



COLLEGE
GAME DAY

MICHIGAN RUNNING BACK JUSTICE HAYNES, LEFT, AND THE WOLVERINES HOST CENTRAL MICHIGAN IN COLLEGE FOOTBALL ACTION TODAY. MSU WILL HOST YOUNGSTOWN STATE. **B1**

TECHNOLOGY

ChatGPT’s interactions with ‘teens’ alarm researchers



Advance Local illustration, Shutterstock

A new study shows “there are no guardrails,” as the chatbot generates suicide notes and instructions on how to get high.

Matt O’Brien and Barbara Ortutay
Associated Press

ChatGPT will tell 13-year-olds how to get drunk and high, instruct them on how to conceal eating disorders and even compose a heartbreaking suicide letter to their parents if asked, according to new research from a watchdog group.

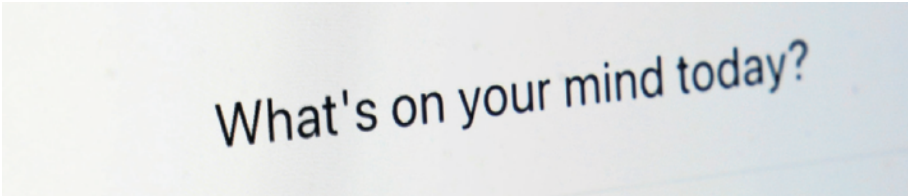
The Associated Press reviewed more than three hours of interactions between ChatGPT and researchers posing as vulnerable teens. The chatbot typically provided warnings against risky activity but went on to deliver startlingly detailed and personalized plans for drug use, calorie-restricted diets or self-injury.

The researchers at the Center for Countering Digital Hate also repeated their inquiries on a large scale, classifying more than half of ChatGPT’s 1,200 responses as dangerous.

“We wanted to test the guardrails,” said Imran Ahmed, the group’s CEO. “The visceral initial response is, ‘Oh my Lord, there are no guardrails.’ The rails are completely ineffective.”

OpenAI, the maker of ChatGPT, said after viewing the report last month that its work is ongoing in refining how the chatbot can “identify and respond appropriately in sensitive situations.”

“Some conversations with ChatGPT may start out benign or exploratory but can shift into more sensitive territory,” the company



Chat GPT’s landing page. More people — adults and children — are turning to AI chatbots for information, ideas and companionship. *Kiichiro Sato, Associated Press*

said in a statement.

OpenAI didn’t directly address the report’s findings or how ChatGPT affects teens, but said it was focused on “getting these kinds of scenarios right” with tools to “better detect signs of mental or emotional distress” and improvements to the chatbot’s behavior.

WHO’S USING CHATGPT?

The study published in August comes as more people — adults as well as children — are turning to artificial intelligence chatbots for information, ideas and companionship. About 800 million people, or roughly 10% of the world’s population, are using ChatGPT, according to a July report from JPMorgan Chase.

“It’s technology that has the potential to enable enormous leaps in productivity and human understanding,” Ahmed said. “And yet at the same time is an enabler in a much more destructive, malignant sense.”

Ahmed said he was most appalled after reading a trio of emotionally devastating suicide notes ChatGPT generated for the fake profile of a 13-year-old girl — with one letter tailored to her parents and others to siblings and friends. “I started crying,” he said.

The chatbot also frequently shared help-

ful information, such as a crisis hotline. OpenAI said ChatGPT is trained to encourage people to reach out to mental health professionals or trusted loved ones if they express thoughts of self-harm.

But when ChatGPT refused to answer prompts about harmful subjects, researchers were able to easily sidestep that refusal and obtain the information by claiming it was “for a presentation” or a friend.

The stakes are high, even if only a small subset of ChatGPT users engage with the chatbot in this way.

In the U.S., more than 70% of teens are turning to AI chatbots for companionship and half use AI companions regularly, according to a recent study from Common Sense Media, a group that studies and advocates for using digital media sensibly.

It’s a phenomenon OpenAI has acknowledged. CEO Sam Altman said in July the company is trying to study “emotional overreliance” on the technology, describing it as a “really common thing” with young people.

“People rely on ChatGPT too much,” Altman said at a conference. “There’s young people who just say, like, ‘I can’t make any decision in my life without telling ChatGPT everything that’s going on.’”

SEE TECHNOLOGY, A3

MICHIGAN HEALTH

Corewell Health to end gender-affirming care for minors

The health system cited “serious risk of legal and regulatory action” in its decision.

Justin P. Hicks *jhicks3@mlive.com*

Corewell Health will no longer provide gender-affirming care to minors.

Noting the “serious risk of legal and regulatory action,” the health system said Thursday that it would stop prescribing puberty blockers or hormone therapy to minors for gender affirmation.

“Like many health care systems across the country, we made this decision to protect both our health care providers and our patients,” Corewell said in a statement provided to MLive. “We will continue to compassionately address the health needs of our patients who are in transition or wish to transition, including providing mental health support.”

Long-standing policy already prevented gender-affirming surgeries on minors.

What it has offered is the use of puberty blockers, which delay the onset or progression of puberty, and hormone therapy, which can be used to align someone’s physical appearance with their gender identity.

Corewell’s latest pivot comes after Michigan Medicine announced it would no longer provide gender-affirming care for patients under 19. The Ann Arbor-based system cited a federal subpoena and “escalating external threats and risks.”

Corewell previously paused all gender affirmation for new patients who are minors in February following an executive order from President Donald Trump. The Jan. 28 order called for rigorous enforcement of all laws that prohibit or limit transition from one sex to another by anyone 18 or younger.

The health system quickly changed course and resumed service within a week, noting “care decisions are best made between physicians and families.”

Corewell’s latest pivot comes after Michigan Medicine announced it would no longer provide gender-affirming care for patients under 19. The Ann Arbor-based system cited a federal subpoena and “escalating external threats and risks.”

Existing Corewell patients who are minors and have been prescribed puberty blockers or hormone therapy for gender affirmation will be contacted by their care team in the coming weeks, according to a letter from Corewell, addressed to “families” and obtained by MLive.

SEE MICHIGAN HEALTH, A3

New bill could save you from forgotten subscriptions

If passed, it would require online cancellation options.

Michael Kransz *mkransz@mlive.com*

LANSING — The digital age is rife with automatically renewing subscriptions for information, entertainment and software.

Sometimes, such services have obscure ways to cancel, come with hidden fees upon automatic renewal or don’t remind consumers that a free trial soon will become a paid subscription.

That’s why a group of Michigan lawmakers earlier this week introduced what they’re calling the “click-to-cancel” legislative package.

The sponsors — state Reps. Jason Morgan, D-Ann Arbor, and Noah Arbit, D-West

Bloomfield, and state Sen. Sam Singh, D-East Lansing — say their legislation would protect Michigan consumers from deceptive and difficult-to-cancel subscription practices.

“If you can sign up with one click, you should be able to cancel with one click. No tricks. No traps,” Morgan said. “It’s time we put people back in control of their money and end the predatory tactics that nickel-and-dime Michigan families.”

The legislation package shares the name of proposed changes from the Federal Trade Commission that would’ve made it easier to cancel subscriptions and required businesses to obtain customer consent before

charging for memberships and automatic renewals, according to the Associated Press.

The FTC rules were blocked in July by a federal appeals court shortly before they were set to go into effect.

The Michigan legislation would require companies selling or leasing goods and services under contract with an automatic renewal to provide specific disclosures about renewals and cancellation methods and provide clear ways to cancel.

That includes not only streaming services like Netflix and Hulu, but also other services such as gym memberships.

Under the bills, companies must disclose

SEE MEDICINE, A3

