



## **EPISODE 147 Can Artificial Intelligence (AI) Help A Physician At The White Coat Crossroads?**

**With host Dr. Heather Fork**

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HF: “It can help you settle down in your current situation and try to improve it before you leave. I've seen people even really just change fundamentally in how they feel after a couple weeks of just knowing that they're not trapped.”

Welcome to The Doctor's Crossing Carpe Diem podcast. If you're questioning your career in medicine, you've come to the right place. I'm Heather Fork, a former dermatologist and founder of The Doctor's Crossing. As a master certified coach, I've helped hundreds of physicians find greater happiness in their career, whether in medicine, a nonclinical job, or something else. I started this podcast to help you discover the career path that's best for you and give you some resources and encouragement to make it happen. You don't need to get stuck at the white coat crossroads. So, pull up a chair, my friend, and let's carpe that diem.

Hi there, and welcome back to the Doctor's Crossing Carpe Diem podcast. You're listening to episode number 147. Today I am doing a solo episode and I'm looking at this question of “Can artificial intelligence help the physician at the white coat crossroads?”

I was curious about this because I've been hearing different things about this online site called Chat GPT. That's “G” as in George, “P” as in Paul, “T” as in Tom. And I'd done some searches on Chat GPT. I used it to see how well it could write a cover letter, make a resume, and even write a poem and different things. But I really hadn't explored asking

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the kinds of questions that a physician might who is feeling a bit stuck or burned out or trapped at the crossroads and wanted to get some advice. In this podcast, I'm going to be sharing some of the questions that I asked Chat and what Chat told me.

I'll be sharing the full transcript of all the questions that I asked Chat and Chat's answers that you can download if you want at [doctorscrossing.com/chat](https://doctorscrossing.com/chat). And I'll put that in the show notes. I'm not going to go through extensively all the questions and answers, but it'll all be there for you if you'd like to look at the transcript. And that's different from the transcript for this podcast. This is all the Q&A that I did online with chat because there are a lot more questions that I actually ask than I'm going to be covering in this podcast.

If you're not familiar with Chat GPT, this is an artificial intelligence site that you can use for free. The actual address is [chat.openai.com](https://chat.openai.com). I'll put that in the show notes too. But you can even just Google Chat GPT and you'll find it.

You can ask Chat so many different things. You can ask trivia questions. You can ask Chat to plan a trip for you to Italy. You can ask them to help you come up with a business name. It can be very useful for helping you think about questions such as, "Yeah, what should I name my business?"

And the interesting thing about Chat is that the more details that you give it and the more specific you are, the better kinds of responses you can get. It's pretty impressive. I know the first time I used it, I asked it to write a poem about a dog and immediately, almost as soon as you type your question or your query, Chat comes up with an answer. And it's actually a bit eerie how fast it "thinks" and responds.

It writes very well so you could use it to write a sample cover letter. And, given, you're going to have to put your own personal touch on things and change them, Chat is not something you can just use verbatim if you're doing something like a cover letter. But it is a very interesting resource and it's just fun even to play around with.

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Today, as I mentioned, we're going to be asking these questions that a physician at the crossroads might ask, and I'm going to be giving you my take on what I think is useful about this tool, if you might be wanting to use it in a similar fashion. And then some areas where I think there are some gaps and you don't want to obviously rely on it completely.

All right, let's get started with the questions. My first one was based on an internal medicine physician who is dissatisfied with practice. I wrote to Chat. "I am an internal medicine physician one year out of residency. Since I was five years old, I have wanted to be a doctor. Now that I am in practice, I'm not finding the work fulfilling. I like my patients, but find seeing patients all day long very draining. With all the charting and the EMR, messages, phone calls and interruptions, I'm getting home late and charting in the evening and the weekends. I trained for years to be a doctor. This is what I wanted, but I'm not happy. I can't imagine doing this until I retire. Is there something wrong with me?"

Chat responded by saying "I'm not a mental health professional." Chat says that a lot by the way. "But I can offer some general advice and insights that might help you in your current situation. It's important to note that what you're experiencing is not uncommon in the medical field and many health professionals go through similar challenges and feelings of burnout."

Now, I didn't mention burnout in my initial paragraph that I wrote, but Chat deduced that. The first thing Chat said was, "You're not alone. Many healthcare providers experience burnout, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera." Chat also said "It's important to recognize that your feelings are valid and not uncommon."

Well, I know a lot of physicians at the crossroads especially are seeking that validation. They don't realize that they're not alone. And I don't know if reading this from a Chat



bot would be helpful for you, but I think it's a great place to start in responding to this query.

Then Chat goes on to mention about the importance of self-care, talking to someone, whether it's a therapist, a counselor, a mentor, evaluating options. And Chat mentioned you can explore alternative career paths within or outside of medicine.

I love that they're bringing this in because - now sometimes when you go to get advice from someone, if you're in this situation, they have an agenda. They might want you to stay in medicine, maybe they left themselves and they're kind of suggesting that you apply to the job that they're in.

One thing I really like about Chat is that it's neutral. It's not going to judge you. It's not going to tell you to do one thing or the other, but it's going to help you explore things with a broader perspective than someone who might have some strong opinions. Now that can be challenging sometimes when you'd like somebody to tell you what to do, but Chat is not going to do that.

Chat goes on to mention about trying to reduce administrative burdens. They understand that the EMR and all the charting takes a lot of time and said you may be able to find opportunities to streamline your process or delegate tasks. Now these are all things we know. Often I hear physicians say, "I know I should delegate more, but it's difficult." What you'll often get from Chat is actually helpful advice, but it's whether we're willing to take it or look at it or apply it to our situation by just reading it versus someone really helping us look at our situation.

And then the last thing was to consider a change and again mentioned exploring different practice settings or career paths within medicine or outside of medicine. And I love the last part of what Chat said, which was "Remember that it's okay to reevaluate your career choices and make changes if necessary. Your wellbeing and happiness are



important and finding a fulfilling path in medicine, whether it involves adjustments to your current role or exploring new opportunities is crucial for your long-term satisfaction and success.”

I agree with that 100% and that's something we have a hard time doing, which is prioritizing our wellbeing and, if we need to look at different opportunities, to give ourselves that permission. That's really a nice permission slip from AI.

For this next question, I shifted the specialty and I wanted to get more specific about nonclinical options. I wrote to Chat “I am a 34 year old family practice physician. I've been in practice for five years since residency. I've been working in an outpatient group practice and am burned out and not sure if I want to leave clinical practice completely or if I need to take a break and try to be happier in clinical practice. I would like to make between \$180,000 to \$300,000 and have a better work-life balance. What are my nonclinical options?”

For the answer, Chat mentioned 10 different sectors. Number one was medical writing or medical communications. Two, medical education and training. Three, healthcare consulting. Four, telemedicine. Five, medical administration. Six, clinical research. Seven, health informatics. Eight, pharmaceutical or medical device industry. Nine, health and wellness coaching. Ten, nonprofit or advocacy organizations.

I thought this was a decent list. If you really had no idea at all what your options were, this would give you a good start someplace to begin looking. And of course, if there was a specific area here that you're interested in, say it was medical communications, you could follow up with “Can you tell me more about physician roles and medical communications?” And then you can keep drilling down and getting more specific.

One of the glaring areas that's missing here is this big category of utilization management. I don't know why it's not coming up at all, but this would be working for a



health insurance company or a benefit management company, working as a physician advisor, working in clinical documentation improvement. That's one of the downsides; you may not know what's missing when you get answers such as this, but I think it's not a bad start.

For my next question, I was curious if I switched it to a surgeon looking for nonclinical jobs, how much this would change the answers that I got. In general, the answers were fairly similar. There were a few differences such as Chat mentioned medical legal consulting, which could have been for the family practice physician. Chat also mentioned medical quality improvement and public health. These things could be for any specialty.

And what I found in searching on different specialties and just playing around with how I do my queries, is it's a little bit random what Chat puts for which specialty. What I would suggest is if you're searching on your specialty, I would open it up, put in "physician", put in "surgeon", put in "clinician", and then just try some different specialties because it seems a little bit random what kind of responses you get.

I made some of my queries pretty long, talking about the burnout and working late at night. And that can be helpful but I don't find it specifically necessary to do that.

For this next one, I wanted to try to get some advice from Chat. What I wrote was, "Since I am a surgeon, I am concerned that if I leave practice for one of these nonclinical jobs and do not like it or I'm not good at it, I won't be able to go back to being a surgeon. Should I just stay in my surgical job even though I am burned out?"

Chat wisely responded "The decision to leave clinical practice as a surgeon is a significant one and it's completely understandable that you would have concerns about the possibility of returning to surgical practice if you decide to pursue a nonclinical career. Here are some considerations to help you make an informed choice. Number



one, explore part-time options. Before making a permanent decision to leave clinical practice you might consider exploring part-time or reduced hour arrangements.”

I love that advice and I know it can be difficult as a surgeon to do that, but I've seen people even take a leave of absence, go to part-time, which I know can have difficulties where you end up going part-time but having to do full-time call and the work feels like full-time, but it's definitely worth looking into.

Some people quit their current job and then do locums. That's another possibility. The second recommendation is to talk to colleagues and mentors. That is a really good one, I believe.

The third one is to research nonclinical roles thoroughly. That is an excellent suggestion. What I've seen is whether you're a clinician or a surgeon, if you're questioning whether you should leave or stay, it can really help to explore options, even if you have a sense that you're probably going to stay, because what it does is it helps you know you're not trapped. It helps you understand that there are a lot of different things you can do and processes you can go through to actually make changes. It's as if there's a pressure relief valve that releases pressure on you when you know your options.

It can help you settle down in your current situation and try to improve it before you leave. And I've seen people even really just change fundamentally in how they feel after a couple weeks of just knowing that they're not trapped.

The fourth recommendation is to maintain licensure and skills until you really know that you don't want to practice. Excellent suggestion. Five is to plan for financial security, assess your financial situation. That is so important. We often don't really look at our finances and we're not sure exactly how much money we might even need. So, that's an excellent thing to do if you're questioning whether you should stay or leave and even know what type of salary you might need if you do leave.



Number six is consider temporary leave. I've seen people take a leave of absence rather than just quit. It gives them some time, especially if they're really burned out or having panic attacks or really having a difficult time practicing.

And the last one was to evaluate your burnout. It's important to address the root causes of burnout and that's important because if it's something such as anxiety, and you don't really want to leave, but you can get some help for the anxiety or the imposter syndrome, that can make a huge difference. All right. I was pretty happy with chat's answer there.

For my next query, I mentioned to Chat that I appreciated these answers, but I hadn't really seen anything about working in utilization management, for example, working for a health insurance company or benefit management or as a physician advisor. And then Chat went on to talk about these different jobs in health insurance companies or being a medical director, chief medical officer.

I don't know the reason for this very, kind of serious, omission in terms of nonclinical options. In all these other queries, Chat never mentioned this big bucket of utilization management. There was no mention of being a life insurance medical director or working in disability. There was no mention of working for the FDA or the CDC.

I didn't really query and hear about different kinds of clinical jobs, such as having a niche practice, a concierge practice, direct primary care, working in functional medicine, integrative medicine, having a lifestyle practice. That would be one area that could potentially be searched on.

What I did query, however, was about having a wellness coach business. I was curious about if Chat could help with the basic steps that one would take when starting a business.





My question here was “If I want to start a business as a wellness coach and not use my physician license, what are the steps I need to take to set up the business and get started?” This was actually, I thought, a nice outline of an answer to help you start thinking about these different steps.

Chat started with “Define your niche and target audience, then do market research. Come up with a business plan. Create the legal structure and registration.” There's more details here than what I'm giving and as I mentioned, if you want to have the transcript of my chat with Chat, you can get it at [doctorscrossing.com/chat](http://doctorscrossing.com/chat).

The next step was the business name and branding. And as I mentioned before, you can have Chat help you with coming up with a business name. And say you give some information to Chat and you get 10 answers. And there's one that's getting a little bit close. You could say, “I like this answer, can you come up with 10 more similar to this name?”

Chat goes on to mention “Getting any certification and training needed for this business, looking at the location, whether it would be a physical location or virtual. Then come up with your services and pricing, et cetera, et cetera.”

I'm not going to read all of these, but it's kind of nice to see because I see physicians often thinking about having a business and they're wondering, “Well, what are the steps? How do I even get started?” Chat is not going to do everything for you, but this would be better than you staring at a blank piece of paper and wondering “Where do I even begin?”

The last question I asked Chat had to do with this overwhelm that we often feel when we're at the crossroads and starting something new. I focused it on starting this wellness coaching business, but this could really apply to anything like looking at nonclinical careers, thinking of making changes.



What I said to Chat was, “Thank you for your answer. These steps seem overwhelming to me. I am paralyzed by all of the details. Do you think I might not be cut out to be a business owner or entrepreneur? Becoming a doctor was hard, but all the steps were laid out for me. Can you hear the violin playing in the background?” I’m trying to get some sympathy from Chat.

Chat says “It’s completely normal to feel overwhelmed by the prospect of starting a business, especially if you’re used to a structured and well-defined path like the one in medicine. And again, you could apply this to changing to a nonclinical job.

Entrepreneurship and business ownership come with a different set of challenges and uncertainties. But feeling overwhelmed at the beginning is a common experience for many aspiring entrepreneurs. It doesn’t necessarily mean you’re not cut out for it. Here’s some things to consider.” Chat, I do find to be pretty reassuring.

One, seek support. Yes, that’s important. Find people who’ve gone before you, get in groups. You don’t have to reinvent the wheel, you don’t have to do this alone. Number two, break it down. That’s such a good suggestion because we often think we need to see how we’re going to go from A to Z. We want to see all the steps, but that’s just not possible. And if we let ourselves, just say “What is the next logical step I need to take, and do that” And don’t be like, we have to have it all mapped out, that’ll drive us crazy. I’m kind of ad-libbing here, but again, in the transcript you can see exactly what Chat wrote.

Number three, learn as you go. Yes, that’s so important. You don’t need to do an MBA to start a business. Most business owners never did an MBA. And really being an entrepreneur, starting anything new or transitioning to a nonclinical career is problem solving. They’re just different steps in your problem solving as you go along.



Number four, consider partnerships. And that might be a possibility. Number five, evaluate your passion. And that's a great question if you're doing anything really. Where's your interest level on a scale of zero to 10? I always say we'd like an eight, nine or ten. Seven is sort of the cutoff there.

Number six, build a solid network. Yes, and you might want to join a group to help you. You can get incredible advice from people, even if you hear one thing. Sometimes that's the thing that you needed to hear that day that makes all the difference in the world.

Number seven, start small. Oh, I love this. It's like start with a lemonade stand. Don't do the moonshot. Whatever it is you're thinking of, often I'm talking to people who want to start a business and they think of all these things they want to have in the business and it starts to feel overwhelming and expensive.

But what is the smallest thing you can start with? If you want to be a coach or have a certain type of service, maybe you want to do weight loss management, start with one person. Just even see if you like it. Or if you want to be a medical writer, write one article.

The last one, number eight, is consider professional help. Chat wrote, "If the administrative and legal aspects are overwhelming, it may be worth consulting with professionals such as lawyers, accountants, or business consultants to ensure you're on the right track."

That's a great suggestion too. I think there's always a place for DIY and then if you feel like you're getting stuck or you want to shorten the learning curve, you can go into Facebook groups, you can find groups specifically to help you with your area. I know I've hired coaches to help me, people who are ahead of me on the curve. You invest money but it actually saves you money because you save a lot of time and avoid unnecessary mistakes.



In summary, I enjoyed using Chat GPT. I think if you're at the crossroads and you really haven't done much research or really talked to many people, you can just start playing around on Chat GPT and you can go deeper on a lot of these areas. I was just giving an overview. You can ask about salary, you can ask about interview questions for specific jobs. I found those really not too bad.

If you are interested, I will have the link for this site in the show notes. And again, you can download my transcript of all the questions I asked. I asked probably five or six more questions that I didn't include on the podcast that you can find in this transcript at [doctorscrossing.com/chat](https://doctorscrossing.com/chat).

I want to thank you very much for being here with me. I really enjoy being able to do this with you and I look forward to seeing you in the next episode. Don't forget to carpe that diem and I'll see you again next week. Bye for now.

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Podcast details

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