

Human touch in the age of AI: *Preserving the soul of medicine*



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Artificial intelligence is no longer a distant idea in medicine. It is already here, woven into the fabric of clinical care. It writes our notes, reads our scans, and flags patients at risk before we even step into the room. It is fast, precise, and astonishing in its ability to process complexity.

And it is not leaving.

With each advancement, AI transforms what is possible. Yet amid this powerful momentum, a quieter question arises: a question that deserves our full attention. What happens to the parts of medicine that cannot be calculated or coded? The moments that live in a patient's story, in a trembling silence after hard news, in the quiet weight of a hand resting on a shoulder.

Medicine has always been more than a science. It is a human calling. It asks not only for knowledge, but for presence; for the courage to sit with suffering; for the compassion to speak not just to symptoms but to the person behind them. No machine can do that.

AI can build a differential faster than a seasoned specialist. It can detect abnormalities invisible to the human eye. It can comb through data with inhuman stamina and predict outcomes with remarkable accuracy. But it cannot walk into a room and say, "You are not alone." It cannot feel the pause that hangs in the air after a difficult question. It cannot offer solace in silence.

The promise of AI is real, and it is powerful. Used wisely, it can make us better. It can lift the weight of administrative overload, catch what we may miss, break down barriers in communication and bring essential support to places where care is scarce. It can elevate our practice.

In today's world, exciting advancements are happening in the field of health care. AI systems are being developed to personalize the delivery of health information, adjusting communication based on individual patient preferences and understanding. This approach creates a supportive environment where patients feel understood and cared for. AI tools can assist physicians by providing personalized health education materials, which enhance patients' understanding of their conditions and treatments. Imagine being able to use a patient's own words to convey information at their level

and in their language. Instructions could be customized to fit into their daily lives, making the journey to better health more accessible and personal.

But AI must never replace our practice.

The true danger is not that AI will take our place. It is that we will allow it to hollow out the soul of our profession. That we will grow so reliant on its precision that we forget our own intuition. That we will move so quickly, guided by data, that we forget how to truly see the person in front of us.

The next generation of doctors will enter a world where AI is as familiar as the stethoscope once was. They will train with it, lean on it, and come to expect it. But they must be taught what AI cannot know. It cannot read fear in a patient's eyes. It cannot offer hope through the genuine empathy and warmth expressed in sincere eye contact. It cannot build trust, or offer grace, or carry the weight of uncertainty with quiet resolve.

We have a choice in how this technology shapes the future of medicine. We can let it narrow our gaze, or we can use it to widen our reach. If we approach it with intention, it can return to us what matters most: the time to be fully present. To look someone in the eye. To listen without distraction. To ask, "What matters to you today?" and wait for the answer.

AI will change how we deliver care. But it must never change why we care. The human touch is something we must not leave behind. It is the center of all that medicine is, and everything it must continue to be.

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