

Supplementary Material

Supplement 1. Examples of the diagnostic indicators of the DSM criteria derived from the pilot sample

Preoccupation

The patient reported of mental overinvolvement to the game, steadily ruminating about what happened during the past gaming session and making detailed plans for the next episode.

The patient reported to have restructured his everyday life for the sake of being able to spend more time online.

The patient reported having accessed the Internet at any occasion possible. This regarded during work, in the late evening hours, immediately after waking up and on weekends during the whole time.

Tolerance

The patient recognized a strong need for spending more and more time on social networking sites and to get connected to an ever growing circle of users. She described these circumstances with a certain feeling not being satisfied anymore with the existing online contacts and to increase the feelings of arousal by discovering and monitoring the lives of new contacts.

“When I go into the game, I feel nothing for the first 2 or 3 hr. The things there seem too familiar, almost boring. Thus, I have to keep on gaming until I feel a certain relief, until I can grasp a certain echo of the feeling I am missing.”

“I would not say that I am enjoying the game anymore; I would rather say that it is the memory of the past enjoyable moments that is motivating me to stick to it. I am kind of chasing exactly these past moments by intensifying my engagement on the game.”

Loss of control

“I am totally losing control when I am online. I forget about the time and if I realize that hours have passed I am still not able to log off.”

Not feeling in control of deciding when going online and how much time to spend online was described as the major reason for searching treatment.

“Again and again I told myself to not visit these sites anymore, because this will only cause troubles – still I never succeeded in doing so.”

Withdrawal

“Not being able to go online? I can remember several episodes where this was the case and I can also remember that this turned me to a different person – an inpatient, sometimes even choleric one.”

“Merely thinking not being able to access the game is causing sheer panic in my mind.”

The patient reported of maddening feelings (especially irritability, feelings of restlessness, and dysphoric mood) after the first day of quitting the game.

Continued use

The patient states that he cannot imagine a life without the Internet, most assuredly that keep going online has become a major stressor in his life.

“Finally I recognized that the game was an obstacle for my personal development. I was cutting any chance of making progress in any respect of my life.”

In the course of playing the game, the patient more and more lost his daily routines. This resulted in sleeping until the late afternoon, starting the game, and keeping playing it during the whole night.

Loss of interest

Other recreational activities were skipped by the patient. The reasons for it were that there was no time left and that these activities growingly lost their appeal in the face of online gaming.

“I realized that the only thing remaining pleasing or thrilling was spending my time in the game. All the other stuff I loved to do formerly was kind of fading out.”

The patient registered that using the Internet was literally exhausting him and that he missed the energy necessary to further engaging in former recreational activities.

Mood regulation

“I used to keep spending the most time online, accompanied by an irresistible urge, when I had a really bad day, feeling small and unloved.”

“I was always using the game in order to escape reality.”

A main reason for keeping using the game was the wish to get “*sedated*” by the consumption.

Jeopardizing relationships/perspectives

During this period, the patient had the impression that spending his time online was of higher priority than meeting with his friends.

He stated that his job performance was continuously decreasing since he started using the Internet excessively.

The partnership broke down after his spouse discovered him to be spending the nights in front of the screen again.

Deceiving

“When I realized that all of my friends suddenly played less because there were different things getting more important, like the new girlfriend or getting a driving license, I was pretending to also get rid of the game.”

“I built up a very complex web of lies in order to keep family and friends unaware of it.”

“I cheated my whole family about that matter. I used to pretend having important appointments,

forcing me to work early in the morning or coming home late at night. Instead I was spending my time watching pornography.”

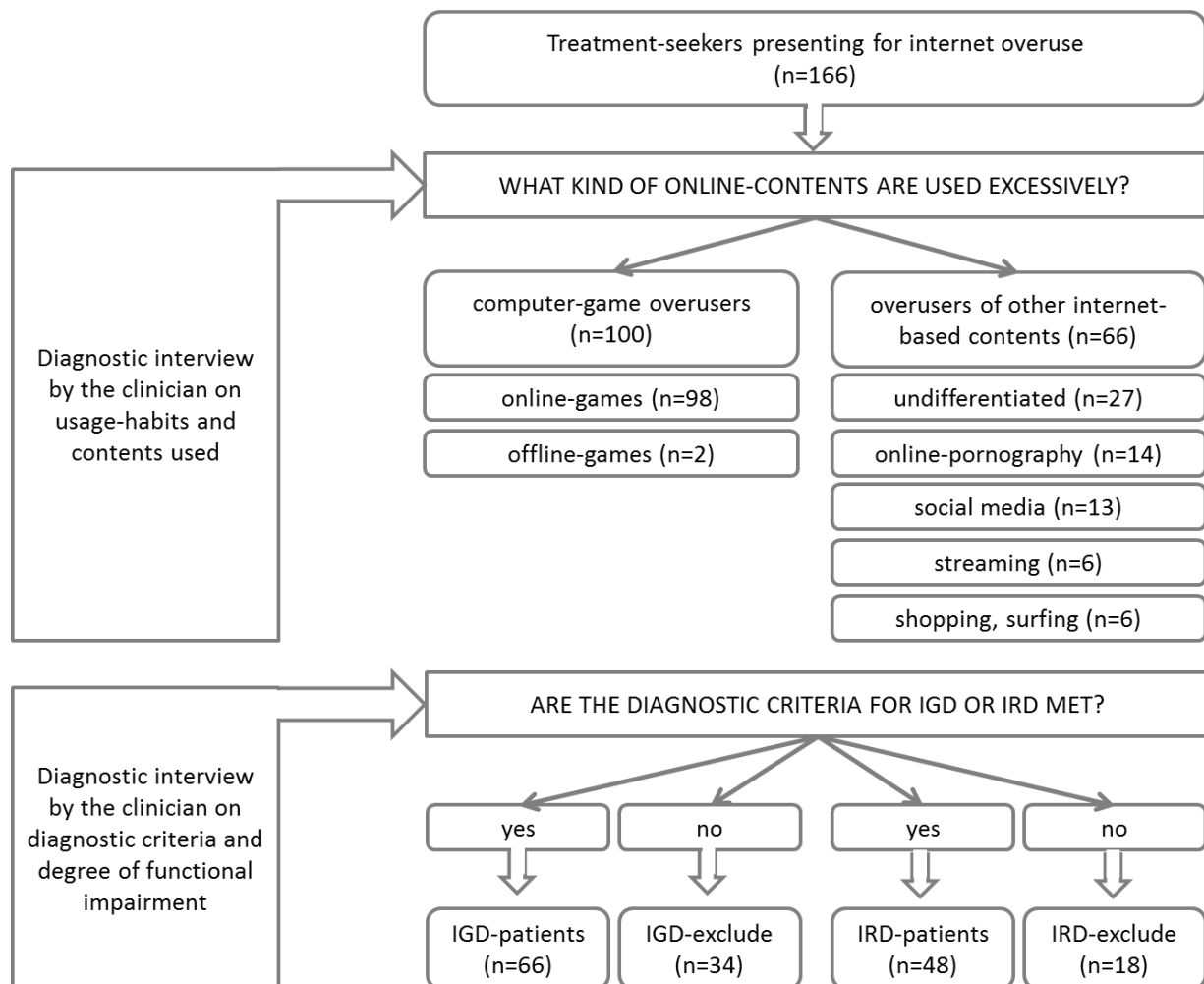
Craving

The patient portrayed constant feelings of being “rushed and electrified” when thinking about getting online again.

“This urge to log into the Internet was the strongest feeling ever, irresistible and it dominated my thinking and my whole life.”

She depicted having the game in mind immediately after waking up. Although she realized that other things were more important at that moment, she was not able to resist the drive to immediately go online.

Supplement 2. Enrolment of the treatment seekers, classification of Internet-overuse, and diagnostic procedure



Note. Please note that not for every criterion enough diagnostic information was available; missing rates ranged from 10% to 60% (Table 2).