Can you be addicted to the internet?

July 23 2014, by Matt Terry

A McMaster researcher is trying to understand how much time people spend online – and whether their habits pose a danger to their physical or mental health.

Michael Van Ameringen, director of McMaster's Anxiety Research Centre, is collecting data from approximately 2,000 people via an online survey.

The results will be pooled with responses from people in the United States and Europe to give researchers a clearer picture of how much time people spend online.

It will also help them understand whether people who struggle with managing their time on the web are dealing with issues of obsession, addiction or impulsiveness.

"There's so little information on internet use, we really don't know much," says Van Ameringen.

Once researchers understand the extent to which internet addiction is an issue, they can start to devise ways to help people battle it.

"There are behaviour therapies that work well for obsessive compulsive disorder, but won't work for those who suffer from other issues," says Van Ameringen. "So we need to understand what we're looking at first before we can make recommendations on treatment."

Van Ameringen predicts that a substantial number of people struggling to manage their time online have impulsivity issues.

"And, somewhat ironically, people with attention deficit disorder," he says. "The internet is so engaging that, even for people with engagement problems, it still hooks them."

Despite the stereotype, internet addiction issues aren't limited to young gamers who can't put down their Xbox controllers or people who stare at their iPhones all day.

Van Ameringen says he also treats patients who struggle with chasing deals and spend hours on sites like Kijiji.

"The internet is so convenient and easy to access. It's always there, and so it draws people immensely."

Data collection will continue over the next year, after which researchers can begin their analysis.

Provided by McMaster University

Citation: Can you be addicted to the internet? (2014, July 23) retrieved 19 April 2024 from https://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-07-addicted-internet.html

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.