'Brain Rot' May be Visible on MRI: Physician Launches Digital Toxicity Awareness Day on August 2

On August 2, Digital Toxicity Awareness Day will examine known biological changes linked to "brain rot"—live on YouTube and in person.

WESTMONT, IL, UNITED STATES, July 14, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- "Brain Rot" May be visible on MRI: Physician Launches Digital Toxicity Awareness Day on August 2

> Brain rot is not slang—it is a warning. Our brains are being flooded with nonstop stimulation, interruption, and emotional triggers they were never built to withstand."
>
> *Eugene Lipov, MD, Founder, Digital Toxicity Awareness Day*

New public health initiative highlights the potential biological effects of excessive digital exposure on the brain, sleep, attention, and mental health.

Digital Toxicity Awareness Day will launch on August 2, 2026, with a free YouTube Live event at 12:00 p.m. Central Time and an in-person event at Stella Mental Health in Westmont, Illinois.

Founded by Eugene Lipov, MD, a physician, researcher, and psychobiologist, the initiative will educate the public about how chronic smartphone use, social media overstimulation, doomscrolling, constant notifications, and screen-related sleep disruption may affect the brain and nervous system.

"This is not just about distraction," said Dr. Lipov. "MRI studies have reported lower gray matter volume and altered brain activity in people with excessive or problematic smartphone use. In plain English, digital toxicity may be visible on brain imaging. The effects may be biological as well as psychological."

Research has associated problematic smartphone use with structural and functional differences in brain regions involved in attention, reward processing, impulse control, emotional regulation, and addictive behavior.

Here is the science :
Wang Y, Zou Z, Song H, et al. "Altered Gray Matter Volume and White Matter Integrity in College

Students with Mobile Phone Dependence." Frontiers in Psychology. 2016;7:597. doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2016.00597.

Participants with mobile-phone dependence had lower gray-matter volume in the superior, inferior and medial frontal gyri, anterior cingulate cortex, thalamus and middle occipital gyrus. Greater dependence severity correlated with lower volume in several of these regions. The study was cross-sectional, so it could not establish causation.

Horvath J, Mundinger C, Schmitgen MM, et al. "Structural and Functional Correlates of Smartphone Addiction." Addictive Behaviors. 2020;105:106334. doi:10.1016/j.addbeh.2020.106334.

Individuals meeting criteria for smartphone addiction had lower gray-matter volume in the insula and temporal cortex, as well as reduced resting-state activity in the anterior cingulate cortex.

Lee D, Namkoong K, Lee J, Lee BO, Jung YC. "Lateral Orbitofrontal Gray Matter Abnormalities in Subjects With Problematic Smartphone Use." Journal of Behavioral Addictions. 2019;8(3):404–411. doi:10.1556/2006.8.2019.50.

Problematic smartphone users had significantly smaller gray-matter volume in the right lateral orbitofrontal cortex, and lower volume correlated with greater smartphone-addiction severity.

Nagata JM, Bao K, Murray SB, et al. "Social Media Use and Early Adolescent Brain Structure: Findings From the Adolescent Brain Cognitive Development Study." NeuroImage. 2026;331:121860. doi:10.1016/j.neuroimage.2026.121860.

In 7,614 adolescents, greater daily social-media use was associated with lower overall cortical thickness and volume. A social-media-related factor was also associated with reduced hippocampal volume and lower inferior-temporal gray-matter volume. This study concerns social-media exposure rather than smartphone use alone.

"Brain rot is not just a slang term," Dr. Lipov said. "It is a warning label. The modern brain is being exposed to levels of stimulation, interruption, novelty, and emotional triggering that it was never designed to handle."

The initiative follows the July 24, 2026, release of Dr. Lipov's forthcoming book, Digital Brain Rot. The book examines smartphone overuse, dopamine reward loops, sleep disruption, stress physiology, attention fragmentation, and compulsive digital behavior. More information is available at DigitalBrainRot.com.

The campaign aims to increase awareness of digital toxicity as a potential biological and public health concern, explain how excessive digital exposure may affect sleep and mental health, and

help people reclaim attention, real-world connection, and well-being.

About Eugene Lipov, MD
Eugene Lipov, MD, is a physician, researcher, and psychobiologist with more than 20 years of experience in neuroscience, trauma, pain, and the autonomic nervous system. He pioneered the use of stellate ganglion block for post-traumatic stress disorder and has appeared on FOX 5 DC to discuss dopamine-driven digital addiction, memetic disease, and strategies for reducing compulsive smartphone use.

Media Contact
Eugene Lipov, MD
DigitalToxicityAwareness.com
eugene@dreugenelipov.com

Eugene Lipov
Stella Mental Health
+1 312-618-0829
email us here
Visit us on social media:
LinkedIn
Instagram
Facebook
YouTube
TikTok
X
Other
