



Can hospitals trust AI with numbers?

STAR HEALTH REPORT

Hospitals around the world are racing to bring artificial intelligence into everyday care, but a new study suggests the technology may still stumble over some surprisingly basic tasks. Researchers in the United States tested nine popular AI language models on simple hospital record questions, such as counting patients or sorting information from emergency department visits. The results were far from reassuring.

Using records from 50,000 real emergency visits, scientists found that most AI systems struggled when asked direct questions in plain language. Even some of the best-known models produced inaccurate answers once the amount of data increased. One leading system saw its accuracy fall sharply when handling larger tables, raising concerns about relying on AI alone for hospital planning and patient management.

The picture improved when the models were paired with tools that allowed them to generate and run computer code. Under those conditions, a few systems delivered almost flawless results. Researchers say the findings show that AI still needs strong human oversight and technical support before it can safely handle critical hospital administration tasks independently.

The researchers warned that speed and convenience should never replace accuracy, especially in healthcare settings where small mistakes can quickly create larger problems overnight.

THALASSAEMIA

A silent disorder, a national concern

DR SUROJIT KUMAR SARKAR (TITAS)

A silent crisis is spreading across Bangladesh, hidden inside families and passed quietly from one generation to another. Thalassaemia, a lifelong blood disorder, is now emerging as a growing social emergency, affecting thousands of families who often have little idea they are carrying the condition until a child becomes seriously ill.

Observed every year on May 8, World Thalassaemia Day serves as a global reminder of the growing burden of inherited blood disorders and the urgent need for awareness, prevention, and accessible treatment. In countries like Bangladesh, where a significant number of people unknowingly carry thalassaemia genes, the day highlights the importance of premarital screening, early diagnosis, and public education. This year's observance comes at a time when experts are increasingly warning that thalassaemia is evolving from a neglected medical condition into a major social and public health challenge.

Health experts believe nearly 10 to 15 percent of Bangladeshis may unknowingly carry some form of the disorder. In certain northern communities, the rate is believed to be even higher. Yet awareness remains alarmingly low. Many couples begin married life without ever hearing the word thalassaemia, only to face devastating news months after the birth of their child.

The warning signs often appear when a baby is around six months old. Parents notice weakness, unusual paleness, yellowish eyes, or repeated illness. Soon, regular blood transfusions become part of life. For many families, it arrives like a storm

without warning.

Thalassaemia is inherited from parents. A person may carry the condition without showing any symptoms, which is why it often remains undetected for years. When both parents carry the disorder, there is a higher chance their child may develop a severe form requiring lifelong treatment. In Bangladesh, one of the most common forms is linked to a blood variation known as Hb E, which is especially widespread in some regions.



Doctors say simple blood tests can help identify carriers before marriage or pregnancy. However, screening is still not common practice in the country. As a result, many families discover the disease only after their child becomes dependent on regular treatment.

Managing thalassaemia is emotionally and financially exhausting. Children often need monthly transfusions to survive, along with medicines to prevent

harmful iron build-up in the body. Without proper care, complications can affect growth, bones, hormones, and overall health. While advanced treatments exist abroad, they remain beyond the reach of most Bangladeshi families.

The financial burden can also be crushing. Even in lower-cost settings, treatment may cost families around Tk 10,000 every month. For lower and middle-income households already struggling with rising expenses, the pressure can become unbearable.

Specialists warn that Bangladesh can no longer afford to overlook the problem. They are calling for nationwide awareness campaigns, accessible screening programmes, and better treatment facilities at district and upazila levels. Many also believe thalassaemia testing should become routine before marriage and family planning.

Despite the challenges, there is hope. Newer medicines are helping some patients reduce their dependence on transfusions, offering families a glimpse of a more stable future. Experts say the fight against thalassaemia now depends not only on doctors, but also on awareness, early testing, and collective social action before the crisis grows even deeper.

For many parents, the greatest pain is knowing the illness could have been prevented through awareness and timely screening. Public health experts say Bangladesh still has an opportunity to slow the crisis before it spirals further. But that window may not remain open for long. The message is becoming increasingly urgent: awareness today can save countless families tomorrow.

The writer is an Associate Professor of Haematology at Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College. E-mail: dtsurojit@yahoo.com

Bangladesh's youth are exhausted! Are they ready for a change?

STAR HEALTH REPORT

Bangladesh's university students are quietly carrying a heavy burden, and a new youth wellness survey has brought their struggles into sharp focus. Conducted among 1,500 students across ten universities in Dhaka during the Third National Youth Wellness Festival 2026, the findings reveal a generation running low on sleep, energy, and emotional support.

Nearly two in three students said they feel stressed almost every day, while more than half sleep six hours or less each night. Many blamed demanding university schedules for their exhaustion, with long study hours and constant pressure leaving them mentally drained even without physical work.

The reasons behind this stress stretch beyond classrooms. Students pointed to financial worries, family expectations, uncertainty about careers, social media comparisons, and relationship struggles as daily pressures shaping their lives.

Yet amid the fatigue, there are signs of hope. Activities such as yoga, breathing sessions, dance, art, and meditation drew strong interest at the festival, with many students saying they now want to prioritise their wellbeing. The findings send a clear message: Bangladesh's youth are exhausted, but they are also ready for change. Experts say universities, families, and communities must work together to create safer, kinder, and healthier spaces for students.



HANTAVIRUS

When ordinary dust turns dangerous

A silent danger carried by rats and mice is once again drawing global attention. The World Health Organisation (WHO) recently warned about hantavirus, a rare but serious illness that spreads mainly through contact with infected rodents and their waste. Though uncommon, the disease can turn severe very quickly, making awareness and prevention more important than ever.

People usually become infected when they breathe in tiny particles from rodent urine, droppings, or saliva that have mixed with dust in closed or poorly cleaned spaces. Risk can increase while sweeping storerooms, cleaning abandoned buildings, handling grain, or staying in areas with heavy rodent activity. In rare situations, some strains of the virus may also spread through very close human contact.

The illness often begins quietly, looking much like a seasonal fever. Early signs include fever, tiredness, body pain, headache, chills, and stomach problems such as nausea, vomiting, or diarrhoea. Some people may also complain of dizziness and weakness. However, symptoms can worsen rapidly within a few days. Breathing may become difficult, the chest may feel tight, and patients can suddenly become critically ill. Health experts warn that delayed treatment can become life-threatening.

As there is no widely available cure or vaccine, prevention remains the strongest shield. WHO advises people to keep homes, workplaces, and storage areas clean and free from rodents. Food should always be stored safely, and small openings around doors or walls should be sealed to stop rats and mice from entering. While cleaning rodent-infested places, dry sweeping should be avoided because it can spread contaminated dust into the air. Instead, affected areas should first be dampened and cleaned carefully while maintaining good hand hygiene.

Public health experts also stress the importance of early medical attention if flu-like symptoms appear after possible exposure to rodents. Quick diagnosis and supportive care can improve survival. Though the overall public risk remains low, the recent concerns surrounding hantavirus serve as a reminder that even small household pests can sometimes carry deadly consequences.

With changing weather, crowded living conditions, and poor waste management in many parts of the world, experts fear rodent-related illnesses could become harder to control. Simple habits such as disposing of garbage properly, avoiding contact with wild rodents, and using protective gloves during cleaning can greatly reduce risk. Health agencies are also encouraging stronger community awareness so that people recognise symptoms early and seek medical help before the illness turns severe.

Source: World Health Organisation

Small acts of love may heal the heart

Love may not always arrive through grand speeches or dramatic gestures. Sometimes, it hides in a warm cup of tea, a thoughtful message, or a simple "have you eaten?" According to a new study from Pennsylvania State University, people who express love in small, everyday ways may actually feel more loved themselves.

Researchers followed 52 adults for four weeks, asking them several times a day about moments when they showed love or felt cared for.



The findings revealed an interesting pattern: those who expressed love more often later reported stronger feelings of being loved. However, people who merely received love were not always more likely to return it.

The study also found that people who regularly felt loved were more likely to describe themselves as happy, fulfilled, and emotionally balanced. Researchers believe these daily exchanges create stronger emotional connections and improve overall wellbeing.

The message is simple yet powerful: love grows when it is shared. Small acts of kindness, affection, and care may not only brighten someone else's day, but quietly transform our own lives too. In a fast-moving world filled with stress and distance, researchers say expressing affection daily could become an easy habit for healthier relationships and families.

BORN INTO BURDEN: The rising cost of Thalassaemia in Bangladesh

PROF WAQAR A KHAN

A quiet crisis often begins with celebration. In many Bangladeshi homes, the arrival of a child is welcomed with prayers, sweets, and endless dreams for the future. Yet for some families, that joy slowly turns into fear when an invisible illness begins to reveal itself.

Shaila and Rahim were no different. Their families celebrated when they learned they were expecting their first child. Every medical visit brought reassurance, and nothing seemed unusual throughout the pregnancy. When their daughter Ayesha was born, she appeared perfectly healthy. Her smile brightened the home and filled the family with hope.

But within months, worry quietly entered their lives. Ayesha looked pale, became tired easily, and was less playful than other children her age. Doctors advised further blood tests, and the results shattered the family's happiness. Their daughter had thalassaemia, a lifelong condition that would require regular blood transfusions and constant care.

Like many parents, Shaila and Rahim had never heard of the disease before. They could not understand how two healthy parents could have a child with such a serious illness. Doctors later explained that parents may unknowingly carry the gene without showing any symptoms

themselves. When both parents are carriers, there is a chance their child may be born with the condition.

Health experts say this painful story is repeated in countless households across Bangladesh every year. According to specialists working in the field for decades, many parents only discover the disease after their



child becomes seriously unwell. By then, families often face emotional heartbreak, financial strain, and years of hospital visits.

What makes the situation even more tragic is that thalassaemia can often be prevented. A simple blood test before marriage or during early pregnancy can identify whether someone is a carrier. Special tests during pregnancy can also help families make informed decisions early on. However, such services remain limited in Bangladesh, with advanced testing available in only a few centres in Dhaka.

Doctors and researchers say awareness remains one of the

country's biggest challenges. Many families avoid discussing the illness openly because of fear, stigma, or lack of understanding. Yet silence does little to protect future generations.

For one senior physician who has worked with thalassaemia patients since 2000, the memories remain deeply personal. He recalls the shocked faces of parents struggling to accept the diagnosis and remembers many children who later lost their lives. Those experiences inspired him to establish specialised testing facilities despite enormous financial barriers.

Experts now believe Bangladesh urgently needs a stronger national prevention programme focused on public awareness, carrier screening, and wider access to testing services. They say thousands of children could be spared years of suffering through early action and education.

The story of Ayesha is not simply one family's tragedy. It is also a reminder that awareness, honesty, and timely testing can protect countless children from a preventable future.

For families across the country, the greatest hope now lies not only in treatment, but in knowledge shared before another joyful beginning turns into heartbreak.

The writer is the former President of Dhaka Shishu Hospital Thalassaemia Centre. E-mail: waqarkind@gmail.com

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