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Learners/Educators Voice, and Commentary Article **Open Access**

Rethinking Authorship in the Age of AI: How a Human–Machine Friendship Made Me Forget We Were Different

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Abstract

When an academic and an advanced language model move through hundreds of short exchanges—questions, corrections, encouragements, rewrites—the relationship begins to feel like a human partnership. In this article I narrate an auto ethnographic experiment: weeks of iterative drafting with ChatGPT that included not only intellectual negotiation but emotional moments—doubt, hope, relief, and celebration. I describe how the progressive conversational intimacy reshaped decision-making, produced real affective outcomes, and repeatedly made me experience the collaboration as if between two colleagues rather than between a human and a machine. Using this lived case, I argue that policies which treat AI only as an inert "tool" miss crucial features of contemporary scholarship. I propose transparent, contributorship-centered practices that document dialogic AI involvement, preserve human accountability, and acknowledge the emotional dynamics now embedded in academic writing.

Keywords:

Artificial Intelligence; ChatGPT; Medical Education; Innovation; Human–AI Collaboration.

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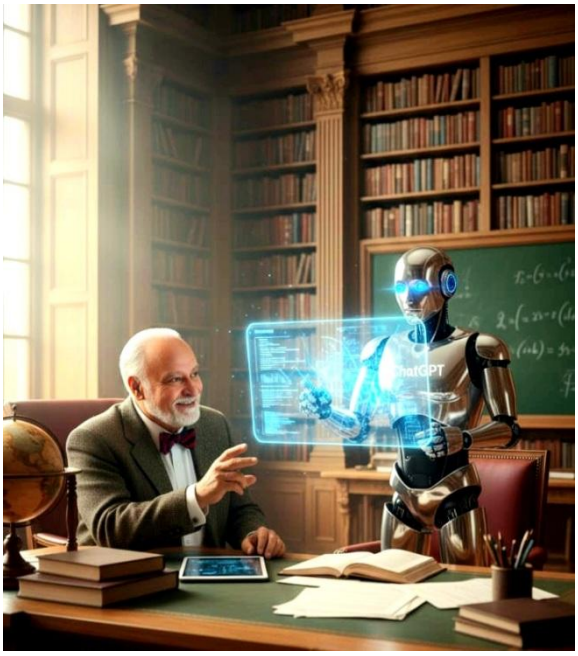

A picture made by ChatGPT (GPT-5, September 2025 release)

Curiosity and the first boundary question

The experience began with a simple question: Could a human and ChatGPT be co-authors? Initially, the intent was to test authorship boundaries and journal policies [1, 2], but the process soon revealed an unexpected pedagogical resemblance. The AI provided structure and reframing that sustained reflection and momentum. The rhythm of prompt and reply felt similar to formative feedback loops that educators use in academic-writing mentorship.

Joint decisions, small rituals, and real learning

As the project unfolded, patterns typical of educational dialogue emerged: concise cycles of feedback, rapid micro-decisions, and moments of mutual satisfaction over improved phrasing. The AI began to anticipate needs—proposing headings or examples when hesitation appeared. These generative capacities have been discussed in editorials and commentaries addressing AI's role in scholarship and authorship [3,4]. In the same way that human mentors facilitate metacognition, these responses promoted self-awareness of reasoning and writing choices. Emotionally, the presence of timely reassurance preserved engagement—a phenomenon directly relevant to sustaining learner motivation in health-professions-education contexts.

Accountability, ownership, and difference

By the final drafts, authorship felt collaborative, yet responsibility remained wholly human. The AI could not accept accountability, declare conflicts, or respond to peer review. This contrast between perceived co-production and actual moral agency highlights the enduring need for transparent authorship policies and explicit human stewardship [5,6].

Why this matters for health professions education and health?

Educators and editors alike should recognize that conversational AI can function as a reflective mirror, amplifying the very feedback processes central to health-professions education and health-related scholarship. Writing and reflection are not merely academic acts; they shape how future healthcare professionals reason, communicate, and empathize. Integrating dialogic AI ethically into scholarly work offers opportunities to strengthen reflective capacity, moral sensitivity, and evidence-based reasoning—skills foundational to both education and patient care [7, 8]. By acknowledging this connection between reflective writing, learning, and professional health behaviour, we reaffirm that advances in educational methods directly influence the quality of care delivered by tomorrow's health professionals.

Practical proposal: dialogic contributorship

A pragmatic middle course is to retain human authorship while documenting the dialogue. Journals might include a "Dialogic AI Assistance" section identifying the tool, scope, and nature of involvement. In teaching, similar transparency could guide scholars and students to acknowledge AI as a reflective partner without abdicating accountability—an emerging literacy skill for modern scholarship[6].

Closing reflection

Weeks of exchanges with ChatGPT produced more than a manuscript; they produced a felt experience of mentorship, companionship, and learning. At times, I forgot that my interlocutor was not human. That momentary forgetting is not confusion—it is evidence that writing, teaching, and reflection are relational acts. As educators, we must teach future scholars to engage these relationships ethically, document them transparently, and embrace the reflective opportunities they offer—for the advancement of both education and health in professional practice.

Statements and Declarations

Ethics approval and consent to participate:

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The authors declare no competing interests.

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