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Editorial

Should ChatGPT be Considered an Author in Scholarly Publications?

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The academic and scientific world was disrupted when ChatGPT was released in the latter part of 2022. ChatGPT is a chatbot; a computer program powered by natural language processing (NLP) and artificial intelligence (AI) capable of generating text with human-like qualities. It takes AI-generated text to a whole new level with the ability to create texts, messages, essays, and probably even scientific articles. Considered superior in its NLP, it can spew out texts relevant to the command input by the user. That is, when asked to "write me a 500-word editorial article on the topic of ChatGPT an author of scholarly publications," it can provide you with something similar to what you are currently reading.

Albeit innovative and impressive, scholars and academics were quick to draw the line between artificial and authentic intelligence. Harboring on its power, one can expect the devious ways ChatGPT may be used and abused in publication science.

ChatGPT features the ability to write texts, instead of providing websites, links, or short answers to the user's query. I have tried it myself, for the purpose of experimentation, and from a syntactical point of view, the output is quite acceptable. However, when it comes to semantics and content, that is where the caveats start to unravel. The database ChatGPT uses is only up until 2021. That same database, as per the developer, is not connected to the internet.[1] With only a few months in, we may consider that machine learning is still ongoing. Its chatbot NLP feature lends itself automatically to user requests, no matter how ethical or unethical these may be. Thus, whatever ChatGPT produces upon your command, may not necessarily hold true. These along with other limitations, or maybe even future ones, casts doubt on the believability of evidence ChatGPT produces.

Bring this dilemma to the area of publication science, and we find ourselves in a rabbit hole of confusion and delusion. Remember, an important cornerstone of authorship and contributorship is accountability for the article published.[2,3] ChatGPT seems to be a non-legal entity, devoid of personality bound to rules, regulations, and legislations (WAME).[4]

We are therefore called to reflect on the standards of authorship and contributorship. And this call is not limited to scientific journals and their editors, but also to researchers and scientists whose works we review and publish. The intellectual disruption and discourse raised by ChatGPT should be cathartic and precipitate revisiting these standards of authorship and contributorship to remain relevant in the present. As a journal editor, peer reviewer, and researcher, I am ethically bound to support the stance made by our colleagues from the World Association of Medical Editors, Nature, and Science, to name a few, to prohibit ChatGPT the credit from being assigned as an author for scholarly publications.[4-6]

Notwithstanding the controversy behind ChatGPT, it is undeniable that it brings forth promising solutions to commonly encountered problems in the scientific publishing industry. It may complement currently mainstreamed AI tools that authors are using in preparing manuscripts for submission. Whether evidence generated using ChatGPT is plausible to be included in the submitted manuscript in whatever capacity is an emerging debate that we should all monitor in the coming months.

Conflicts of interest

The statements described in this article present the informed opinion of the editor-in-chief, but not necessarily of the journal and publisher unless otherwise specified.

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