

Porn addict epidemic in Australia: Teenagers and grandparents in need of rehab and counselling

 [dailytelegraph.com.au/lifestyle/health/thousands-of-aussies-treated-for-sex-addiction/news-story/eb59c128c3a4faa708d90a40624ad761](https://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/lifestyle/health/thousands-of-aussies-treated-for-sex-addiction/news-story/eb59c128c3a4faa708d90a40624ad761)

May 11,
2019

Teens and grandparents are among the thousands of Australians seeking treatment for raging sex addictions, here and overseas, as online porn becomes ever cheaper and easier to access and buying sex is “as easy as ordering a pizza”.

News Corp was told internet porn and online dating apps are behind a huge rise in the number of Aussies developing life-consuming sex addictions.

According to experts, a full-blown sex addiction is a devastating condition which can result in sufferers being unable to maintain jobs and relationships, as they spend most of each day, every day, searching for sexual gratification.

Some people, desperate for help, are travelling as far afield as northern Thailand and paying big bucks for treatment at exclusive rehab facilities with dedicated sex addiction recovery programs, while thousands of others are receiving treatment in Australian rehabs or through psychologists, counsellors and sex addiction specialists and programs.

Experts believe untold numbers of Aussies, who are too embarrassed to seek help or cannot afford private and sometimes costly treatment, are going untreated.

They said Australia was on the cusp of a sex addiction epidemic.

Sex addiction specialist John Arber said he had treated more than 1500 people — mostly men — for the condition through his Melbourne practice in the last five years, and the number was increasing annually.

The age of his clients ranged from 18 to “well into their 70s”, he said.

“The ease of access with the internet is a significant factor. Teenagers have access to devices and the internet, and many of my clients report becoming addicted to pornography at a very young age. Social media has a lot to answer for,” Mr Arber, who will present on sex addiction at next week’s major ANZADDICTION conference on the Gold Coast, said.



 John Arber is a Victorian sex addiction therapist who is concerned about the rising levels of sex addiction. Picture: Supplied

Relationship manager at Sydney's South Pacific Private (SPP) Tamara Buchanan said the #metoo movement and reporting of sexually addictive behaviour involving sportspeople and celebrities had helped destigmatise the condition, so more people were seeking help.

"Anecdotally, we are observing more and more clients seeking help and openly talking about their sex addiction," she said.

Golfer Tiger Woods, actors Russell Brand, Michael Douglas, Charlie Sheen, David Duchovny, Rob Low and Kanye West have all been linked to sex addiction.

Clinical psychologist Dr Janet Hall, also based in Melbourne, treats people with addiction problems from across Australia.

She said the number of people seeking her help was increasing by about 30 per cent every year.

Porn — which was “becoming ever accessible, affordable (free), abundant and anonymous” — was largely to blame, Dr Hall said.



 Charlie Sheen is just one of many celebrities how have been linked to sex addiction.
Picture: Getty Images

And increasing numbers of Australian businessmen with families are looking to Thailand for discreet treatment of their sex addictions, according to therapist with The Cabin, Stuart Fenton.

The Cabin runs luxury rehabs in Sydney and Chiang Mai, Thailand.

Mr Fenton said the ease with which men could now buy sex had contributed to the increase in sex addicts.

“It’s not just the increase in free pornography, it’s also the increase in dating apps and the way that sex workers can advertise, that just makes it so much more accessible these days,” Mr Fenton said. “Twenty years ago it would have been a matter of covert cruising the streets looking for street workers but these days it’s as easy as ordering a pizza, more or less, so I think that’s played a really big part in it as well.”

In the last 18 months, he had treated nearly 20 Australians at the Chiang Mai Cabin facility for sex addiction, most of whom were middle-aged, heterosexual men with families, and the funds to pay for overseas, private treatment, Mr Fenton said.

“They are usually self-funded, people who have businesses and they can afford \$15,000 for 28 days,” he said.



Stuart Fenton is a sex addiction therapist at The Cabin in Chiang Mai, Northern Thailand. The Cabin has a dedicated sex addiction recovery program which is being accessed by Australians. Picture: Supplied

Exclusive Thai rehab centre The Dawn, also in Chiang Mai, also confirmed it was regularly treating Australian men for sex addiction; usually in combination with other addictions or mental health issues.

Dr Hall defined sex addiction as “a compulsive urge to act out sexually that would be much greater than what we would consider ‘the norm’ — in both quantity and in quality”.

The ‘norm’ was considered to be three times a week with a maximum of two partners, she said.

“My definition (of sex addiction) is that it causes spiritual, mental, emotional, physical or economical pain or distress to the addict or their loved ones,” Dr Hall said. “No amount of rational explanation, guidance and often negative consequences, can stop them from acting out.”

Effective treatment required regular sessions with a sex addiction expert and could require a lifetime commitment to the 12-step Sex Addicts Anonymous program.

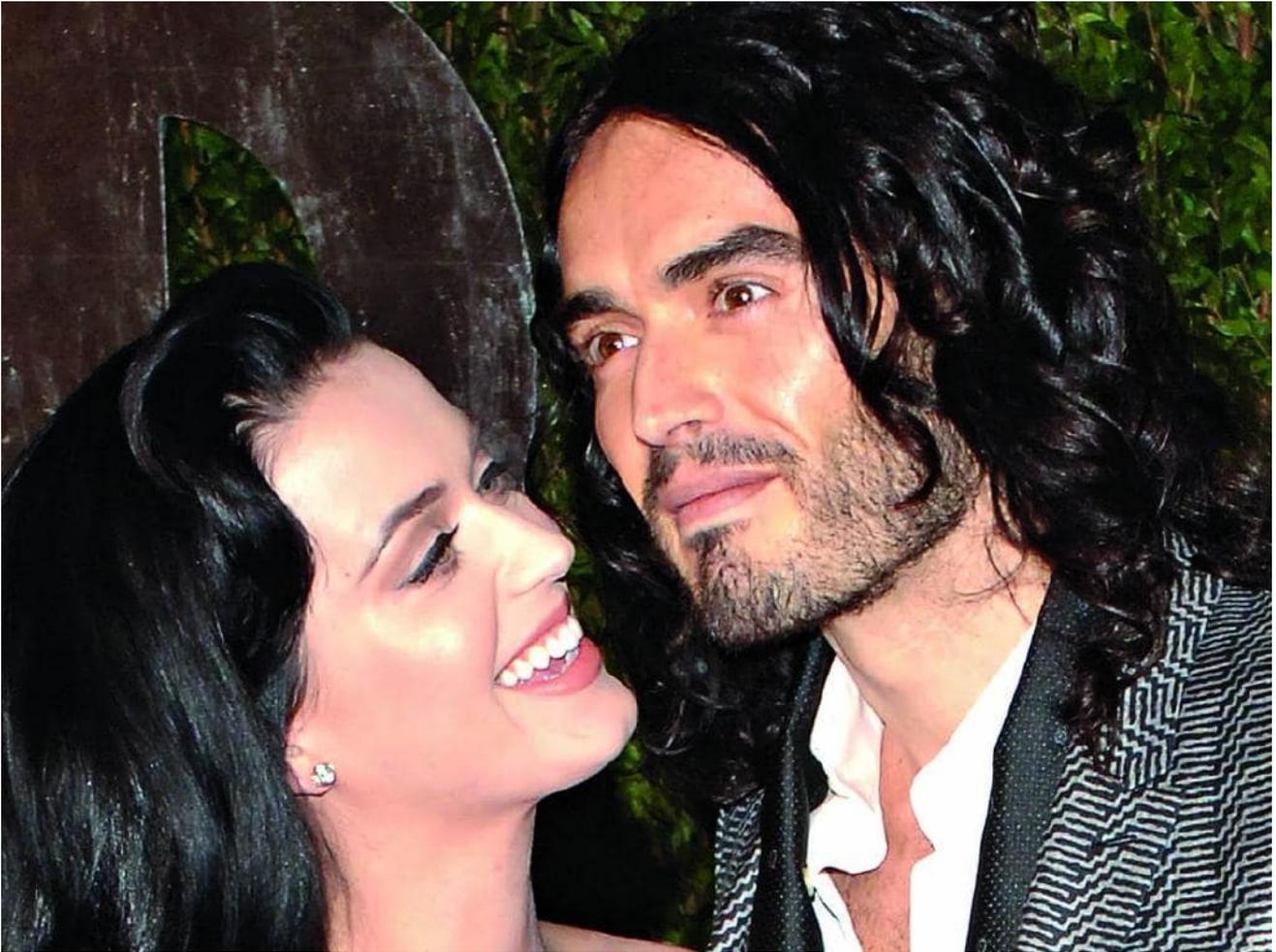


 Sex addiction got US golf star Tiger Woods into a lot of hot water in the past, but he appears to have recovered and turned his life around. Picture: AFP

Mr Fenton said among his recent international clients at The Cabin in Chiang Mai was an English university student whose sex addiction was so bad he had been unable to study and wanted to kill himself.

“He would say to me ‘I wake up in the morning, I don’t have breakfast and the first thing I do is look for sex. I go off and I pay a cab driver to help me find a hooker and then I spend the whole day having group sex and going to swingers things when I’m meant to be studying,’” Mr Fenton said. “He spent six years of his life doing that and then got into trouble for plagiarising at uni, and ended up without a qualification, because he never studied. He spent six years having sex, all day, every day. This is a guy who sat in front of me and said ‘I want to die, this is not fun, I hate myself’. But it’s like being a heroin addict, they keep doing it because they just can’t stop.”

Mr Arber said most men came to him seeking help after they had been caught out by their loved ones through emails, texts, the search histories on their devices, telephone bills or bank statements.



 Russell Brand, pictured with ex-wife Katy Perry, has been open about his battle with, and recovery from, sex addiction. Picture: Getty Images

“The vast majority transition from viewing pornography online, going to chat rooms then acting out with hook-ups, attending massage shops and brothels,” he said.

Mr Fenton said most of his clients had also reached crisis point before seeking help.

Some had been blackmailed by sex workers while many others had devastated wives and partners, threatening to leave and take the children, unless intensive treatment was sought.

“I’m always stunned at how rational and together a lot of the wives are about it — some don’t cope that well — but what I typically see is that they are supportive,” Mr Fenton said. “And when they (the men) are in treatment, they usually say ‘I love my wife and I want our family to stay together and I feel like I’m about to lose it all, and it doesn’t matter that I’m a successful businessman, none of that matters compared to my wife and family’. But they have been putting all that at risk, against their own better judgment, because they’re addicted to sex.”

South Pacific Private program director Alyssa Lalor said sex addiction and its inclusion in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) — which is used by clinicians and psychiatrists to diagnose psychiatric illnesses — had been hotly debated over the years in clinical circles but at SPP it was recognised as a process addiction, and treated accordingly.

“SPP has been treating clients with co-occurring conditions and dual diagnoses since opening in 1993 including thousands of clients who self-identify as being addicted to sex. Sex addiction is characterised by obsessive or compulsive behaviours that interfere with a person’s daily life,” she said.

Up to eight per cent of people who arrived for treatment at SPP were experiencing behaviours commonly associated with sex addiction, and the numbers were growing steadily year on year, Ms Lalor said.

Gold Coast based psychologist and author of book *Sex, Lies and Relationships*, Ruth Simons, said the growing problem of sex addiction was part of wider issues related to sex and relationships.



 Gold Coast psychologist and sex therapist Ruth Simons believes sex addiction is part of a wider problem. Picture: David Clark

“Internet pornography has impacted relationships in many ways. This first issue now is the age that our children are subjected to pornography many starting from the age of eight years-old. What our children have access to is shaping their view on sex and sexuality. It is not uncommon for boys to treat girls roughly when they start out in their sex lives, as this is what they see on the net. Most do not see loving parents in their homes, so they don’t have any role models where they can see sex in a loving environment,” she said. “There are many males who would rather have sex with their computers than with their partners.”

Originally published as [Easy porn fuels sex addict surge](#)