

Chatbots Moving into Healthcare Registration

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If you've ever had a question about your cell phone bill or a dispute with an online retailer, you might have found the least stressful way to solve your problem is by clicking on the "chat with a representative" button. You're not put on hold, the representative is exceedingly polite, and you don't have to worry about a phone call dropping due to bad reception. In all likelihood, you've had a pleasant experience because you weren't actually talking to a human—you were talking to a chatbot.

A chatbot is a computer program that simulates actual human interaction by scanning submitted messages and basing its prewritten responses on keywords. It's not a huge leap to see how the benefits of using chatbots translates to [healthcare](#), especially in telemedicine. After all, who actually likes waiting rooms and a new set of paperwork in the physical doctor's office? With this in mind, the virtual medical and behavioral healthcare provider [MDLive](#) recently introduced its own chatbot, Sophie, to the market at the end of last year, with the goal of streamlining the registration process.

"Sophie aims to improve the platform user experience by offering a tailored, conversational registration process for each individual. Conversation is initiated with a user based on demographics and information entered throughout the registration interaction," MDLive's press release on Sophie states.

At first glance, registration doesn't seem like the obvious place to use a chatbot in healthcare, but Patty Buttner, RHIA, CDIP, CHDA, CPHI, CCS, director of HIM practice excellence at AHIMA, says chatbots are "a tool of the future for dealing with often lengthy registration questions." In a presentation at AHIMA's Data Institute, Buttner says Desiree Matel-Anderson from Field Innovation Team spoke about the use of chatbots in Syrian refugee camps.

"Matel-Anderson said the refugees preferred talking to the chatbots as they could do it from their own personal space and did not have to be seen presenting to the psychologists tent, as there is a social stigma associated with mental health services," Buttner says.

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