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INTERNET ADDICTION - THE NEW DIGITAL DISORDER

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Internet Addiction has become a serious health concern in Europe due to widespread currency and accessibility of various internet applications like online computer gaming, monetary driven gambling or social communities. Under the leadership of the American Psychiatric Association it has recently been proposed to subsume pathological gambling as a behavioral addiction under the new category: 'Addiction and Related Disorders' acknowledging commonalities in clinical expression, aetiology and comorbidity with substance related disorders. Also, Internet addiction has been proposed as a new (research) diagnosis in DSM V. The outstanding psychological symptom patients concerned report is an irresistibly urge to 'be online'. This can lead to constrained behavior which entails psychobiological harm for the user and leads to an addictive behaviour (behavioural addiction). Patients show psychopathological patterns (tolerance, withdrawal, interpersonal conflict, mood modification, relapse) comparable to substance-related disorders.

The talk will outline recent results of psychological research and psychiatric as well as clinical characterization of Internet Addiction. A special focus within the lecture will be on different strategies of intervention. This includes counselling of patients and their relatives as well as outpatient group treatment and individual psychotherapy of Internet Addiction. Complementary, first outcomes of the evaluation of a cognitive behavioral based outpatient therapy from the 'Ambulanz für Spielsucht Mainz' will be presented.