

Studies examine impact of media use among youth, recommend preventative measures

June 27 2011

In today's society where access to media is ever present, many parents worry about what is appropriate media usage for their children and how media consumption can potentially affect them. Two new studies led by Dr. Dimitri A. Christakis, MD, MPH and Dr. Michelle M. Garrison, PhD of Seattle Children's Research Institute, focus on different uses of media and assess how media usage can lead to depression in college students and disrupt sleep patterns in preschool aged children. The results of Dr. Christakis' study, "Problematic Internet Usage in U.S. College Students: A Pilot Study," were recently published online in *BMC Medicine*, while Dr. Garrison's study, "Media Use and Child Sleep: The Impact of Content, Timing, and Environment," was published online June 27 in *Pediatrics*.

Overview of "Problematic Internet Usage in U.S. College Students: A Pilot Study"

Pathological use of the Internet, whether problematic or truly addictive, remains a growing concern worldwide. For adolescents and young adults, this topic is worthy of special consideration, as they have been shown to be at high risk for behavioral addictions. In Dr. Christakis' study, in which 224 eligible college students at two U.S. universities completed a survey that included the Internet Addiction Test (IAT) as well as the Patient Health Questionnaire, Dr. Christakis assessed the link between problematic Internet usage and its association with moderate to [severe depression](#).

The study found the prevalence of problematic Internet use is a cause for concern, and potentially requires intervention and treatment amongst the most vulnerable groups. Four percent of the students surveyed scored in the occasional problem or addicted range on the IAT. While the percentage is lower than what has been reported in similar studies, the study demonstrates that problematic Internet usage is more common than asthma on U.S. college campuses, and suggests that colleges should consider preventative approaches. The study also found a significant association between problematic Internet usage overall and moderate to severe depression.

"Pediatricians and parents continue to report overuse of the Internet in their patients and children, respectively," said Dr. Christakis, MD, MPH of Seattle Children's Research Institute. "Given the Internet is woven into the fabric of the lives of this generation of children, concerns about the potential for addiction are warranted and today's [college students](#) are clearly at risk, given the considerable exposure that they have to the Internet."

Dr. Christakis' study collaborators were Dr. Megan Moreno, MD, MEd; Lauren Jelenchick, BS; Dr. Mon T Myaing, PhD; and Dr. Chuan Zhou, PhD.

Overview of "Media Use and Child Sleep: The Impact of Content, Timing, and Environment"

In a separate study led by Dr. Garrison, the results demonstrate how the use of media such as television, video games and online content can affect a child's sleep. While media use has previously been shown to negatively impact children's sleep, this study was the first to explore the joint influence of media content and time of day.

In the study of more than 600 children aged three to five years, Dr. Garrison observed increased [sleep problems](#) in preschool-aged children for each additional hour of daytime violent media content or evening media use. While daytime viewing of non-violent content did not contribute to sleep problems, violent content viewed during the day was also associated with significantly increased sleep problems. Evening media use, on the other hand, was associated with significantly increased sleep problems regardless of content type. The types of sleep problems reported by parents included trouble falling asleep, nightmares, waking during the night, trouble with morning alertness, and daytime sleepiness. The majority of violent media exposure in this study was from children's programming, rather than programming intended for adults or adolescents.

"Early childhood sleep disruption has been associated with obesity, behavior problems, and poor school performance," said Dr. Garrison, of Seattle Children's Research Institute. "We advise parents to choose non-violent media content, and to avoid media screentime entirely during the hour before bed. Removing televisions and other [media](#) devices from the child's bedroom can be an important first step. "

Provided by Seattle Children's

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