

Artificial intelligence in healthcare

Report launched

28 January 2019

I am pleased that the Academy has today published the findings of a major enquiry into the likely impact of Artificial intelligence in healthcare. It is encouraging to see doctors from almost every branch of medicine being so supportive of this new technology and the way it will support clinical decisions. That said, it also counsels caution that politicians and policy makers would do well to heed, in that it won't alleviate pressure on the NHS any time soon. It should not be expected to either.

With AI starting to be used in some areas of clinical activity, such as retinal eye scans and targeting radiotherapy to treat cancer, it has been claimed the need for some medical specialists will be much reduced in future. The Academy enquiry has found that if anything, the opposite is true and that AI is not likely to replace clinicians for the foreseeable future but makes the case for training more doctors in data science as well as medicine. The report also recommends:

- AI developed by commercial companies should be subject to critical appraisal and testing in much the same way as pharmaceuticals are
- Regulation is needed, but it shouldn't stifle innovation. Getting the balance right will be a challenge for policymakers
- All doctors' training and skills will need to be adapted so they understand how AI works and what its limitations are.

I am grateful to Professor Martin Severs at NHS Digital for commissioning this work and also to the authors, Dr Jack Ross, Dr Cathy Webb and Dr Farzana Rahman who have worked so hard to make it the landmark piece of work it should become.



Professor Carrie MacEwen, Chair, Academy of Medical Royal Colleges