

Artificial Intelligence in Mental Health Care

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About Me

- California LMFT #42723
- Adjunct Professor, CSU Northridge
- Author, *Basics of California Law for LMFTs, LPCs, and LCSWs* and *Saving Psychotherapy*
- Editor, *User's Guide to the 2015 AAMFT Code of Ethics*
- Chair, AAMFT Online Therapy Best Practices Workgroup
- Served on AAMFT Ethics Committee

Computing vs. Artificial intelligence

- An oversimplified explainer:
 - **Computing**
 - DATA → RULES → OUTCOMES
 - Rules specified by programmers, applied consistently
 - **Artificial Intelligence**
 - DATA → OUTCOMES → RULES
 - Rules determined by data analysis, can adapt to new data

Not all AI is created equal

- Different uses
- Different processes (recording sessions v other data v limited input)
- Different privacy safeguards
- Different intentions
- Requires nuanced analysis

AI-based documentation

- **More than a dozen companies offer this service right now**
- Pro: Saves time, may make documentation stronger
- Con: Some require session recordings, potential bias, data handling
- Existing legal and ethical obligations:
 - If app uses any PHI, get BAA (legal)
 - Obtain permission for any recording (ethical)

Other current uses of AI in mental health care

- Diagnostic screening
- CBT exercises
- Cognitive restructuring
- Medication reminders
- Mindfulness and meditation
- AI-based therapy or mental health support

Spooner, 2024

Ethics related to AI in mental health care

- **No major association has yet adopted ethical standards specific to AI**
- Applying broader technology standards to specific AI applications
 - Appropriate training
 - Privacy protection
 - Informed consent
 - Permission for recording

Conversational AI

- Closest to therapy is **conversational AI**: “Software that simulates conversations with users through natural language processing”
- Typically through a chatbot (text) or an avatar (video), consumers interact with AI in real time conversation
 - Avatars: Human-appearing images designed to lead clients to believe they are interacting with something human-like
- Client interactions are complex, and AI appearing more human-like is not necessary for clients to prefer interacting with it

Lee & Lee, 2023; Sedlakova & Trachsel, 2023, p. 4

AI-based therapy already is in use

- Woebot is registered with the FDA as medical device
- Chatbots and avatars designed to provide various forms of mental health support

Sedlakova & Trachsel, 2023, p. 4

Regulatory considerations

- **Jurisdiction** - Boards regulate human providers, not technology systems
- **Disclosures** - What therapist uses of AI should clients be notified of
- **Data privacy** - Therapists are not data policy experts; how much do therapists need to understand and share about AI companies' data use policies
- **Data commercialization** - Even if recordings are deleted, how is other data used to further refine AI or generate revenue
- **Title and practice protection** - Can AI companies call the service they are providing "therapy" and use terms suggesting assessment, diagnosis, treatment

AI articles:

psychotherapynotes.com

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