Tech's role in medical care systems under discussion as Babylon Health shows its AI capabilities

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Credit: Babylon Health

Here are some of the usual warning signs. Now go see a doctor. Those two sentences sum up what we assume is the prudent way to lean on software's medical info world when that itch, cough or pain looks serious. Now there is cause to wonder if we can think about leaning in even more.

Babylon Health is using artificial intelligence to offer medical information through a symptom checker app, reported *New Scientist*, *IT Pro* and numerous other sites watching this company's possible impact on our health systems.

Via this app, patients can receive health feedback based on what the patients tell the bot.

A number of reports quoted Professor Martin Marshall, vice chair of the RCGP, however, who said no single app can do what a human general practitioner does in being mindful of physical, psychological and social factors that may be impacting a patient's health. Prof. Marshall said real clinical scenarios do not always have cut and dried answers.

The company showed off its chatbot at an event held at the Royal College of Physicians.

The chatbot was "offering several possible scenarios along with a percentage-based estimate of each one being correct," said the BBC.

Babylon Health founder Ali Parsa said the company was fully aware AI singly could not look after a patient and "that is why we complement it with physicians," according to the BBC, with the idea being that a human doctor would make use of the chatbot information within a follow-up video chat.

Recently, Babylon Health delivered a presentation streamed at London's Royal College of Physicians: The company's AI, in a series of tests demonstrated its ability to provide health advice on par with practicing clinicians. In a further test of its AI's capabilities, Babylon's team collaborated with the Royal College of Physicians, Stanford and Yale New Haven Health to test the AI alongside seven primary care doctors using 100 vignettes. Babylon's AI scored 80% for accuracy, while the

seven doctors achieved an accuracy range of 64-94%.

Parsa said the results showed how AI-augmented health services could reduce the burden on healthcare systems around the world.

According to a report by Bloomberg, Malcolm Grant, chair of NHS England, offered this perspective during a panel discussion at the recent event. He said "The NHS has enormous intellectual capital and I want to be very clear about not driving that away," Grant said. "I want to be very clear that we will not drive GPs out of practice and see this as an Uber-style rival."

According to Bloomberg, Parsa said that in an ideal situation and in most developed countries, best results would likely happen with doctors used the Babylon tool in conjunction with their own skills and intuition. "They can improve each other," he said.

Arjun Kharpal, technology correspondent for CNBC in London, meanwhile, reported that Mobasher Butt, medical director at Babylon, said in a statement to CNBC on Thursday that "we have created a service that offers a complete continuum of care, where AI decisions are supported by real-life GPs to provide the care and emotional support that only humans are capable of."

Parmy Olson in *Forbes* walked readers through the London demo which in turn clarifies what the app can deliver. She said a screen above Parsa showed "an animated, 3-D web of symptoms and diseases, as the voice of a woman resounded through the auditorium, answering automated questions from a chatbot about her recent dizzy spells."

More information: www.babylonhealth.com/