

WHO: Compulsive video gaming now a mental health problem

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Compulsive video-gaming is now considered a mental illness, the World Health Organization (WHO) has reported.

In a newly released disease classification manual, WHO said that compulsive video gaming now qualifies as a mental health condition affecting about three percent of video gamers.

The global health agency said classifying “gaming disorder” as a medical condition would help governments and healthcare providers to be more vigilant to identify the risks.

The decision to list compulsive video gaming as a new health problem was based on scientific evidence, according to Shekhar Saxena, director of WHO department for mental health and substance abuse.

Saxena said parents and friends of video game enthusiasts should be mindful of a potentially harmful problem.

“Be on the look out,” Saxena said while noting concerns should be raised if the gaming habit appears to be taking over.

“If it’s interfering with expected functions of the person – whether studies, socialization or work – then you need to be cautious and perhaps seek help,” he said.

According to Saxena, there is a need and demand for treatment of video gaming addiction in many parts of the world.

The British Psychological Society, however, stressed that not every child who spends hours in the room playing games is an addict.

But the American Psychiatric Association has not classified gaming disorder to be a new mental health problem, saying more clinical research is needed before it might be considered for inclusion.

The group said that much of the scientific literature about compulsive gamers is based on evidence from young men in Asia.