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**SEX ADDICTION: MYTH OR REALITY?**

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**OBJECTIVE**

To determine whether hypersexual behavior can appropriately be characterized as an addiction, or rather, a symptom or manifestation of a co-existing Axis I or Axis II Disorder.

**DESIGN AND METHODS**

A literature review is being conducted to explore these opposing viewpoints. Articles published from the year 2000 to present relating to the topic of sex addiction/ hypersexuality/ sexual compulsivity/ impulsivity are reviewed.

**RESULTS**

The concept of sexual addiction was introduced in the 1970's. Two schools of thought have. Proponents of sex 'addiction' argue that the neurochemical changes associated with hypersexual behavior are quite similar to that of drug addiction. They argued that sex 'addicts' can experience a psychological withdrawal as experienced by those addicted to drugs of abuse. Some proponents of sex addiction even advise a 12-step treatment program. Critics of sex addiction argue that increased sexual activity is a way of alleviating affective symptoms, or is reflective of the impulsivity, associated with concomitant Axis I or Axis II pathology. They postulate that treating the underlying psychiatric disorder would ameliorate hypersexual behavior.

**DISCUSSION**

Despite standard, and even increasing use of the term 'sex addiction' in media and popular culture, mental health professionals remain divided in regards to this subject. The proposed inclusion and subsequent rejection of hypersexual disorder in DSM-V highlights this existing debate. The notion of hypersexual behavior as an addiction warrants further exploration, especially since how it is defined may dictate treatment modality.