

NEWS IN BRIEF

STORIES BY BECCA HELLER

GRAPHIC BY DANIEL VASILES

UNITED STATES

POLICE CONFISCATED A BAG CONTAINING OVER 35 POUNDS OF COCAINE AT THE UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS IN NEW YORK, according to BBC. The bag, which had been printed with a poor imitation of a U.N. logo, arrived in the organization's mail room and was discovered while passing through security. The cocaine itself was hidden in hollowed-out notebooks and, according to Spokesman Paul Browne, seemed to have been accidentally delivered to the U.N. headquarters from Mexico City.

HAITI

ON JAN. 23, HAITIAN PRESIDENT MICHEL MARTELY ANNOUNCED A PLAN TO USE SOLAR ENERGY KITS TO DOUBLE THE NUMBER OF RURAL HOUSEHOLDS WITH ELECTRICITY WITHIN THE NEXT TWO YEARS. Currently, only 30 percent of Haiti has access to electricity, and according to BBC, the proposed \$40 million energy package aims to introduce electricity to thousands more.

SUDAN

OVER 20 CHINESE WORKERS WERE CAPTURED BY SUDANESE REBELS IN AN OIL-RICH REGION BORDERING NEWLY ESTABLISHED SOUTH SUDAN. The raid escalated tensions between Sudan and South Sudan and further highlighted the risks Chinese companies face as they continue to invest in the tumultuous but petroleum-rich region. According to BBC, statements from Beijing announced that Sudan and China were taking action to respond to the emergency.

SPAIN

IN THE LAST QUARTER OF 2011, OFFICIAL REPORTS CLOCKED SPAIN'S UNEMPLOYMENT RATE AT BEYOND FIVE MILLION, BBC reports. While Spain has long had the highest unemployment rate in the eurozone, the rate, which has now risen to 22.8 percent, is shockingly more than double the average rate of the other 17 countries in the eurozone.

Brain irregularities found in young Internet addicts

By Kate Gibson
STAFF WRITER

How often have you logged on to check Moodle and moments later found yourself on Facebook without remembering how you got there?

In an age when virtually any information is only a click away, experts are beginning to explore reasons behind compulsive Internet usage.

A recent study from the Chinese Academy of Sciences in Wuhan found structural irregularities in the brains of adolescent Internet addicts.

The research group, led by Dr. Hao Lei, performed specialized MRI brain scans on 35 men and women between the ages of 14 and 24, according to BBC.

Seventeen of these individuals had been identified as having Internet Addiction Disorder, which is "characterized by an individual's inability to control his or her use of the Internet," according to the published study in PLoS ONE. The diagnoses were based on the answers to a series of yes or no questions pertaining to the impact of the Internet on the individual's everyday life.

Those who had been diagnosed with IAD showed disruptions in the white matter of the brain, which contains nerve fibers. The disconnected nerve fibers are localized in areas of the brain linked to emotions, decision-making and self-control, according to BBC. The subjects who were not diagnosed with IAD did not display such disruptions.

These same fiber disconnections have also been found in the brains of cocaine addicts, alcoholics and gambling addicts, suggesting that Internet addiction may interact with the brain in a similar manner as other established substance or behavioral addictions.

"One of the side effects (of addiction) may be that you might choose not to eat because the addiction is what's feeding you," said Ernest McCoy, part-time

counselor at Guilford. "You may not seek human interaction as frequently as you once did, your sleep habits might change and you may become disinterested in other activities."

Though additional studies will be needed to confirm these findings, this discovery "could lead to new treatments for addictive behavior," reported BBC.

Existing treatment for behavioral addiction may include "intensive outpatient therapy and participating in cognitive behavioral therapy," said McCoy.

"You really have to work toward a change in lifestyle," said McCoy. "You had to change your lifestyle to maintain the addiction, so you have to change your lifestyle to maintain sobriety."

Because of the newness of this illness, however, there is no widely accepted model for treating Internet addiction.

The last "Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders" was published in 1994, "when the Internet was still in its infancy," said Chris Henry, assistant professor of psychology, in an email interview. As such, the current DSM does not contain any information about Internet addiction.

"But its next edition is scheduled for a 2013 release, and the possible inclusion of something like an 'Internet addiction disorder' has been hotly debated for the last several years," said Henry. "Some have debated that it represents a kind of impulse-control disorder and should be recognized as such, while others argue that, while clearly problematic for some individuals, it is not widespread or serious enough to warrant inclusion in the DSM."

While the future classification and treatment of Internet addiction remains uncertain, know this: in the two minutes it took to read this article, a million new Facebook comments were born.

Diagnostic criteria for internet addiction

- ⓐ Do you feel preoccupied with the internet?
- ⓐ Do you feel the need to use the internet with increasing amounts of time in order to achieve satisfaction?
- ⓐ Have you repeatedly made unsuccessful efforts to control, cut back or stop internet use?
- ⓐ Do you feel restless, moody, depressed, or irritable when attempting to cut down or stop internet use?
- ⓐ Do you stay online longer than intended?
- ⓐ Have you jeopardized or risked the loss of a significant relationship, job, educational or career opportunity because of the internet?
- ⓐ Have you lied to family members, a therapist or others to conceal the extent of involvement with the internet?
- ⓐ Do you use the internet as a way of escaping from problems or of relieving a distressed mood (e.g. feelings of helplessness, guilt, anxiety and depression)?

Participants answering yes to questions 1 to 5 and at least one more answer were classed as suffering from Internet Addiction Disorder

Source: Young's Diagnostic Questionnaire for Internet Addiction adapted by Beard and Wolf

GRAPHIC BY JOY DAKON