

# The Intersection of AI & Mental Health

The use of artificial intelligence (AI) has experienced significant growth in recent years. While AI innovation can be beneficial, it can also raise ethical and safety concerns when applied in the mental health field.

## The Age of AI

AI tools, such as ChatGPT, Google Gemini, and Microsoft Copilot, are used daily by an estimated 500–600 million people.<sup>1</sup> Alarming, OpenAI data suggests 1 million users discuss suicide with ChatGPT weekly, and there have been claims made publicly that link AI to suicide deaths.<sup>2</sup>

Like many other sectors, the field of mental health care is undergoing a significant transformation due to AI advancements. These innovations can enhance the efficiency of care and broaden access to essential services for individuals seeking support.

AI-powered tools, from chatbots to predictive analytics, are being integrated into therapeutic practices, providing new avenues for personalized treatment and ongoing support. As a result, mental health professionals can leverage these technologies to better understand patient needs and improve outcomes, making mental health care more effective and accessible than ever before.

AI technologies can be integrated into mobile applications to send timely reminders for medication schedules, track side effects, monitor medication responses, enhance adherence, and facilitate collaboration between individuals and their healthcare providers.<sup>3</sup>

### States with regulations in place addressing AI and mental health care include:

<b>Illinois</b>	Restricts AI in therapy and psychotherapy services, allowing only for administrative and supplementary support functions.
<b>New York</b>	Requires tech companies to release a disclaimer stating their AI bots are not human.
<b>Nevada</b>	Imposes restrictions on behavioral healthcare providers from using AI systems while treating patients.
<b>Utah</b>	Formed the Office of Artificial Intelligence to focus on AI policy, regulation, and innovation, including addressing the mental health crisis.

## AI Regulation

The American Psychological Association's 2025 health advisory calls the current regulatory frameworks inadequate to address the reality of AI in mental health care, the advisory calls for policymakers, particularly at the federal level, to:<sup>6</sup>

- modernize regulations;
- create evidence-based standards for each category of digital tool;
- address gaps in Food and Drug Administration oversight;
- promote legislation that prohibits AI chatbots from posing as licensed professionals; and
- enact comprehensive data privacy legislation and "safe-by-default" settings.

## Emerging Ethical and Safety Challenges

While AI offers meaningful benefits for mental health care, its rapid integration into clinical and consumer settings has also raised critical ethical, safety, and regulatory concerns. As these tools become more widely used, experts emphasize the importance of examining their potential risks, particularly for individuals who may rely on them during vulnerable moments. Several key challenges have emerged:

**Unintended Consequences:** AI systems can unintentionally reinforce stigmatization, overdiagnosis, or the medicalization of normal emotions due to biases in their training data. This may lead to pathologizing typical feelings or ignoring context. Continuous evaluation and adjustment of AI algorithms are essential to avoid these unintended harms.<sup>4</sup>

**Accountability and Liability:** As AI tools impact mental health assessments and treatment, questions about liability in adverse outcomes arise. Determining responsibility can be complex due to the interactions between clinicians, developers, and automated systems. Clear frameworks are necessary to define accountability and provide recourse for individuals harmed by AI-driven recommendations.<sup>5</sup>

**Regulation and Standards:** The American Psychological Association's 2025 health advisory emphasizes that AI chatbots and wellness apps are not clinical treatment tools, lack sufficient evidence of effectiveness, and may lead individuals, especially those in crisis, to substitute them for professional care. This advisory highlights the importance of establishing comprehensive regulatory standards to safeguard patient rights, privacy, and well-being as AI becomes increasingly integrated into mental healthcare.<sup>6,7</sup>

**Bias and Fairness:** AI models trained on biased datasets can lead to inequitable outcomes in mental health care, disproportionately affecting marginalized populations. Identifying and mitigating algorithmic bias is essential for ensuring fair support for all users.<sup>8</sup>

## Conclusion

Integrating artificial intelligence in mental wellness can enhance care by improving accessibility and effectiveness. However, addressing ethical and safety concerns through collaboration and transparency is essential to ensure equitable and compassionate support in mental health care.

## References

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