IOSR Journal of Computer Engineering (IOSR-JCE)
e-ISSN: 2278-0661, p-ISSN: 2278-8727, Volume 27, Issue 3, Ser. 3 (May. – June. 2025), PP 39-45
www.iosrjournals.org

Saving Lives With AI: A Chatbot Solution For Accessible Medical Assistance

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Abstract
The healthcare chatbot system is designed to assist individuals in rural areas and government hospitals who face difficulties in obtaining appointments or medical information from doctors. By leveraging this chatbot, patients can address their healthcare concerns. With India's growing population, rising birth rates, and declining death rates due to advancements in medical technology, there is an increasing gap between the number of doctors and the population in need of medical attention. This is especially evident in government hospitals in urban areas, where a shortage of doctors often leads to inadequate patient care and, in some cases, fatalities. To address this issue, an intelligent and smart chatbot system is required, one that can provide guidance to both doctors and patients, potentially saving numerous lives. The AI-driven healthcare chatbot featured in this project aims to offer medical advice in situations where doctors may make errors in diagnosis. Unlike human doctors, this AI system, designed for such purposes, eliminates the potential for mistakes. The chatbot can make decisions based on the patient's request by consulting its own database, and in situations where the required information is unavailable, it can gather relevant details from online search engines like Google to provide the necessary advice to users. The integration of such an AI-powered solution has the potential to transform healthcare delivery, especially in underserved areas, ensuring that people receive the medical attention they need, when they need it.

Keywords: *Chatbot, Healthcare, Artificial intelligence, Natural language processing, Python, Symptoms.*

Date of Submission: 23-05-2025 Date of Acceptance: 03-06-2025

I. Introduction

A chatbot is an AI-driven software designed to simulate human conversation through various platforms like messaging apps, websites, mobile applications, or even over the phone. It represents the natural progression of question-answering systems powered by Natural Language Processing (NLP). The concept of chatbots dates back to the 1950s when Alan Turing proposed the Turing Test, which evaluates whether a machine can mimic human behavior to the point of being indistinguishable from a human. The first chatbot, known as ELIZA, was created in 1960 by Professor Joseph Weizenbaum.

A. Importance of Chatbots

Chatbots have become one of the most advanced forms of human-machine interaction. As technology progresses, chatbots play an essential role in various fields such as health education, diagnostics, and mental health support. According to a survey of conversational agents, chatbots are categorized into various types and contexts, with particular emphasis on their role in healthcare. These intelligent systems help bridge the gap between users and services, improving user engagement and overall experience while also aiding businesses in enhancing operational efficiency.

B. How Chatbots Work

A chatbot's core functionality revolves around "User Request Analysis." The system's primary task is to analyze user input, understand the user's intent, and extract relevant information. The chatbot then generates the most appropriate response using NLP. This process allows the chatbot to interact effectively, whether in healthcare, customer service, or other domains. Chatbots have gained widespread use across various sectors, including healthcare, politics, and customer service, significantly improving communication processes.

C. Chatbots in Healthcare

In healthcare, chatbots offer immense potential, from providing mental health support to helping diagnose illnesses. They streamline healthcare processes by providing immediate assistance, answering questions, and offering basic health advice. Although there isn't a comprehensive review of chatbots for lifestyle

modification programs, numerous reviews have explored their effectiveness in areas such as mental health support, smoking cessation, and disease identification .This paper proposes the development of an AI-powered healthcare chatbot that can diagnose diseases based on user-reported symptoms. The system aims to provide basic information about medical conditions before users consult a doctor, helping reduce healthcare costs and time. By using a question-and-answer protocol, the chatbot answers user queries and offers diagnostic support. The goal is to create a user-friendly interface where patients can communicate easily with the chatbot, which will analyze symptoms and provide appropriate guidance.

II. Literature Review

A literature review plays a critical role in exploring and evaluating the existing body of knowledge on a specific topic. In the case of the AI healthcare chatbot, a literature review helps to synthesize research, methodologies, and the latest developments in the field. The primary goal is to analyze and present the state-of-the-art technology, its applications, challenges, and opportunities. By reviewing the current literature, we can gain a deeper understanding of the integration of AI in healthcare, specifically through chatbots, and recognize its potential impact on patient care and medical diagnosis.

Several studies have highlighted the benefits of AI chatbots in improving healthcare accessibility, particularly in rural and underserved regions. According to a study by Nadarzynski et al. (2019), AI-based chatbot services have been found to be acceptable in healthcare settings, particularly when used for providing medical advice and support. These chatbots reduce the need for physical consultations, making them a valuable tool in areas with a shortage of healthcare professionals. The chatbot is able to quickly provide answers to patient queries, offer advice, and even perform initial diagnostic tasks, thus reducing wait times and enhancing healthcare delivery [1].

In addition, AI-powered chatbots have been explored in health education, diagnostics, and mental health management. Zhang et al. (2020) proposed a model for designing AI chatbots aimed at promoting physical activity and healthy diets. This study focused on how AI can influence behavior change, particularly in individuals with chronic diseases or lifestyle-related conditions. By using AI to provide personalized health recommendations, chatbots have the potential to enhance patient engagement and improve adherence to healthy behaviors [2].

AI-based chatbots are increasingly being seen as an essential tool for healthcare, offering accessibility to medical information, helping diagnose diseases, and providing immediate support for patients. Flora Amato (2018) explored the use of deep machine learning and AI in healthcare applications, stating that these technologies allow chatbots to interact with patients in a way that mimics the conversation with a doctor. Amato used Watson Language Service as the core engine for building such intelligent systems, integrating this service with the IBM Bluemix platform to create a robust solution for automated patient interaction. This approach not only enhances patient-doctor communication but also provides a deeper understanding of patient symptoms and conditions through AI-powered conversations [3].

Priyasankari (2017) proposed an AI-driven system where user dialogues are employed in a linear style for symptom extraction and mapping. In this approach, the chatbot prompts the user with questions about their symptoms, and based on the responses, it identifies the possible diseases. It categorizes the conditions as either minor or serious and provides the user with an initial diagnosis. This model ensures that the chatbot can effectively guide patients by identifying conditions early, potentially improving treatment outcomes. It is particularly useful in scenarios where immediate consultations with doctors are not possible [4].

Benilda Eleonor (2019) introduced a healthcare application called “Pharma Bot,” designed to assist pediatric patients by offering an interactive platform for symptom checking. This AI chatbot aids in identifying potential health conditions in children and provides guidance to parents on whether they need to consult a healthcare provider. The system, which integrates medical databases and advanced AI algorithms, shows great potential in the pediatric field, where timely intervention is critical for children’s health [5]. This approach underscores the versatility of AI healthcare chatbots across different patient demographics, emphasizing their broad applicability in various medical specialties.

III. Proposed Methodology

The proposed methodology for the AI healthcare chatbot involves using machine learning and natural language processing (NLP) techniques to assist in diagnosing diseases based on symptoms provided by the user. The chatbot will interact with patients by taking user input (symptoms) and return a diagnosis along with other relevant symptoms associated with the identified disease. The system will be developed using Python and various Python libraries to streamline the process and improve the accuracy and efficiency of the chatbot. Below are the steps involved in the methodology:

A. System Design and Architecture

The AI healthcare chatbot will be designed with a user-friendly interface where patients can input their symptoms in a conversational manner. The chatbot will follow a symptom-based approach by prompting users with a series of predefined questions regarding their symptoms. Based on their responses, the chatbot will process the input and return an appropriate diagnosis. The system architecture includes:

- User Interface (UI): A simple, text-based interface where users can interact with the chatbot through a messaging application or website.
- Back-End Processing: A Python-based backend that uses NLP and machine learning algorithms to process user inputs and provide accurate results.
- Database: A database containing information about diseases, symptoms, and related conditions, which the chatbot can reference to deliver accurate responses.

Fig. 1 The Chatbot Log

B. Data Collection and Prepro cessing

Data collection is a crucial step in building a reliable AI healthcare chatbot. A dataset of common diseases, symptoms, and their relationships will be gathered from reliable medical sources. This data will be preprocessed to remove irrelevant or redundant information, ensuring that the chatbot is able to access the most relevant and useful data. Preprocessing steps include:

Data cleaning involves removing irrelevant information, fixing inconsistencies, and handling missing values to ensure the dataset is accurate and reliable. This process ensures that the data used by the chatbot is consistent and free from errors, making it ready for further analysis. Once the data is cleaned, it undergoes data transformation, where the raw data is converted into a structured format that can be easily processed by the chatbot. This includes categorizing diseases and symptoms, organizing the data into standardized formats, and structuring it in a way that allows the chatbot to quickly access and provide relevant information based on user inputs.

C. Natural Language Processing (NLP) and Machine Learning

To process user input, the chatbot will employ Natural Language Processing (NLP) techniques to understand the symptoms described by the patient. The following steps will be implemented:

The AI healthcare chatbot system will utilize various techniques to understand and respond to user inputs. Intent recognition will be performed using Natural Language Processing (NLP) algorithms to detect the user's intent by identifying the symptom described. Key entities, such as diseases and related symptoms, will be extracted from the patient's input through Named Entity Recognition (NER). Once the symptoms are identified, the system will match them with diseases in the database and propose a potential diagnosis. In cases where the user's symptoms are not directly available, the chatbot will query external sources for additional information. Additionally, machine learning classification techniques will be employed, using supervised learning algorithms to classify the symptoms into various disease categories based on the input received from the user, thereby enhancing the accuracy of the proposed diagnosis.

D. Integration of Python Libraries

The following Python libraries will be used to implement the AI healthcare chatbot efficiently:

- Pandas: Pandas will be used for data manipulation and analysis. It allows for easy handling of structured and time-series data, making it ideal for storing and processing the large dataset of symptoms and diseases. The library's DataFrame structure will help in organizing and accessing data quickly and efficiently during symptom matching and disease diagnosis. It will also help in cleaning, filtering, and processing data before it is passed through the machine learning models, ensuring that the dataset is in the right format for optimal performance.
- NumPy: NumPy will provide support for working with large, multi-dimensional arrays and matrices. This is essential for performing mathematical operations involved in processing large datasets efficiently..
- Scikit-learn: Scikit-learn will be employed for building and applying machine learning models, which are crucial for disease prediction and pattern recognition based on user-inputted symptoms.
- Natural Language Toolkit (NLTK): The NLTK library will be essential for Natural Language Processing (NLP) tasks, enabling the chatbot to process, understand, and respond to user inputs in natural language.
- TensorFlow/Keras: TensorFlow and Keras will be used to implement deep learning models for more advanced disease prediction tasks. These frameworks allow for the development of neural networks that can learn complex patterns in data.

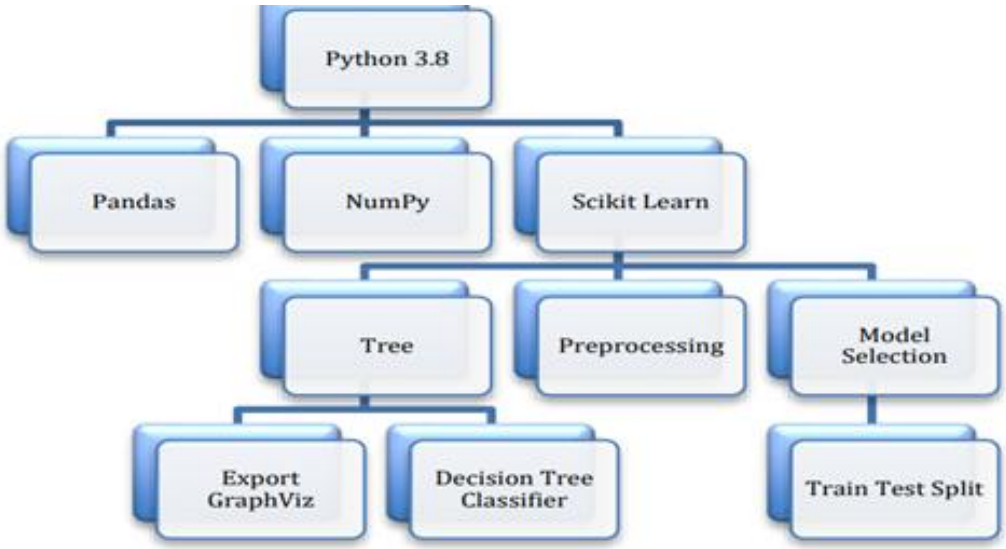

Fig.2 Python libraries

E. Algorithm

The algorithm used in the chatbot follows a systematic approach to diagnose diseases based on the symptoms reported by the patient. Initially, the chatbot presents Symptom 1 to the patient. If the patient responds with a "Yes," the chatbot proceeds to identify the corresponding disease and provides a list of other commonly related symptoms that may accompany this condition. This not only helps in confirming the diagnosis but also enables the patient to be aware of other symptoms that might develop in the future.

If the patient responds with a "No" to Symptom 1, the chatbot moves on to Symptom 2, repeating the process. If the patient again responds with a "Yes," the chatbot identifies the disease associated with this symptom and again provides a list of additional symptoms linked to the condition. If the patient says "No" to Symptom 2, the chatbot continues this process with Symptom 3 and so on, until it has covered all 43 symptoms in its database.

By following this step-by-step method, the chatbot effectively narrows down the possible diseases based on the user's symptoms. It works by cross-referencing the patient's responses to a series of predefined symptoms, ensuring that the most relevant disease is identified. Each symptom is linked to a specific set of conditions, and the chatbot leverages this information to present the patient with a detailed diagnosis along with a comprehensive list of other symptoms associated with the identified disease.

This approach not only makes the diagnosis more accurate but also ensures that patients are given detailed information about other symptoms they might experience, empowering them to make informed decisions about their health.

IV. Results And Discussion

The AI-based healthcare chatbot system underwent rigorous testing with different user inputs, successfully identifying diseases based on the reported symptoms. The system's distinguishing feature is its ability to not only diagnose the disease but also to provide additional related symptoms, which sets it apart from other existing healthcare chatbots. This capability allows users to get a more comprehensive view of their condition, enhancing the overall user experience.

A. Disease Identified: Vertigo

In the first case (Fig. 3), the patient reported feeling unsteady and experiencing a spinning sensation, both of which are characteristic of vertigo. After the patient selected "yes" for the symptom of unsteadiness, the system accurately identified Vertigo as the disease. The system then went a step further, listing other common symptoms that could accompany the disease, such as nausea and dizziness. This feature allowed the patient to check for additional symptoms that they were currently experiencing and also to anticipate future symptoms if the condition were left untreated. This proactive approach helped the patient understand the potential severity of the condition and take appropriate steps for treatment.

Fig. 3 Output through giving symotoms for Vertigo

B. Disease Identified: Psoriasis

In another example (Fig. 4), the patient reported inflammatory nails and peeling skin, symptoms that are often indicative of psoriasis. When the patient confirmed "yes" for the symptom of inflammatory nails, the chatbot identified Psoriasis as the disease. Similar to the first case, the system provided additional related symptoms, such as dry skin and itching, helping the patient to recognize whether they might be dealing with psoriasis or another condition. The inclusion of these extra symptoms empowered the patient to make a more informed decision about seeking treatment, ensuring they were aware of any changes in their condition over time.

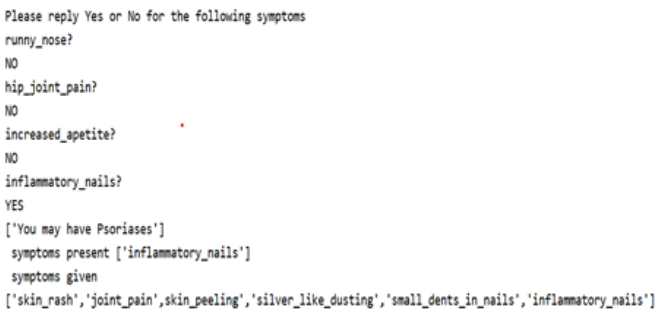

Fig.4 Output through giving symotoms for Psoriases

C. Disease Identified: Diabetes

In the third example (Fig. 5), the patient reported excessive hunger, increased appetite, and extreme fatigue, all of which are common signs of diabetes. After selecting "yes" for the symptom of increased appetite, the system identified Diabetes as the disease. Once again, the chatbot provided a list of other symptoms typically associated with diabetes, such as frequent urination and unintentional weight loss. This allowed the patient to evaluate their condition more thoroughly and consider whether they were experiencing other signs of diabetes that might require medical attention. By providing this detailed information, the chatbot facilitated an informed conversation about the disease and the next steps in managing the condition.

Fig.5 Output through giving symotoms for Vertigo

D. Comparison with Existing Chatbots

Symptom Identification: The healthcare chatbot developed in this project follows a straightforward and user-friendly approach, asking users to identify symptoms in a "YES" or "NO" format. Based on the responses, it identifies the most likely disease or illness. This method contrasts with existing chatbots, such as Your.MD, which acts as a personal health assistant. Your.MD offers symptom checkers and quizzes that provide general health advice and personalized recommendations. However, these features do not always deliver a clear, direct diagnosis solely based on the user's reported symptoms, which could result in less precise or reliable outcomes.

Comprehensive Information: A key advantage of our chatbot system is that it provides not only a disease diagnosis but also lists other related symptoms that the user may be experiencing or could potentially experience in the future. This functionality allows users to better understand the full scope of their condition, providing valuable insights into possible next steps. In comparison, many existing chatbots often offer a diagnosis based on a wide dataset of symptoms but do not provide the same level of detailed symptom analysis or predictions. As a result, users may not be fully informed about the broader implications of their condition.

Simplicity and Algorithm: The algorithm powering our chatbot is both simple and effective. It processes user responses efficiently, delivering a highly accurate diagnosis based on the symptoms entered by the user. This simplicity is a strength, as it reduces the complexity of the system, making it easier for users to navigate. Additionally, our chatbot is built with flexibility in mind, meaning that it can be easily modified to add new features or improve its accuracy over time. This adaptability ensures that the system remains up-to-date with the latest medical information and user needs, unlike some existing chatbots that might rely on fixed datasets or limited features.

In summary, the AI-based healthcare chatbot developed in this project offers a comprehensive, user-friendly, and effective way to diagnose common illnesses based on reported symptoms. Its ability to not only identify diseases but also provide additional related symptoms makes it stand out from other healthcare chatbots. This feature, combined with the simplicity and flexibility of the underlying algorithm, makes it a powerful tool for helping users understand their health conditions and take necessary actions. As AI technology continues to improve, this chatbot has the potential to become even more accurate and robust, further enhancing the way healthcare is delivered and improving patient outcomes. The system's design allows for easy future modifications, ensuring it can adapt to the evolving needs of healthcare users and provide ongoing value in the medical field.

V. Conclusion

The development of artificial intelligence (AI) has significantly advanced to the point where machines can effectively mimic human conversation, revolutionizing sectors like healthcare. While chatbots have existed since 1966, their use in healthcare surged with innovations like Siri in 2011 and the Facebook Messenger bot, paving the way for their broader adoption. The healthcare industry is now witnessing startups leveraging AI-powered chatbots to support both patients and healthcare providers, improving efficiency and accessibility. AI healthcare chatbots are transforming patient care by enabling individuals to input their symptoms, receive diagnoses, and even obtain prescriptions without always consulting a doctor. This automation addresses challenges like doctor shortages and long wait times, especially in underserved areas, providing a more accessible healthcare option. Chatbots also enhance the patient experience by offering personalized, immediate responses based on natural language processing (NLP), making healthcare more accessible and user-friendly. Despite their potential, AI healthcare chatbots face challenges related to accuracy, data privacy, and handling complex medical situations. While they can assist with routine tasks like symptom checking and appointment scheduling, they are meant to complement, not replace, human doctors. AI chatbots free up medical professionals to focus on more critical care.Looking forward, continued advancements in machine learning and data security will make AI healthcare chatbots more reliable and effective. They will likely play a larger role in diagnosing a wider range of

conditions, offering mental health support, and promoting preventive care. Ultimately, AI healthcare chatbots are set to transform the healthcare landscape, providing a more efficient, accessible, and personalized healthcare experience, reshaping how care is delivered globally.

In conclusion, AI healthcare chatbots are poised to transform the healthcare landscape by making healthcare more accessible, efficient, and patient-friendly. The future holds the potential for a healthcare system where patients, with the help of advanced AI chatbots, can take greater control of their health, receive timely diagnoses, and have a more personalized and seamless healthcare experience.

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