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Introduction

The journey to medical school is marked by the challenge of the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT). However, for students of low socioeconomic status (SES), access to, and the cost of, preparatory courses pose a significant barrier. This commentary explores how OpenAI's ChatGPT™ (<https://platform.openai.com/models/gpt-3.5>) can address equity and access issues in MCAT preparation, drawing from my personal experience as a low-SES undergraduate student. This AI tool's ability to personalize learning, offer diverse perspectives, provide rapid responses and comprehensive analyses, can enhance MCAT readiness.

Equity and access

The inherent inequity in MCAT preparation lies in the frequently high cost of traditional preparatory courses. Many students lack the financial means to access these resources, exacerbating disparities in medical school admissions. ChatGPT offers a solution by providing free and equitable access to a powerful learning tool. Regardless of socioeconomic background, every student can utilize ChatGPT's vast knowledge base and AI-driven assistance.

Personalization and targeted focus

Unlike generic preparatory courses, ChatGPT allows students to tailor their learning to personal areas of weakness. My experience with ChatGPT involved focused discussions and simple answers to challenging questions. This personalized approach empowered me to address my specific learning gaps, optimizing my preparation efforts.

Example prompts posed to ChatGPT in my personal preparation for the MCAT:

- What are some tips to excel on 'reasoning within the text' in the CARS section?
- Create a list of important sociology definitions for the MCAT.
- Create flashcards that are relevant to each section of the MCAT.
- Make a one-week schedule: complete chemistry question pack in three days, CARS practice, review physics concepts, complete and review a practice test, exercise three times, and have family time.
- Create 10 practice questions for each section on the MCAT, with no answers included. Please provide the correct answers and reasoning.
- Create a sample history passage (three paragraphs) and 10 "reasoning within the text" questions about the passage. Please provide the correct answers to your questions.

Immediate responses and efficiency

One of the standout advantages of using ChatGPT is the immediacy of its responses. While traditional study resources often require waiting for office hours or scheduled course time, ChatGPT offers real-time assistance at any hour. As a student with other commitments tangled in studying time, quick access to explanations and clarifications allowed me to cover more material in a shorter span of time.

Active learning and self-assessment

ChatGPT's active learning capabilities facilitated a deeper understanding of key concepts by engaging in meaningful conversations and simulating exam-style questions. By actively participating in my learning process, through identifying weak-spots and working through them with ChatGPT, I was able to strengthen my skill as an engaged learner.

Utilizing ChatGPT for test readiness

Active quizzing and self-assessment offered a dynamic approach to practicing critical thinking, problem-solving techniques, and exam-taking skills. I was able to request practice questions, evaluate my responses, and receive instant feedback. In contrast to preparatory courses, which typically provide students with exercises and exams to track progress and allow for reflection, ChatGPT was able to simulate a similar experience through chat-based interactions tailored to the learning style of the student. This approach allowed me to pinpoint areas of difficulty, focus on targeted subjects, and prepare for the demanding nature of the MCAT.

Limitations

While ChatGPT has its benefits, it is vital for students to use critical judgement and verify information from reliable resources due to the potential for misinformation. Additionally, the interactive nature of AI may not be a perfect substitute for peer discussion and collaborative problem-solving; ChatGPT's responses, though informative, lack the personal touch that human interaction provides. Lastly, digital access could be a barrier for those with limited access to a reliable internet connection.

Conclusion

ChatGPT emerges as an inclusive platform in MCAT preparation, addressing equity concerns. As a student with limited access to expensive preparatory resources, I found ChatGPT to be a surprisingly effective supplementary tool. This AI-driven ally, with its dynamic features, extensive knowledge base, personalized assistance, and active learning interface, offers a more affordable study approach to students. However, acknowledging its limitations such as misinformation, peer collaboration, and disparities in technology access, it is important for students to approach ChatGPT as a supplementary tool. If used alongside other study resources, it can enable a more comprehensive and well-rounded preparation strategy. In an educational landscape where access to resources remains an obstacle, ChatGPT stands as an equitable opportunity for all aspiring medical professionals.

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