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Pornography addiction and its bad effects on mental health and their homoeopathic management

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Abstract

Due to easy internet access, (AAA, factors) the possibilities of channel for sexual interactions, online pornography, have increased. It causes greater impact on mental health of a person along with various psychological & behavioural changes such as; preoccupation with sexual thoughts throughout the day, guilt, shame, confusion, tendency towards other impulsive behaviours, depression, anxiety etc. Homeopathy is very effective against mental health problems. In Homoeopathy, theory of individualization and selecting similimum by using a holistic approach enables to a complete state of health (physical, mental and social well-being). Homeopathy aims not only the treatment of mental problems but also deals with underlying cause and individual susceptibility.

Keywords: Pornography addiction, mental health, homoeopathy, individualization, depression, anxiety

1. Introduction

Addiction refers to the behavior of the individual becoming extremely pre-occupied which was initially subjected to accomplish a satiation effect. Persistent repetition of the activity results in loss of ability to choose whether to continue or terminate the habit and this ends in uncontrolled impulses to be indulge in such behavior and ultimately lands to behavior related adverse consequences ^[1]. “Pornography addiction” is defined as an irresistible desire of visual stimulation and reward gained from brain by the sight of pornography (sexual acts performed by others) in the form of images and videos. However, internet pornography corresponds to use of internet to gratify sexual activities constitute a significant problem for present day scenario ^[2]. Its uncontrollable use constitutes “problematic pornography use” (PPU). Problematic pornography use (PPU) causes impulsiveness as well as compulsiveness in their behavior. Compulsive behavior may produce interference to the individual’s personal, professional and social life. Problematic pornography use is associated with poor quality of life, depressive symptoms, mental and physical health suppressive days, and high level of anxiety as compared to no pornography users ^[3]. The prevalence of pornography addiction ranges from 4.5% to 9.8%. It is observed that there is stronger association of pornography use during COVID-19 pandemic because of social distancing awareness ^[4]. Pornography consumption increased over years, more among males particularly young adults, and decreases with age. However, validity of whether porn addiction is an actual addiction or not is subjected to controversy. Many of them consider it as a behavioral addiction that is presented by an obsessive compulsion to view pornographic material. There are many studies that favor that it is a real addiction.

According to a research more than 80% of subjects seeking treatment for compulsive sexual behavior disorder, despite of negative consequences in sphere of finances, occupation as well as personal or relationship troubles yet not able to control their pornography use. PPU is on the rise because of “Triple A” influence i.e. accessibility, affordability, anonymity. PPU is a subtype of hypersexual disorder or as compulsive sexual behavioral disorder [ICD-11]. This problematic use might have adverse effects in sexual development and functioning especially among the young population ^[5].

Evidences Supporting Pornography Addiction Model

Major brain changes observed in addicts includes sensitization, desensitization, dysfunctional prefrontal circuits and malfunctioning stress system.

- In the subjects addicted to pornography there is more desire to specific sexual cue particularly prominent in prefrontal cortex and amygdala, being evidence of sensitization.
- The desire for sexual cue predominant in early phases, but later followed by down regulation of reward system mediated from dorsal cingulate and later after repeated exposures develops habituation to the stimuli and results in dysfunction. To overcome this there comes a search for new pornography as a means of sexual satisfaction.
- Many users expressed diminished desire for sex with partner, but not for masturbation in their EEG readings. This can be considered as a sign of desensitization.
- There is also lack of connections between ventral striatum & prefrontal cortex and also between caudate & temporal cortex lobes as well as grey matter deficit in these areas could explain uncontrollable sexual impulses.
- Hypothalamic pituitary adrenal axis mediates dysfunctional stress response similar to alteration seen in substance addicts.
- These alterations may result in impulsivity, poor concentration ability, poor decision making, interference in memory, deficit in emotion regulation and excessive preoccupation with sex ^[5].

Symptoms associated with problematic pornography use

1. Recurrent and intense sexual fantasies, urges and behavior which utilize most of your time and feels as if it is beyond your control (obsessive compulsiveness) ^[6].
2. Feeling of strong sexual drive with a feel of release of tension afterwards but later on there is feeling of guilt and remorse remains.
3. Self-efforts to reduce or control such obsessive behavior remains unsuccessful ^[7].

Effects of pornography addiction

Pornography use may affect certain centers of the grey matter of brain which have role in inhibition of impulsive action. This may lead the person to violent outburst episodes such that it may contribute to domestic violence and other crimes. However, it's not possible to define the exact amount of uses that may cause harm because of every individual's brain has its own threshold, as brain recognizes nothing about pornography but it recognizes only in terms of stimulation through dopamine and opioid spikes. This interaction of stimuli and his brain determines whether viewer goes to addiction or not ^[8].

PPU associated risks:

- It may lead to development of pornography induced erectile dysfunction (PIED), delayed ejaculation and anorgasmia on physical plane ^[9].
- In case of children and young persons, due to early sexual exposure leads to rise in child on child sexual abuse. In England, from year 2012 to 2016 there was 78% rise in such incidences. It is a contributory factor in emergence of harmful sexual behavior ^[7]. There is high co relation (85%) between viewing child pornography and child sexual abuse ^[10].
- In the recent Literature, we may get strong evidence of connection between pornography use to sexual offenses, aggressions and abuse so it's also an issue of

social concern. There is significant relation between violent attitude towards women and viewing pornography. ^[11]

- It may also lead to psychosexual dysfunction. Often associated with anxiety disorder, mood disorder followed by substance use disorder and sexual dysfunctions.

Psychotherapy

“Cognitive behavioral therapy” and “Acceptance and Commitment therapy” is considered to be useful in treatment of hypersexual disorders. Reducing or abandoning the use of pornography results in improvement of all associated symptom on physical or mental planes. However compulsive disorder difficult to abandon but if abandoned, complete reversal of symptoms also possible. ^[7]

Homoeopathic point of view: Homeopathy is a system of holistic approach which deals with the principle of “*Individualization*”. In Homoeopathy we do not treat the patient symptomatically but draw the complete picture of the individual and try to understand his life situation that has given rise to the symptoms. We also take physical generals such as likes and aversions, dreams, appetite, thirst, etc and mental generals such as fear, anger, grief, emotional reactions, etc. to constitute the totality of the case and sum total of all the symptoms guides us to select the simimum for the patient.

In Homeopathy, repertory is an index of symptoms which helps to form the complete picture of the case. In repertory, symptoms are given in the form of rubrics. Common rubrics corresponding to the general symptoms related to pornography addiction are mentioned below:

Rubrics in complete repertory ^[12]

[Complete] [Mind] EXCESSES: Sexual, ailments from, agg. (73)
 [Complete] [Mind] THOUGHTS: Persistent: Sexual (2)
 [Complete] [Mind] THOUGHTS: Persistent: Amorous (24)
 [Complete] [Mind] ANXIETY: Thoughts: From (21)
 [Complete] [Mind] ANXIETY: Hysterical (10)
 [Complete] [Mind] ANXIETY: Conscience, of: Masturbation, from (1)
 [Complete] [Mind] REMORSE, REPENTANCE: Masturbation, from (2)
 [Complete] [Mind] COMPULSIVE DISORDERS (102)
 [Complete] [Mind] ANXIETY Hypochondriacal (76)
 [Complete] [Mind] MASTURBATION, AILMENTS FROM (49)
 [Complete] [Mind] INDOLENCE, AVERSION TO WORK: Emissions, pollutions, after seminal (3)
 [Complete] [Mind] DULLNESS: Masturbation, from (13)
 [Complete] [Mind] MASTURBATION, AILMENTS FROM (49)
 [Complete] [Mind] ANXIETY: Masturbation, from (3)
 [Complete] [Mind] INDOLENCE, AVERSION TO WORK: Masturbation, from (3)
 [Complete] [Mind] HYSTERIA: Sexual: Excitement, from suppression of: Low-spirited, anxiety and sadness (1)
 [Complete] [Mind] DULLNESS: Masturbation, from (13)
 [Complete] [Mind] FANCIES: Lascivious (112)
 [Complete] [Mind] FANCIES: Lascivious: Masturbation tendency, with (4)
 [Complete] [Mind] SECRETIVE: Sexually (1)

[Complete] [Mind] INSANITY, MADNESS: Erotic, sexual (38)

Rubrics in kent repertory ^[13]:

[Kent] [Mind] THOUGHTS: Tormenting (see Anxiety, Remorse): Sexual (3)

[Kent] [Mind] THOUGHTS: Intrude and crowd around each other: Sexual (7)

[Kent] [Mind] SADNESS, MENTAL DEPRESSION: Sexual excitement, after (1)

[Kent] [Mind] SADNESS, MENTAL DEPRESSION: Alternating with: Sexual excitement (1)

[Kent] [Mind] SEXUAL EXCESSES, MENTAL SYMPTOMS FROM (37)

[Kent] [Mind] HYSTERIA: Sexual excesses, after (6)

[Kent] [Mind] COMPANY: Aversion to: Desires solitude: To practice masturbation (2)

[Kent] [Mind] SADNESS, MENTAL DEPRESSION: Masturbation, from (15)

[Kent] [Mind] THOUGHTS: Tormenting (see Anxiety, Remorse): Sexual (3)

[Kent] [Mind] INDOLENCE, AVERSION TO WORK: Emission, after an (1)

[Kent] [Mind] LASCIVIOUSNESS, LUSTFUL (46)

[Kent] [Mind] INSANITY, MADNESS: Erotic (12)

Rubrics in knerr repertory ^[14]

[Knerr] [Mind and Disposition] MANIA (DEMENTIA, INSANITY, MENTAL ABERRATION, ALIENATION OR DERANGEMENT, MADNESS): Sexual: Abuse, from (2)

[Knerr] [Mind and Disposition] HYPOCHONDRIASIS: Sexual system, originating in: Abuse, from (1)

[Knerr] [Mind and Disposition] IMBECILITY: Sexual abuse, after (1)

[Knerr] [Mind and Disposition] LASCIVIOUS: Sexual desire, with (2)

[Knerr] [Mind and Disposition] LASCIVIOUS: Sexual, uncovers, parts (1)

[Knerr] [Mind and Disposition] MENTAL EXERTION: Headache, causes: Throbbing worse at base of brain with congestion of spine, increase of sexual excitement and violent erections (1)

[Knerr] [Mind and Disposition] COMPANY: Aversion to (desire for solitude): Masturbation, in (1)

[Knerr] [Mind and Disposition] IDIOCY: Masturbation, after (2)

[Knerr] [Mind and Disposition] LASCIVIOUS: Fancies (5)

[Knerr] [Mind and Disposition] EROTIC: Fancies (1)

[Knerr] [Mind and Disposition] MEMORY: Loss of: Sexual excesses, from (3)

[Knerr] [Mind and Disposition] BED: Lies in, by preference (lactophilie): From sexual excitement (1)

Few remedies found in materia medica for PPU

Staphysagria: Suited to the person with *persistent dwelling on sexual subjects* for which they *desire solitude*. They may also be indulged in *self-abuse* which lands them on *guilt feeling*. There are several symptoms related to *sexual excess* such as *emissions with backache* followed by *weakness* and *sexual neurasthenia*.¹⁵ Its patient is *highly dignified* due to which he *suppresses his sexual urges* and even feels guilt for his sexual dwellings. His sexual desires are not easily expressed due to his *shyness and honour* and *expressed only*

in his fantasies. He has constant thoughts of sexual fantasies and feels ashamed of it so patient remains in *constant anxiety* to hide his thoughts. There is *fear of losing self-control* because *extremely secretiveness* in his thoughts. Such patients feel guilty for such thoughts and leads them to pathological symptoms such as tendency to Styes and tumours (sycosis), Spermatorrhoea, emissions, weakness, guilt feeling is the hallmark for the remedy ^[16].

Conium Maculatum: Conium has strong action on sexual sphere. There is increased sexual desire but power decreased. There is weak erection as an effect of suppressed sexual appetite. Because of sexual abstinence or sexual excess, paroxysms of hysteria may occur ^[14]. Conium to be thought of in the old bachelors, in old maids and in widows who suffer from ill effects of non-gratification of sexual appetite. In impotency due to constant nightly emissions from excessive indulgence in sex. There is great sexual desire with insufficient and short-lasting erections. There is discharge of prostatic fluid on change of emotion. This remedy is frequently prescribed for sexual weakness in young men due to excessive masturbation. The slightest touch or sight of women may bring him on emissions ^[17].

Lachesis: Over stimulation on the sexual sphere due to which patient dwells towards sexual excesses and turns the person lascivious. Sex is not only very enjoyable for Lachesis; it also relieves tension ^[18]. Lachesis patient may exhibit the qualities such as obscenity and lewdness. To hide his excessive sexual thoughts such persons, turn loquacious, talkative and inclined for mental labour especially at night. Dreams are amorous which causes night emissions ^[19]. Due to persistent sexual desires, there is flaccidity of the penis, Erections without sexual desire, Pollutions night and day, sometimes with debility and sweat ^[20].

Fluoric Acid: Experiences a driving force for sexual intercourse, often begins from the early life. His thoughts are full of his previous sexual experiences or fantasises even in later life. Patient usually remains unsatisfied by his relationships and so frequently changes, often superficial intimacy in relationships. Patient has tremendous fear of sufferings and anxiety about own health. It is mainly a male remedy who usually believes in enjoying his life in all extents. Though patient falls asleep immediately as he comes to bed but later wakes up due to painful erections frequently and so suffers from insomnia for years ^[19].

Nux-Vomica: He is a hyper-sexual individual who may indulge beyond the boundaries of conventional morality to gratify his sexual impulses. The Nux patients are highly ambitious, workaholic and competitive in nature want to achieve their targets even at the cost of their own health. They may also indulge in the use of stimulants and drugs particularly in the sexual sphere, their acts are conducted out of impulse and hence described as “amoral” ^[19]. Due to over indulgence of sexual activities leads them to the state of exhaustion. In later life Nux patient suffers from impotence. He is pleasure-seeking and the four most common remedies do so are Nux, Lachesis, Tuberculinum and Lycopodium. Nux person is a self-indulgent sensualist. He has great desire for excitement, food, alcohol, and sex ^[18].

Platina: There is persistent and intense sexual desire in platina. Though its pleasurable in the beginning of indulgence in such things but later it lands the patient to distress. Platina is predominantly a female remedy and she feels unable to escape from sexual thoughts which interrupts her normal thinking. She is ashamed of her thoughts so can't reveal her sexual impulses. To cope up her sexual urge platina females develop the habit of frequent masturbation. Due to her continuous indulgence in sexual activities they land up on vulnerable psychological state^[18].

Origanum Majus: Effective in young girls indulged in habit of masturbation and excessively aroused sexual impulses. *Erotomania*, powerful lascivious impulses, leucorrhoea and also hysteria. Lascivious ideas and dreams in such patients^[15].

Above mentioned remedies are not only to be thought of in cases related to pornography addiction but other remedies such as Sulphur, Lycopodium, Hyoscyamus, Natrum Mur, Selenium, Ustilago and many others may also be considered, depending upon individual constitution of the patient.

Conclusion

By the above discussion we may draw the inference that Homoeopathy may help us in treatment of addiction problems when used along with psychotherapy or counselling sessions. Homoeopathic medicines are very helpful in patients who are emotionally vulnerable. It takes great strength to resist the addiction and to retrain our mind towards some productive thinking and not to relapse towards previous state of thoughts. Our Homoeopathic remedies act on all three states – *mind, body and soul*. So, they may help us in getting rid of pornography addictions when used in conjunction with various psychotherapies.

Now a days due to easy access to internet, pornography is prevalent in our society. Although during the covid-19 pandemic scenario pornography addiction have increased to greater extent. Exposure to such habits in childhood or adolescents can lead to unhealthy ideas about sexual relationships and even greater effects in their psychology. This addiction can have huge effect on the personal level, relationships as well as in social level so we cannot ignore such a problematic issue. Homoeopathy has an important role to play as it views the person as a unique individual and it may help the patients at an emotional level.

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