

# The Wider Meaning of Addiction

**Gulbahar Singh Sidhu**

Senior Consultant, Department of Psychiatry, Doaba Hospital, Jalandhar –144001, Punjab, India;  
gulbaharsidhu@rediffmail.com

The word “Addiction” connotes addiction to a wide range of chemical substances such as Heroin, Cannabis, Cocaine, Nicotine, and Alcohol, amongst others. This belief pervades not just across the medical fraternity but amongst the policymakers as well.

Can addiction exist outside this domain of illicit drugs and chemical substances? The idea that true addictions can exist even in the absence of psychotropic drugs was given by Peele back in 1979. Individuals could get addicted to a particular set of experiences, of which the use of a specific chemical substance is only one example<sup>1</sup>. This formed the basis for the concept of “Behavioural Addiction”. Surprisingly, neither of the two internationally used diagnostic manuals of mental disorders, i.e., DSM-IV-TR (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders)<sup>2</sup> and ICD-10 (International Classification of Disease)<sup>3</sup> has included this wider concept of addiction.

The 11th edition of the International Classification of Diseases has for the first time included a new category “Disorders due to Addictive behaviours”, officially recognizing that highly rewarding behaviours, analogous to psychotropic substances, can become addictive<sup>4</sup>.

This inclusion has important implications for the management practices for patients presenting with “Addictive Behaviours”. For one, addiction to internet gaming, social media and related problems need to be

managed in essentially the same way as addiction to substances of abuse. This would go a long way in managing patients coming to our clinics with problematic use of social media and related problems. More importantly, this wider concept of addiction would help in changing the negative attitudes that the policymakers, the media, and the community at large, have about patients suffering from substance use disorders.

Indeed, addiction in its wider avatar is much more prevalent than our most conservative estimates. It's high time that we start looking at patients suffering from Addiction with greater respect and acceptability.

## References

1. Peele S, Brodsky A. Love and Addiction. New York: Taplinger; 1979.
2. American Psychiatric Association. Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders. Text Revision. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Washington, DC; 2000.
3. The ICD-10 classification of mental and behavioural disorders: Diagnostic criteria for research. Geneva: World Health Organization; 1993.
4. World Health Organization. International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems. 11<sup>th</sup> ed; 2019. Available from: <https://icd.who.int/>

**How to cite this article:** Sidhu, G. S. The Wider Meaning of Addiction. Int. J. Med. Dent. Sci. 2022; 12(1): 2056-2056.