ETHOS Initiative aims to inform students about the rise of AI in the healthcare industry

By CHLOE GRANT
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Quinnipiac University's ETHOS Initiative for Ethical Artificial Intelligence hosted Associate Professor of Law Wayne Unger for its final event of the semester, AI On Trial: Current and Upcoming Legal Battles that Will Change AI Forever Nov. 12.

Hosted in Quinnipiac's Science, Innovation, Technology and Exploration (SITE) building, the event discussed the necessity for AI regulation in the healthcare industry. It also addressed legal challenges of this, liability frameworks and educational implications of emerging artificial intelligence into these kinds of technologies.

It also addressed additional insights on the ethics of modern-day technology.

Unger kicked off the event talking about current litigation involving companies like OpenAI, more familiarly known as ChatGPT, as well as Anthropic, in reference to Claude. He addressed cases in which both software allegedly incited harm on users, pushing them toward self-harm or suicide.

When it comes to legal arguments regarding injuries as a result of said software, companies may rely on "product liability" or legal "torts," according to Unger.

He emphasized how often during lawsuits, companies like Anthropic and OpenAI will attempt to use the First Amendment as a shield, though success is uncommon in "malpractice" contexts.

Lawsuits against AI also tend to run into issues regarding a lack of professional standards in this area of expertise, given that AI is a newer concept, and it is difficult to define what it "should" have done compared to human practitioners.

"I don't think those lawsuits go very far…In medical malpractice you are arguing that the person, the medical practitioner, did something that deviated from what they should have done, right? And in AI, we don't necessarily know what should AI have done? Because we don't have a track record of it," Unger said.

He later diverged and began to speak on the standards that should be implemented in order to ensure technology is safe and ethical. One of the biggest suggestions he made was establishing a certifying or licensing body before technology is deployed for medical services.

"There needs to be a certifying body or a licensing body on top of that to say yes, it meets those standards, so it can proceed," Unger said. "Very similar to how we say, okay, before you can become a doctor, you need to meet these standards, and you need a license to do (so)."

Junior biomedical sciences major Sophie DiStefano expressed similar concerns regarding AI acting as a mental health tool.

"I think the biggest risk is AI is trained to respond with human emotion or a synthetic human emotion, and that's a really scary thing when people are putting their emotions into the system and they're talking about 'I feel this way," DiStefano said. "I feel this way, because AI is also programmed to agree with you. It's not programmed to disagree with you. You know, it's meant to be very repetitive in that sense."



TYLER MIGNAULT/CHRONICLE

Quinnipiac University Associate Professor of Law Wayne Unger presents at ETHOS Initiative for Ethical Artificial Intelligence event, Nov. 12.

As Unger continued with his talking points, members of the audience expressed frustration and worry about their future careers given the current AI landscape.

"I'm a biomedical sciences major, so medicine has always been a really big passion of mine. So figuring that out and being a future medical professional, it's kind of scary, for sure," DiStefano said.

One professor in attendance emphasized that while knowledge is easily accessible via AI, students must focus on developing critical thinking and human judgment skills. He touched on how higher education should teach students how to evaluate AI output rather than abusing it to complete coursework.

The conversation then addressed whether AI tools will ever require any kind of formal licensure or if they will simply meet certain quality certification standards to be usable.

Going in a different direction, audience members threw out hypothetical situations for Unger, questioning the pros and cons of a parent using AI to homeschool their child. The question was followed by a debate on whether a child could potentially sue their parents if inadequately educated.

"I have been poorly educated by my parent?" Unger said. "Well, the most, the easiest remedy there, is you sue your parent."

The discussion turned to the potential liability of universities and professors if AI-given instruction fails to prepare students for life post-graduation.

Unger closed the event by touching on the future of AI and what is to come in the AI and legal space.

LEGISLATION from cover

toxicated, some legislative loopholes make it harder for victims like her to make a case. Gadkar-Wilcox is pushing for that to change.

In 2025 alone, colleges and universities in Connecticut reported over 100 total rapes in their Clery reports, which are required under the Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Crime Statistics Act — also referred to as the Clery Act.

Currently, Connecticut law for cases involving sexual violence focuses on two different aspects, the first being a standard for mental incapacitation. Meaning "somebody who has been intoxicated without their knowledge, without their consent," Gadkar-Wilcox explained.

The other focus is on physical helplessness.

"Which basically says that you can also allege a claim if, at the time of the incident, you were basically unconscious or physically unable to communicate your consent," she said.

Gadkar-Wilcox wants to reevaluate those state standards.

To put it into perspective, "if a reasonable person would have thought somebody was too intoxicated to sign a contract, that could invalidate their consent to the contract," Gadkar-Wilcox said.

For Gadkar-Wilcox, the current law raises several questions.

"What happens with somebody who was voluntarily consuming alcohol or any other substance, and five hours later you have an incident? What difference does it make that that initial consumption was voluntary or involuntary? What matters is at the moment the incident happened, the question is whether or not the person had capacity to consent," Gadkar-Wilcox said.

Gadkar-Wilcox noted that many states have changed their law to answer those questions and close the aforementioned loophole. However, Connecticut is not one of them.

Texas law, for example, puts the burden on the other individual, not the victim.

"The burden is now on an alleged perpetrator to take some accountability for knowing what a reasonable person would know, that this person was way too intoxicated to give their consent," Gadkar-Wilcox said.

This is the standard in Texas and several other states, and having the same standard is one of the changes Gadkar-Wilcox wants to see in Connecticut.

Gadkar-Wilcox says that what needs to change is the focus of the law: "It's not focusing on the time of the incident and whether or not there's a responsibility to recognize whether there was competence to consent. Instead, it makes it about, you know, voluntary versus involuntary intoxication," she said.

While still in the preliminary stages, the overall goal is to close the loophole and ensure it doesn't matter whether or not the victim chose to drink.

Along with changing the law regarding voluntary intoxication, Gadkar-Wilcox says there are several other things that need to change. One of which is the institutional response during these instances.

Looking specifically at Cornell, Gadkar-Wilcox noted the reason the case is being talked about two years after the actual incident.

"We have more questions than we do answers because we don't know what their protocol was. But one of the questions is why wasn't this turned over to the police?" Gadkar-Wilcox said.

The Cornell case highlights the necessity for institutions to take these instances seriously from the moment they happen.

For Gadkar-Wilcox, the case also raises questions about the culture surrounding sexual violence.

"We're telling women you know you should be the ones to cover your drinks, make sure you go to a party with friends, make sure you don't wear anything too revealing, and when we say that to women, that's basically telling women you have a responsibility not to be assaulted," Gadkar-Wilcox said.

But this is another area where change is needed.

"We shouldn't be telling women they have a responsibility not to be assaulted," Gadkar-Wilcox said. "We should be telling potential perpetrators that they don't have the right to anybody's body."

On one end, Gadkar-Wilcox is working on changing the state's legislation while in the early stages of raising these questions and finding support. The other side falls into education across the state.

Gadkar-Wilcox recently spoke at Sacred Heart University about sexual violence and Cornell alumna and Quinnipiac professor.

"I think it makes it more impactful for me because I know, having spoken with a number of young students, and predominantly young women, but having spoken to just groups of young students on campus for so many years, that this is not an isolated incident, and that's what is really troubling," she said.

The biggest message she wants to send is that change needs to happen through action.

"We have to actually take the steps we need to take to make sure that we're breaking these cycles, not just sort of reacting to an incident and saying 'I can't believe this happened,'" Gadkar-Wilcox said.

noticed students, especially females, want a space to talk about it.

"We need to give them space to do that," she said.

She looks to create more opportunities for education and awareness at institutions across Connecticut.

Gadkar-Wilcox looks at cases like this, Cornell in particular, as not only a legislator, but a

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– Sujata Gadkar-Wilcox
CONNECTICUT STATE SENATOR AND QUINNIPIAC PROFESSOR OF LEGAL STUDIES