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## Short Communication

# Using ChatGPT as a grief counseling tool in end-stage cancer diagnosis

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### ABSTRACT

With the advent of Artificial Intelligence, the healthcare system around the world has a golden opportunity to improve the quality of care and efficiently enforce the management of patients. It is the need of the hour to explore and learn what AI, and by extension, the Large Language Models like ChatGPT, can do to make the process of healing a better experience.

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## 1. Using ChatGPT as a Counseling Tool in End-Stage Cancer Diagnosis

Artificial intelligence, especially large language models like ChatGPT, has revolutionized society in ways unimaginable. In a world catapulting head-first into the still mysterious world of humanized machines, how can medicine be left behind?<sup>1</sup> Using devices to facilitate healthcare is not a novel idea, but using it to replace human interaction is. We understand the impact a life-altering diagnosis like end-stage cancer has on a person. Coming to terms and accepting the diagnosis is a challenge, let alone grasping the medical technicalities and formulating a plan of care. This is where ChatGPT comes into play, helping the patient understand in layman's terms, thereby easing the entire process. It can accurately answer the patients' questions ranging from "Why did it happen to me?" to "What does cancer staging mean?" It has a wide spectrum of responses tailored in an easy-to-comprehend manner.

Assuming a patient recently diagnosed with stage IV pancreatic cancer has innumerable unanswered questions even after meeting the doctor, who do you think the patient

should turn to? In such a situation, ChatGPT can fill in the shoes of a person able to offer emotional support at a difficult time as well as explain medical factoids regarding pancreatic cancer. Firstly, it possesses the ability to pacify a devastated patient with responses comparable to a qualified physician. Furthermore, it can provide ways to deal with grief. It offers realistic solutions, of which meditation, yoga, and relaxation exercises are a few examples.<sup>2</sup> Secondly, in addition to dealing with the emotional aspect of the diagnosis, it can also provide insight into the pathology of pancreatic cancer. It simplifies the disease process and treatment options in a coherent and clear fashion for the patient to understand, a task that has proven difficult even for many doctors.<sup>3</sup> Thirdly, it talks to the patient in a dialogue form mimicking another human being, which strengthens its role as a replacement.<sup>4</sup> A tool like ChatGPT can be quite helpful, particularly when a doctor has a daily spending cap for how much time they can spend with a patient. Patients can talk to ChatGPT as many times as necessary.

Table 1 shows my conversation with ChatGPT regarding pancreatic cancer and how to deal with it. I typed out the questions exactly as shown in the table and received instant responses. The entire process was effortless and user-friendly.

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**Table 1:** Shows a conversation between a patient diagnosed with pancreatic cancer and ChatGPT

Question	Answer
1. I was recently diagnosed with end-stage pancreatic cancer and doctors told me I have a life expectancy of 6 months. I am really scared. How do I deal with it?	1. Facing a diagnosis of end-stage pancreatic cancer is undoubtedly frightening. Here are some brief suggestions to help cope: a. Seek support from loved ones and professionals. b. Focus on quality of life and symptom management. c. Consider counseling or therapy to address fears and emotions. d. Engage in activities and connections that bring comfort and peace. e. Take care of yourself physically and emotionally.
2. I feel like I am a burden on my family. How do I make them suffer less?	2. Communicate openly with your family about your feelings and reassure them of your love and gratitude. Seek support from outside resources, such as hospice care or counseling, to lessen the burden on your family members. Encourage them to take breaks and prioritize self-care while providing care for you.
3. I wish this had happened to someone else instead of me. Does that make me a bad person?	3. No, feeling that way doesn't make you a bad person. It's a common reaction to difficult circumstances. It's important to acknowledge your emotions and seek support to navigate through them.
4. How does pancreatic cancer occur?	4. Pancreatic cancer occurs when cells in the pancreas develop mutations in their DNA, causing them to grow uncontrollably and form a tumor. The exact cause of these mutations is often unknown, but factors like smoking, obesity, family history, and certain genetic syndromes can increase the risk.
5. What does stage 4 pancreatic cancer mean?	5. Stage 4 pancreatic cancer is an advanced stage where the cancer has spread from the pancreas to distant organs or tissues. This stage is often characterized by metastasis to organs like the liver, lungs, or abdominal cavity. Treatment options may focus on managing symptoms and improving quality of life rather than curative measures.

A downside to using ChatGPT as a grief counseling tool would be the lack of human touch. We are social animals, after all, and even the most sophisticated versions of ChatGPT would fail to replicate human interaction.<sup>5</sup> Another disadvantage would be the lack of personalization for a particular patient in terms of responses, which maybe the doctor is better suited to. These patient-specific nuances are not available at this stage of the development of ChatGPT, but the future looks bright. With the appropriate investment in time and capital to train the software according to the healthcare setup's needs, artificial intelligence has immense potential to encompass all aspects of GATHER counseling, which include Greet, Ask, Tell, Help, Explain, and Return. Integrating AI into the GATHER counseling framework allows healthcare workers to expedite workflows, increase patient satisfaction, minimize administrative responsibilities, and ultimately improve the quality of care provided.<sup>6</sup>

In conclusion, the idea that ChatGPT can be used in cooperation with the physician in counseling patients with a cathartic diagnosis of end-stage cancer has a scope of turning into reality.

## 2. Source of Funding

None.

## 3. Conflict of Interest

None.

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