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Editorial

Artificial Intelligence in Medical Education and Clinical Practice: Navigating Innovation Responsibly

Uzma Ahsan

Artificial intelligence (AI) has promptly progressed and incorporated itself from a theoretical framework into a practical and progressively obligatory component of modern healthcare and medical education. Its prospect spans across clinical decision making, documentation, research assistance, and personalized learning owing to the development of machine learning and generative AI systems, particularly large language models.[1] Such speedy amalgamation has already revolutionized the way medicine is taught and practiced, raising significant concerns about its safe, ethical, and effective use.[2]

In medical education, traditional teaching methodologies such as lectures, textbooks, and bedside training are now being gradually supported through AI-based tools. These tools not only generate clinical scenarios, simplify complex concepts, and provide instant feedback, but also assist in more personalized and self-directed learning.[3] For learners in a resource limited country like Pakistan, AI provides an opportunity to partially overcome the gaps in faculty availability and clinical exposure by strengthening accessibility to a structured educational support and virtual clinical involvement.[4]

There is a steadily increasing use of AI in specialties like radiology, dermatology, pathology, and cardiology for image interpretation and evaluation, risk estimation, and diagnostic assistance.[5] This support is further strengthened through generative AI systems by enhancing their competencies in assisting with documentation, summarizing patient records, and synthesizing medical literature, thereby reducing administrative workload and improving efficiency.[6] These tools provide immense support in settings with inadequate healthcare workforce capacity, resulting in upgraded service delivery and improved use of clinicians' time. Use of AI assisted systems may not only help in early detection but can also strengthen accessibility to specialist level input in underserved regions. These benefits still remain dependent on rigorous validation and adaptation to the context.[1,5]

Medical training, however is in principle about developing rational thinking, decision-making, and professionalism, and not simply obtaining information. Excessive dependency and disproportionate reliance on AI tools not only pose a risk of promoting passive learning but also create excessive trust and a selective preference in these automated systems, where learners thoughtlessly trust and accept the outputs without critical evaluation.[5] The use of AI is strictly recommended as a support to teaching, not a substitute for intellectual and critical engagement. A pressing need of the current time is to incorporate AI literacy into medical curricula so that future clinicians appreciate both its utility and its boundaries.[2]

In spite of all the advantages, AI and its consumption in healthcare and medical education must be viewed in the context of its limitations. Generative AI systems from time to time provide information which is either not correct or is fictitious ("hallucinations"), which can be misleading in clinical situations.[5] Additionally, low- and middle-income populations are particularly vulnerable to the detrimental effects of enhanced healthcare inequities arising from algorithmic bias resulting from non-representative training data.[1] In addition, issues pertaining to transparency, understanding, and liability further complicate clinical integration, as the decision-making processes of AI systems are often not fully understandable.[2]

Ethical concerns remain central to the debate. Issues pertaining to patient privacy, data security, informed consent, and accountability in AI assisted decision-making are still progressing.[1] The prime essence of human involvement in medicine must not be dominated by the excessive use and dependency on AI. Empathy, compassion, professional communication, and patient trust continue to be indispensable components of the physician patient connection and cannot be simulated by algorithms.[2]

Sharif Medical & Dental College, Sharif Medical City. Sharif Medical City Road, Off Raiwind Road, Jati Umra, Lahore 54000, Pakistan.

Correspondence: Dr. Uzma Ahsan
Head & Professor, Department of Dermatology
Sharif Medical & Dental College, Lahore
E-mail: *uzma_ahsan@yahoo.com*

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Employment of AI in Pakistan offers prospects for better opportunities to support medical education and healthcare services amidst numerous obstacles, such as shortage of qualified workforce, unequal resource distribution, and an accelerating disease load. It is not possible to achieve benefits without improving the resources and framework provided by institutions, and the capacity building of healthcare providers.[7]

Artificial intelligence has one of the most pivotal impacts in medicine's history. However, the major concern is not the smart operation of machines, but how humans will employ them intelligently. The future of healthcare won't be a conflict or competition between doctors and algorithms; instead, it should be a bridge connecting the collaborative working of technological support and human expertise. As medicine advances into an era of intelligence augmentation, maintaining clinical reasoning, ethical responsibility, and compassionate patient care will be as vital as technological progress.[6,8]

The prime objective should not be to produce an artificial intelligence healthcare professional but to train a considerate, thoughtful, and skilled physician empowered by AI. It will certainly redesign healthcare practices, but the outcome and utility will eventually depend on how wisely it is integrated.

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