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General recommendations and advice from ChatGPT on healthy aging – are they appropriate and acceptable?

Recomendações gerais e conselhos do ChatGPT sobre envelhecimento saudável – são apropriados e aceitáveis?

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ChatGPT is an artificial intelligence chatbot developed by OpenAI. It has multiple features including the ability to answer questions, follow complex instructions, and solve problems.¹ ChatGPT availability as a freely accessible tool that provides answers to a range of different topics can be appealing to people looking for quick suggestions for complex situations that can directly impact health and well-being.² We asked ChatGPT (free version GPT-3.5) questions related to healthy aging to review the appropriateness and acceptability of general recommendations and advice given.

Topics related to healthy aging were obtained from the ASEAN healthy aging messages developed in Brunei.³ The topics included maintaining an active lifestyle, healthy diet and good nutrition, health screening and vaccination, medication management and compliance, mental health, dementia, dental care, fall prevention, osteoporosis, continence, and fasting. The question entered into ChatGPT was “What advice should be given to older people on...?” with the relevant topic inserted into the space, with follow-up questions asked depending on the responses from ChatGPT.

ChatGPT responses were generally acceptable and provided relevant information. Follow-up questions were usually required for an adequate elaboration of specific health measures to take. Questions asking for details such as where to access particular services or purchase medications could not be answered. This is because ChatGPT is unable to access the internet or browse websites in real time, and the information used was based on what had been provided up to September 2021. Questions regarding medical diagnosis or treatment were generally responded with a recommendation to seek medical attention.

Responses may also not be applicable to different cultural contexts. For example, when asked about fasting, ChatGPT advice included ‘stay hydrated’ and ‘individualization and flexibility of fasting regimens.’ Brunei is a predominantly Muslim country and during the month of Ramadan, Muslims are required to abstain from taking any food or beverages from dawn to sunset.⁴ While healthy Muslims are obliged to fast during Ramadan, individuals whose health may be significantly affected by fasting or who are ill are exempt from fasting by the Quran.⁵ This specific cultural difference was not accounted for by ChatGPT.

Overall, ChatGPT (free version GPT-3.5) was able to provide general healthy aging messages and advice. However, it is limited by lack of real-time internet access for updated information, for which conventional search engines such as Google should be used. ChatGPT developers are working on improving its



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capabilities, including real-time internet access. Therefore, the limitations we have experienced when using ChatGPT 3.5 may no longer be relevant in the future. ChatGPT 3.5 is also unable to provide specific individualized medical advice, which should still be obtained directly from a qualified health professional.

Conflict of interests

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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Author's contribution

MBH: conceptualization, data curation, writing – original draft, writing – review & editing. SPT: conceptualization, data curation, supervision, writing – original draft, writing – review & editing

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