

# Pornography addicts must retrain brain

Couple say perversion cause of 56 per cent of divorces

**RAMON GONZALEZ**

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In our highly sexualized culture “sexual immorality is running rampant” with literally millions of people struggling with porn and sexual addictions daily, say Bruce and Jennie Hannemann.

“The problem inside the Church is as bad as the outside,” the Green Bay, Wisc., couple said, pointing to a survey of U.S. Christians showing that 50 per cent of men and 20 per cent of women struggled with pornography use.

This has led to countless wounded souls, broken relationships, divorce and dysfunctional families. In 56 per cent of divorces “an obsessive interest in Internet pornography” was a significant factor.

The Hannemanns spoke on the effects of pornography at Holy Trinity Church in Spruce Grove May 5. The

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**Bruce Hannemann**

couple gave a similar presentation at the Catholic Pastoral Centre May 7. Both presentations were part of the Edmonton Archdiocese’s first annual Life and Family Week.

Jennie said those who become trapped in pornography addiction are not necessarily losers. “The profile of an Inter-



Bruce and Jennie Hannemann say viewing pornography triggers the brain into releasing a flood of its own endorphins.

net pornography addict is intelligent, sensitive and spiritual,” she pointed out. “Aren’t those the characteristics of the majority of Catholics?”

The Hannemanns are co-founders of Elizabeth Ministry International and cofounders of RECLAiM, an online program for porn addicts. Bruce, an author, is a former porn addict himself.

Jennie has served families for over 35 years in the roles of educator, pastoral and family life minister, Catholic radio personality and retreat director. Her journey through her husband’s pornography addiction has enhanced her work with the hurting and has intensified her belief in the power of God’s grace.

“Pornography corrupts us to our core,” she said. “It’s time to reclaim our culture for Christ.”

The couple said in reality, Internet pornography is like an addiction to drugs or alcohol. Pornography viewing triggers the brain into releasing a flood of its own endorphins and neurochemi-

cals such as dopamine, serotonin and norepinephrine. The porn viewer becomes addicted to these chemicals and finds it almost impossible to break free.

Bruce said people often begin watching porn at a young age out of curiosity. He started at age nine when he found a stash of porn magazines in his dad’s office. Curiosity turns into compulsion and soon porn viewing becomes a form of self-medication every time there is a problem.

## ESCAPE FROM STRESS

When people frequently use pornography for pleasure, escape and coping, the brain begins to believe this is the way to deal with the stresses of life.

As a result, their thoughts become dominated by sexual images, urges and fantasies, spending increasing amounts of time, effort and energy in pleasing themselves or fighting the urge. They are unable to stop.

“Just as with those who struggle with

drugs and alcohol, they have developed a chemical dependency,” Bruce said. “They can’t imagine a day without masturbation.”

Men addicted to pornography prefer masturbation to having sex with a woman, noted Jennie. “Pornography is ruining the sex lives of an entire generation (of young men).”

“By the time they get married, they are not going to get aroused by their wife.”

The couple noted teens are extremely vulnerable to Internet pornography as well as sexting and urged parents to take precautions and to “talk about this with your children.” Sexting, the act of sending nude pictures via a smart phone, is popular with young people aged nine to 18.

One of the great challenges in helping people break out of pornography is the fear, shame and embarrassment they feel. Because of this, many keep their struggles a secret and suffer alone.

## RETRAIN THE BRAIN

“I couldn’t function anymore because of my addiction,” recalled Bruce. “I sought help but I still couldn’t stop.” He said his life changed only after he retrained his brain through an online recovery program.

“Willpower alone is not going to be enough,” Jeannie pointed out. “Porn addiction is a chemical addiction. It’s not about sex and is not going to be cured by marriage.”

In their presentation, the Hannemanns promoted the program RECLAiM Sexual Health, describing it as a science-based online recovery program that helps individuals move forward on their personal path to freedom from unwanted sexual behaviours.

They said RECLAiM, which combines “brain science” with insights from Theology of the Body, leads to physical, mental and spiritual healing.

For more information on the program go to [www.ReclaimSexualHealth.com](http://www.ReclaimSexualHealth.com).