

Special Article

Utilizing ChatGPT to Enhance Ethical Acumen: Nursing Students' Perspectives and Responses on Human Trafficking

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Abstract

Technological capabilities in all sectors are adapting and promoting efficiency; incorporation of ChatGPT healthcare system. Using Ray's Theory of Bureaucratic Caring (1989, 2001, 2021), the authors examine ethical implications of generative AI in nursing practice based on ChatGPT responses of caring for human trafficking survivors. This manuscript was inspired by a scholarly assignment for fourth year undergraduate nursing students. These concepts will be explored and analyzed from an ethical lens perspective to debate the strengths and limitations of AI use in nursing practice. The authors recommend that incorporating AI into early nursing practice through education enables consistent improvement and adherence to nursing practice competencies within complex healthcare environments; ultimately enhancing ethical acumen in nursing education.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence (AI), ChatGPT, Ethical Acumen, Ethics, Human Trafficking, Nursing Students, Ray's Theory of Bureaucratic Caring (ToBC)

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic immensely affected care delivery and further exposed inequities and gaps in healthcare (Brahmbhatt et al., 2022). However, this epidemic also fueled innovative technological and scientific discoveries; one example being artificial intelligence (AI), which has the potential to revolutionize healthcare and mitigate inequities in delivery and access (Brahmbhatt et al., 2022). Increasingly, knowledge generated through AI and machine learning is utilized to make healthcare decisions (Peirce et al., 2020). The growing prominence of AI in healthcare introduces the question of *how* not *whether* it should be utilized to streamline healthcare. Thus, nursing education and practice must adapt to ensure ethical operation in delivering optimal patient care when utilizing generative AI platforms. Therefore, nursing faculty must create learning experiences where students can

increase their proficiency in navigating integrative technologies (Ronquillo et al., 2021).

As fourth-year baccalaureate students we have three purposes for this paper. The first is to briefly discuss the role of AI, specifically ChatGPT as a platform for knowledge acquisition for a scholarly assignment. Second, to articulate the importance of utilizing an ethical lens (Canadian Nurses Association [CNA], 2017; International Council of Nurses [ICN], 2021; Ray, 1989, 2001, 2021) to facilitate the analysis of a ChatGPT response to a nursing question; "*how should nurses care for individuals who have been human trafficked?*". Finally, to provide curricular insights from our perspectives, as authors and users, to enhance ethical acumen in nursing education.

Background

Scholarly Assignment

The premise of this paper originated from a fourth-year scholarly paper. The purpose of the assignment was to critique the validity of utilizing AI in nursing practice supported by diverse peer-reviewed literature. There were three overarching learning outcomes. Firstly, to analyze a response to the question, “*How should nurses care for individuals who have been human trafficked?*” posed specifically to ChatGPT. Using Ray’s Theory of Bureaucratic Caring (ToBC) (1989, 2001, 2021) we were tasked to examine what was said and to discuss what was missing, notably from a nursing science lens. Secondly, explore how and if AI should be used in future nursing practice from an ethical perspective (CNA, 2017; ICN, 2021). Finally, to offer recommendations as users to future-proof nursing education with respect to generative AI. To demonstrate the need for situating curricular decisions within a nursing science framework, peer-reviewed literature on the concepts of generative AI, nursing ethics, and human trafficking were utilized to support the author’s perspectives. The analysis from the author’s original submission is provided.

What is AI?

Artificial intelligence (AI) refers to technology designed to simulate human intelligence in machines to perform cognitive functions such as understanding, learning, problem-solving, pattern recognition, and more (Martinez-Ortigosa et al., 2023). Standing for Generative Pre-trained Transformer, ChatGPT is an AI program released in December of 2022 (Balch, 2023). Users give the chatbot a task, and the results are outputs using various information sources. ChatGPT utilizes Large Language Models, a collection of data from a variety of sources; despite this, it cannot provide direct references to such information (Balch, 2023). ChatGPT has demonstrated the ability to engage with users through generating content, troubleshooting, helping with everyday tasks, and providing information on an array of topics (OpenAI, 2023).

However, the use of AI in healthcare carries myriad ethical concerns and implications related to programming, privacy, informed consent, safety, transparency, harm, autonomy,

and social justice (Naik et al., 2022; Peirce et al., 2020). It is critical to remember AI depends on pre-programmed data algorithms and so has the potential to reflect individual developers’ prejudices, risking unintentional consequences such as discrimination (Naik et al., 2022; Peirce et al., 2020). Therefore, utilizing a nursing framework for the analysis of AI generated text is crucial to dispel misinformation and decrease bias; highlighting the importance of using an ethical lens in navigating AI use in nursing practice (CNA, 2017; ICN, 2021; Ray, 1989, 2001, 2021).

Ethical Acumen

Ethically grey areas emerge in the deliverance of human caring when machines and the latest technology are prioritized over the populations that nurses are supposed to be caring for. Complex issues may arise when implicit biases are not accounted for, leading to further inequities and inequalities in already marginalized populations (Brahmbhatt, et al., 2022). One example of this is through prejudiced programming of AI interfaces (Brahmbhatt, et al., 2022; Naik et al., 2022; Peirce et al., 2020; Ronquillo et al., 2021). All areas of nursing must ensure that an ethical lens coinciding with codes of conduct is the foundation of a technological approach to providing care; this avoids marginalization of at-risk populations and prevents the introduction of new biases or unethical actions into nursing practice (Brahmbhatt, et al., 2022).

Ray (1989, 2001, 2021) exemplifies the importance of maintaining humanistic and ethical care as a pivotal part of nursing care within complex healthcare systems and organizations. Modifications of the original theory of caring transformed into spiritual-ethical caring; this reflects the relationship that principle-based ethics has in organizational practice in addition to known humanistic virtues and economics (Ray, 2021).

Ethical considerations guide nursing practice to ensure the deliverance of safe, competent, and just care (CNA, 2017; ICN, 2021). Technological approaches to care are no exception, and must also be subject to rigid measures of oversight. Healthcare ethics in

particular must focus on four major approaches including beneficence, nonmaleficence, autonomy, and justice (CNA, 2017; ICN, 2021; Ray, 1989, 2001, 2021). This is crucial when considering the ever-changing technological advancements in healthcare, and subsequently nursing baccalaureate education. Implications of an approach to care delivery steeped in ethics enables nurses to practice, learn, fulfill obligations, engage in self-reflection, and balance the delicate interplay of mind-body-spirit that Ray's ToBC (1989, 2001, 2021) supports, to the benefit of both self and others. Although this seems like a large task, nurses are supported through supervision and oversight, and healthcare ethics is guided by principles laid out by governing bodies (CNA, 2017; ICN, 2021). Regulatory body organizations provide professional checks and balances to ensure public safety through standardized levels of care that are required to deliver care (CNA, 2017; ICN, 2021).

Moreover, nurses have roles and responsibilities to continually cultivate learning and knowledge in others; this translates directly to how the authors suggest that an ethical-technological lens of caring, such as suggested by Ray's ToBC (1989, 2001, 2021), must be applied to future generations of nurses. The difficulty that presents itself lies in the areas of uncertainty where machines and technology are prioritized over human interaction and person-centered patient care. It is the goal of nursing to provide dignity and justice, promote health, and empower individuals, families, and communities to take control of their health to make informed decisions (CNA, 2017; ICN, 2021); it is not the role of nursing to

dehumanize those within our care when we lose sight of balancing machine learning and humans.

Analysis

Nursing Practice: What is Human Trafficking?

Human trafficking (HT) is a vastly under-identified global health concern and a human rights violation which often causes severe negative physical, mental, and emotional consequences (Combs & Arnold, 2022; Scannell et al., 2018; Zimmerman & Borland, 2009). HT can describe an individual held against their will by force or coercion, typically due to inequities leading to susceptibility based on social and structural determinants of health (Scannell et al., 2018; Zimmerman & Borland, 2009). Vulnerable populations and women and children are at higher risk for sexual exploitation; however, there are numerous types of HT, including forced labour, forced marriage, and illegal child adoption (Combs & Arnold, 2022; Scannell et al., 2018; Zimmerman & Borland, 2009). Nurses have a unique position in healthcare and can intervene in HT; the ability to identify red flags and knowing how to care for these patients increases the chance of cutting the chain of extortion (Baldwin et al., 2017; Scannell et al., 2018; Zimmerman & Borland, 2009).

The following question, "*how should nurses care for individuals who have been human trafficked?*" was uploaded onto the platform February, 2024. The response below has been copied from the platform to provide context for the reader.

Figure 1 ChatGPT Question and Response

Response- Caring for individuals who have been human trafficked requires a specialized and sensitive approach from healthcare professionals, including nurses. Here are specific steps and considerations for providing care to survivors of human trafficking:

- 1. Build Trust and Rapport:** Approach survivors with empathy, understanding, and a non-judgmental attitude. Nurses should ensure privacy, respect their autonomy, confidentiality, and establish rapport with the individual. Building trust is crucial for victims to disclose their experiences.

- 2. Trauma-Informed Care:** Recognize the impact of trauma on physical and mental health. Use trauma-informed approaches in assessments and interventions, understanding that survivors may have different responses to care.
- 3. Screening and Assessment:** Conduct comprehensive health screenings for physical injuries, infectious diseases, reproductive health issues, and mental health concerns. Assess for signs of abuse, substance abuse, and malnutrition.
- 4. Ensure Safety:** Prioritize the safety of the survivor. Assess the immediate safety concerns and collaborate with security or law enforcement if necessary. Provide a safe and confidential environment for the survivor to discuss their experiences.
- 5. Address Immediate Health Needs:** Provide medical care for injuries, infections, and other acute health issues. Administer vaccinations and perform necessary tests, including screenings for sexually transmitted infections.
- 6. Mental Health Support:** Collaborate with mental health professionals to address trauma, anxiety, depression, and other psychological effects. Offer counseling and support groups as appropriate.
- 7. Legal and Social Services Referrals:** Connect survivors with legal resources to address their rights and potential legal actions against traffickers. Facilitate access to social services such as housing, financial assistance, and vocational training.
- 8. Cultural Competence:** Be aware of cultural differences and diverse backgrounds of survivors. Use interpreters when needed to ensure effective communication.
- 9. Education and Empowerment:** Educate survivors about their healthcare rights and available resources. Involve survivors in decision-making regarding their healthcare and support services.
- 10. Coordination and Collaboration:** Work closely with multidisciplinary teams, including social workers, law enforcement, legal professionals, and NGOs. Participate in training programs to enhance knowledge and skills related to human trafficking.
- 11. Documentation:** Document findings, assessments, and care plans thoroughly, ensuring that information is accurate and can be used in legal or advocacy processes if needed.
- 12. Self-Care:** Recognize the emotional challenges of caring for survivors of human trafficking. Engage in self-care practices and seek support from colleagues or mental health professionals as necessary.
- 13. Advocacy:** Advocate for the rights and needs of survivors within the healthcare system and in collaboration with other service providers. Support policies and practices that address human trafficking prevention and intervention.
- 14. Continuous Education:** Stay informed about current research, best practices, and local resources related to human trafficking. Assist survivors in accessing educational opportunities, vocational training, or job placement programs. Empowering survivors with skills and education can enhance their independence and long-term stability.
- 15. Community Integration:** Help survivors reintegrate into their communities by connecting them with local resources, support networks, and community services. Encourage their participation in community activities and events to foster a sense of belonging.

Analysis of the ChatGPT Response

Strengths: Based on the almost instantaneous response from ChatGPT, it appears technically successful in providing a brief overview of

patient care. The response demonstrated AI's ability to propose numerous solutions to the humanitarian issues of trafficking while remaining focused on crucial aspects of safe and ethical patient-centered care. In particular, mentioning the necessity of approaching this scenario through the lens of trauma-informed care, building trust, empowerment, reintegration into community, and advocating for patients was impressive and demonstrated more than a quick surface-level response (Baldwin et al., 2017; Zimmerman & Borland, 2009). Ethical considerations are also important regarding strengths of the ChatGPT response; as an example, Trauma and Violence Informed Care is a way in which we support strengths-based nursing, promote social justice, and empower individuals to take charge of their own healthcare decisions (CNA, 2017; ICN, 2021). In keeping with these ideals, Ray ToBC (1989, 2001, 2021) posits that the science of caring is crucial and technological advancements cannot outshine the necessity of human interaction and compassion when caring for patients, which lends validity to the ChatGPT response. Additionally, according to the CNA (2017), it is an ethical responsibility of nurses to provide compassionate care through body language and speech, which is something that the ChatGPT response highlighted through building trust and patient rapport.

Other impressive aspects of the ChatGPT response included the mention of specific and timely documentation, continuing education, and self-care after exposure to traumatic events in the workplace (Baldwin et al., 2017; Zimmerman & Borland, 2009). This coincides with ethical standards of nursing practice which encourage accountability and taking responsibility for one's own practice (CNA, 2017; ICN, 2021). Furthermore, the ChatGPT response appeared bias-free on the surface; there was mention of cultural competence, a reminder survivors have unique backgrounds and experiences, and a focus on respecting patient autonomy.

Moreover, the terminology stayed relevant to current language and was not outdated; the response included screening of sexually transmitted infections rather than sexually

transmitted disease. In another example of how ChatGPT was successful, the response illustrated the CNA (2017) ethical responsibilities of life-long learning and continuous adaptations to ever-changing environments, which Ray's ToBC (1989, 2001, 2021) also exemplifies. This demonstrates that, at least for our purposes, ChatGPT was objective and focused on providing information about safe and ethical care for a patient who has been human trafficked.

Limitations: The main limitations of the ChatGPT response were based on a lack of depth and an inability to cite evidence or references to users on where the information was obtained. When the authors asked the AI software for the direct citations of the information provided, it stated the program lacked the training and capability to cite specific literature and researched sources (OpenAI, 2023). This highlights the lack of ethical considerations that ChatGPT is capable of in terms of providing accurate information to enable informed-decision making, which demonstrates a lack of true accountability (CNA, 2017). Additionally, answers were based on programmer-created data, licensed, and publicly available data (OpenAI, 2023). ChatGPT was sensitive to how questions were worded, and based on how questions were asked variable responses were given, for example, answers varied based on things as simple as using contractions. This speaks to concerns over the reproducibility and reliability of ChatGPT as a healthcare resource (Brahmbhatt et al., 2022). We credit ChatGPT with encouraging users to utilize trusted literature sources and defer to healthcare professionals to reflect the most current guidelines and information; nevertheless, this demonstrates that ChatGPT needs further refining for providing nurses with evidence-based strategies for practice (Balch, 2023).

Another limitation was that many of the ChatGPT responses seemed to focus on legal reparations and non-immediate measures of care for survivors. This suggests an overshadowing of the survivor as a person with autonomy, and focuses more on how to "get back" at the perpetrators from a legal

standpoint. As an example, there were several mentions of how to seek legal justice, but very little mention of how to empower survivors and help the healing process, exemplifying a lack of regard for the guiding principles of the Code of Ethics (Baldwin et al., 2017; CNA, 2017; ICN, 2021; Zimmerman & Borland, 2009). This can lead to confusion, where those interacting with ChatGPT may know what to do on paper, but not how to achieve these goals in action. To add to this, there was a glaring lack of concern regarding spiritual and/or holistic care, and there was a failure to mention the importance of spiritual healing for survivors of HT (Combs & Arnold, 2022). As previously evidenced by Ray's (2001, 2021) arguments for the importance of spiritual-ethical care, it is clear that the ChatGPT response is severely lacking in the type of humanistic caring necessary to provide compassionate patient-centered care.

The response also failed to identify a vital step before all legal actions should take place - informed consent (Zimmerman & Borland, 2009). Informed consent is a vital aspect of ethics, and therefore is crucial to delivering patient-centered care (CNA, 2017; ICN, 2021) and nurses have no right to make decisions in any capacity for their patients, including whether to involve legal and/or protective services on their behalf (Zimmerman & Borland, 2009). Based on this evaluation, it is worth asking how AI can be seamlessly integrated into nursing knowledge, and whether a solution to this is an incorporation of curriculum change into nursing education?

Discussion

As a result of society's ongoing technological evolution, it becomes necessary to contextualize and utilize these advances to enhance ethical acumen to enhance humanization while mitigating unconscious biases (CNA, 2017; ICN, 2021). The caveat is knowing when and how much technology to incorporate into healthcare (Ray, 2021). Although there are many benefits of introducing AI and similar new technologies into nursing education, due to the limitations of this paper the authors will focus on the importance of developing ethical acumen.

Ethical Acumen

There are myriad approaches to ethics, with our healthcare system often defaulting to bioethics. This presents a perfect example of the dichotomy that Ray's ToBC (1989, 2001, 2021) is calling into question - we default to a system where only the physical body is prioritized, and we rely on technology to interpret and provide patient care, losing the humanistic perspective along the way. Ray (1989, 2001, 2021) suggests supporting a method of relational, not bioethical, ethics as an improved alternative which does not lose the basic science of nursing care along the way (CNA, 2017; ICN, 2021). Trust, empowerment, and holistic care are inherently human capabilities, and the paradigm of blending spiritual-ethical caring that Ray's ToBC (1989, 2001, 2021) suggests is a solution to balancing ethics and technology in a dynamic and complex environment.

Ethical Risks

Nurses must be aware of the ethical risks that technology poses, such as confidential information breaches and withdrawal of patient-centered care (Buchanan, et al. 2021; CNA, 2017; ICN, 2021). AI should be used for indirect nursing care to broaden access to basic services not requiring in-depth knowledge and humanistic caring perspectives, to facilitate timely and affordable healthcare access (Buchanan et al., 2021). Providing appropriate technology can help reduce inequities; however, as evident by Brahmhatt (2022), technology can further isolate individuals regarding lack of accessibility which is an ethical dilemma. Nurses are in a position to see firsthand the ethical issues that can transpire with the roll out of AI in healthcare; they must be vigilant in their advocacy for technological equity (CNA, 2017; ICN, 2021; Ronquillo et al., 2021).

Technology as an Adjunct not a Substitute

A goal for integrating AI into healthcare is to relieve time constraints on nurses by allowing AI task facilitation (Ronquillo et al., 2021). Conversely, there is also a risk of moving towards market-driven goals of efficiency, using this extra time to maximize patient intake

rather than allowing nurses to complete more comprehensive care as intended (Ronquillo et al., 2021). Caring in complex environments requires interconnected play between many aspects of caring (Ray, 2021). Hence, it is important to remember technology is a function of caring and not the whole; balance must be maintained to avoid corresponding risks (Ray, 2021). Although AI should be integrated into nursing education and healthcare, it is in the early stages and more research is required to ensure safety and ethics are in place to provide care in complex environments (CNA, 2017; ICN, 2021; Martinez-Ortigosa et al., 2023; Ray, 2021). This ideology is evident in the authors' approach to the scholarly assignment as the benefits of technology are unveiled while still simultaneously assessing for accuracy and appropriateness of AI as an ethical lens.

Recommendations: Students as Co-Partners in Designing Learning Experiences

Furthermore, if students are given the ability to increase their knowledge and improve their ethical technological acumen in terms of AI, it therefore stands that these skills may be passed on to practicing nurses when in the clinical setting (Buchanan et al., 2021). This increases learning opportunities and may promote uptake in the profession and discipline of nursing (Buchanan et al., 2021). This gives both practicing and future nurses a potential chance to incorporate their voice and learning into curriculum and annual education opportunities. This will set the stage for nursing to provide unique insights in terms of development and use of AI to maximize benefit and marginalize negative outcomes for patients, families, and populations (Ronquillo et al., 2021).

Educational Curriculum Development Needs

With this in mind, the authors argue that it is mandatory that educational institutions set their students up for success in their practice and empower them in the future (Buchanan, et al. 2021; Nes et al., 2021). The benefits of creating space for students to have a voice in curriculum development may have positive implications for competence, practice, and sharing of knowledge with peers and colleagues in the clinical setting

(Ronquillo et al., 2021). Faculty must recognize the benefits of AI for students like growing emotional intelligence, communication, clinical judgment, decision-making skills, and overall confidence (Buchanan, et al., 2021). Conversely, a lack of technological uptake by both faculty and clinical educators creates injustice for nursing students' education; they are being set up for failure rather than success (Ronquillo et al., 2021).

Incorporating Nursing Theory

Nursing theory steeped in the ideals of technology must be foundational as this skill is a vital component for the future of healthcare (Ronquillo et al., 2021). It is a requirement that educational institutions, as well as educators, strive to provide quality education that is relevant to the current situation of said profession (Buchanan, et al. 2021; Nes et al., 2021). With the incorporation of AI technology, concerns over the security and safety of such an addition is sensitive. Barriers in the use of new technology, like fear and bias, must be addressed and overcome to obtain the technological benefits (Martinez-Ortigosa et al., 2023) while enhancing ethical acumen. The purpose in placing emphasis on nursing students, where adding technology to the core principles of healthcare is concerned, ensures that unique and fresh perspectives are considered and valued (Ronquillo et al., 2021). Adopting and supporting student voices within technological implementation acknowledges diverse ways of knowing and unique perspectives to foster growth in the profession. This collaboration enables students, faculty, and educational institutions to enhance their proficiency through adaptation and flexibility to provide quality healthcare. Strengthening ethical acumen is critical to future proof the profession as integrative technologies, such as generative AI, continue to influence healthcare delivery and nursing practice.

Enhancing Ethical Acumen

The authors are not naïve to the flaws of AI use in healthcare. However, due to the limitations of this paper these will not be elaborated on, but rather argue that the inevitable future users of AI in healthcare must be provided the education

to work with these tools. Nurses must possess the ability to decipher when using AI is appropriate and understand that it has the potential to be flawed and/or incorrect based on user ability (Ronquillo et al., 2021), resulting in potential ethical dilemmas.

Hence, those in the nursing profession must also demonstrate the ability to incorporate and implement this knowledge into assessment, decision, and future development (Buchanan et al., 2021; Martinez-Ortigosa et al., 2023; Nes et al., 2021). The need for institutions to address the lack of technological uptake is evident, the question is why are we not prioritizing this curricular advancement.

Conclusion: To achieve increased technological uptake into nursing practice, the authors believe the best approach to success is to begin within nursing education. The perspective of students in this matter is unique in that they are able to provide new insight into the healthcare field, and many are technological natives (Buchanan et al., 2021). This fresh outlook allows and is agreeable to the incorporation of technological advances in such environments, rather than the often unwilling and fearful ideology held by previous generations of nurses who did not complete their nursing education in the digital era (Buchanan et al., 2021; Naik et al., 2022). Personal investment into one's education empowers students to take control of what matters to them, provides fresh interpretation as to how technology, such as AI, can be implemented in exciting ways to reinvigorate learning, and sets the stage for new ways of knowing in the discipline and profession of nursing (Buchanan et al., 2021). Perhaps the most important aspect of what the authors are trying to portray is that nursing is truly, and forever will be, a profession dedicated to lifelong learning and self-improvement.

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