

Different Perspectives and Different Systems: Responsible and Ethical Mental Health Technology Development

Wednesday, 11 March 2026 11:25 (20 minutes)

Background. In psychiatry, there currently are attempts to develop predictive models identifying risk for severe mental illness before any clinical symptoms appear, thus enabling early intervention and reduction of long-term burden of mental illness. Since these processes need to be responsible and include target group perspective (people with the experience of mental health issues), challenges arise when ensuring the development of ethical medical technology in different healthcare systems.

Research question. How do individuals with different lived experiences of mental illness and their support persons imagine ethical and responsible use of novelty, AI based medical technologies in different healthcare systems?

Methods. Thirty semi-structured interviews with individuals with lived experience of mental illness and their support persons from 9 European countries conducted during 2024.

Results. Using the framework of social construction of technology (Pinch and Bijker, 1984) we explore how the complicated experience of mental illness is lived through in different social and healthcare systems. People with experience of mental health issues are not a homogenous group, and even people with the same diagnosis can have significantly different experiences. It also applies to their knowledge and understanding of medical technologies and AI, creating challenges in the development process of these technologies. People with the experience of mental health issues are equally difficult and important to include into the development process of new technologies so that future risk prediction tools function in a way that is necessary and useful for this vulnerable population. Research participants worried about the use of predictive models becoming mandatory to access healthcare and reproducing further inequalities.

Research participants imagine future trajectories of the potential predictive model as rooted in their past experiences (difficulties accessing support, prejudiced attitudes from professionals, etc). If the existing experience with the healthcare system is seen as responsive for needs, people are more likely to see the benefit of the predictive model since it allows timely prevention of the illness or its consequences. Meanwhile those who experienced healthcare systems as unsupportive, see the tool bringing more of a risk of inequality.

References. Pinch TJ and Bijker WE (1984) The Social Construction of Facts and Artefacts: or How the Sociology of Science and the Sociology of Technology might Benefit Each Other. *Social Studies of Science* 14(3): 399-441.

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Session Classification: AI Driven Biosciences & Ethical Autonomy

Track Classification: General sessions: AI Driven Biosciences & Ethical Autonomy