

# The views of health professionals toward conversational agents that are used for health care: Protocol and preliminary results

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## Introduction

- Conversational agents are software programs that are designed to talk with people using humanlike speech or text.
- In recent years, there has been an increase in the use of conversational agents to deliver health care.
- To date, the views of health professionals toward these agents have received little attention.
- The purpose of this study is to learn more about how health professionals view conversational agents that are used for health care.

## Methods

- We will recruit 24 physicians, nurses, and regulated mental health professionals currently practicing in Canada.
- Participants will be interviewed using Zoom video conferencing software.
- Interviews will be transcribed verbatim for coding and analysis.
- Transcripts will be analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases of thematic analysis.

## Results

Data collection and analysis is ongoing. Preliminary themes from six participants (two physicians, two nurses, and two regulated mental health professionals) are provided below.

### Theme 1: Inappropriate Care

*"I don't think the care is even comparable... meeting with someone and having a conversation is completely different than having certain things that you can check off... I don't think a chatbot could possibly encompass the entirety of somebody's experience."*  
-Participant 4, Psychotherapist

### Theme 2: Authenticity and Misrepresentation

*"It isn't a health professional, so that would be concerning to me... you know authenticity is important... I wouldn't want somebody to think that it's a healthcare provider when it is not."*  
-Participant 2, Nurse

### Theme 3: Accessibility

*"I understand that there's such a demand and people aren't able to access the care they need... if (a chatbot) can help someone, that's excellent."*  
-Participant 4, Psychotherapist

### Theme 4: Lighten the Load

*"So it would save you time and improve your access in the office if you're not focusing on sort of the chronic disease management that perhaps a program could educate your patients on."*  
-Participant 12, Physician



## Discussion

- Preliminary results show mixed views on conversational agents that are used for health care, with participants highlighting both positive and negative aspects of these agents.
- Results will provide an indication of how conversational agents will be received in the health sector as their use increases in the coming years.