

Algeria opens country's first internet addiction clinic



Particularly focused on helping those addicted to using social networks, the Constantine, Algeria-based Bachir Mentouri clinic is fully government funded. Since opening in May 2016, psychologists have already seen more than a hundred people, ranging in age from 15 to 40. The worst addictions manifest themselves in near-constant use of the internet, with few to no breaks for food or the bathroom. Peoples' health necessarily suffers, with physical symptoms of the addiction including back pain, headaches and aggressiveness and anxiety when prevented from going online.

The clinic is also working on a public education campaign, believing that a national debate is needed to make the issue more broadly known and understood. The country has high levels of youth unemployment, with nearly 25 percent of under-24s out of work. All night internet cafes are often the only places young people can congregate, which further exacerbates the problem. Treatments at the clinic include music and physical therapy, as well as group and individual counseling sessions and meditation.

Physical addictions are often easier to see, thus making them easier to diagnose. In those situations, technology is being used in a number of ways to help. We've seen [motivational text messages](#) sent to overshoppers, and a [virtual reality cave](#) that teaches alcohol and drug addicted people coping mechanisms. How else could technology enable new methods of treatment?