

Don't Let ChatGPT Become Your Therapist

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With just one click of a button, we can generate images, speech, and full-scale essays in mere seconds. Recent developments in AI (Artificial Intelligence) technology like ChatGPT have introduced what the future will look like while sparking conversations about the potential threats it may pose against humanity. In the article "OpenAI is encouraging people to use ChatGPT for therapy. That's dangerous." from *MSNBC*, Zeeshan Aleem (2023) argues that ChatGPT as a therapy tool is "reckless" and misleading. He points out that ChatGPT's capabilities are limited and cannot genuinely empathize or understand users' emotions. There are concerns that vulnerable individuals might be misguided by the artificial guidance from the chatbot, potentially leading to harm. He also notes that ChatGPT deviates from therapeutic principles and lacks emotional intelligence and wisdom, the things therapy seekers seek. He believes that overestimating AI's capabilities can lead to wasted time and potentially harm people. I agree with Aleem (2023) that using artificial intelligence like ChatGPT to replace professional human therapy is dangerous. Some jobs are not robot jobs. We should start regulating and restricting what these AI technologies can do. However, Aleem (2023) did not emphasize the potential impact on actual therapists; he did not mention the need for regulation and the danger of underestimating what AI could become.

In the article, Aleem (2023) states that "encouraging people to use chatbots to get therapy presents an opportunity cost." I agree; this is bluntly true. Though, he didn't highlight the potential impact therapists may face because of this technology. Near the end of the article, Aleem (2023) tells us that AI like ChatGPT could "[reroute] people from getting therapy through humans who can offer sustained, nuanced feedback that's based on an actual intellectual and emotional connection." In other words, people might choose a quicker, cheaper option rather

than comprehensive help from fellow humans, which is interesting when considering mental health has become a more prominent topic over the last decade. As a result, the recent surge in demand for mental health services has opened the door for more therapy services and businesses. However, AI could cut all that if people choose chatbots to help solve problems instead of a professional. In fact, according to Jamie Ducharme (2023) from *TIME Magazine*, in a poll conducted by *Business Wire*, "80% of people who'd used ChatGPT for mental-health advice found it a good alternative to regular therapy." However, the results are not surprising considering our rapidly increasing use of technology, especially after the pandemic. We feel socially safer on our devices than interacting with people like therapists. Professor of Psychiatry at Yale, David Tolin, responded to this finding: "I would find [it] a little sad if we eventually replaced the human connection with a computer connection" (Jamie Ducharme, 2023).

In light of these dangers, Aleem (2023) does not offer solutions to stop the dangerous claims from *OpenAI* or AI technology. However, he suggests that *OpenAI* should "prominently advertise the huge limitations and potential dangers of the tech to users." However, this is not the case; instead, *OpenAI* is profiting by "exaggerating" about its technology while harming people. With that, it may be time for the government to step in. Mikaela Cohen (2023) from *CNBC* agrees. In "Why waiting for A.I. laws, regulations from government could be a catastrophic mistake," she says, "regulatory policies enacted in collaboration with government will be an important part of achieving safer AI usage for the public." In contrast, François Cadelon, a director at *BCG Henderson Institute*, believes that "companies will need to create a unified regulatory framework." However, companies have their own interests and perspectives. Cohen (2023) paraphrases what Cadelon said regarding companies establishing their own AI regulation, saying that companies must work together to create AI "protocols." Despite this

potential solution, some organizations might not follow through and go in a different direction, which could be much more liberal in its AI safeguards. If the government established a regulatory commission, AI norms would be unilateral across industries, as Cohen (2023) previously said would be an "important part of achieving safer AI usage for the public." I agree with that, as it would be much safer for society if AI companies and the use of the technology had legal obligations. Hence, the federal government could appoint an AI regulatory commission similar to the Federal Trade Commission to oversee and regulate the use of AI in business and other institutions, like healthcare.

Onward, this is not to say that AI has no positives. Aleem (2023) says ChatGPT is "robust enough to help ChatGPT's users conduct certain kinds of research, brainstorm ideas, and write essays in a manner that resembles a human." There is no question that AI is a tool that will assist humans in research, script writing, and calculations faster and more reliably. For example, *ERMPProtect* (n.d.) points out that humans can use AI to run simulations and predict things humans cannot compute. They also say that AI "employs highly sophisticated underlying technology and computing machinery that have the ability to quickly analyze vast amounts of data." Monotonous tasks tire and make the human brain bored. On the other hand, robot technology can swiftly oversee and process piles of data with "ease, speed, and accuracy."

While AI might make our lives more straightforward now, there could be a chance that it will lead to human extinction. At the end of the article, Aleem (2023) says that the cost of overestimating AI and using it to make false promises...could have [peoples'] time wasted — or even be harmed." I agree that disregarding its clear limitations could pose a threat to users. However, I also think underestimating the power of AI could threaten our existence. In the podcast *Your Undivided Attention*, Tristan Harris and Aza Raskin (2023) reveal that "half of AI

researchers believe there's a 10% or greater chance that humans will go extinct from their inability to control AI." In other words, experts have laid out that the possibility is real. It could all start with jobs. *ERMProtect* (n.d.) alludes that AI could replace human jobs and leave many unemployed. There has always been a fear that new inventions like robots and computers joining the market would put many out of work. However, most important of all, *ERMProtect* also warns us that there is a chance that "self-learning" AI could "[develop] a 'mind of its own.'" If we let artificial intelligence have self-learning capabilities, humans might become powerless to stop them. We train the AI to help and be friendly to humans. But who can say that AI will be our friend forever? A full-fledged self-learning-thinking machine could grow a need for supremacy and threaten human life. By that point, it may be too late to pull the plug.

Ultimately, AI like ChatGPT will be around for a while and might always stay. We often worry about the future. But humanity, over time, again and again, has pulled through and innovated our way through uncertainty and challenges. AI is a new chapter in human history, and we must keep it on a leash. I believe AI is beneficial for preliminary brainstorming or analyzing extensive data. But others and I fear that its limitations and underestimations could threaten us. Not just society overall, but maybe even you. As noted, AI has the potential to replace many job fields like finance, which is the career path I want to pursue. I am concerned about my future in this field, as AI technology could replace me. Just because we can make chatbots that generate, think, and work for us doesn't mean we should.

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