

ChatGPT seems to deliver accurate, legally coherent, and educational responses with moderate readability and high public accessibility to 15 core forensic psychiatry FAQs

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INTRODUCTION

Artificial intelligence (AI) language models such as ChatGPT are increasingly consulted by the public, students, and even legal professionals for quick explanations of complex medico-legal concepts.

Forensic psychiatry, which already suffers from public misunderstanding and media distortion, is a particularly sensitive domain in which inaccurate or legally incoherent information could have significant consequences.

Accessible, well-structured online explanations could substantially improve baseline literacy about issues such as criminal responsibility, competency to stand trial, risk assessment and the insanity defence.

This study examined whether ChatGPT can provide accurate, readable and legally coherent answers to core forensic psychiatry frequently asked questions (FAQs).

AIM

To evaluate the factual accuracy, legal coherence, readability and educational utility of ChatGPT-generated responses to 15 core forensic psychiatry FAQs relevant to

the public and justice professionals.

METHODS

Fifteen (15) FAQs covering key concepts (e.g. definition and scope of forensic psychiatry, roles of forensic psychiatrists, competency to stand trial, insanity and mental illness in law, risk and “dangerousness” assessments, confidentiality, ethical dilemmas, influence on court decisions and training requirements) were submitted to ChatGPT-4 in July 2025.

Each full answer was preserved without editing. Four independent reviewers with forensic psychiatric and legal expertise rated responses for factual accuracy, legal coherence with contemporary Greek and international medico-legal practice, clarity, consistency of terminology and overall accessibility for lay readers.

Readability was quantified using Flesch Reading Ease, SMOG, Coleman-Liau and FORCAST indices.

Reviewers also judged whether each answer was easily understandable by the general public or required restructuring or expert mediation.

QUESTIONS

1. What is forensic psychiatry?
2. What does a forensic psychiatrist do?
3. How is forensic psychiatry different from clinical psychiatry?
4. How does a forensic psychiatrist evaluate someone?
5. What is the role of a forensic psychiatrist in criminal cases?
6. What is competency to stand trial?
7. Can a person be found not guilty by reason of insanity?
8. What is the difference between insanity and mental illness in the legal context?
9. How do forensic psychiatrists assess a defendant's risk of violence or reoffending?
10. What happens if a person is deemed not guilty by reason of insanity?
11. What are the ethical issues forensic psychiatrists face?
12. How do forensic psychiatrists handle confidential information in legal cases?
13. What is a “dangerousness” assessment?
14. Can a forensic psychiatrist influence a court's decision?
15. What qualifications do you need to be a forensic psychiatrist?

RESULTS

All 15 answers were factually accurate, aligning with current forensic psychiatric practices.

The Flesch Reading Ease score had a mean (SD) / median (range) of 58.5 (2.8) / 59.1 (55.2-64.0), indicating moderate readability, and SMOG scores averaged (SD) 10.1 (0.6), with a median (range) of 10.0 (9.0-11.0).

Coleman-Liau scores averaged (SD) 10.4 (0.5), with a median (range) of 10.3 (9.5-11.4), while FORCAST scores averaged (SD) 9.9 (0.5), with a median (range) 9.8 (8.7-10.7), reflecting a U.S. Grade 9-11 readability level.

Twelve (80.0%) responses were deemed accessible to the general public, with the remaining three (20%; competency to stand trial, difference between insanity and mental illness, and ethical issues in forensic psychiatry) rated as moderately complex, requiring structured formatting for clarity.

For instance, answers on what forensic psychiatry is and the role of forensic psychiatrists were particularly well-received for their clarity and educational value.

No critical inaccuracies were identified, while structured formatting and consistent terminology enhanced comprehension, particularly in more technical responses related to forensic evaluations and ethical dilemmas.

CONCLUSION

ChatGPT produces accurate, legally coherent and pedagogically useful answers to core forensic psychiatry FAQs, at a reading level appropriate for most educated members of the public.

These findings support cautious use of AI-generated explanations as an adjunct to traditional educational materials and as a first informational contact point for patients, families and legal actors.

Nonetheless, expert oversight remains essential, particularly for jurisdiction-specific legal nuances and ethically sensitive topics, and AI tools should complement (and not replace) direct consultation with qualified forensic psychiatrists.

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