**Abstract Submission**

**Title**

Triage By Chatbot: Developing A Clinically-Based Consumer Chatbot

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**Background**

Chatbots are automated computer programs that interact with consumers through conversational interfaces, with no human agency. In November 2017 Healthdirect Australia launched a chatbot for its clinically-managed Symptom Checker system, based on extensive research into consumer channel behaviours and preferences.

**Aims**

The chatbot pilot explores the technical, user experience and clinical issues raised in using chatbots in clinical settings. Key considerations included health literacy, conformity to clinical guidelines and metrics to measure outcomes. If a chatbot works in a text interface it can be generalised to other automated conversational systems such as digital assistants and smart speakers.

**Method**

The chatbot uses the same clinically-approved database underlying the web and app versions of Symptom Checker to deliver a Facebook Messenger chatbot. This required extensive rewriting of the clinical information, database structure changes and a radical approach to connecting Facebook and the protected clinical database. Initially five of the 43 symptom “flows” were adapted.

**Results**

The presentation includes data from the first eight months of public use and an evaluation of the issues and opportunities for using chatbots in consumer-facing clinical settings. It describes the clinical governance process used. The key challenge has not been the technical development but the clinical rewriting and the user experience elements.

**Conclusion**

Healthdirect Australia’s experience shows that chatbots are a promising channel for consumer health and interaction, generalisable across many platforms. Health literacy and clinical governance remain key considerations.