Children Endorse Chatbots, but Prefer Humans, for Health-Related Information

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Abstract

This study examines 135 7- to 14-year-old children's beliefs about AI chatbots, doctors, and non-expert adults. Children are asked both whether each of the informants can correctly answer different kinds of health questions and which of the informants they would prefer to ask their own health questions. Children's endorsements in the chatbot informant are as high as their endorsements for doctors, and their endorsements of statements by non-expert grownups decreases with age, However, their endorsements belie their preferences: children significantly prefer not only the expert human informant (the doctor), but interestingly also significantly prefer the non-expert grownup to the chatbot, despite giving this informant low statement endorsements. These results suggest that children's intuitions about AI chatbots are nuanced: they believe that these informants can acquire correct knowledge, but they are not necessarily eager to consult chatbots themselves.

Keywords: children; cognitive development; information seeking; child-AI interaction; technology

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