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Use of AI tools by 1st line Belgian primary healthcare professionals within the context of evidence-based practice

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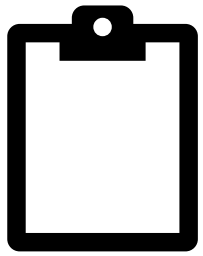
Background

- AI is increasingly used within the context of healthcare
- For professionals who have limited time, it is an appealing alternative for traditional search methods for evidence
- Safe use of AI requires a critical mindset and sufficient EBP skills

Aims

1) Map the extent to which primary healthcare professionals in Belgium use AI tools to support their evidence-based practice
2) Map which AI tools Belgian primary healthcare professionals use
3) Examine whether the use of AI has changed searching behaviour through other channels

Methods



Survey in 2022 and 2025

EBP culture

Belgian health professionals in 1st line

Primary outcome:

- Frequency of AI use within the context of EBP (survey 2025)

Secondary outcomes:

- AI tools that were used (survey 2025)
- Channels through which clinicians searched for answers to clinical questions (survey 2025 vs survey 2022)

Methods

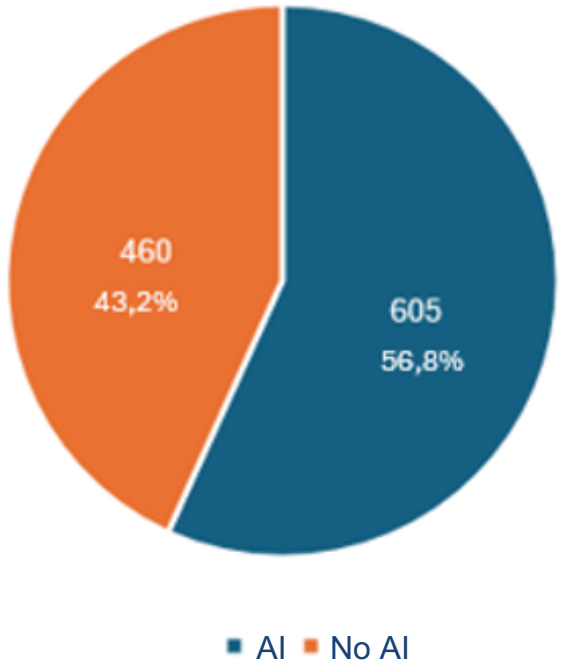
Descriptive analyses

Clinically significant change in search behaviour: cut-off = 10%

Results

Use of AI

- Survey 2025
- Use in frame of information retrieval within the context of evidence based practice



Daily use: N = 100 (9.4%)

1x/week: N = 235 (22.1%)

1x/month: N = 137 (12.9%)

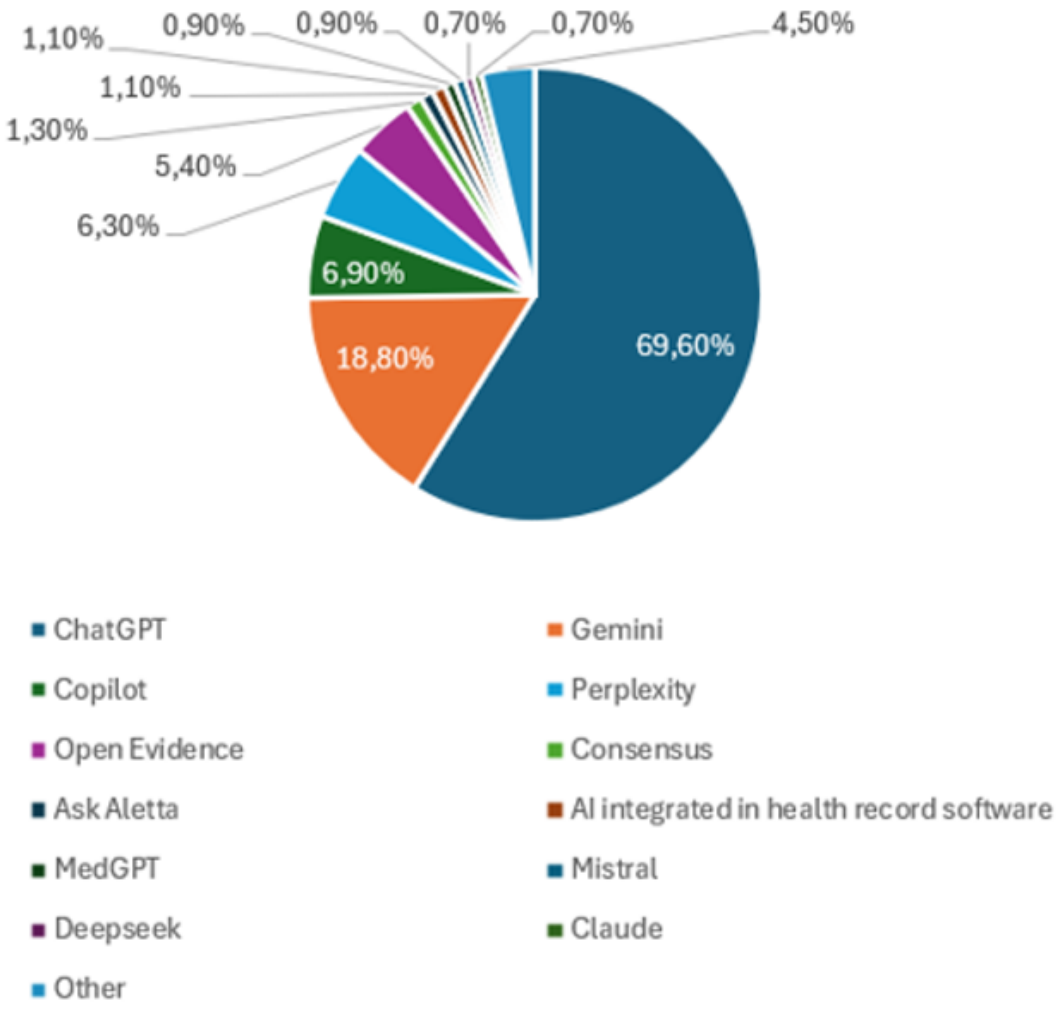
1x/quarter: N = 78 (7.3%)

1x/year: N = 55 (5.2%)

Results

Type of AI tools

- Survey 2025
- Used in frame of evidence-based practice



Results

Change in searching behaviour for evidence

- Surveys from 2022 and 2025

	2022	2025
Online search engines	63.9%	84.8%
Colleagues / discussion groups	43.1%	57.2%
Scientific journals	29.5%	55.9%
Guideline databases	19.3%	25.2%
Specialized medical databases	18.9%	23.3%

Limits

- Survey across the entire 1st line healthcare sector in Belgium
  - Response rate for certain professional groups was low
  - Carefull with conclusions and generalisation
- Embedded in an existing survey
  - Not possible to obtain additional depth or clarification on some items in the survey due to its construct
- Fast changing area of research

Conclusions

- Just over 50% of the in 2025 surveyed 1st line healthcare professionals in Belgium used AI to search for answers within the context of EBP
- Up to 2025, does not come at the expense of searching through other channels (AI tools as a supplement to existing information sources?)
- Used tools: generally very generic tools (ChatGPT, Gemini,…) > more specialised tools designed for clinical practice (Consensus, Ask Aletta,…)
- Important for healthcare professionals
  - Raise awareness about the risks associated with using AI
  - Guide towards tools that are designed / appropriate for use within evidence-based practice