



University
of Exeter

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Research Project: Human/ Psychoanalysis v's AI, Doctorate Research Project

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SEEKING PSYCHODYNAMIC PSYCHOTHERAPISTS / PSYCHOANALYTIC PSYCHOTHERAPISTS / PSYCHOANALYSTS WHO HAVE EXPERIENCE OF USING AI FOR PERSONAL PSYCHOLOGICAL USE

The aim of this study is to explore the question: Can AI, as it currently exists (ChatGPT-5.2), truly engage at the emotional depth and relational complexity that defines psychotherapeutic treatment.

To explore this topic and research question, I am conducting semi-structured interviews with psychodynamic psychotherapists/ psychoanalytic psychotherapists/ psychoanalysis, who alongside have experience of using AI for personal psychological use. Through this qualitative research approach, I hope to understand the differences, potential for and the limitations of artificial intelligence (AI) in relation to psychotherapeutic treatment.

Purpose of the research study

AI applications are becoming increasingly common in mental health, however, their role and relevance in psychotherapeutic treatment remains uncertain.

This research study aims to explore whether, and in what ways, AI can or cannot engage with the emotional depth and relational complexity that define psychotherapeutic treatment.

The aim is not only to highlight possible contributions AI might make to therapeutic practice, but also to consider the important limitations that may prevent it from replacing human-to-human interaction.

Why have you been approached?

As a psychodynamic psychotherapist, psychoanalytic psychotherapist, or psychoanalyst who also has experience using AI for personal psychological use, you are uniquely positioned to

identify, compare, and describe the differences between human psychotherapeutic work and AI-based interactions.

What would taking part involve?

After agreeing to take part, you will be invited to attend a one-hour video interview at a mutually convenient time before the end of March 2026.

Process;

Invitation and consent

If you choose to take part, you will be asked to provide written consent (on a separate consent form).

Interview

You will be invited to attend a one-hour Zoom video interview at a mutually convenient time. The interview will consist of semi-structured questions designed to explore your experiences and your perspectives on the differences between human psychotherapeutic work and AI-based interactions.

The interview will be recorded and transcribed, and the transcript will form the basis for relational thematic analysis (RTA).

All data will be fully anonymised before analysis begins. Names, places, dates, and any other potentially identifying details will be removed, and you will not be identifiable.

How your data will be handled

- Identifiable or administrative data (ie your name on the consent form) will be used only to manage your participation and will be stored securely and separately from the research data.
- Any personal or identifying details will be removed, and your name will be anonymised and replaced with a code.
- All files will be password-protected and accessible only to the researcher.
- There will be no identifiable data within the research dataset.
- Data will be stored securely on the University of Exeter's password-protected OneDrive system, with access restricted to the researcher.

Use of the data

The anonymised interview transcripts will be analysed by the researcher using RTA. The findings will be written up and presented as part of a research dissertation submitted to the University of Exeter in August 2026.

After the study

Once the research is complete, all data will be securely deleted. Results may be written up for reports or publications, however, only anonymised information will be used and no participant will be identifiable.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

There are no direct personal benefits from taking part in this study. However, by participating and allowing your informed perspectives to be shared, understood, and analysed, you will contribute to the exploration of important questions about whether, and in what ways, AI can or cannot engage with the emotional depth and relational complexity that define psychotherapeutic treatment.

This research may contribute to a wider understanding of the role of AI in mental health and could benefit others in the future.

Participants will not be given payments or remuneration of any kind in return for taking part in this study.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

This study is considered low risk. The primary inconvenience is the time commitment of within one hour to take part in the interview. Every effort will be made to ensure that participation is conducted in a safe, respectful, and supportive manner.

What will happen if I don't want to carry on with the study?

Taking part in this research study is entirely voluntary, and there is no obligation to participate. You may withdraw your consent at any time without having to give a reason.

If you decide to withdraw, please inform the researcher, and your data will be removed from the study and securely destroyed where possible. However, once your data has been anonymised, analysed, and included in reports or publications, it may no longer be possible to remove them. In such cases, this will be clearly explained so that you are fully informed about what can and cannot be withdrawn.

How will information be kept confidential?

All data will be used solely for the purposes of this study. Your information will be fully anonymised before analysis begins, with names and any other identifying details removed and replaced with a code. You will not be identifiable in any analysis, reports, or publications.

Identifiable or administrative information (such as your name on the consent form) will be stored securely and separately from the research data. All files will be password-protected and stored on the University of Exeter's secure OneDrive system, with access restricted to the researcher only.

The anonymised interview transcripts will be analysed by the researcher using relational thematic analysis and written up as part of a research dissertation submitted to the University of Exeter in August 2026. Once the study is complete, all data will be securely deleted. There is no intention to use the data for future research or to share it with other researchers.

If you do have any queries about the University's processing of your personal data that cannot be resolved by the research team, further information may be obtained from the University's Data Protection Officer by emailing informationgovernance@exeter.ac.uk or at [Information Governance | Information Governance | University of Exeter](#)

The findings of the study may be published in academic journals or references at professional conferences. Any published material will be fully anonymised and you will not be identifiable.

What will happen to the results of this study?

The findings of this study may be published in academic journals.

There is no planned provision for direct feedback to participants at the end of the study.

However, if you would like to receive a copy of the final approved document, please let the researcher know and this can be provided.

Who is organising and funding this study?

The sponsor of this study is the University of Exeter. The academic and clinical supervisors, listed in order of involvement, are; Dr Janet Smithson, Dr Marta Bolognani, and Dr Jean Knox.

This research project is self-funded by the researcher.

Who has reviewed this study?

This project has been reviewed by the University of Exeter Psychology Research Ethics Committee, contact for the Co-Chair of the Committee is Julian Basanovic (j.basanovic@exeter.ac.uk).

Contact for any questions or requests regarding your participation in this research

In the event of queries or requests you may contact me using email nb745@exeter.ac.uk.

You can also contact the University Research Ethics and Governance Team if you wish to make a complaint or comment, email cgr-reg@exeter.ac.uk.

or

Sean Jennings, Head of Research Ethics, Governance and Compliance (S.Jennings@exeter.ac.uk) University Research Services, University of Exeter, Innovation Centre, Rennes Drive Exeter, EX4 4RN

Thank you for your interest in this project.

Please feel free to contact me, the researcher, if you have any questions before deciding whether to participate.