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Viewpoint

Clinical, Legal, and Ethical Aspects of Artificial Intelligence–Assisted Conversational Agents in Health Care

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JAMA

Published Online: July 24, 2020

2020;324;(6):552-553.

doi:10.1001/jama.2020.2724

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Conversational agents (CAs) are artificial intelligence (AI) programs that engage in a dialogue with users by interpreting their questions or concerns and replying to them in a text message, image, or voice format. Conversational agents typically imitate human conversation by applying natural language processing and machine learning and stand in contrast to text-based engagement platforms that accept discretely formatted human inputs and reply with preset messages. Conversational agents are now familiar tools in consumer life (eg, billing issues). They have increasingly become more common in health care spaces, especially during the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, as well as in direct-to-consumer or clinical capacities.¹



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