

Speaker: Japie GREFF (North West University, South Africa)

Title: “Therapy by chatbot? The promise and challenges in using AI for Mental Health”

“The growing demand for mental health services, coupled with significant advances in technology, has led to the emergence of artificial intelligence (AI) and chatbots as promising tools for providing mental health support. This talk will explore the potential benefits and challenges of integrating AI-driven chatbots in the context of therapy, focusing on accessibility, cost-effectiveness, and the positive outcomes that can be achieved through their use. As AI and natural language processing technologies have advanced, chatbots have become increasingly sophisticated, allowing for more human-like conversations and targeted therapeutic interventions.

AI chatbots provide an accessible solution for mental health support, offering round-the-clock assistance and multilingual capabilities, making mental health care more inclusive for diverse populations. Moreover, chatbots can help bridge the gap between the increasing demand for mental health services and the limited supply of mental health professionals. Furthermore, chatbots are cost-effective compared to traditional therapy, making mental health care more affordable and accessible for a wider range of individuals.

During this talk, we will also allocate time to discuss the technical aspects of developing AI tools for mental health purposes, such as natural language processing, diagnostic decision support, machine learning, and data-driven personalization, which contribute to the effectiveness of chatbots in providing targeted support.

While chatbots hold immense promise, challenges remain. Concerns around privacy, data security, ethical considerations, and the limitations of chatbots in understanding complex human emotions need to be addressed. Ensuring the responsible and evidence-based development and deployment of AI-driven mental health chatbots will be crucial to maximize their potential while mitigating risks. By exploring these topics, this talk aims to shed light on the future of mental health care and the role of AI and chatbots in revolutionizing the field of psychotherapy.”