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Dinosaurs of Tomorrow: Clinicians are an Extinct Species

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The rise of artificial intelligence (AI) may evolve to threaten human progress and survival. Dinosaurs once majestic in their dominance were ultimately brought down by forces beyond their control. Just as automation transformed manufacturing in the 20th century, they could not survive in their skins as the ecosystem needed smaller and capable animals who would consume less and produce more. Old and classic clinicians face a looming threat of obsolescence. This holds true in regions like South Asia, where AI's influence in medical research is accelerating. The unchecked use of AI to generate research papers, once seen as a mere tool, is now a cause for concern. A technologically driven ecosystem may force clinicians to resign from their role as the spearheads of clinical acumen and their job maybe taken up by smart machines.

Eliot TS once asked, "Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge? Where is the knowledge we have lost in information".[1] This loss of wisdom is akin to the history of dinosaurs, once unmatched in their realm, but too slow to adapt when the world changed around them. Today, the medical community faces a similar crossroad. AI, like the asteroid that changed Earth's climate eons ago, has the power to disrupt the landscape of clinical practice and academic research. In South Asia, where AI systems now demonstrate 40% greater accuracy in diagnostics and 60% improved efficiency in treatment planning, the pressure to publish at a speed that matches the need has transformed AI from a tool of enhancement into a crutch for researchers desperate to meet growing demands.[2,3]

The ethical and intellectual costs are staggering. The ethical usage has transformed into misuse. In Pakistan, for example, research funding is limited and AI is a cost effective tool for rescue. A recent survey revealed that more than 30% of researchers use AI tools to produce significant portions of their papers.[4] Such practices blur the line between support and outright academic fraud.

Hannah Arendt wrote that "The aim of totalitarian education has never been to install convictions but to destroy the capacity to form any."[5] In this AI-dominated landscape, we risk something similar. The intellectual labor of formulating hypothesis, thinking critically and synthesize rationally is a roller coaster ride that no one is ready or able to pursue. Like the dinosaurs who could not adapt quickly enough to survive, researchers and clinicians may find themselves redundant if they become overly reliant on AI. The machine's proficiency of giving birth to data from oblivion cannot replace the creativity, intuition, and reasoning that define human discovery.

AI-generated research threatens the credibility of medical literature. Studies have shown that AI-produced manuscripts often contain factual inaccuracies and methodological flaws.[6,7] These errors may be difficult to detect, as AI products may evade standard plagiarism detection tools.[8] The result is a constant flow of pseudo-research that dilutes original research. Statistics and results and inferences based on those results are flawed and skewed.

In South Asia, medical journals are striving to increase their global recognition, striving hard for citations and running a marathon for gaining impact factor based on citations. This in turn has produced paper mills of research milled out of AI that can tactfully place citations and increase the likelihood of publication in a model journal that is cited repeatedly.

In countries like Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh, the drive to publish more can lead to long-term consequences. If AI-generated research goes unchecked, medical journals may lose credibility, and truly innovative studies will struggle to gain visibility in a sea of algorithmic content.[9,10] Moreover, the impact of AI misuse extends beyond the academic realm. Medical research guides clinical practice, public health policies, and treatment guidelines. Flawed, AI-generated studies can lead to serious consequences for patient care and inappropriate treatment recommendations.[11,12]

Mary Shelley's Victor Frankenstein, in his pursuit of mastery over life, found himself horrified by the monster he created. "I had worked hard for nearly two years, for the sole purpose of infusing life into an inanimate body, but now that I had finished, the beauty of the dream vanished, and breathless horror and disgust filled my heart."[13] The story of Frankenstein is a fitting metaphor for AI in research: an exciting innovation that could be purposeful is now devoid of meaning and utterly outrageous at times.

Clinicians and researchers must act now to prevent their own extinction. South Asian medical journals need

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to establish firm guidelines on the ethical use of AI in manuscript preparation. Authors must disclose the extent to which AI was involved in the creation of their work, and reviewers must be trained to identify AI-generated content.[14,15] At the same time, institutions must prioritize the ethical education of researchers. The value of research lies not in how quickly it can be produced, but in the depth of its insights and the rigour of its methods.

The future is not without hope. Just as some species adapt and thrive in changing environments, clinicians too can evolve. AI is not an enemy, but a powerful tool when used appropriately. The integration of AI into research should enhance human capability rather than replace it. Global collaboration among journals, academic institutions, and regulatory bodies is essential to ensuring that AI supports, rather than undermines, the scientific process.[16,17]

In conclusion, the misuse of AI in medical research threatens the very foundations of academic publishing in Pakistan and South Asia. Clinicians, like the dinosaurs are at the brink of extinction if they fail to adapt to the new technological landscape. However, with thoughtful action and a commitment to ethical integrity, the medical profession can avoid the fate of the dinosaurs. As Eliot TS remarked, "Only those who will risk going too far can possibly find out how far one can go."[1] The medical community must take that risk, but with wisdom, ethics, and a resolve to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity.

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