

Pharmacy and technology



Should we replace pharmacists with an automated system? Few professions are important in today's world as pharmacists. They dispense to us the drugs we need to make us healthy. We need pharmacists because their expertise dispenses to us often complex drug regimens upon which our very lives may depend. As technology advances and more and more routines in our lives become automated and performed by robots, there will be a temptation to "outsource" the role and the duties of pharmacists to robots. However, this would be a bad thing to do. We must keep pharmacy in the hands of human pharmacists.

Over the last few decades pharmaceuticals have made major advances, especially in the treatment of chronic diseases. The drugs allow us to live healthier and more productive lives. However, they can also have negative side-effects if they are not taken correctly. Indeed, some drug regimens are very complex and can require the consumption of as many as a dozen different pills several times a day. The level of complexity is so high that many people need professional advice. This is where pharmacists come into the picture. These people study many years and must be very clever to reach the position they are in. However, there is another essential element that pharmacists must possess: intuition. Intuition is a fundamentally human trait. It allows people to make assumptions and come up with ideas that go outside of the box. It allows a pharmacist to suspect that someone may be faking an illness in order to score free drugs. It also allows a pharmacist to anticipate a problem a patient may have with the drug regime they are on. In other words, dispensing drugs is not something a machine can do.

In today's world technology has made so many things more easily. In car factories, robots assemble large portions of each car and they do it very well.

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In marking lots, machines take our money and dispense tickets and let us in and out of the parking lot. All of these things provide a lot of convenience in our every day lives. Of course, we always want to make our lives more and more convenient. That said, there must be a limit. Should we replace our school bus drivers with robots? Most people would disagree. Should we replace our doctors? No. The majority of people believe that there are some services and functions in our society that should be performed by people because only a person has the intuition and judgement to deal with complex and human situations. Does that mean that a human doctor or pharmacist will always get it right? No, but they will be better equipped to deal with such situations and variations than a robot. There is also something to be said for the bedside manner of human pharmacists. Can a robot smile at you and wish you a good day? Does a robot really care how you are feeling? No. There is a great temptation to allow technology to take over more and more of our lives. Sometimes this is a good thing and provides us with great convenience. However, there are some things such as pharmacists that should be left up to humans who have the intuition and judgement to deal with complex situations.

Work consulted

Watkins, Elizabeth Siegel, " From History of Pharmacy to Pharmaceutical History," *Pharmacy in History*, 51 (no. 1, 2009)