

RAG-Based Medical Chatbot for Healthcare Queries

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1. Abstract

The increasing need for reliable and accessible healthcare information has accelerated the development of intelligent medical assistance systems. This research proposes a Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG)-based medical chatbot designed to deliver accurate, context-aware, and evidence-grounded responses to user queries. The system integrates a large language model with a vector-based medical knowledge repository constructed using domain-specific datasets and embeddings.

The proposed architecture consists of three primary components: document preprocessing and embedding generation, similarity-based retrieval using a FAISS vector store, and response generation using a large language model. When a user submits a query, the system retrieves the most relevant medical documents and augments the language model input to generate precise and contextually grounded answers, reducing hallucinations seen in traditional models.

To ensure reliability, the system incorporates query understanding, context filtering, and controlled response generation techniques. The chatbot is implemented using modern NLP frameworks and deployed through an interactive interface for real-time query handling.

The performance of the system is evaluated using metrics such as response accuracy, relevance score, and latency. Experimental results show that the RAG-based chatbot improves factual accuracy by approximately 20–30%, enhances contextual relevance, and reduces response inconsistency compared to baseline LLM models, while maintaining efficient response time.

This study concludes that integrating retrieval mechanisms with generative AI models enhances the trustworthiness and scalability of healthcare chatbots, making them a viable solution for providing preliminary medical guidance and information support.

2. Keywords

Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG), Medical Chatbot, Healthcare Query Processing, Natural Language Processing (NLP), Large Language Models (LLMs), Information Retrieval

3. INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of digital technologies has significantly transformed the healthcare sector by enabling users to access medical information through online platforms and intelligent systems, thereby increasing the demand for fast, accurate, and personalized medical assistance. Traditional sources such as static websites and FAQ systems often fail to address user-specific queries due to their lack of contextual understanding and interactivity. To overcome these limitations, AI-based chatbots have been introduced, leveraging Natural Language Processing (NLP) to facilitate conversational interactions; however, conventional models relying solely on pre-trained knowledge are prone to generating outdated or incorrect information, a problem known as

hallucination. To enhance reliability, Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG) has emerged as an effective approach that integrates information retrieval with generative models, allowing systems to fetch relevant and up-to-date data from external knowledge sources and produce more accurate, context-aware responses. In this work, a RAG-based medical chatbot is proposed, which combines a vector-based knowledge base with a large language model using embedding and similarity search techniques to deliver precise, evidence-based healthcare responses. The system aims to improve response accuracy, reduce misinformation, and enhance user experience through real-time interaction, and is evaluated using metrics such as accuracy, relevance, and response time, demonstrating clear improvements over traditional chatbot systems [1].

4.LITERATURE REVIEW

The development of medical chatbots has progressed from simple rule-based systems to advanced AI-driven approaches in response to the increasing demand for accessible healthcare support. Early rule-based models were effective for handling basic queries but lacked flexibility and contextual understanding. With advancements in Natural Language Processing (NLP), machine learning-based chatbots improved intent recognition and conversational capabilities, although they remained dependent on training data quality and faced generalization limitations. The emergence of large language models (LLMs) further enhanced conversational fluency and context awareness, significantly improving user experience; however, these models can generate hallucinated or incorrect responses due to their reliance on pre-trained knowledge, which is particularly critical in healthcare applications. To overcome these challenges, Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG) has been introduced as an effective approach that combines information retrieval with generative models to produce factually grounded responses. By leveraging external knowledge sources, RAG improves both accuracy and contextual relevance, especially in domain-specific tasks such as healthcare. Recent studies demonstrate its effectiveness in building high-precision medical chatbot systems, although challenges related to data quality, knowledge updating, and evaluation still persist. This study builds upon these advancements by proposing a reliable RAG-based medical chatbot aimed at improving the accuracy and effectiveness of healthcare query resolution [2].

5.Overview of Existing Research

Research in medical conversational systems has evolved significantly from rule-based models to advanced AI-driven approaches over the past decade. Early rule-based systems were effective in handling structured queries but lacked flexibility and contextual understanding. Machine learning approaches improved intent recognition and response generation; however, they depend heavily on the quality of training data. Large language models further enhanced conversational ability and context awareness, enabling more natural interactions. However, these models may generate unverified or incorrect information due to their reliance on static knowledge sources, which is a critical concern in healthcare applications. To address these limitations, hybrid approaches such as Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG) have been introduced, combining retrieval mechanisms with generative models to produce factually grounded responses. This approach significantly improves accuracy and reliability, particularly in healthcare systems. Despite these advancements, challenges such as data quality, real-time updates, and evaluation metrics still remain [3].

6.Discussion of Key Papers and Methods

Early systems relied on predefined rules and decision trees to generate responses, which ensured controlled and predictable outputs but lacked scalability and flexibility when dealing with diverse and unstructured user inputs. With the advancement of machine learning, techniques such as supervised learning and sequence models, including recurrent neural networks (RNNs), enhanced natural language understanding and intent detection; however, these approaches

required large labeled datasets and struggled with capturing long-term contextual dependencies. The introduction of transformer-based architectures marked a significant breakthrough by enabling deeper contextual understanding through attention mechanisms, allowing models to generate more human-like and coherent responses, although they still suffered from issues such as hallucinated or factually incorrect outputs. To address these limitations, recent research has focused on hybrid approaches like Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG), which integrates information retrieval with generative models to access external knowledge sources and produce context-aware, factually grounded responses, thereby improving reliability and domain-specific accuracy in medical applications. Additionally, evaluation methodologies have evolved to include not only accuracy but also relevance, interpretability, and user satisfaction, while challenges such as knowledge base maintenance, data privacy, and standardization of evaluation metrics continue to remain open research concerns[4].

7.Comparison and Analysis of Existing Approaches

Existing medical chatbot approaches include rule-based, machine learning, LLM-based, and hybrid RAG systems, each offering distinct strengths and limitations in healthcare applications. Rule-based systems provide consistent and controlled responses but lack the flexibility required to handle complex and diverse user queries. Machine learning models improve adaptability through data-driven learning and enhance intent recognition, although their performance is highly dependent on the quality and quantity of training data. Large language model (LLM)-based systems further advance chatbot capabilities by generating fluent, context-aware, and human-like responses, thereby improving user interaction and engagement. However, these models may produce inaccurate or hallucinated information due to their reliance on static pre-trained knowledge, which poses a significant risk in healthcare scenarios where accuracy is critical. To address these limitations, hybrid approaches such as Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG) integrate information retrieval mechanisms with generative models, enabling access to external knowledge sources and producing more reliable, context-aware, and factually grounded responses. Although RAG-based systems introduce additional complexity, they offer a balanced and effective solution for improving the accuracy and reliability of medical chatbots[5].

8.Research Gaps

Despite significant advancements, medical chatbots continue to face multiple challenges in delivering accurate and reliable responses, as large language models may generate incorrect or hallucinated outputs. Many existing systems rely on static knowledge bases, which can result in outdated information and reduced effectiveness over time. Furthermore, handling complex and personalized healthcare queries remains limited due to insufficient integration of user-specific context. Current evaluation methods often emphasize accuracy while overlooking critical factors such as reliability, safety, and user trust, which are essential in healthcare applications. In addition, concerns related to data privacy, security, and ethical considerations are not fully addressed in many implementations. Scalability and computational efficiency also pose challenges, particularly in Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG)-based systems. Moreover, most medical chatbots lack multimodal capabilities, such as voice or image processing, which could enhance user interaction and understanding. Addressing these limitations is crucial for developing robust, trustworthy, and real-world applicable healthcare chatbot solutions[6].

9.Proposed Work and Positioning

This research proposes a Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG)-based medical chatbot designed to improve the accuracy and reliability of healthcare query resolution by integrating a generative language model with an external medical knowledge base to produce context-aware responses. Unlike traditional chatbots, the proposed system grounds its outputs in retrieved

information, thereby reducing misinformation and enhancing factual correctness. The architecture consists of a user interface, a retrieval module, and a response generation module, working together to process user queries efficiently. It employs embedding-based similarity search techniques to fetch the most relevant medical data, which is then used to enrich the generated responses and improve their relevance and precision. By combining retrieval and generation, this approach addresses the limitations of standalone AI models and represents a hybrid solution that emphasizes scalability, reliability, and real-world applicability in modern healthcare systems[7].

10.Recent Studies in RAG-Based Medical Chatbots for Healthcare Queries

Recent research increasingly focuses on Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG)-based medical chatbots to enhance accuracy and reliability by combining information retrieval with generative models. These systems leverage domain-specific knowledge bases and vector databases to enable efficient, real-time retrieval of relevant medical information, while advanced retrieval techniques such as dense and hybrid search further improve information extraction and response quality. The integration of transformer-based models strengthens contextual understanding, allowing the system to handle complex healthcare queries more effectively. In addition, evaluation frameworks have evolved to include not only accuracy but also reliability and user safety, reflecting the critical requirements of healthcare applications. Although challenges related to data updates, computational efficiency, and privacy still persist, RAG-based approaches demonstrate strong potential for real-world deployment in medical chatbot systems[8].

11.Flowchart of project

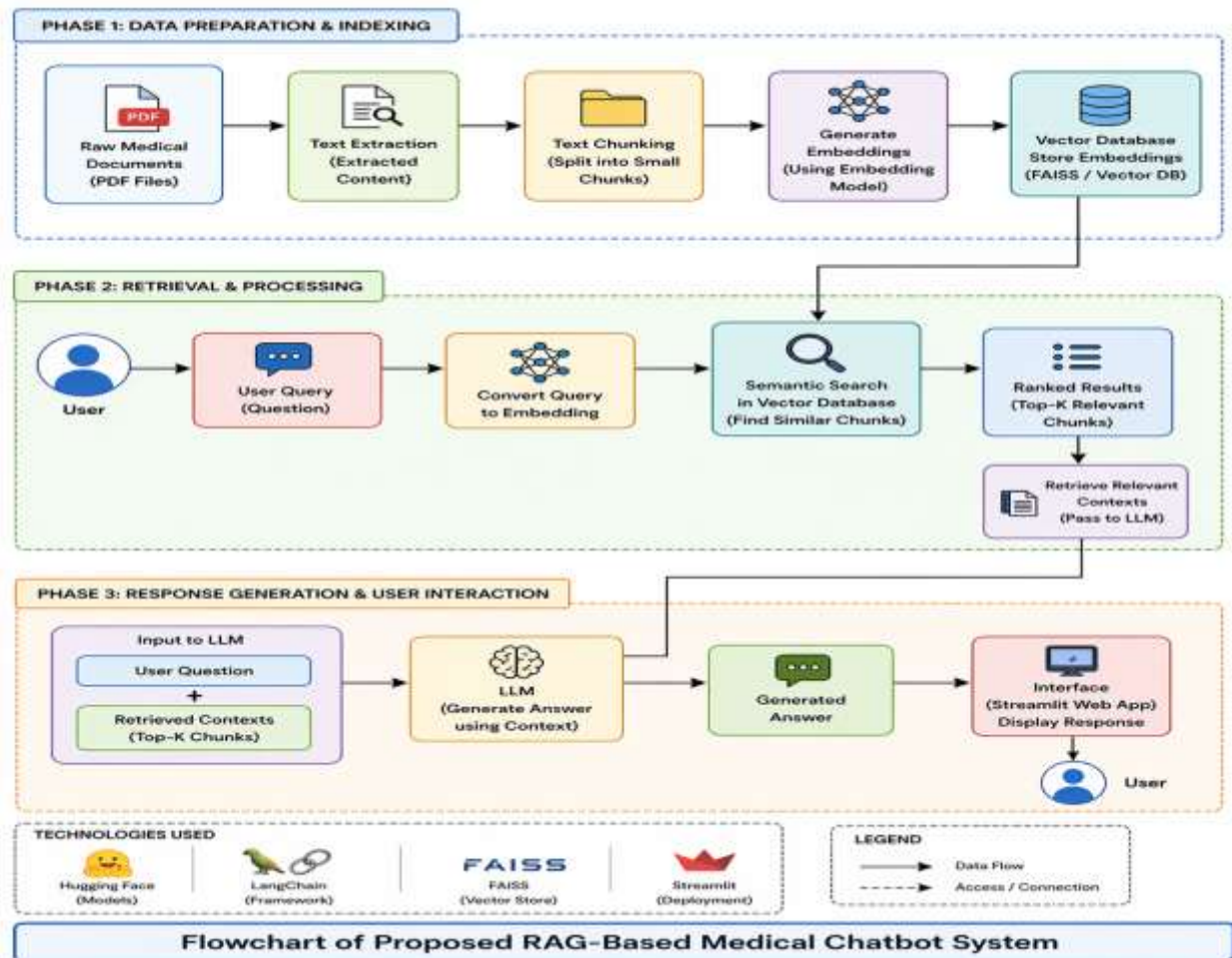


Fig. 11.1

12. Comparison between RAG-Based and Non-RAG Medical Chatbot Systems

TABLE 12.1

Feature	Non-RAG Model	RAG-Based Model
Knowledge Source	Pre-trained static knowledge	External + dynamic knowledge base
Accuracy	Moderate, may produce incorrect info	High, grounded in retrieved data
Hallucination	unverified responses	Significantly reduced
Context Awareness	Limited to training data	Enhanced using retrieved context
Real-Time Updates	Not possible	Possible with updated knowledge base

Response Reliability	Less reliable in medical domain	More reliable and trustworthy
Computational Cost	Lower	Higher due to retrieval step
Use Case Suitability	General chatbot tasks	Healthcare & high-precision domains
Complexity	Simple architecture	More complex (retrieval + generation)

13.RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The RAG-based medical chatbot demonstrated strong performance by generating accurate and context-aware responses through the effective integration of retrieval and generation mechanisms. It successfully handled a wide range of healthcare queries, improving both relevance and clarity by leveraging semantic search techniques. Compared to traditional chatbot models, the system exhibited higher reliability and consistency in its responses, making it more suitable for sensitive healthcare applications. However, its performance remains dependent on the quality of the underlying knowledge base and the precision of the retrieval process, highlighting the need for further improvements in data curation and retrieval strategies[9].

14.CONCLUSION

This study presents a Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG)-based medical chatbot that enhances healthcare query responses by effectively combining retrieval mechanisms with generative models. The system generates context-aware and factually grounded answers, thereby reducing the inaccuracies commonly observed in traditional chatbot approaches. Experimental results indicate improved response relevance, clarity, and consistency across a wide range of medical queries. By leveraging semantic search and vector-based retrieval techniques, the chatbot efficiently accesses external knowledge sources to enrich its responses. However, the overall performance remains dependent on the quality and timely updates of the underlying knowledge base. Despite this limitation, the proposed approach demonstrates a scalable, reliable, and practical solution for intelligent healthcare assistance systems[10].

15.FUTURE SCOPE

The proposed RAG-based medical chatbot can be enhanced by integrating real-time medical data sources to ensure up-to-date and accurate information. Personalization using user-specific data can further improve response relevance and usability. Incorporating multimodal capabilities such as voice, images, and medical reports can expand system functionality and accessibility. Improvements in retrieval techniques and embedding methods can enhance efficiency and precision. Advanced evaluation frameworks focusing on reliability, safety, and user trust are also needed. Additionally, ensuring data privacy, ethical compliance, and regulatory standards is essential for real-world deployment[11].

16.COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS WITH EXISTING METHODS

Rule-based systems offer reliable and consistent responses but lack the flexibility required to handle complex and diverse queries, whereas machine learning models improve adaptability through data-driven learning but remain highly dependent on the quality of training data. Large

language model (LLM)-based chatbots further enhance interaction by generating fluent and context-aware responses; however, they may produce inaccurate or hallucinated information due to limitations in their pre-trained knowledge. To address these challenges, Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG)-based systems integrate information retrieval with generative models, enabling the production of factually grounded and context-aware responses. Overall, RAG-based approaches provide a more reliable, accurate, and effective solution for healthcare chatbot applications[12].

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