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Letter to the Editor

Are we regressing to more primal behaviours?

Sir,

The trajectory of human evolution from our primate ancestors has been established through significant modifications in cognitive ability, social systems, and tool use. In recent years, the introduction of mobile technology has added an entirely novel aspect to this evolutionary path, drastically affecting human behaviour, communication, and cognitive processes.[1] This article addresses the potential evolutionary consequences of mobile technology, specifically whether our reliance on these devices represents a return to more primal behaviours or the next phase of our adaptive evolution.

Human evolution from apes resulted in substantial cognitive advances, such as larger brains, complex language development, and sophisticated problem-solving skills. The use of tools is an indicator of human progress. Communication and shared knowledge played pivotal roles in the cohesion and survival of early human communities.

THE MOBILE TECHNOLOGY REVOLUTION

Mobile technology has introduced new ways of processing information, communicating, and interacting with the world, but the widespread use of mobile phones has changed the habits and social relationships of people, and they increasingly rely on these devices. The constant flow of information and notifications could lead to fragmented attention and a reliance on devices for information storage, potentially impairing deep cognitive processing and memory retention.[2,3]

REGRESSING BACK

Mobile technology creates a culture of quick gratification, with information, entertainment, and social contact available on demand. This immediacy can be compared to more primitive reward-seeking behaviours shown in our ancestors. Despite the fact that mobile technology improves communication, it can also lead to social isolation. Face-to-face contacts are being replaced by digital communication, which may lack the depth and emotional connection that in-person conversations provide.[4] Continuously gazing down at a mobile device puts strain on the neck muscles and vertebrae, resulting in forward head posture and rounded shoulders.[5] Poor posture patterns, like slouching while using mobile devices, may lead to the development of kyphosis. Excessive mobile phone use causes a lack of physical activity, which is a preventable risk factor for NCD.

The ubiquitous use of mobile technology has had a tremendous impact on many elements of daily living, like posture and musculoskeletal problems reminiscent of our primate ancestors, social isolation, behavioural shifts, augmented cognitive abilities, etc.

It's critical to strike a balance between maximizing the benefits of mobile technology and minimizing its negatives as we continue to incorporate it into our daily lives. Maintaining this equilibrium will guarantee that, as we evolve, our cognitive and social capacities will be strengthened rather than weakened.

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