# AI chatbots provide inconsistent health advice, raising patient safety concerns



# AI Chatbots Fall Short in Health Advice, Study Finds

As healthcare costs escalate and waiting lists continue to lengthen, an increasing number of individuals are turning to AI chatbots for medical insights. However, a recent study led by researchers at the University of Oxford raises serious concerns about the reliability of these digital assistants. The findings suggest that not only do these chatbots fail to enhance health decision-making, but they may also lead users astray by providing incomplete or misleading information.

In this study, participants interacting with various AI models, including GPT-4o and Meta’s Llama 3, often missed crucial health conditions or downplayed their severity. The research highlighted a common issue: users frequently struggled to supply the chatbots with sufficient information, leading to responses that varied significantly in quality. Importantly, when compared to traditional methods such as online searches or personal judgment, there was no discernible advantage for users who opted for AI-driven consultations. Experts pointed out that current evaluations of chatbots do not accurately represent the complexities of human-AI interaction, calling for more rigorous testing methodologies.

While tech giants like Apple, Amazon, and Microsoft are actively advancing AI-driven health solutions, the healthcare profession remains apprehensive about their application in critical medical decisions. The American Medical Association has explicitly advised against utilising chatbots for clinical decision-making, underscoring the need for a cautious approach when integrating these technologies into healthcare systems.

In contrast, a separate study from the University of Technology Sydney found AI chatbots to be effective in providing advice on low back pain, boasting accuracy levels comparable to that of human healthcare professionals. This study revealed that chatbots excelled in recommending treatments and self-management strategies, with a consistent emphasis on exercise for both prevention and management of low back pain. However, it did note that inaccuracies arose when chatbots responded to other frequently asked questions, again stressing the importance of cautious implementation of AI in healthcare.

This dichotomy points to a broader conversation about the role of AI in health advisement. While certain applications of AI show promise and can match the performance of human experts in specific areas, substantial gaps remain in the technology that could lead to detrimental advice in more complex or varied health scenarios.

As the demand for efficient healthcare solutions grows, the balance between leveraging advanced technology and ensuring patient safety becomes increasingly crucial. The findings from both studies illuminate the ongoing challenges and potential pitfalls of relying on AI chatbots for medical guidance, ultimately highlighting the necessity for robust oversight and comprehensive evaluations in this evolving field.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://news.google.com/rss/articles/CBMie0FVX3lxTFBYaV9TWG96T2RqUU5sbmxWeHI1TGxCUmJzU0pNdFhNUE1wQW9ud0xETUpuZ3gxbzVVWnEtNEhpbXotdGc5QmRITlU3cWF2cTdPdHRUUGwwdWtENUFYVE5qY19veDBuNFRCemlyaDlVZG1CUXZvYlRUYTdjZw?oc=5&hl=en-US&gl=US&ceid=US:en)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://news.google.com/rss/articles/CBMie0FVX3lxTFBYaV9TWG96T2RqUU5sbmxWeHI1TGxCUmJzU0pNdFhNUE1wQW9ud0xETUpuZ3gxbzVVWnEtNEhpbXotdGc5QmRITlU3cWF2cTdPdHRUUGwwdWtENUFYVE5qY19veDBuNFRCemlyaDlVZG1CUXZvYlRUYTdjZw?oc=5&hl=en-US&gl=US&ceid=US:en)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://news.google.com/rss/articles/CBMie0FVX3lxTFBYaV9TWG96T2RqUU5sbmxWeHI1TGxCUmJzU0pNdFhNUE1wQW9ud0xETUpuZ3gxbzVVWnEtNEhpbXotdGc5QmRITlU3cWF2cTdPdHRUUGwwdWtENUFYVE5qY19veDBuNFRCemlyaDlVZG1CUXZvYlRUYTdjZw?oc=5&hl=en-US&gl=US&ceid=US:en), [[2]](https://www.uts.edu.au/news/health-science/ai-chatbots-rival-doctors-back-pain-advice-study-finds)

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2. <https://www.uts.edu.au/news/health-science/ai-chatbots-rival-doctors-back-pain-advice-study-finds> - A study from the University of Technology Sydney found that AI chatbots can provide advice on low back pain with accuracy levels comparable to healthcare professionals in Australia. The research indicated that chatbots excelled in answering questions related to suggested treatment and self-management, consistently recommending exercise for preventing and managing low back pain. However, the study also noted inaccuracies in chatbot responses to other commonly asked questions, highlighting the need for cautious implementation of AI in healthcare settings.
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