**Excessive internet use causes blood pressure rise and anxiety**

Some people who use the internet a lot experience significant physiological changes such as increased heart rate and blood pressure when they stop, according to research.

A study tested the heart rate and blood pressure of 144 participants, aged 18 to 33, before and after a brief internet session. Their anxiety and self-reported internet addiction were also assessed.

The results showed increases in physiological arousal on ending the internet session for those with problematically high internet usage. The rises in heart rate and blood pressure were mirrored by increased feelings of anxiety. There were no such changes for participants who reported no problems with internet usage.

The study, carried out by clinicians from Swansea University in Wales and the University of Milan in Italy, is the first controlled-experimental demonstration of physiological changes due to internet exposure.

The researchers found an average 3%–4% increase in heart rate and blood pressure, and in some cases double that figure, immediately on stopping surfing the internet, compared with before using it, for those with behaviour problems related to digital technology.

Although this rise is not enough to be life-threatening, such changes can be associated with feelings of anxiety, and with alterations in the hormonal system, which can reduce immune responses.

The study found that the participants spent an average of five hours a day on the internet, with 20% spending over six hours.

More than 40% of the sample reported some level of internet-related problem, acknowledging that they spent too much time online.