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Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Patient–Healthcare Relationships: Psychosocial Perspective

Jawale Manish Hemant[1], Prof. P. P. Chavan[2], Prof. A. J. Shaikh[3], Dr. H. B. Jadhav[4]
Student, Department of Computer Engineering[1]
Guide, Department of Computer Engineering[2]
Co-Guide, Department of Computer Engineering[3]
Department of Computer Engineering[4]
Adsul Technical Campus, Chas, Ahilyanagar, India

Abstract: *Artificial intelligence is becoming part of healthcare through tools that help organise medical information, support clinical decisions, answer common questions, and improve communication. These changes affect more than treatment and efficiency: they can also influence how patients feel, how much they trust healthcare professionals, and whether they feel heard and respected. This paper reviews AI in patient–healthcare relationships from a psychosocial perspective. It considers trust, empathy, privacy, patient autonomy, health literacy, anxiety, accessibility, and the role of clinicians in explaining AI-supported decisions. AI can make some services faster and easier to access, but it may also create distance when communication feels automated or when recommendations are difficult to understand. The paper argues that AI should strengthen—not replace—the human relationship at the centre of care. Responsible use requires transparency, protection of personal information, inclusive design, careful evaluation, and meaningful human oversight..*

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Patient–Healthcare Relationship, Psychosocial Perspective, Trust, Empathy, Patient Autonomy, Health Communication, Responsible AI.

I. INTRODUCTION

Healthcare is not only a process of identifying illness and selecting treatment. It is also a relationship in which patients share concerns, ask questions, express fear, and make decisions with healthcare professionals. The quality of this relationship can affect whether people understand advice, follow a treatment plan, and feel confident seeking help.

Artificial intelligence (AI) is increasingly used in healthcare-related activities, including medical image analysis, decision-support systems, chatbots, appointment management, and the summarisation of clinical information. These tools may help staff manage workloads and give patients quicker access to basic information. However, healthcare is personal, and an efficient digital interaction does not always provide the reassurance or understanding that a person needs.

This review looks at AI through a psychosocial lens: the way technology interacts with emotions, relationships, social circumstances, beliefs, and behaviour. Its central argument is that AI should support communication and care while preserving the patient's voice and the professional's responsibility.

II. PROBLEM STATEMENT

AI systems are being introduced into healthcare faster than many patients can understand how they work or how their information is used. Patients may be unsure whether a recommendation comes from a clinician or an algorithm, why a particular result was produced, or who is accountable if the result is wrong. Some may find digital tools convenient, while others may experience confusion, worry, or exclusion because of language, disability, limited internet access, or

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low digital confidence. The problem addressed in this paper is how healthcare organisations can benefit from AI without weakening trust, empathy, privacy, shared decision-making, and the emotional support that patients expect from care.

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE REVIEW

- To explain how AI can influence communication and relationships between patients and healthcare professionals.
- To discuss psychosocial factors such as trust, empathy, anxiety, autonomy, privacy, and health literacy.
- To identify potential benefits and risks of AI-supported healthcare from the patient's point of view.
- To describe practical ways to keep AI use transparent, inclusive, safe, and centred on people.

IV. REVIEW METHODOLOGY

This paper uses a narrative review approach. It organises established discussions about AI in healthcare, patient-centred care, digital health communication, privacy, and responsible AI into key psychosocial themes. It is a conceptual review rather than a clinical trial or a new experiment; it does not claim to measure patient outcomes directly. The discussion therefore identifies relevant considerations and possible implications, while recognising that effects may differ by system, setting, patient group, and quality of implementation.

V. AI IN THE PATIENT–HEALTHCARE RELATIONSHIP

A. Communication and understanding. AI-enabled chat interfaces and digital assistants can provide explanations, reminders, and answers to routine questions at times when staff may not be available. They may help patients prepare for appointments or understand unfamiliar medical terms. Yet the information must be accurate, readable, and suitable for the person receiving it. A patient should be able to ask a clinician for clarification, especially when the issue is serious or uncertain.

B. Trust and transparency. Trust grows when patients understand what is happening, receive consistent information, and know who is responsible for decisions. If an AI system is hidden from view or its role is unclear, patients may feel misled. Healthcare teams should explain when AI is being used, what it contributes, and what its limits are. AI output should be treated as support for professional judgement, not as unquestionable truth.

C. Empathy and emotional support. Patients often need compassion as well as information. AI can respond quickly and may help people find basic guidance, but it cannot reliably replace the human understanding, attention, and moral responsibility involved in a clinical relationship. When a person is frightened, grieving, or facing a difficult diagnosis, a trained professional should remain available to listen and respond sensitively.

D. Shared decisions and autonomy. AI-generated predictions or recommendations can help structure a discussion about care options.

However, the final decision should take account of the patient's values, preferences, circumstances, and informed consent. Clinicians should explain relevant options and uncertainties in plain language, rather than presenting a system recommendation as a decision that cannot be challenged.

VI. PSYCHOSOCIAL BENEFITS AND RISKS

A. Possible benefits. When designed well, AI may reduce waiting for routine information, support reminders and continuity of care, assist people in preparing questions, and help healthcare workers organise information. Language support and accessible interfaces may also improve participation for some patients. These benefits depend on the reliability of the tool and whether it fits the needs of the people using it.

B. Anxiety and uncertainty. An automated result can cause unnecessary worry if it is presented without context. Conversely, a reassuring answer may create false confidence when a medical assessment is needed. Patients should be told when a tool cannot answer safely and how to reach an appropriate professional.

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C. Privacy and dignity. Health conversations contain highly personal details. Patients may hesitate to share information if they do not know who can access it or how long it will be stored. Healthcare providers should collect only necessary data, explain its use, restrict access, and follow applicable privacy and security requirements.

D. Bias and unequal access. AI may perform less reliably for groups that are poorly represented in training data. Differences in language, age, disability, income, culture, and digital access can also affect who benefits. Systems should be tested with diverse users and offer non-digital or human-supported alternatives where needed.

VII. ROLE OF HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS

AI should be introduced as a support tool within a care team, not as a substitute for the professional relationship. Clinicians can help patients interpret AI-generated information, correct misunderstandings, explain uncertainty, and decide when a system's output should not be followed. Staff also need training to recognise limitations, communicate clearly about AI, and protect patient confidentiality.

Healthcare organisations should provide a clear process for patients to question an AI-supported recommendation, request human review, report a concern, or correct inaccurate personal information. Responsibility for care must remain clear even when multiple digital systems are involved.

VIII. RESPONSIBLE AND HUMAN-CENTRED IMPLEMENTATION

A practical approach begins by asking whether AI is genuinely useful for the patient and the clinical team. Before deployment, organisations should assess accuracy, safety, accessibility, privacy, fairness, and how the tool affects communication. Patients should receive understandable information about the system's role, and consent should be sought where appropriate.

After deployment, systems should be monitored for errors, unequal performance, complaints, and unintended effects on patient experience. Feedback from patients, caregivers, clinicians, and community representatives should inform improvement. High-impact decisions require meaningful professional oversight and a clear route to challenge or appeal an outcome. Human-centred implementation is an ongoing responsibility, not a one-time technical check.

IX. FUTURE SCOPE

Future research should examine how different patient groups experience AI-supported care over time. Useful areas include patient trust, perceived empathy, willingness to disclose sensitive information, understanding of AI explanations, satisfaction, and the effect on shared decision-making. Studies should include diverse languages, ages, abilities, and socioeconomic settings rather than relying on a narrow group of users.

Further work is also needed to design explanations that are clear without being misleading, evaluate the impact of AI on clinician workload and face-to-face time, and establish practical standards for transparency and accountability. The aim should not be to maximise automation in every situation, but to identify where AI improves care and where a human conversation remains essential.

X. CONCLUSION

AI offers promising ways to support healthcare communication, organise information, and improve access to routine assistance. At the same time, patient–healthcare relationships depend on trust, empathy, respect, privacy, and shared decisions—qualities that cannot be measured only through speed or technical accuracy. Poorly explained or inaccessible systems may increase anxiety, reduce confidence, or leave some patients behind.

The most responsible path is to use AI to strengthen human care. Patients should understand when AI contributes to a decision, have their information protected, and retain the opportunity to speak with a qualified professional. With transparent communication, inclusive design, ongoing evaluation, and clear human accountability, AI can become a useful partner in healthcare without losing sight of the person behind every patient record.

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