**Peer response 1**

Martyna discusses the adoption of technology in healthcare, focusing on the use of AI to deliver mental health care. She identifies some of the potential benefits of AI-based tools, namely increased access, higher patient engagement, and deployment of tailored interventions. She also stresses associated risks, including data privacy and security concerns, and illustrates these with a recent example from BetterHelp, a digital mental health company which sold confidential user data to third parties.

Demand for mental health services is increasing worldwide, and putting unprecedented pressure into healthcare systems (Kovacevic et al., 2023). Although AI-based tools could prove helpful, concerns have also been raised about the potential dehumanisation of care leading to even higher social isolation and depression, helping to accelerate rather than thwart the mental health crisis (Kaplan, 2024).

The case mentioned is a dire example of the risks associated with digital mental health care on a broader dimension (as BetterHelp’s business does not currently involve AI). Martyna points out the reputational damages suffered as user trust diminished, together with the financial impact of the fines issued. Perhaps as a result, BetterHelp revenue has been declining from a maximum in Q2 2023, along with a fall in paid subscribers (TapTwice Digital Team, 2024). However, the fines issued were minimal in comparison with the company’s revenue, or the undisclosed amounts paid for the data sold, which included health data linked to email and IP addresses (Federal Trade Comission, 2023). The gravity of this situation cannot be overstated, given the disclosure of sensitive data from users in potentially vulnerable positions to third-parties who may exploit it for commercial gains. Moreover, it highlights the importance of strong and swift regulatory oversight and action of digital health companies to help prevent a repeat of such issues in the future (Mathias et al., 2024).

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