



**SHOCK THERAPY:** A device delivers 30-volt pulses to pressure points in a patient's brain, in this Beijing Internet addiction clinic.

and now treats hundreds of patients a year. While patients are primarily from China's coastal areas, they have come from as far away as Taiwan and Malaysia, paying US \$1000 for 20 days of treatment—a steep price for the average Chinese family. Patients are forced to give up the Internet cold turkey, with the help of counseling, physical activity, antidepressants, and even electrical treatments [see photo, “Shock Therapy”]. Patients are awakened promptly at 6:30 a.m. and go to bed at 10:00 p.m., a routine that helped one patient, Cheng Cheng. “When I was playing games at home, I didn’t have a regular eating and sleeping pattern,” he said on the day he was released.

The Beijing hospital claims a success rate of 80 percent. A patient is deemed “cured” when, following treatment, Internet activity is limited to 1 or 2 hours a day. “Internet addiction is much easier to cure than a smoking or drinking addiction,” according to Tao (who smoked several cigarettes during the interview).

Tao, who graduated from Shanxi Medical University with a Ph.D. in psychology, says that China’s Internet cafés have made themselves irresistible to many, sometimes offering dorm beds, drinks, and meals next to computer terminals. “I treated one patient who went into an Internet café in the fall and didn’t come out until spring,” says Tao. “He spent six months there.” —JEN LIN-LIU

# China’s e-Junkies Head for Rehab

Beijing hospital ward treats Internet addicts

Qin Xinle’s teenage son had stopped eating meals regularly and had refused to go to school. The boy’s Internet addiction had gotten so bad he sometimes played online games for 24 hours without stop. Finally, at his wit’s end, Qin piled his family into their car and drove 5 hours to Beijing, to check the boy into the Internet addiction center at the Beijing Military Clinic, which occupies space on the campus of the Beijing Military Region Central Hospital. Here, Qin’s son wouldn’t have access to the Internet or a phone for the next 20 days, and he wouldn’t be allowed to leave.

This, China’s first in-patient Internet addiction center, often is fully booked. It currently is expanding its capacity from

40 to 300 beds, and it’s being studied by other hospitals around the country, which plan to open similar wards. So widespread is the concern about teenagers falling prey to the Internet’s allure, the central government has even sought to ban youths under the age of 18 from going to Internet cafés.

What accounts for China’s singular obsession with the cyberworld? Tao Ran, the head of the center’s addiction ward, blames the country’s crowded urban environment, with its dearth of outdoor space for sports and recreation. Qin, an IT salesman, seems to agree. “China’s leapfrog development, where every two years creates a new generation, is causing problems like this.”

Patients who receive treatment at the center are usually male, between the ages of 13 and 18, though the hospital has also treated patients as old as 70. Tao, a 43-year-old psychologist who used to specialize in treating cigarette and alcohol addiction, saw his first Internet-addicted patient, a friend’s son, in 2003. “All of a sudden we were faced with a new problem, and we didn’t have a mature way of thinking about it,” he says.

Soon after, Tao shifted his focus to Internet addiction

PHOTO: GANQIAN CHU/GETTY IMAGES; PUZZLE ART: LAURA HOFFMAN

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**KEY** (from previous News page)  
The answer is 2. Because there is a 2 in each of the bottom two rows, a 2 cannot appear in the two left-hand or bottom three squares of the ninth box, and because a 2 appears in the eighth column, nor can a 2 be in the top middle square of the box. So by elimination, the number in the top left square must be 2.

This challenge is from Michael Mepham’s popular Sudoku Web site, [www.sudoku.org.uk](http://www.sudoku.org.uk).