

BBC NEWS**Spain treats child phone addicts**

Two children in Spain have been admitted to a mental health institution to be treated for addiction to their mobile phones, Spanish media report.

The children, aged 12 and 13, were sent to the clinic by their parents, who said they could not carry out normal activities without their handsets. They were doing badly at school and lying to relatives in order to get money to spend on their phones. They have been learning to cope without their phones for three months.

Dr Maite Utges, who runs the Child and Youth Mental Health Centre in Lleida, near Barcelona in north-eastern Spain, said it was the first time the clinic had treated children who were dependent on their mobile phones. "They both showed disturbed behaviour and this exhibited itself in failure at school. They both had serious difficulties leading normal lives," she was quoted in Spanish papers as saying. The children had owned their phones for 18 months, and their parents had made little effort to restrict their use before noticing how serious their dependence had become.

'Tip of iceberg'

Dr Jose Martinez-Raga, an expert in addictions, said children who developed a dependency on mobile phones, like those who over-used video games, often became irritable, withdrawn and antisocial, and their school performance deteriorated. He warned these cases could be the "tip of the iceberg", and that mobile phone addiction "could definitely be a danger in the future". Fears have been raised in a number of countries about the adverse effects mobile phone use may have on children. Dr Utges recommended that parents not allow their children to have mobile phones until they reached 16 years of age.

Cell Phones: The New Addiction

It seems today that everyone everywhere has a cell phone. While some worry about the health implications of extensive cell phone use, a new complication has arisen—mental illness. In Spain, two children are being treated for cell phone addiction. The children, ages 12 and 13, displayed disturbed behavior and an abnormal dependence on their phones, were lying in order to obtain money for phone cards, and were failing in school. Frighteningly, the children had the devices for only 18 months before the addiction became severe enough to warrant admission to a mental health facility.

Story from BBC NEWS:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/europe/7452463.stm>

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QUESTIONS ON AND BEYOND THE TEXT:

I) Summarize the text, including the answers to the following questions; (you should not write more than 6 sentences)

1. Why have the two children been sent to a health clinic? What do they do there?
2. Have there been other cases of cell-phone addicts in Spain?
3. Which typical symptoms do addicted teenagers show?
4. Which solution does the expert in addictions give to the problem of cell-phone addiction?

II) How frequently do you use your mobile-phone? Would you call yourself an addict, or do you know anyone who might be an addict?

III) Who might be to blame for such addictions?