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## THE NOSOLOGICAL ROLE OF COMORBIDITY IN PATIENTS WITH INTERNET AND VIDEO-GAME ADDICTION

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**Background and Objectives:** With the Cyberspace's exponential growth of influence questions arise about its mental impacts. The presented study examines the question whether the dependent use of the Internet can be understood as an impulse control disorder, an addiction or as a symptom of other psychiatric conditions.

**Methods:** Internet dependent patients seeking for psychiatric assistance and fulfilling the criteria for pathological Internet use (PIU) were examined with the Structured Clinical Interview according to DSM-IV (SCID), and a variety of questionnaires including the Barratt Impulsiveness Scale (BIS), the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) and the Dissociative Experience Scale (DES). The patient group was compared to a matched group of healthy controls.

**Results:** The adult patient-group consisted of 25 subjects, 76 % male, with a mean age of 29.36 years. Average time spent in Cyberspace was 6.47 h/d, mostly in online-role-playing games. According to SCID I and BDI, 19 patients (76%) suffered from a depressive syndrome, with 10 cases of major depressive disorder (40%) and 8 cases of adjustment disorder with depression (32%). Six patients (24%) suffered from a comorbid anxiety disorder. Compared to controls, the patient group presented significantly higher levels of depression (BDI), impulsivity (BIS) and dissociation (DES).

**Conclusions:** PIU shares common psychopathological features and comorbidities with substance related disorders. Therefore, it might be seen as a diagnostic entity in itself within a spectrum of behavioral and substance dependencies. Especially Internet role play may contain an addictive potential for adolescents and adults with subclinical psychopathology.