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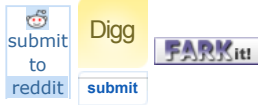
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Sex addiction is big business for US clinics



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Sex addiction isn't just a problem for Tiger Woods -- it's big business for clinics claiming to offer treatment.

The planet's best golfer is far from the first celebrity to go into sex rehab, but he's probably the biggest and his case has helped thrust the idea of sex addiction as a serious disease into the spotlight.

Speaking Friday in a live televised apology for his multiple extra-marital affairs with cocktail waitresses, nightclub hostesses and a porn film actress, Woods said he had already received 45 days of "guidance" at a clinic.

On Saturday, he's heading back for more.

Despite a certain amount of skepticism from the public about sex addiction, professionals in the field say it is comparable to alcoholism and not just an excuse for philanderers.

"A figure like Woods has drawn a lot of attention to the issue but I have dealt with that for years," said Craig Gross, a sex addiction expert and author of several books on the matter.

"A lot of relations are in shambles because of that. It is a growing issue that many more people than we can imagine are dealing with."

Gross said treatment in a clinic similar to the Pine Grove facility in Mississippi used by Woods costs between 20,000 and 40,000 dollars for a six-week course.

Experts say treatments consist of psychotherapy, medication and group discussion along the lines of the 12-step Alcoholics Anonymous program.

Sometimes relatives or others close to the patient will take part. Anti-depressants are used as well as medications designed to lower sex-drive.

One Arizona clinic offers treatment on an "intensive" basis, with the patient in and out in four days.

Michael Johnson, a sex addiction specialist from Austin, Texas, said a real cure is only possible in about two years, "sometimes longer than that."

Mainstream medical experts are cautious discussing the issue and the American Psychiatric Association does not recognize the disorder as a true illness.

But Johnson said that compulsive, unrestrained sexual activity causes harm.

"In my practice there are people who are not as prominent as Tiger

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Woods but successful people that put all their life at risk," he said.

"Woods is an example: look at what he put at risk, he was on the top of the world and doing foolish things."

Another example was New York's high-flying governor [Eliot Spitzer](#), who resigned in 2008 after it was revealed that he was repeatedly visiting prostitutes, paying up to 5,000 dollars at a time.

Although talking about the problem is a basic component of most addiction therapies, Johnson said Woods's case was unusual.

"I've had various clients going to the sex addiction clinics and never heard about one of them having to make a public apology as part of the treatment."

Gross said the public confession was a success.

"His statement showed clearly that there are things that he learned. He was believable and sincere."

