

Artificial Intelligence Can Assist the Homeopath, But It Cannot Replace Him: Listening to a Doctor is Different from Listening to a Robot

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ABSTRACT

Homeopathy is a clinical methodology discovered about two centuries ago by the Saxon doctor Samuale Hahnemann, it is based on the law of similarities and treats the individual with a "small dose" of a specific substance that, in "high doses" would make him sick. The infinitesimal homeopathic doses are prescribed after a long medical visit during which the homeopath listens carefully to the patient's narrative, takes into account the smallest narrative details, evaluates every kind of disorder accused by the patient and, based on the law of similarities, prescribes the appropriate, personalized, individualized homeopathic therapy. The attention paid to the patient, and not only to the disease, makes the narrative medical approach of classical homeopathy typical, which takes into account global, physical, mental and existential suffering. Listening homeopathically, therefore, means expanding listening based on a clear and precise motivation aimed at humanly understanding the overall meaning of pain. Generative AI, not having an internal motivation, is different from natural and human intelligence, that's why the natural and well-motivated listening of a homeopath is very different from the artificial and unmotivated listening of a robot. To establish a natural and human relationship with the patient, one must listen naturally and humanely, but this does not exclude that the good use of artificial intelligence, in homeopathy, can prove extremely useful.

Keywords: artificial intelligence, homeopathy, listening, clinical narrative, motivation.

INTRODUCTION

Homeopathy is a clinical methodology discovered about two centuries ago by the Saxon physician Samuel Hahnemann [1], the undisputed founder of homeopathy, a medical discipline whose therapy is based on the "law of similarity" according to which the individual is treated with a "small dose" of a specific substance that, at a "high dose" would make him ill. Homeopathic medicines are prescribed in "infinitesimal" doses, but the prescription occurs after a long medical visit during which the homeopath listens carefully to the patient's narrative according to a typically homeopathic medical-narrative approach. The authoritative Davidson and Jonas clearly maintain that individualized homeopathy "includes elements found in

humanistic therapy and narrative medicine” [2]. Therefore, the homeopathic doctor takes into account the smallest narrative details, evaluates every kind of disorder complained of by the patient and, according to the law of similarity, prescribes the appropriate, personalized, individualized homeopathic therapy. Artificial Intelligence (AI) is not in conflict with homeopathy and a chatbot can be an aid to the homeopath [3], but it must be admitted that listening to a doctor is different from listening to a robot. In fact, a “chatbot” is “a computer program or character (as in a game) designed to mimic the actions of a person to converse with human beings” [3]. In short, a chatbot can only “imitate”. The homeopath, on the other hand, is very different from a chatbot for obvious and intuitive reasons. The homeopath, first of all, is not a computer program, secondly, is not devoid of motivation. Generative artificial intelligence, on the other hand, “has no internal motivation” and “does not possess a true awareness of itself or of what is happening in the world” [4]. We cannot underestimate this difference between the machine and the man because it is a substantial difference that we must reflect on. The machine, although capable of “imitating” a person very well and of “imitating” empathy [5], does not possess motivation. Artificial intelligence “imitates”. The title of a scientific article asks a very clear question: “Can Artificial Intelligence Chatbots Convincingly Mimic Empathy?” [5]. The answer is equally clear: “An experimental study suggests yes, but utility has yet to be tested.” [5]. In short, a chatbot would also be capable of imitating empathy, but, be careful, “empathy” is not “sympathy”. Consulting an authoritative dictionary, we learn that the term “empathy” indicates “the ability to put oneself in another person's situation with no or little emotional participation (the latter is instead present in the feeling of sympathy)” [6]. In homeopathy, emotional participation is not little or zero, on the contrary, the doctor-patient relationship is based on “sympathy” and on the “law of similarity”. The term “sympathy” clearly recalls the meaning of “similarity”. Therefore, in order for the doctor-patient relationship to be structured in coherence with the “law of similarity”, “sympathy” is essential. From this, we understand that the “law of similarity” acquires a very broad meaning, fundamental for implementing therapy with homeopathic drugs, but also for establishing a homeopathically significant doctor-patient relationship based on “sympathy”. Of course, to properly prescribe homeopathic medicines, it is necessary to correctly apply the fundamental therapeutic principle, “*Similia similibus curentur*” because, according to this principle, “homeopathy employs the rebound effect of drugs in a therapeutic way” [7]. It must be specified that “primary action of drugs is followed by secondary and opposite reaction of the organism” or “rebound effect of drugs” [7]. It is evident that the correct application of the “law of similarity” is fundamental both to correctly prescribe homeopathic medicines and to establish a doctor-patient relationship consistent with the rules of homeopathy, but, be careful, to correctly apply this law, a correct motivation is needed that the doctor possesses, the machine does not. Motivation means “the force that induces an individual to put into action a certain behavior directed to a purpose” [8]. According to what Hahnemann states in the first paragraph of the capital work of homeopathy, “the main and only purpose of the doctor is to make the sick healthy or, as they say, to cure them” [9]. Artificial intelligence does not have a motivation, but this does not mean that a chatbot cannot assist the good homeopath who has a strong motivation and does not function like a machine.

METHODS

The starting point of our work is centered on the following question: can artificial intelligence assist the work of the homeopath? In order to acquire good information and adequately answer the question, a systematic bibliographic search was carried out and the electronic biomedical database PubMed/MEDLINE and the web search engine Google Scholar were used. During the

bibliographic search, the authoritativeness of the authors and affiliations were constantly taken into account.

RESULTS

The results of the bibliographic research are interesting and allow us to answer the initial question: yes, artificial intelligence can assist the work of the homeopath. Some interesting articles will be cited below that allow us to have a critical and constructive discussion. An authoritative scholar, Patil [Affiliations: Dean, Faculty of Homoeopathy, Bharati Vidyapeeth (Deemed to be) University, Homoeopathic Medical College & Hospital, Research Institute and Dept. of Post-Graduation, Pune, Maharashtra, Pune 411043] is the author of an article whose title is extremely clear: "Chatbot – A technological aid to homoeopathy that can improve the homoeopathic prescription" [3]. From the title itself, it is clear that a chatbot is an aid to homeopathy and, from the title, it is clear that homeopathy and artificial intelligence can integrate very well. The authoritative author states that "In Homoeopathy, AI has been employed in many ways including fuzzy expert systems and The System for Homeopathic Glaucoma Treatment (SEHO) expert systems (ES) to choose the best approach for treating visual disorders. KENBO, a true ES, records the complete symptoms of the patients and converts them immediately into rubrics from five available repertories" [3]. In an article by Sunita *et al.* (Akhila.D, Anita.SP Department of Repertory, affiliated: Bharati Vidyapeeth (Deemed to be University), Homoeopathic Medical College, Dept. Of Post Graduate & Research Centre, Pune, Sunita SD Department of Computer Engineering, Bharati Vidyapeeth (Deemed to be University), College Of Engineering, Pune, India] the authoritative authors explain the reasons why a homeopathic chatbot proves useful for homeopathic activity and in the conclusions they state clearly "All things considered, the homoeopathic chatbot discussed in this article has the potential to revolutionize the practice of homeopathic medicine by providing a cutting-edge method for repertorization and case handling" [10]. The authoritative authors in the conclusion clearly state: "The integration of Artificial Intelligence into homeopathy holds significant promise for optimizing patient care and improving the overall efficiency of homeopathic practice. While AI and ChatGPT can provide valuable information and preliminary guidance, they should not replace the expertise of trained homeopathic practitioners" [11]. It is interesting to underline that the article clearly specifies that the valuable information provided by AI and ChatGPT should not replace the experience of trained professionals.

DISCUSSION

Homeopathy is a clinical methodology discovered about two centuries ago by the Saxon physician Samuale Hahnemann and is based on the "law of similarities" according to which like cures like. In short, homeopathy cures the individual with a "small dose" of a specific substance that, in "high doses" would make him ill. The so-called "individualization" of homeopathic therapy is fully achieved when the fundamental rule of individualized homeopathy is respected, when the "law of similarities" is respected, when a good narrative tension is established between doctor and patient in full respect of the "law of similarities". The authoritative Davidson and Jonas clearly maintain that individualized homeopathy "includes elements found in humanistic therapy and narrative medicine" [2]. The patient's story facilitates a global, holistic, overall understanding of suffering. Suffering is not only somatic, but also psychic and existential, and with homeopathy suffering is framed globally. the homeopath's careful listening is essential to grasp the overall meaning of the pain. The patient talks about his overall pain, narrates his overall discomfort, talks about himself and how he spends his existence and the

homeopath listens carefully to the narration. This is why homeopathy, to put it briefly, "cannot fail to be narrative medicine" [12]. The homeopathic approach is characterized by patient-centered communication, empathy, narrative competence. In an authoritative article by Hartog (Christiane S. Hartog: Department of Anaesthesiology and Intensive Care Medicine, Friedrich Schiller University, Jena, Germany), it is clearly stated: "The homeopathic model is based on holism and comprehension of the totality of the patient and uses patient-centered communication with a high degree of physician co-operation, empathy, hopefulness, enablement and narrative competence, all of which can improve outcomes" [13]. Thus, in homeopathy, narrative, communication and empathy are fundamental to establish a good relationship between the doctor and the patient and the homeopath is an important component of the therapeutic context. In an authoritative article by Elys *et al.* (Caroline Eyles: University of Southampton, Primary Care & Population Sciences, Aldermoor Health Centre, United Kingdom) it is clearly stated: "This study shows the homeopath as an important component of the therapeutic context forming complex relationships and using communication that is skills based and inductively shaped to interpret and respond to each individual patient and their narrative in the consultation» [14]. Since the homeopath is an important component of the therapeutic context [14], and since generative artificial intelligence, "has no internal motivation" [4] and "does not have a true awareness of itself or of what is happening in the world" [4], we believe that Artificial intelligence can assist the homeopath, but it cannot replace him, therefore, we believe that listening to a doctor is different from listening to a robot. Motivation is a "force that induces an individual to perform a certain behavior directed towards a goal" [8]. Generative artificial intelligence does not have this "force", it does not be motivated. Moreover, as stated in the authoritative article by Arya *et al.*, "While AI and ChatGPT can provide valuable information and preliminary guidance, they should not replace the expertise of trained homeopathic practitioners" [11].

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the articles reviewed, we believe that AI can assist the homeopath, but cannot replace him. AI and ChatGPT can provide excellent information, but cannot replace the doctor's experience. The doctor's experience cannot be replaced by the experience of a robot because the doctor, who has a motivation, listens, communicates and empathizes based on his motivation. Generative AI, on the other hand, does not have a motivation, and the robot, however intelligent it may be, is not a human being [15].

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors thank for their support: Foundation T. & L. De Beaumont Bonelli for Cancer Research. Naples, Italy.

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