Summary Post

In my initial discussion on the use of AI in mental health care, I highlighted its potential

to enhance accessibility, increase engagement, and offer personalized interventions

(Ornell *et al.*, 2020), while also emphasizing significant concerns about data privacy and

security (Morley et al., 2020). To illustrate these risks, I referenced the case of

BetterHelp, a digital mental health platform fined by the FTC for sharing confidential

user data with third-party advertisers (Neporent, 2023).

Guilherme contributed by noting the rising global demand for mental health services

and the pressure this places on healthcare systems (Kovacevic et al., 2023. He pointed

out that while AI tools could help alleviate this burden, they also pose the risk of

dehumanizing care, which could heighten social isolation and exacerbate mental health

issues (Kaplan, 2024). He stressed that the FTC fine imposed on BetterHelp was

relatively small compared to its revenue (Federal Trade Comission, 2023), underscoring

the need for stricter regulatory oversight to prevent such incidents (Mathias et al.,

2024).

California's Senate Bill 1120 aims to regulate AI in healthcare by promoting fairness,

requiring human oversight, and ensuring transparency. However, while these measures

support responsible AI practices, they would not have prevented the BetterHelp

incident, which stemmed from deliberate data-sharing choices rather than technical

failures (California State Legislature, 2024).

Technical methods like end-to-end encryption, data anonymization, and access control

can enhance data protection (Kieseberg, Weippl, and Holzinger, 2021), but ethical

practices are crucial. To avert future incidents, legislation may need to mandate that companies anonymize user data to prevent it from being traced back to individuals. The BetterHelp case underscores that data protection is not purely a technical matter—it reflects company decisions that prioritize profit over ethics. This example demonstrates the potential consequences a company faces when it neglects robust data protection and highlights the pressing need to update laws. Stronger regulations are essential to ensure that companies are required to implement effective technical safeguards and prioritize the protection of consumer data (Klymenko et al., 2022).

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