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Chatbot Framework for Emergency Medical Care Flow: Case Study

Leonel Patrício[a,b,*], Carlos Costa[a,b,c], José Silva[d], Leonilde Varela[a,b], Zilda Silveira[e], Maria Manuela Cruz-Cunha[f]

[a]*Universidade do Minho, Department of Production and Systems, 4804-533 Guimarães, Portugal.*
[b]*ALGORITMI Research Centre, Universidade do Minho, 4804-533 Guimarães, Portugal.*
[c]*Federal Institut of Minas Gerais (IFMG) -Bambuí, Brazil.*
[d]*University of Aveiro, Department of Economics, Management, Industrial Engineering and Tourism, 3810-193 Aveiro, Portugal.*
[e]*Department of Mechanical Engineering, Sao Carlos School of Engineering, University of Sao Paulo, Sao Paulo, Brazil.*
[f]*2Ai - Applied Artificial Intelligence Laboratory, Polytechnic Institute of Cávado and Ave, Portugal.*

Abstract

This study aims to explore the use of chatbots in optimizing the flow of medical emergency care, focusing on a case study carried out in Minas Gerais, Brazil, in a medical emergency hospital. The methodology involved observational research to identify needs arising from the high flow of patients and long waiting times. Subsequently, a chatbot framework was developed for potential implementation in hospital services. This framework was developed after a comprehensive literature review and analysis of existing chatbot systems in similar contexts. It integrates essential criteria to effectively manage the flow of emergency medical care, addressing identified challenges. The results highlight the potential of chatbots to optimize emergency medical services and reduce patient waiting times. Overall, this research provides knowledge into developing chatbot frameworks tailored to the specific needs of emergency medical care environments.

Keywords: Chatbot; Case Study; Emergency Medical Care Flow.

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +351 911 932 085.
E-mail address: leonelfilipepatricio@gmail.com

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1. Introduction

In the digital transformation era, healthcare institutions worldwide are under increasing pressure to streamline their operations and enhance the efficiency of emergency medical care provision. Among the innovative solutions being explored, the adoption of chatbots has emerged as a promising avenue to optimize patient care flow in emergency medical environments [1]. Chatbots offer the potential to revolutionize how healthcare providers interact with patients, manage appointments, and disseminate critical information. In the contemporary healthcare landscape, chatbots have emerged as versatile tools with the potential to revolutionize patient care provision and streamline administrative processes [2].

Chatbots can facilitate rapid triage by assessing symptoms and severity, directing patients to appropriate care pathways, and providing real-time updates on wait times and resource availability. Additionally, they offer a continuous communication channel for patients to seek medical advice, request assistance, or receive post-discharge follow-up, thereby increasing patient engagement and satisfaction [3].

In the context of emergency medical care, chatbots offer a variety of functionalities that can significantly enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of services rendered [3]. They assist in initial patient triage by providing preliminary assessments and recommendations based on reported symptoms. Furthermore, they facilitate appointment scheduling, send automated reminders, and provide access to educational healthcare information. Following emergency care discharge, chatbots enable remote patient monitoring, collecting data on their recovery and proactively intervening in case of complications [4]. They also simplify administrative tasks for healthcare professionals, such as medical documentation and referral management.

Chatbots hold immense promise for optimizing the flow of emergency medical care provision, offering innovative solutions to meet the growing needs of patients and healthcare providers. Through rigorous research and strategic implementation, they can play a pivotal role in transforming emergency healthcare services and improving patient outcomes [5]. Given this scenario, we present our central research question.

The central research question guiding this study is:

- **How can chatbots assist in optimizing the flow of emergency medical care provision in a hospital?**

This study aims to address this question by examining the potential benefits and challenges associated with integrating chatbots into emergency medical environments and proposing a framework for their effective implementation. By leveraging existing literature knowledge and drawing on real-world case studies, this research seeks to provide practical recommendations for healthcare providers seeking to harness the power of chatbots to improve patient outcomes and operational efficiency in emergency medical care [6].

The structure of this study is as follows: Section 2 presents the study methodology; Section 3 will provide a literature review of the research; Section 4 presents the case study and the proposed Chatbot framework, along with a discussion of the results; and finally, Section 5 concludes with key findings and avenues for future research.

2. Methodology

The choice of methodology for this research work was crucial to ensure the obtaining of detailed and meaningful data. Observation and case study were chosen due to their ability to provide a deep and contextualized understanding of the phenomenon in question [7].

2.1. Observation

The observation was carried out in a specific environment, allowing the capture of behaviors, interactions and events as they occur in reality. A non-participatory approach was used in order to minimize observer interference in the observed events [8].

1. **Selection of Environment:** The observation location was selected based on relevance to the phenomenon under study and accessibility to participants.

2. **Observation Instruments:** Instruments such as field notebooks, video and audio cameras were used to record relevant details during the observations.

3. **Observation Period:** The observation period was established to cover different moments and contexts relevant to the study.

2.2. Case study

The case study was developed after the Observation to deepen the understanding of the phenomenon in a specific context. The case was designed based on its relevance and representativeness to the research question [9].

1. **Case Development**: The case was designed using specific criteria, such as its suitability for the research problem, data availability and accessibility to participants [10].

2. **Data collection:** Various data sources, including interviews, documents and historical records, were used to obtain a comprehensive view of the case under study [10].

3. **Data analysis:** Data was analyzed using qualitative techniques, such as content analysis and thematic coding, in order to identify relevant patterns and trends [10].

Through this process, it was possible not only to capture the nuances of emergency medical care but also to understand how the implementation of chatbots could be integrated into the existing workflow. Interviews with healthcare professionals and patients revealed valuable insights into the needs and challenges faced, which were fundamental to developing the proposed chatbot framework. Data analysis also highlighted specific areas where efficiency could be improved, such as in the initial triage of patients and communication between the medical team and patients. This deep understanding of the hospital's reality in Minas Gerais provided a solid foundation for building a framework that not only meets practical requirements but also considers the experiences and concerns of all those involved in the care process. As a result, the research not only seeks to develop technological solutions but also commits to humanizing care, ensuring that technological innovations align with the real needs of patients and healthcare professionals.

3. Literature Review

The provision of medical care in hospital emergency departments faces increasing challenges, such as high patient influx, shortage of human resources, and the need for a rapid and effective response. Chatbots, conversational artificial intelligence (AI) systems, can offer an innovative solution to assist in the triage and patient care process in emergency situations [11].

Chatbots can be used to perform various tasks in the context of emergency care, such as:

- **Patient triage:** Collecting information about symptoms and medical history to determine the severity of the situation and direct patients to appropriate care [12].

- **Information provision:** Answering frequently asked questions about the care process, symptoms of diseases, and medical procedures [12].

- **Emotional support:** Offering words of comfort and support to patients and their families in times of high stress [12].

- **Appointment scheduling:** Allowing patients to schedule medical appointments in advance, reducing wait times in emergency units [12].

- **Feedback collection:** Gathering patient feedback on the care received, enabling the identification of areas for improvement and service enhancement [12].

These functionalities not only alleviate the workload of healthcare professionals but also enhance the patient experience. Automated triage, for instance, can expedite the care process, ensuring that more severe cases are prioritized. By providing accurate and timely information, chatbots help demystify the care process and reduce patient anxiety, creating a more welcoming and informative environment.

Moreover, collecting feedback is crucial for the continuous improvement of emergency services. Data gathered through chatbots can inform teams about areas needing attention and adjustments, fostering a learning cycle that benefits both professionals and patients. This user-centered approach ensures that technological innovations align with the actual needs of the healthcare system, promoting a more efficient and humane response in emergency situations.

Thus, the literature suggests that the implementation of chatbots should not be viewed merely as a technological solution but as an opportunity to transform the culture of emergency medical care, prioritizing communication and empathy in patient interactions. With careful integration and consideration of ethical and practical challenges, chatbots can indeed revolutionize the way emergency services operate.

The implementation of chatbots in emergency care can bring various benefits, including:

- **Reduced wait times:** By automating repetitive tasks such as data collection and information provision, chatbots can free up healthcare professionals to focus on direct patient care [13].

- **Improved quality of care:** Accurate triage and emotional support can contribute to more effective and humanized care [13].

- **Increased patient satisfaction:** Easy access to information and online appointment scheduling can increase patient satisfaction with the service [14].

- **Cost reduction:** Task automation can reduce operational costs in emergency units [14].

Despite the potential benefits, there are some challenges to consider in implementing chatbots in emergency care:

- **Accuracy and reliability:** It are essential to ensure that chatbots provide accurate and reliable information, avoiding errors that could compromise patient health [15].

- **Data security and privacy:** Ensuring the security and privacy of patient data collected by chatbots is necessary [16].

- **Patient acceptance:** It is important to assess patient acceptance of chatbot use in emergency care, ensuring they feel comfortable and safe with the technology [16].

Chatbots can be a valuable tool to assist in hospital emergency medical care, offering various benefits such as reduced wait times, improved quality of care, and increased patient satisfaction. However, it is important to consider challenges related to accuracy, reliability, data security and privacy, as well as patient acceptance. The

implementation of chatbots should be done carefully and strategically, with the involvement of healthcare professionals and patients, to ensure that the benefits of the technology are maximized and risks are minimized.

4. Case study and Chatbot framework

4.1. Presentation Case study

In the current scenario of healthcare services, enhancing the efficiency of emergency medical care has become a critical priority. This study aims to explore how chatbots can be effectively integrated to optimize the flow of emergency medical care in a hospital located in Minas Gerais, Brazil. The central objective is to investigate how these technological tools can reduce patient waiting times and improve the quality of service amidst challenges posed by increasing demand and limited resources.

The methodology adopted in this study consists of two main stages: observation and case study. Both stages were conducted comprehensively and rigorously to ensure the acquisition of detailed and meaningful data.

The initial phase of the research involved a meticulous observation of the hospital environment, allowing for a holistic understanding of the processes, challenges, and interactions involved in emergency care. Employing a non-participatory approach, researchers sought to capture the nuances and complexities of the workflow without interfering in daily operations.

The selection of the observation environment was based on criteria of relevance and accessibility, ensuring that the chosen location adequately represented the realities of emergency medical care. A variety of data collection methods were employed, including direct observation, informal interviews, and document analysis.

During the observation period, researchers recorded meticulous details about triage procedures, waiting times, interactions between patients and healthcare professionals, and any other relevant aspects of the emergency medical care flow. This approach allowed for an in-depth understanding of the needs and challenges faced in the hospital environment.

Based on insights obtained during the observation phase, a detailed case study was initiated. The case was developed with the aim of deepening understanding of the phenomenon in a specific context, providing a more comprehensive and detailed analysis of the challenges and opportunities related to the use of chatbots in emergency medical care.

The case was carefully crafted considering its relevance to the research problem and the availability of data. A variety of sources were used to gather information, including structured interviews with healthcare professionals, analysis of medical records, and review of pertinent literature.

- **Structured Interviews:** A total of 15 structured interviews were conducted with healthcare professionals, including doctors and nurses in the emergency department. These interviews aimed to gather insights on the challenges faced in patient triage and resource allocation. Prior to the interviews, a pilot test was conducted with three professionals to refine the questions, ensuring they were clear and effective in eliciting meaningful responses. The main conclusions indicated a pressing need for improved communication and decision-making tools, highlighting the potential role of chatbots in enhancing these areas.

- **Medical Record Analysis:** The analysis focused on 200 medical records from patients treated in the emergency department over a one-month period. This selection aimed to provide a representative sample of varying severity levels and demographics. Methods used for this analysis included qualitative reviews of patient symptoms, triage categories, and treatment outcomes. Findings from this analysis revealed significant delays in the treatment of patients with mild symptoms, suggesting that a chatbot could help streamline the triage process and reduce wait times.

- **Literature Review:** A review of relevant literature was conducted to contextualize the findings and explore previous applications of chatbots in healthcare settings. This literature reinforced the insights

gained from interviews and record analyses, establishing a solid foundation for the proposed chatbot framework.

Through a combination of detailed observations, structured interviews, and medical record analysis, this study provided a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced in triage and emergency care. The next step of this work will be to present the chatbot framework.

4.2. Chatbot Framework

In this chapter, the chatbot framework developed to optimize the flow of care in hospital emergencies in Minas Gerais, Brazil, will be presented. This tool aims to speed up the patient screening and allocation process, ensuring efficient distribution of resources and prioritizing those most in need of urgent care.

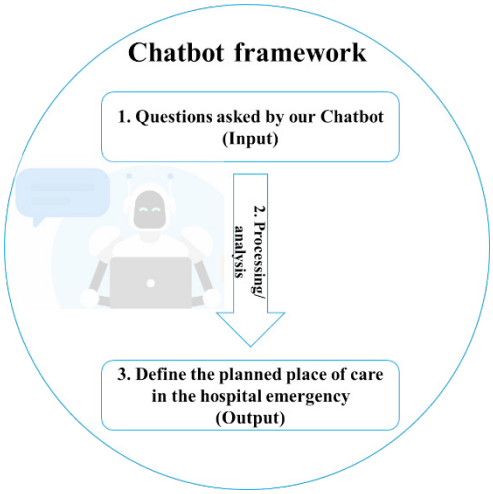

Fig. 1. Chatbot Framework

Initially, the chatbot requests information that is crucial for properly triaging patients. Questions are structured to elicit details about each individual's symptoms, medical history, and specific needs. Below are the questions presented:

Table 1. Question 1 Chatbot

1. What is your name and age?
Line 1: Full name
Line 2: Age

Table 2. Question 2 Chatbot

2. What are your current symptoms?
Line 1: Fever
Line 2: Cough
Line 3: Difficulty breathing
Line 4: Chest pain
Line 5: Others (specify)

Table 3. Question 3 Chatbot

3. Are you experiencing severe breathing difficulties?
Line 1: Yes
Line 2: No

Table 4. Question 4 Chatbot

4. Are you experiencing chest pain or any other worrying symptoms?
Line 1: Yes
Line 2: No

Table 5. Question 5 Chatbot

5. Are you currently taking any medication regularly?
Line 1: Yes
Line 2: No

After collecting the patient's responses, the chatbot analyzes the data and classifies the severity level of each case. This process takes into consideration the patient's age, the presence of pre-existing medical conditions, and the severity of reported symptoms.

Based on data analysis, the chatbot determines the most appropriate location for the patient within the emergency hospital environment. The results are presented in a matrix that indicates the priority of care and the availability of beds for different severity categories and patient profiles.

The questions formulated by the chatbot were based on recognized triage guidelines such as the Emergency Triage Scale (ETS) and Symptom Triage Rating (CTS), which are designed to quickly assess the severity of symptoms presented by patients. These methods use specific questions about signs and symptoms, such as difficulty breathing, chest pain, and medication use, to ensure effective screening. In this way, the chatbot's questions were carefully selected to capture essential information, allowing for adequate prioritization of emergency care [17].

4.3. Results and Discussion

After meticulously developing our chatbot framework, it is essential to understand the expected results and features programmed for this innovative tool.

During the analysis of case data, researchers employed qualitative techniques to identify patterns and relevant trends.

Two graphs can be analyzed below regarding data collected on site in order to analyze important factors for the development of our Chatbot framework. Average wait times are based on data collected over the course of a week. Furthermore, data were obtained through a satisfaction survey carried out with patients after emergency care.

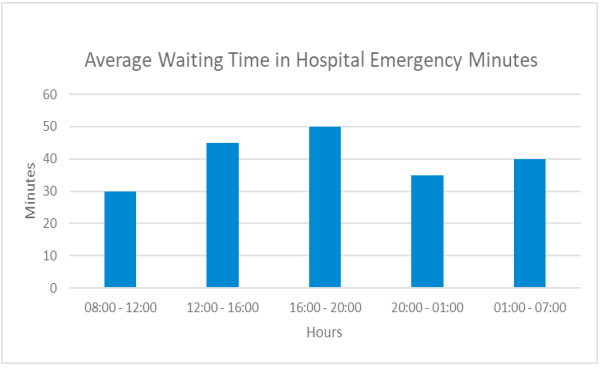

Fig. 2. Average Waiting Time in Hospital Emergency.

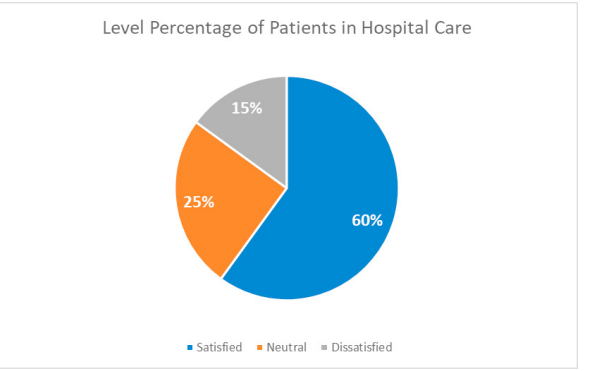

Fig. 3. Level Percentage of Patients in Hospital Care.

The results obtained from the analysis of case data are fundamental to the development of our chatbot. The satisfaction survey conducted with patients reveals their perceptions about the quality of care, highlighting areas that can be improved, such as communication and speed in the triage process. In addition, the average wait times, collected over the course of a week, provide a clear view of existing bottlenecks in the system. Integrating this data

into the chatbot framework will allow us to identify critical points where technology can be applied to reduce wait times and increase patient satisfaction, ensuring that the chatbot not only optimizes the flow of care, but also more effectively meets the needs and expectations of users.

These results highlight the importance of a dynamic and efficient triage system, which can be achieved through the implementation of our chatbot. To ensure fair and effective allocation of patients, it is essential to consider the severity of symptoms and the age of the individuals. The table below illustrates how patients are allocated and the order of priority for care, taking into account the severity of symptoms and the age of the individuals:

Table 6. Allocated patients and the order of priority of care

Symptoms \ Age	**Under 60 years old**	**Over 60 years old or with pre-existing medical conditions**	**Any age, especially elderly or with pre-existing medical conditions**
Mild	3rd in line	2nd in line	1st in line
Moderate	2nd in line	2nd in line	1st in line
Severe	2nd in line	1st in line	1st in line
Available Spaces (*example*)	10 spaces	8 spaces	5 spaces

In this table, we initially consider a total capacity of 23 places for emergency care. As patients are allocated, priority of care is determined as previously described. However, as more patients arrive, available places decrease, directly impacting the priority order for care.

For example, if all 10 available seats for patients with mild symptoms are filled, the next patient with severe symptoms or advanced age will be prioritized to occupy the next available seat. This ensures that resources are allocated fairly and efficiently, prioritizing those most in need of emergency care.

This dynamic and adaptive approach reflects our commitment to ensuring that all patients receive the care they need, even when faced with high demand and limited capacity.

- **Initial Capacity:** We start with an initial total emergency care capacity, which is the maximum number of patients that the hospital can accommodate simultaneously. Let's assume that the hospital has capacity for 23 patients in its emergency room.

- **Symptom and Age Screening:** For each incoming patient, the chatbot performs a screening based on the reported symptoms and the patient's age. This triage is done in accordance with standard medical guidelines, where patients with severe symptoms or who are more vulnerable due to age or pre-existing medical conditions are prioritized for emergency care.

- **Allocation of Available Seats:** Initially, all 23 seats are available for emergency assistance. As patients arrive and are allocated seats, the number of available seats decreases.

- **Prioritization of Care:** Patients are prioritized according to the severity of their symptoms and age, as indicated in the previous table. Patients with severe or more vulnerable symptoms are placed closer to the top of the priority list.

- **Capacity Update:** As available spaces decrease due to more patients arriving, the priority order may change. For example, if the number of available seats decreases to 20, the patient priority order may need to be readjusted based on this new capacity.

This algorithm ensures that patients are treated efficiently and fairly, prioritizing those who need immediate emergency care based on the severity of their symptoms and medical conditions. However, the integration of chatbots in emergency medical care raises important ethical questions that need to be carefully examined. One of the

main challenges is ensuring the privacy and security of patient information, as chatbots handle sensitive data, including symptoms, medical history, and other personal details. Hospitals must implement strict data protection policies to ensure that the information collected is stored and processed securely. Additionally, the need to obtain informed consent from patients is critical; users should be fully aware of how their information will be used and have the freedom to opt out of interacting with the chatbot if they wish. This approach not only respects patients' rights but also fosters trust in the technology, which is vital for the acceptance and effectiveness of the chatbot in emergency contexts.

Furthermore, the data security and patient acceptance are interconnected issues that play a crucial role in the implementation of chatbots in emergency services. Patient acceptance depends not only on the functionality of the chatbot but also on the perception of security regarding the handling of their information. When patients feel that their data is protected and that the technology is reliable, they are more likely to use the system. Therefore, it is essential for chatbot developers to implement robust cybersecurity measures, such as data encryption and user authentication. Additionally, awareness and education programs about the use of the chatbot can help increase acceptance by highlighting the benefits that the technology can bring, such as reduced wait times and improved communication with healthcare professionals.

When considering the use of chatbots in emergency medical care, it is crucial to take into account patient privacy, consent, and algorithmic issues. Privacy is a right that must be protected, especially in the healthcare field. Chatbots should be designed to collect only the essential information and to use that data solely for triage and care purposes. Consent must also be clear and easy to understand, so patients know exactly what they are authorizing. Furthermore, issues with algorithms can impact fairness in care; if a chatbot's algorithms are not well-developed, certain patient groups may be prioritized or deprioritized based on factors like age or gender. Paying attention to these issues is essential for ensuring fair and ethical care and for increasing patient trust in new health technologies.

5. Conclusions

The utilization of chatbots presents a promising solution for optimizing the flow of emergency medical care provision in hospitals. Through a comprehensive study conducted in Minas Gerais, Brazil, this research explored the integration of chatbots into the emergency care environment and proposed a framework for their effective implementation. The findings underscore the potential benefits of chatbots in reducing patient waiting times and enhancing the quality-of-service delivery.

The developed chatbot framework facilitates rapid patient triage by collecting essential information about symptoms and medical history. Through careful analysis, the chatbot classifies the severity level of each case and determines the most appropriate allocation within the emergency hospital environment. This dynamic approach ensures efficient distribution of resources and prioritizes patients in need of urgent care, thereby optimizing the utilization of available capacities.

In response to our central question about how chatbots can optimize the flow of emergency medical care in hospitals, we can conclude that these tools play a crucial role in triaging and prioritizing patients based on symptom severity and associated risk factors. age or pre-existing medical conditions. Implementing a well-designed chatbot can result in better resource allocation and a significant reduction in wait times, thereby improving the efficiency and quality of emergency services.

Overall, this research demonstrates the potential of chatbots to revolutionize emergency medical care provision, providing both patients and healthcare professionals with enhanced communication channels and streamlined processes. However, it is important to acknowledge and address challenges related to accuracy, reliability, data security, privacy, and patient acceptance during the implementation of chatbot systems.

In conclusion, the integration of chatbots into emergency medical care environments holds promise for transforming healthcare delivery and improving patient experiences. Future research endeavors should focus on further refining and evaluating chatbot frameworks, as well as addressing emerging issues and opportunities in this rapidly evolving field.

As a suggestion for future work, it is recommended that additional studies be carried out to evaluate the effectiveness and acceptance of chatbots by healthcare professionals and patients. Additionally, it is important to consider the limitations of this work, including the need for additional validation of the triage algorithm and

continued adaptation of the chatbot based on user feedback and changes in medical guidelines. Another limitation to be considered is technological accessibility, as not all patients may have easy access to electronic devices to interact with the chatbot.

While the development of a chatbot framework for emergency medical care presents significant theoretical potential, the lack of empirical validation limits its practical application and the trust that healthcare professionals can place in this technology. Real-world implementations and case studies are crucial for assessing not only the effectiveness of the chatbot in reducing wait times but also its interaction with patients in critical scenarios. This validation is essential for identifying potential system failures, as well as for collecting data on patient acceptance and the impact on clinical outcomes.

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