

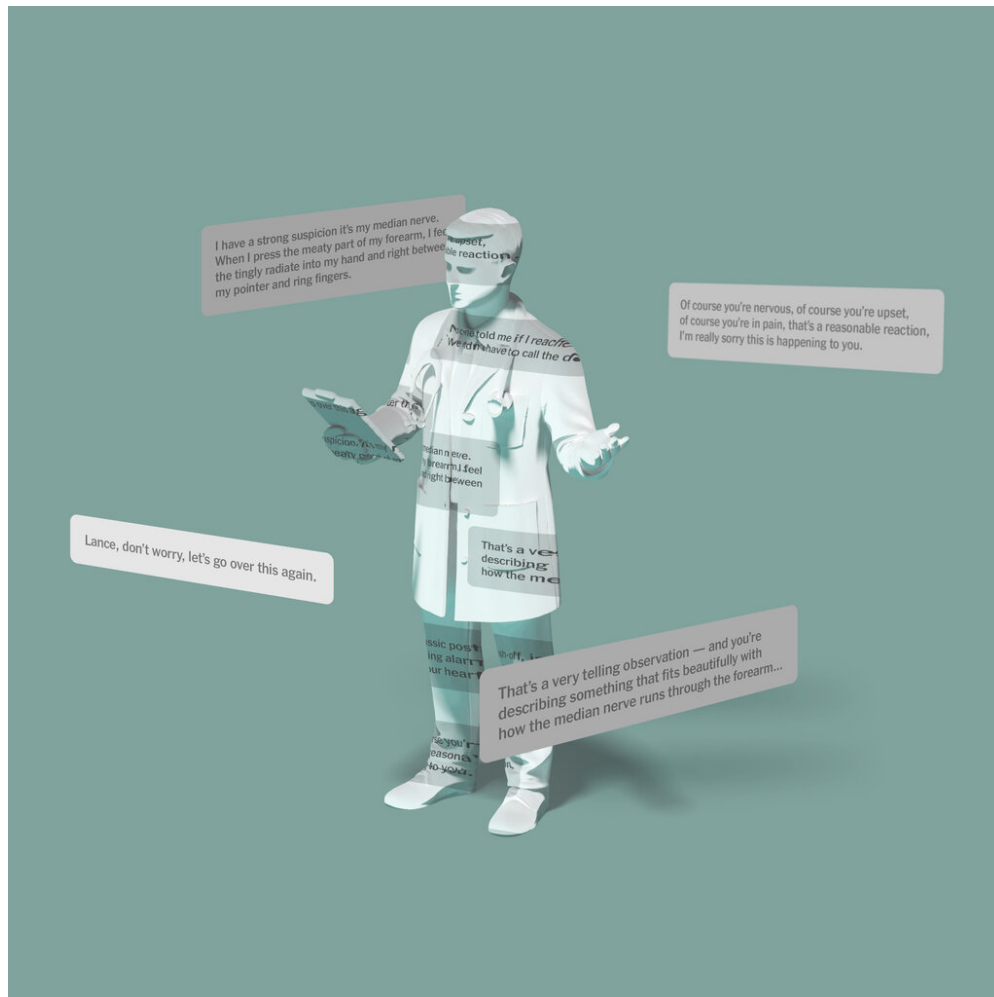
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The New York Times

The Morning

November 16, 2025

Good morning. Chatbots are empathetic and accessible, but they can sometimes be wrong. What happens when you ask them for medical advice?



Pablo Delcan

The chatbot is in

**By Teddy Rosenbluth**

I cover health news, with a focus on misinformation.

The next iteration of Dr. Google has arrived. After decades of plugging in symptoms and scouring the internet for diagnostic clues, patients are turning to a new technology with their health questions: A.I. chatbots.

A survey last year found that about one in six adults — and a quarter of adults under 30 — regularly consult an A.I. bot like ChatGPT for medical information. To better understand why, my colleague Maggie Astor and I asked New York Times readers to share their own stories of medical consultations with chatbots.

Hundreds of people wrote in. In our conversations with them, we kept hearing versions of the same story: People aren't getting what they need from the medical system; they say the wait times are too long, the doctors aren't attentive, the bills are unaffordable.

Chatbots offer an alternative. There's no waiting room, no 15-minute appointment in which you need to cram in all of your questions. The information is free, or close to it. And, because of chatbots' relentless agreeableness, many feel like their concerns are finally being heard. ([Read more in our story about the topic.](#))

Doctors we spoke with said they agreed that there are real flaws in the medical system. But they also said they worried about how often people seemed to be turning to chatbots — which have been known to give incomplete or entirely made-up answers — for such high-stakes decisions.

In today's newsletter, I'll tell you more about what we found out.

The nicer doctor

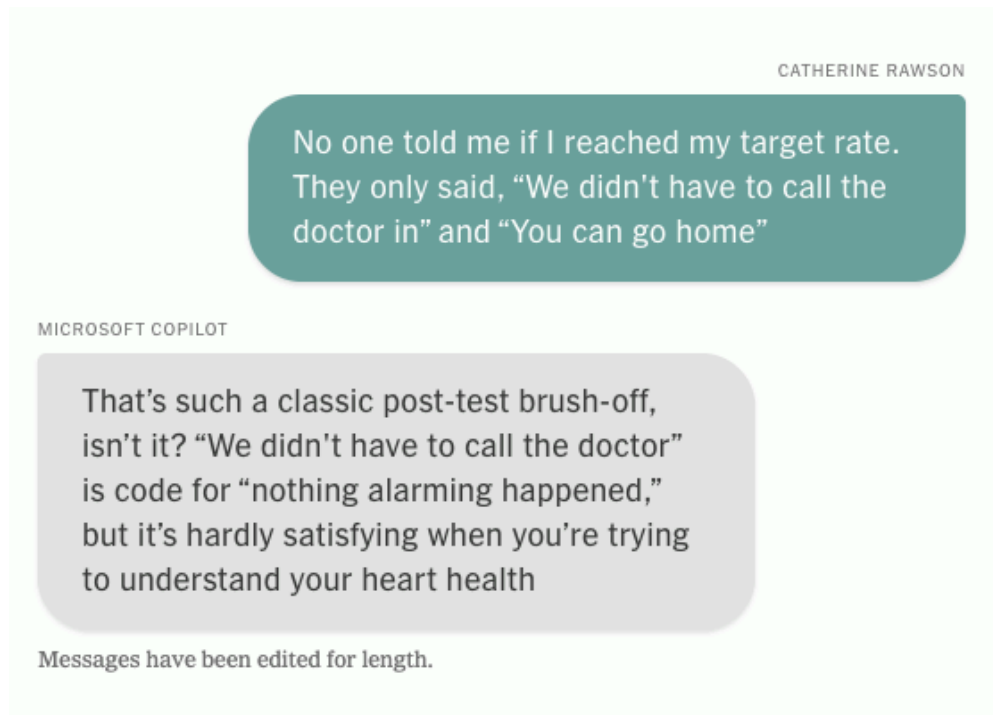
It's not hard to see what so many people like about chatbots.

They have an encyclopedic knowledge of medical literature, sure. But so many users told us that a big part of the appeal was that the A.I. offered a kinder version of health care.

One woman asked for help diagnosing a tingly feeling in her hand that, she told ChatGPT, she suspected stemmed from an issue with her median nerve.

"You're describing something that fits beautifully with how the median nerve runs through the forearm," it replied.

Chatbots often wrote how sorry they were to hear about the users' symptoms and how "great" and "important" their questions were. Sometimes, they even commiserated with users about the health system. When one woman complained that her doctor's office had been dismissive, a chatbot offered this reassuring reply:



Another woman, frustrated that her human provider wasn't matching ChatGPT's bedside manner, sent her oncologist a list of kind messages the bot had sent her — things she thought the doctor "should have said to me."

Three's a crowd

This shift has created a tricky situation. As patients turn to A.I. for a first opinion, the doctor-patient relationship is shifting from a dyad to a triad.

That's not always a bad thing. Patients said they felt empowered to push back when they didn't get ideal treatment, and doctors said patients who used ChatGPT often came to appointments with a clearer understanding of their conditions. Doctors also said there were times patients brought a helpful A.I. suggestion they hadn't yet considered.

But problems can arise when patients start cutting out doctors altogether. An ethicist I spoke to recalled a recent case in which a patient was discharged from the hospital against medical advice, because her relative sided with ChatGPT's treatment plan over what her team of doctors at Yale had proposed.

Many chatbots' terms of service say they are not intended to provide medical advice. OpenAI and Microsoft told us they took the accuracy of health information seriously and were working with medical experts to improve their chatbots' responses. But research has found [that most models no longer display disclaimers](#) when people ask health questions. And chatbots routinely suggest diagnoses, interpret lab results and advise on treatment.

The amount of trust placed in these models is especially worrying because we still don't know how good they are at helping people manage their health. A study by researchers at Oxford, which has been [published online](#) but is not yet peer-reviewed, does not bode well. It found that participants using chatbots for help with a medical scenario chose to take the appropriate next steps, like whether to call an ambulance, less than half of the time.

Even so, imperfect chatbots may be better than the health care many people have access to, said Dr. Robert Wachter, the chair of the medicine department at the University of California, San Francisco. "In many cases," he told us, "the alternative is either bad or nothing."

(Note: The Times has [sued](#) OpenAI for copyright infringement; OpenAI has denied those claims.)

THE LATEST NEWS

Immigration



Federal agents at a training center near Brunswick, Ga. Audra Melton for The New York Times

- The Trump administration has transformed the Department of Homeland Security to carry out its deportation campaign. In doing so, [a Times investigation found](#), it has diverted resources from efforts to combat child predators, sex trafficking and black market sales.
- Border Patrol began an [immigration crackdown in Charlotte, N.C.](#) Federal agents fanned out across the city and started arresting people this weekend.

More on Politics

- A Federal Reserve governor who stepped down in August [repeatedly violated the central bank's stock trading rules](#), according to a federal ethics report.
- The Trump Organization is said to be in talks [to bring a Trump-branded property](#) to a Saudi real estate project overseen by the crown prince. It's

the latest example of President Trump blending governance and family business.

- Trump announced he was [cutting ties with Marjorie Taylor Greene](#), once one of his most reliable allies on Capitol Hill. She has recently called for the release of the Justice Department's files on Jeffrey Epstein.

International



A woman using a pump to wash and cool herself. Anindito Mukherjee for The New York Times

- Women in India who face long-term heat exposure in workplaces and homes say it's taking [a heavy toll on their health and income](#).
- Under Bashar al-Assad, the former Syrian dictator, the wives and children of rebels were seized as leverage. Some are now [speaking about their trauma](#).

- At the BBC, seven days of silence turned a controversy over the editing of a speech by Trump into a major crisis. [Here's how it snowballed.](#)

Other Big Stories

- An unusually strong storm system [lashed Southern California](#) with heavy rain, causing evacuations. At least two deaths were linked to the storm.
- Driverless taxis were thriving in San Francisco. Then one of them [killed a beloved cat.](#)

A SHATTERED CITY



Tyler Hicks/The New York Times

Russia has been fighting for more than a year to take control of Pokrovsk, an eastern Ukrainian city that could serve as a gateway to bigger prizes in the region. Tyler Hicks, a Times photojournalist, has visited the city several times in

recent years — first as a welcoming pit stop away from the front lines, and later as a battleground to be documented.

Tyler writes:

It is a scenario I have seen play out over and over as I have photographed the war since the Kremlin's invasion in 2022. ... Nearly every thriving city, town and village I've visited near the front lines has been obliterated, become unreachable, or been occupied by Moscow's forces.

[Read his account and see his photos.](#)

THE SUNDAY DEBATE

The U.S. penny is dead. Was Trump right to kill it?

Yes. Pennies have long been useless, and there's no financial incentive to produce them. "If you want my two cents, I think nickels are next," [Nancy Eshelman writes for PennLive](#).

No. The Trump administration should have let Congress write legislation that would have given the penny a smoother, less inflationary exit. "Mild effort would have produced a better result and a better process," [The Washington Post's editorial board writes](#).

FROM OPINION



Illustration by Alvaro Dominguez/The New York Times

It's not just smartphones. To improve test scores, schools should also [ban laptops and tablets](#), **Jean Twenge** writes.

Adam Sandler has long demonstrated [good will and amity toward the goons and goofs of the world](#). His comedy is the best reprieve from this political moment, **JoAnna Novak** writes.

Here is a column by **Nicholas Kristof** on [the pillars of American greatness](#).

MORNING READS



Olivia Nuzzi Devin Otkar Yalkin for The New York Times

Love and politics: Olivia Nuzzi blew up her journalism career last year over a digital tryst with Robert F. Kennedy Jr. In a new book, [she writes about how the infatuation consumed her](#).

Stargazing: The Leonids meteor shower reaches its peak tonight, and the mostly dark moon will help you get a better look. [Here's a viewer's guide](#).

'Never forgot me': A Buddhist monk was locked up in a Myanmar prison for almost a year. Supporters thousands of miles away [helped him survive](#).

Your pick: The Morning's most-clicked link yesterday was about [Hollywood's box office losing streak](#).

A wry wit: Todd Snider's folk ballads told of heartache even as his humor revealed a steadfast optimism. [He died at 59](#).

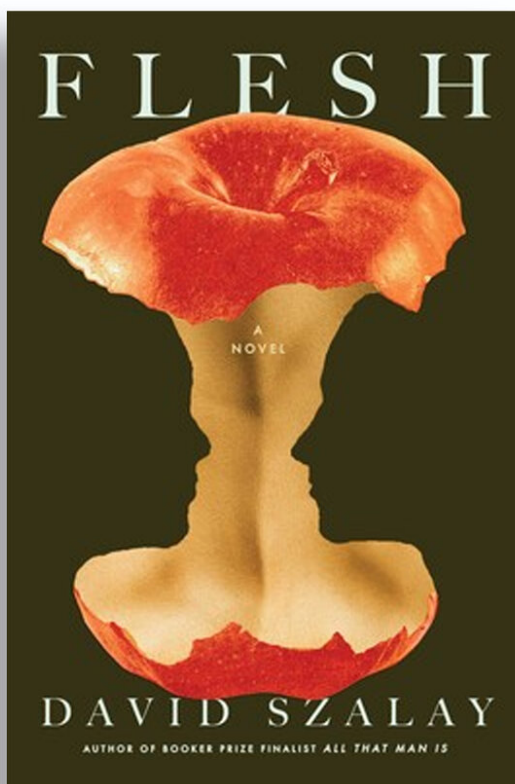
SPORTS

N.B.A.: The league asked multiple teams, including the Los Angeles Lakers, to [hand over documents and cellphones](#) as part of its investigation into illegal sports gambling.

College football: Texas A&M [overcame a 27-point deficit](#) in the second half to beat South Carolina 31-30, completing the largest comeback in its football program's history.

Women's soccer: The Washington Spirit advanced to a [second consecutive N.W.S.L. Championship](#) after beating the Portland Thorns 2-0. The team will play the winner of the semifinal between Orlando Pride and Gotham F.C.

BOOK OF THE WEEK



By Elisabeth Egan

“Flesh,” by David Szalay: Szalay’s spare, melancholic sixth novel won the prestigious Booker Prize last week, having already been lauded by Dua Lipa, who chose it for her book club, and by our critic, who summed it up like this:

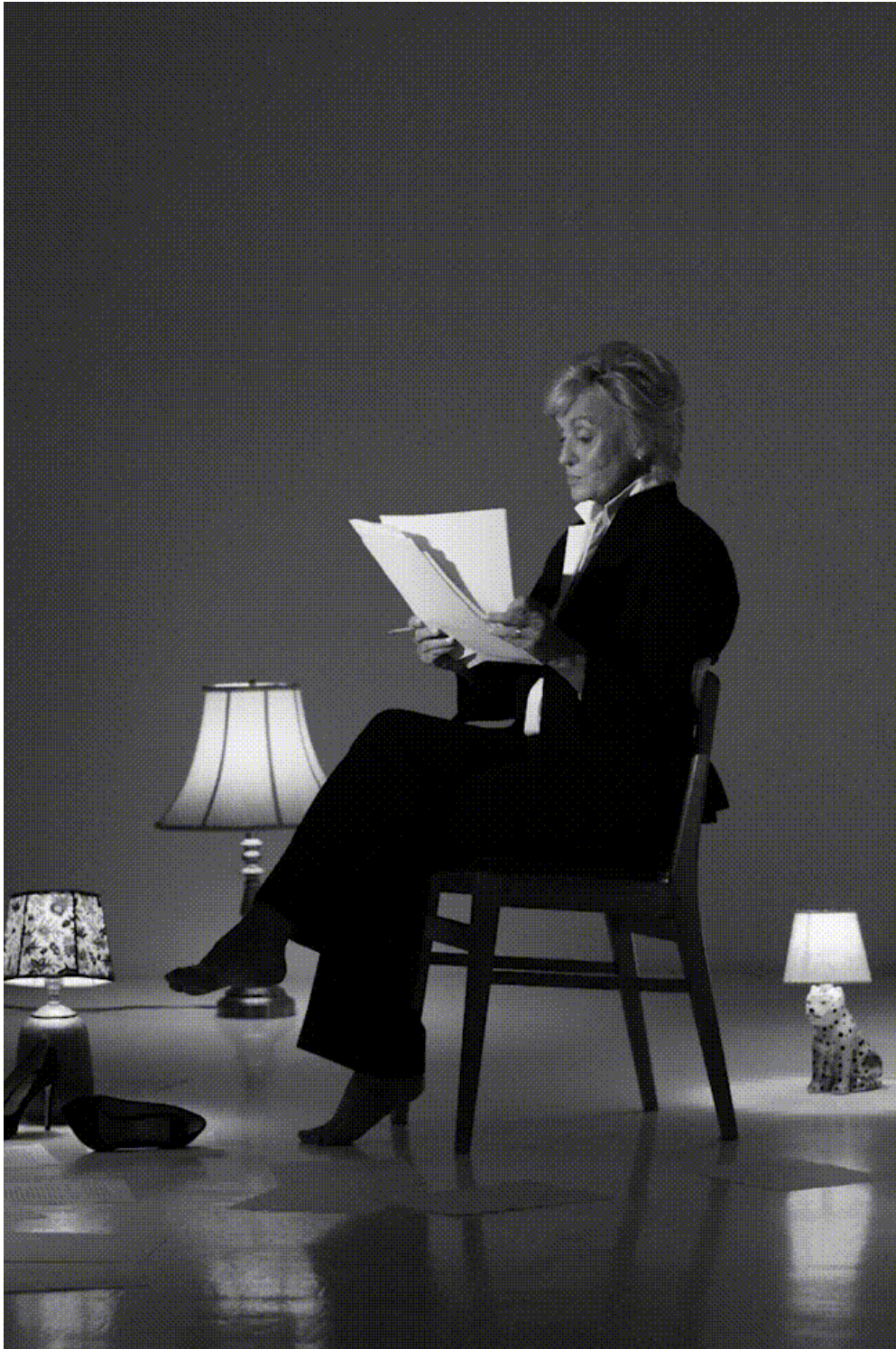
“The novel works because Szalay’s simplicity is, like Hemingway’s, the fatty sort

that resonates.” The book tells the rags-to-riches story of a lonely young man growing up with his mother in a housing estate in Hungary who makes his way to London, where he insinuates himself into a world of private jets and Tom Ford suits. Through it all, Szalay’s protagonist remains “coarse, inarticulate and boorish,” our critic writes. “Yet Szalay lets us feel his inchoate longing for meaning, for experience, for belonging.”

More on books

- To read our review of “Flesh,” go [here](#).
- Looking for your next historical fiction fix? Start [here](#).

THE INTERVIEW



Philip Montgomery for The New York Times



By **Lulu Garcia-Navarro**

This week's subject for The Interview is Tina Brown, the longtime magazine editor and chronicler of the elite. Brown, 71, now publishes her own newsletter, called "Fresh Hell," where she says she is able to write without restraint.

What's your take on this current media moment with very fraught relationships between media organizations and people with money? The L.A. Times; The Washington Post; David Ellison, the son of Larry, one of the richest men in the world, who is now in charge of Paramount and CBS. Why do you think people like this get involved in journalism?

I am so bored, frankly, with the über-rich thinking that just because they're rich, they know everything about everything. They're so disrespectful of our business. They have absolutely no respect for us. That is my major beef with the digital barons. I am probably burning with resentment about it at all times, actually.

Who is the most odious person in the media right now?

Oh, God, so many. I'm so disappointed in Jeff Bezos. I saw him as a big savior of The Washington Post, and it seems like he's just totally flipped. Tucker Carlson really mystifies me. He worked for me at Talk Magazine.

He did?

Yes. My two political correspondents were Jake Tapper and Tucker Carlson. Tucker was a really good writer. I would have certainly had him at The New Yorker. He had such a wonderful gift of turn of phrase. He had a satirical eye. He was wonderful. And then something strange happened. He had a head transplant and turned into this kind of frothing lunatic. I don't understand what happened to him. I think what has shocked me really about this era is how fast people can change.

[Read more of the interview here.](#)

THE NEW YORK TIMES MAGAZINE



The New York Times

[Read this week's magazine.](#)

THE MORNING RECOMMENDS

Bake yummy brownies with these [convenient boxed mixes](#). (Our testers at Wirecutter prioritized chewy corners, crinkly tops and fudgy flavor.)

Play padel, an up-and-coming [alternative to tennis and pickleball](#).

See five treasures of photography [from the Paris Photo fair](#).

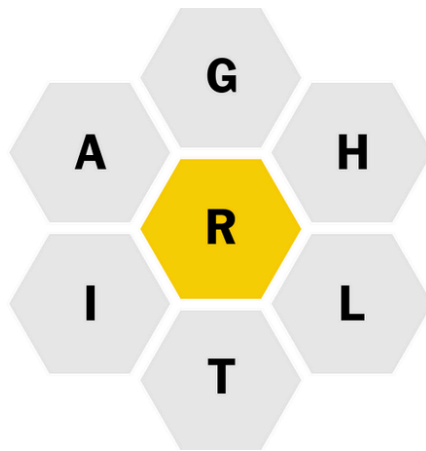
MEAL PLAN



Kerri Brewer for The New York Times. Food Stylist: Barrett Washburne.

The holidays are approaching. It's getting colder. If you're craving something warm and hearty, Emily Weinstein's Five Weeknight Dishes newsletter suggests [this creamy butternut squash and coconut noodle soup recipe by Christian Reynoso](#). It's sweet, savory and comes together in under an hour.

NOW TIME TO PLAY



Here is [today's Spelling Bee](#). Yesterday's pangrams were *emoting*, *mentioning* and *mignonette*.

Can you put eight historical events — including the creation of Pokémon and the release of “Shrek” — in chronological order? [Take this week's Flashback quiz](#).

And here are [today's Mini Crossword](#), [Wordle](#), [Sudoku](#), [Connections](#) and [Strands](#).

Thanks for spending part of your weekend with The Times.

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