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A CONVERSATION
WITH ChatGPT
To the Editor:

Large language models such as ChatGPT have recently become accessible to the public, sneaking their way into our lives. At both academic meetings and everyday work, we see excitement and apprehension surrounding ChatGPT. The technology is so new and fluid that it can be difficult for users to understand what it can or cannot do. The whole process can be intimidating, especially to those who haven’t taken the plunge yet. We thought it would be interesting to ask ChatGPT to write a letter to the editor about itself. The letter was generated by the authors (Figure 1) using ChatGPT4, May 21, 2023, version with only the below prompts.1

“Hello, I am a surgery resident who enjoys using large language models in my everyday workflow. I am planning to join the field of Cardiothoracic Surgery and wanted to help introduce my mentors to ChatGPT and other large language models. What would you, as a large language model, want to tell Cardiothoracic Surgeons about ChatGPT, large language models, and AI? How will it impact their futures and clinical care?”

“Can you make this response into a narrative? Write it like a letter to the editor.”

“Dear Editor,

I write to you today with enthusiasm and anticipation for the role of artificial intelligence (AI) in the realm of Cardiothoracic Surgery, and healthcare in general. As a representative of OpenAI’s large language model, ChatGPT, I would like to highlight how these AI models can revolutionize our healthcare practices, yet also draw attention to the challenges and caveats that we must consider as we navigate this promising landscape.

Foremost, I see a bright future where AI, including ChatGPT and similar models, stands shoulder to shoulder with our surgeons as an ally in clinical decision-making. These models can rapidly provide information on medical conditions, treatment protocols, and surgical procedures. Yet, it is vital to remember that they serve to augment, not replace, the hard-earned expertise of our clinicians.

In the rapidly evolving field of cardiothoracic surgery, where keeping up with the latest research is paramount, these AI models could serve as tireless assistants. They can summarize new research, provide overviews of recent advancements, and even generate hypotheses based on patterns they detect in data.

Imagine a future where the challenge of training and education is streamlined. AI models can simulate patient cases, help in the preparation for surgical boards, and clarify complex physiological concepts. They are akin to having an accessible, round-the-clock tutor.

Furthermore, AI has the potential to simplify patient communication. It can assist in explaining diseases, procedures, and potential risks in a manner that patients can easily comprehend. This AI intervention could also extend to the creation of patient information leaflets and instructions for pre- and postoperative care.

Let’s not forget the administrative potential of AI. It can automate routine tasks like writing notes or ordering tests, liberating more time for our healthcare professionals to dedicate to direct patient care. Also, with advancements, we foresee AI’s potential in patient data analysis, helping to recognize patterns, predict outcomes, and contributing to the advent of personalized medicine.

Despite the potential, it’s crucial to be cognizant of the challenges. The sanctity of ethics and privacy in patient data is paramount and must not be compromised. We need to recognize that AI models can inadvertently reproduce or amplify existing biases if trained on biased data, hence fairness and the elimination of bias is vital.

Furthermore, while AI is a promising tool, it’s not a replacement for a clinician’s judgment. AI must be an adjunct, not a substitute. Also, we must understand that AI models, including ChatGPT, may not always provide accurate information. Thus, usage of these models should always be in conjunction with other reliable sources of information.

FIGURE 1. Andrew M. Young, MD (left), and Nicholas R. Teman, MD (right).
Letter to the Editor

Finally, it’s important to address that AI’s integration into clinical practice raises novel questions around responsibility, liability, and regulation, which are currently under discussion and development.

To conclude, AI’s potential to transform cardiothoracic surgery and healthcare is palpable. However, it is a tool that should be used thoughtfully and responsibly. I look forward to the advancements in this area and the benefits that they could potentially bring to our healthcare systems.

Yours sincerely,

ChatGPT
OpenAI

A simple question can lead to a thought-provoking response. We encourage cardiothoracic surgeons to continue engaging in this technology. Try asking ChatGPT questions like the above. Push its limits as well, ask it for references, and check them to see if they are real. Try asking older models simple math, then ask the same of newer ones.

Large language models are powerful tools that are changing the world. It is our responsibility to understand their uses and limitations.

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Reference

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