Dr. Watson: The ‘Jeopardy’ Computer Finds New Life Fighting Cancer

It turns out, though, that Watson was destined for much more than game-show glory. Doctors at New York’s Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, *Wired* reports, will soon begin using Watson’s computing power to help them make medical diagnoses. Dr. Mark Kris, Sloan Kettering’s chief of thoracic oncology, is less than a year away from launching a system that uses Watson’s ~~brain~~power to navigate the hospital’s amazingly rich databases of research and treatment history. Instead of an answer to a trivia question, Watson will generate treatment recommendations for doctors. *Jeopardy!* meets *House*.

“The connection came when I learned that Watson could look at case histories at an institution like ours and say what were the best choices that our doctors made,” Dr. Kris tells *Wired* of the idea for giving Watson his medical license.

And, once implemented, the approach will allow Watson to act as a kind of know-it-all apprentice for Sloan Kettering’s human doctors, offering ranked treatment options based on the cross-analysis of patients’ medical records and the latest medical literature — and providing, basically, another diagnostic layer for doctors. The system, Kris notes, “will allow us to have an unprecedented way of collecting and analyzing information about individual patients and present a doctor and a patient with a listing of treatment options made by looking at case histories from Sloan-Kettering, the world’s medical literature, and specific information from that patient.”

Most intriguingly, doctors won’t have to have a supercomputer on the premises to avail themselves of Watson’s services. To the contrary, Dr. Kris is imagining a system that doctors can use over the Internet, freely. “The idea is that it would come through the cloud to a laptop or an iPad,” Kris says. And the goal “is to make it available to doctors around the world.”

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