

Conversational AI & Mental Health: Opportunities and Challenges



Monday, December 8



8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.



San Diego, CA



UC San Diego

SANFORD INSTITUTE FOR
EMPATHY AND COMPASSION
Center for Empathy and Technology

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SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

This free event is made possible with support from a UC San Diego Strategic Convene and Influence Award.

Conversation AI & Mental Health; Opportunities and Challenges

Monday, December 8th, 2025

8:30 am - 4:30 pm

Location: Duane J. Roth Auditorium

Sanford Consortium for Regenerative Medicine

2880 Torrey Pines Scenic Dr.

San Diego, CA 92037

Event Description:

Convene with experts to explore barriers, facilitators, and practical considerations related to the promises and risks of using generative AI tools for companionship, therapy, and mental health support. As large language models and other conversational AI systems increasingly serve as unguided or self-directed tools for wellness and emotional support, this speaker series will examine both their promise and their risks. The workshop will bring together experts from multiple disciplines to explore the ethical, social, and practical implications of using generative AI for mental health support without the involvement of a health professional.

Target Audience:

This event is designed for health care professionals of all specialties, as well as interested community members, to explore how the evolving landscape of Conversational AI impacts our global interactions.

Learning Objectives:

1. Discuss how generative AI tools are being used by individuals for companionship and mental health support
2. Identify recent trends of generative AI tools being used to promote wellness and mental health
3. Assess the social and relational implications of direct-to-consumer conversational AI use for mental health support, including unintended or adverse consequences
4. Provide examples of rigorous research methods and explain why they are needed to assess impacts in the general population, and specific (e.g., youth/patient/client) populations

Program Agenda:

8:30 am - 9:00 am	Registration
9:00 am - 9:25 am	Welcome and Introductions
9:25 am - 10:30 am	Morning Session - Individual-level Considerations
10:30 am - 11:00 am	COFFEE BREAK
11:00 am - 11:45 am	Morning Speaker with Senator Padilla
11:45 am - 1:00 pm	LUNCH BREAK
1:00 pm - 2:40 pm	Afternoon Session - Systems-level Considerations
2:40 pm - 3:10 pm	COFFEE BREAK
3:10 pm - 4:25 pm	Afternoon Speaker Panel Discussion with Audience Q&A
4:25 pm - 4:30 pm	Closing Comments/Adjourn

Faculty/Committee Member:

Cinnamon Bloss, PhD
Professor, Herbert Wertheim School of Public Health

Desiree Shapiro, MD
Associate Clinical Professor, Psychiatry

Bradley Voytek, PhD
Professor and Chair, Cognitive Science

David Danks, PhD
Professor, School of Computing, Information, and Data Sciences

Gentry Patrick, PhD
Professor, Neurobiology

Planning Committee Member:

Melissa Karnaze, PhD

Assistant Project Scientist, Herbert Wertheim School of Public Health

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