

Mobile Phone Usage and Dependency among Medical Undergraduates in Puducherry

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Background

For many people now, mobile phone is essential to their life. Young adults who are enrolled in professional or other graduation studies in India, apart from using cell phones for call functions and sending and receiving SMS, often use them to play games, surf the internet, and send/receive emails. They also prefer playing with features on the cell phone (including reading online news and downloading songs, wallpaper, and ring tones) appears to have become the adolescent leisure phenomenon in recent years. As the phones have become cheaper and more sophisticated, sales of cell phones to teenagers have become more common. However, as the cell phones become more compact, concerns about problem use are growing. To date, there has been almost no study of whether cell phone use is addictive or dependence-forming among medical undergraduates, a major professional stream in India.

Aims & Objectives

The primary objective of the study was to assess the cell phone usage including smartphones among the medical undergraduates in a private medical college in Pondicherry and to elicit any dependence or addiction formation among them.

Material and Methods

This cross-sectional study was carried out on undergraduate medical students (>350 students) from SLIMS Puducherry. Both male and female undergraduate

medical students in the age group of 18-20 years were enrolled in the study. The instrument used were Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) IV modified questionnaire for mobile phone addiction in a five point Likert scale and modified Young's addiction scale to assess the problematic dependence or any addiction among the medical undergraduates. Descriptive analysis was done for various variables. Factor analysis and reliability analysis of Likert scale questionnaire are being done. The dependence and addiction were group in Inability to Control Craving, Feeling Anxious & Lost, and Withdrawal/Escape and productivity loss.

Results

More than 90 percent of the medical undergraduates have a mobile phone and the predominant type of mobile being the new breed smartphones. On an average they use the mobile phone.

Conclusions

Today, as the capability of the cell phone becomes sophisticated and multifunctional, young users like the medical undergraduates are becoming increasingly dependent or "addicted" to this technology, not only for voice or text (such as SMS) but also as a tool for seeking information online, for entertainment, relaxation, passing time by playing games, picture and video taking and other yet-to-be invented applications, and as an expression of status and identity.