Addiction to the electronic gadgets like tablet, smartphones is not a personal problem. The addiction to smart devices which includes spending time in social networking websites, voice chatting apps, watching online movies has induced serious abuses problems, which is observed more in the younger generation, especially students.

Addictions come in a variety of types, which includes drug addiction, behavioral addiction to electronic devices (smartphones), game, internet etc. The most unfortunate fact about internet addiction is resistance to treatment, necessitates significant risks with a high relapse rate [3]. There are relatively few studies available on smartphone addiction.

The growing number of users of the smart devices in schools and colleges is a serious health concern [1-2]. Students use smartphones in classrooms, leisure hours specially at night, in bed before going to sleep. The blue light from the smart devices decreases the production of melatonin which keeps the brain alert. Some report depression and anxiety as predictors of smartphone addiction [4]. Perhaps young adults with "personality type A experiencing high stress level and low mood may lack positive stress coping mechanisms and mood management techniques and are thus highly susceptible to smartphone addiction"[4].

China and South Korea, both countries where the prevalence of smart phone addiction is high have reported various addiction and treatment models. A study of medical students in China found very similar prevalence rates of about 30% in both men and women, however male students were likely to be addicted to using game apps and females were more likely to report the use of multimedia applications and social networking services [5]. The commission on youth protection in Korea developed an intervention model in 2004. After 2005 as a positive approach of the continuation of the programme, youth family camp for internet addiction and natural cure programmes with Korea green culture foundation in 2007 was formed. However, focusing on the classical treatment, may not be a solution for the addiction [6].

Dr. Ivan Goldberg was pioneer in the field who coined the terms internet addiction disorder (IAD) for pathological, compulsive use of internet [7]. Broadly speaking, addiction to the internet can be categorized into addiction to sex and relationships, addiction to online games, net compulsions, overload of information and so on [1].

One could argue that we are partly addicted to socializing, not to the technology (smartphones) per se. This can be problematic as the social media aspect of the internet is both 24/7 and it links to so many other aspects of our lives which are more and more virtual. We would like to highlight the importance of a public health perspective, since IAD or smart phone addiction is not only causing harm to individuals, but it also affects families and communities. A public health perspective focuses, not only, on prevention and harm reduction, but also addresses questions needs assessments for people with IAD and questions about equity for example regarding access to treatment.

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