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Introduction:

Artificial intelligence (AI) is revolutionizing healthcare globally by increasing clinical decision-making, treatment plans, and diagnostic precision while lowering costs and improving outcomes. It holds the potential to bridge gaps in equity and access to care. But integrating AI also brings up important ethical issues, especially those pertaining to informed consent, privacy, and trust. These concerns are particularly noticeable among invulnerable groups, such as women, children, and the elderly, who may find it difficult to comprehend the advantages and disadvantages of using AI for treatment.

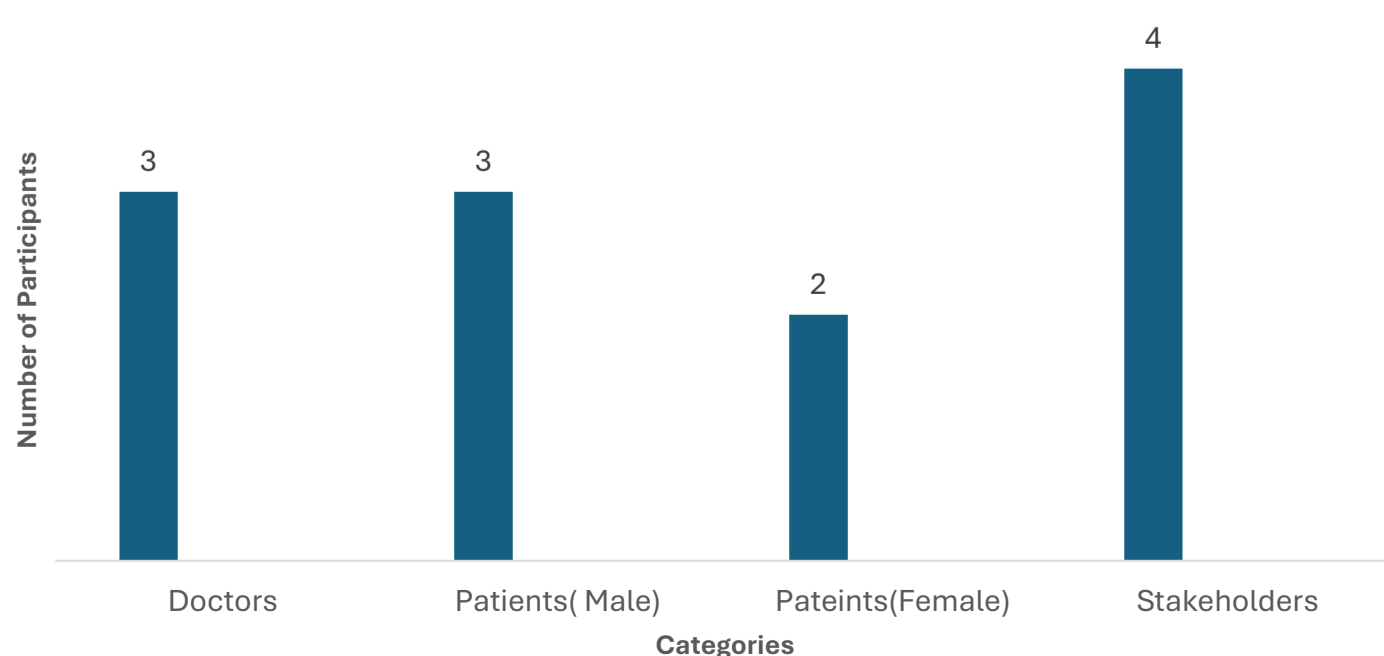


Objectives:

- Examine the views of patients and healthcare providers regarding informed consent and privacy in AI-integrated treatments.
- Evaluate stakeholder's views on AI integration and its impact on informed consent through surveys.
- Develop ethical recommendations and enhance transparency and understanding of AI integration in healthcare.

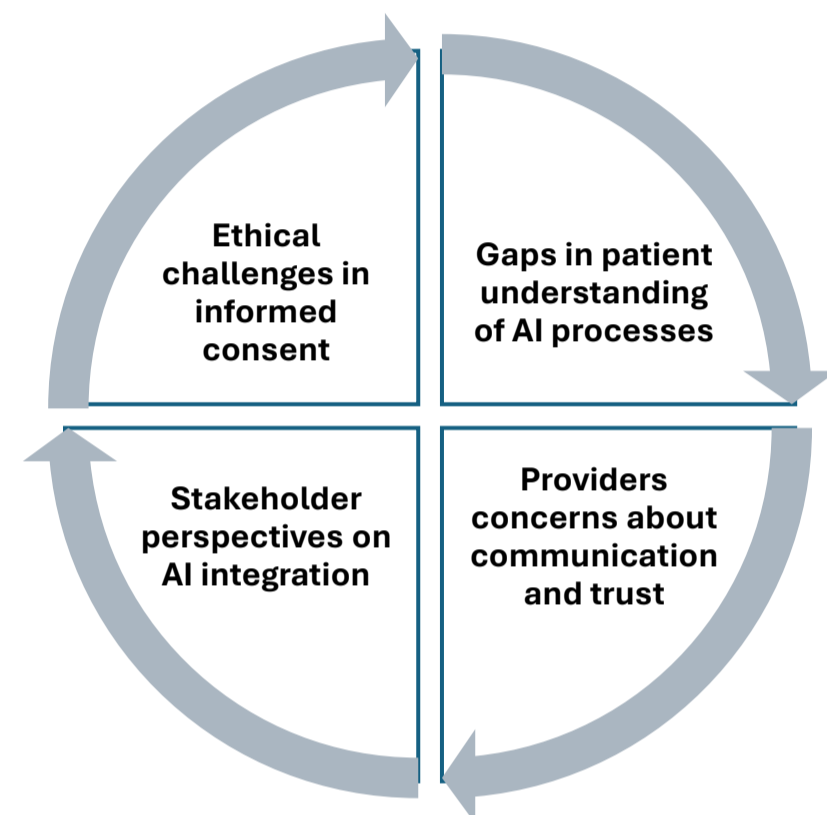
Methodology:

- This pilot qualitative descriptive study was conducted to explore experiences with AI-based screening technology.
- Purposive sampling was used for recruiting doctors, patients, and stakeholders (policy analysts, research scholars, optometrists) from OPD clinics at the Department of Ophthalmology, PGIMER.
- Open-ended in-depth interviews were conducted.
- Thematic analysis was used to systematically analyse the data and identify key insights.



Results:

- The study included 12 participants: 3 doctors, 4 patients, and 5 stakeholders.
- Most participants were male (n = 8), representing a diverse range of professional and experiential backgrounds.
- All participants had first hand exposure to AI-driven healthcare systems, either as users or implementers.
- Four key themes emerged, which are as follows:
- The influence of healthcare providers was a recurring theme, intersecting with patient experiences, ethical issues, and the broader adoption of AI in healthcare.



Conclusion:

- Obtaining a consent and discussing about AI was found to be challenging and time consuming, especially in a tertiary healthcare centre.
- Data privacy emerged as a main concern, with fears about misuse of sensitive medical information.
- Trust in AI technologies varied as some participants doubted its reliability and some placed their trust in the Doctor with his/ her experience and ability to validate AI driven treatment.
- Stakeholders identified the importance of having clear accountability for errors or issues arising from AI systems.
- Need for simple tailored guidelines was identified by both healthcare providers and patients.

Recommendations:

This study aims to address the ethical concerns around responsible integration of AI in healthcare, benefiting the patients and society overall. By addressing India's lack of AI-specific consent guidelines, it will provide a foundation for customized informed consent, aiding health institutions and policymakers in creating patient-centered policies and shaping future healthcare initiatives.

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Note:* The study is still in its very initial stage. We expect changes and new and more relevant findings as we move ahead with this research.