

How ANZ medical students are using AI, and *why* current tools aren't enough



High adoption, low trust: The reality of current AI tools in ANZ medical education

Artificial intelligence has rapidly become a staple tool for medical students, promising to streamline study, synthesise vast amounts of complex information and generate customised learning materials. However, our baseline survey of 49 medical students across Australia and New Zealand reveals a significant gap between the promise of current AI tools and the reality of their application in medical education.

The study found that while students eagerly adopt AI into their study workflows, with 49% using it daily and another 38.8% using it weekly, they are burdened by a lack of trust in the responses they receive and a “prompt tax.” Students rate their trust in general AI tools at an alarming 4.6 out of 10, leading to significant time spent refining queries and fact-checking AI outputs.

This white paper presents the complete findings from Survey 1 (the baseline survey) of the ANZ pilot study. A second survey is currently underway to capture student perceptions of StudyFinder AI, Elsevier’s new curriculum-aligned AI enhancement within ClinicalKey Student, and results will be shared in a forthcoming report.

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Study overview

Medical students are under immense pressure to master vast amounts of information. In response, many have turned to general large language models (LLMs) like ChatGPT to act as digital tutors.

We conducted a baseline survey of 49 medical students across Australia and New Zealand to capture their perceptions of general AI tools. The survey was conducted via Microsoft Forms between 27 February and 1 March 2026.

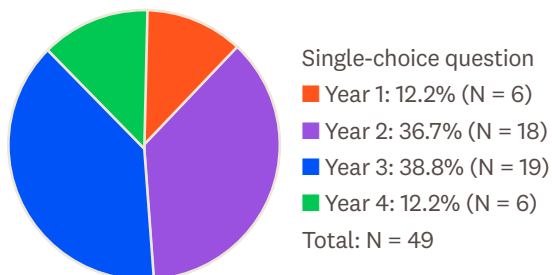
Prior to completing the survey, all participants completed a screener to confirm eligibility, ensuring the sample comprised active medical students who were currently using AI tools in their studies. The screener also captured baseline information, including year of study, institution and Elsevier product access. Participants were recruited and registered through the User Interviews platform.

A second phase is currently underway, in which a subset of participants are providing comparative feedback after testing StudyFinder AI over a two-week trial period.

Demographics

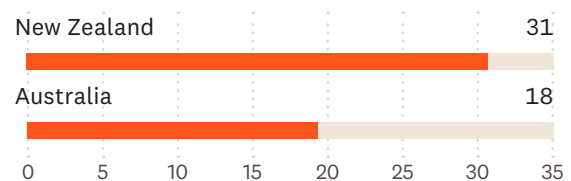
The sample comprised 49 medical students drawn from four institutions across Australia and New Zealand. Year of study ranged from year 1 (12%) to year 4 (12%), with the majority in years 2 and 3 (37% and 39% respectively).

Year of study



Source:
StudyFinder AI ANZ Pilot —Survey 1 Readout, Slide 3
Single-select question

Institutions by country



Total: N = 49

Source:
StudyFinder AI ANZ Pilot —Survey 1 Readout, Slide 3
Single-select question

Three major themes emerged from the baseline survey regarding the *effectiveness*, *trustworthiness* and *usability* of general AI tools in modern medical study.

The reality of current AI tools: Trust, usability and curriculum gaps

ANZ medical students are regularly using AI, but the general-purpose tools they rely on are falling short of the rigorous demands of medical education.

Three interconnected themes emerged from the data:

1. AI is now a core, habitual study tool

49% of students use AI daily and nearly 40% use it weekly. Strengths include speed, convenience and ease of navigation. However, these benefits are consistently undermined by issues of trust, accuracy and curriculum relevance.

2. Low trust drives a costly “prompt tax”

Students gave their current AI tools a trust score of just 4.6/10. Because outputs cannot be trusted implicitly, students must spend extra time reprompting and fact-checking, transforming what should be a seamless study aid into a high-effort process.

3. Curriculum alignment remains a critical gap

47% of students find it difficult to locate information aligned to their curriculum using current AI tools. Current models lack contextual awareness of specific medical programs and appropriate learning levels. AI tools are good at making studying faster or easier in some respects, but not necessarily more accurate or tailored to what students actually need to learn.

Critical gaps with general AI tools



4.6 / 10

Average trust score given to general AI tools



92%

must actively verify AI outputs



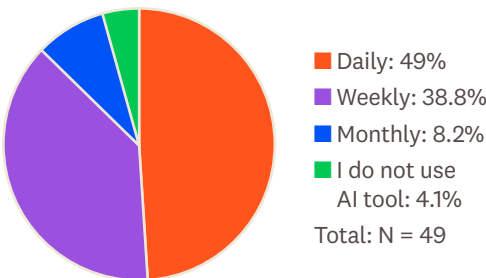
47%

report difficulty finding curriculum-aligned resources

AI is a core, habitual study tool

Over half of students report using AI tools daily, and nearly all use them at least weekly. AI is now deeply embedded in how medical students study.

How often do you currently use AI tools such as ChatGPT to support your study?



Source:
StudyFinder AI ANZ Pilot — Survey 1 Readout, Slide 7
Open-text question

How students primarily use AI

Based on open-text responses describing the last time they used an AI tool for study, the primary use cases ranked, in order, are:

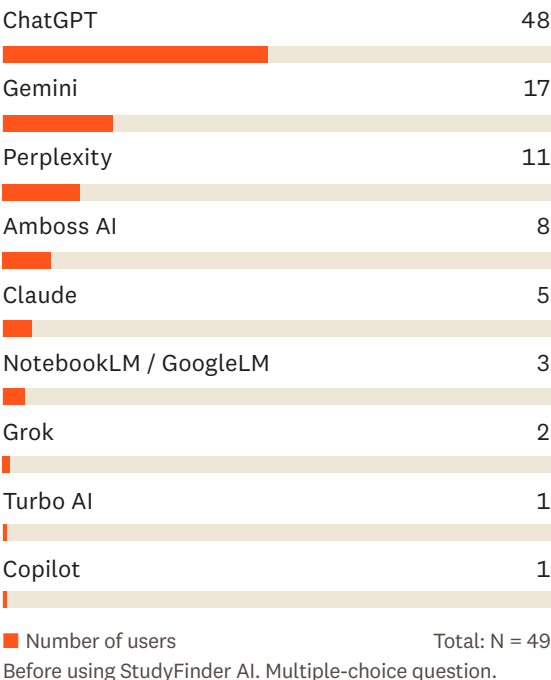
- Explanation / understanding
- Practice questions / exam prep
- Summarisation
- Checking / validation
- Research support
- Flashcard / active learning

Source:
StudyFinder AI ANZ Pilot — Survey 1 Readout, Slide 7
Open-text question

Tools used in the last six months

ChatGPT dominates AI tool usage among ANZ medical students, used by 48 of 49 respondents.

Which AI tools have you used in the last 6 months?

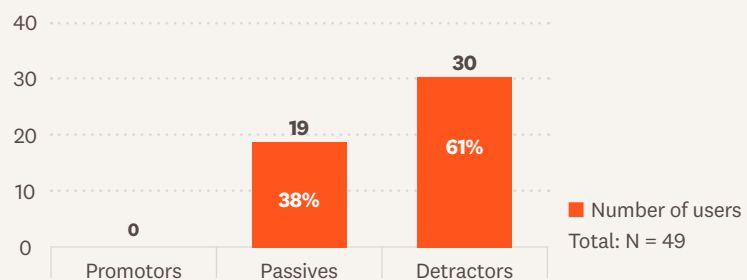


Source:
StudyFinder AI ANZ Pilot — Survey 1 Readout, Slide 6

High effort, low trust — the “prompt tax”

Students feel that current AI tools require too much effort to get good results. Satisfaction with the time spent adjusting, rephrasing or reprompting questions to get a useful answer is low, with 61% of students rating their satisfaction at 6 out of 10 or below, and not a single student giving a score of 9 or 10.

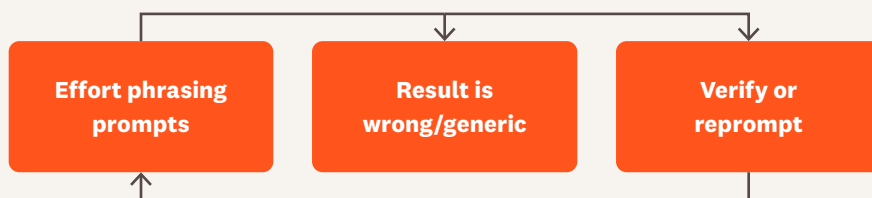
Using your current AI tools, how satisfied are you with the time you spend adjusting, rephrasing or reprompting questions to get a useful answer? (Rating 0-10)



Source: StudyFinder AI ANZ Pilot — Survey 1 Readout, Slide 8
Single-select question

Students need to be overly specific to get good answers. Responses are often inaccurate, irrelevant or too generic. Users spend extra time reprompting and fact-checking. AI struggles more with detailed, niche or technical questions. Formatting, instruction-following and speed issues add further friction.

High effort, low trust creates a frustration loop



Source: StudyFinder AI ANZ Pilot — Survey 1 Readout, Slide 9

72% of users do not strongly trust AI for medical accuracy

The most alarming trend in the data is the widespread lack of trust in AI-generated medical information. Students gave general AI tools a trust score of just 4.6 out of 10. Because students cannot trust outputs implicitly, the time saved by using AI is lost to fact-checking.

How confident do you feel in trusting the accuracy of medical information provided by the AI tools you currently use for study?



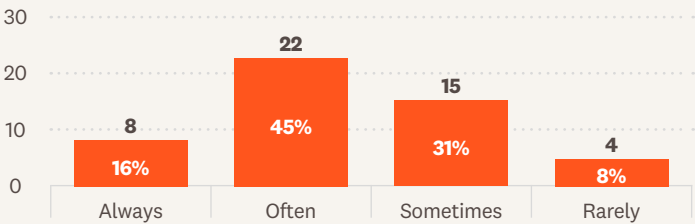
4.6 / 10
Trust

Trust score = $\frac{\text{Sum of all trust ratings}}{\text{Number of respondents}}$

Total: N = 49

Source: StudyFinder AI ANZ Pilot — Survey 1 Readout, Slide 10
Single-select question

When using AI tools for study, how often do you feel the need to verify the information using other sources?



■ Number of users

Total: N = 49

*Those that chose Always, Often or Sometimes.

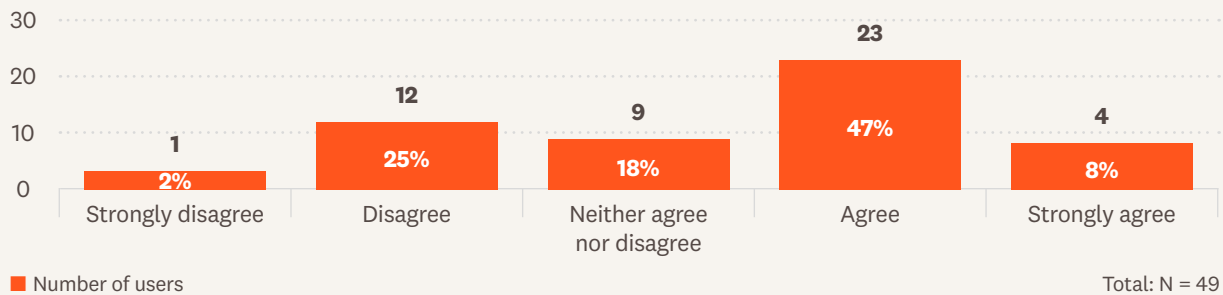
Source:
StudyFinder AI ANZ Pilot — Survey 1 Readout, Slide 11
Single-choice question.

Approximately 92%* of respondents reported at least some need to verify information obtained from AI tools using other sources. AI is not seen as a source of truth, but a starting point. 61% of students verify often or always.

Usability: Where AI works and where it falls short

Students were asked to rate their agreement with six statements about usability using their current AI tools. Navigation and general study efficiency emerged as relative strengths, while curriculum alignment and resource relevance were consistent pain points.

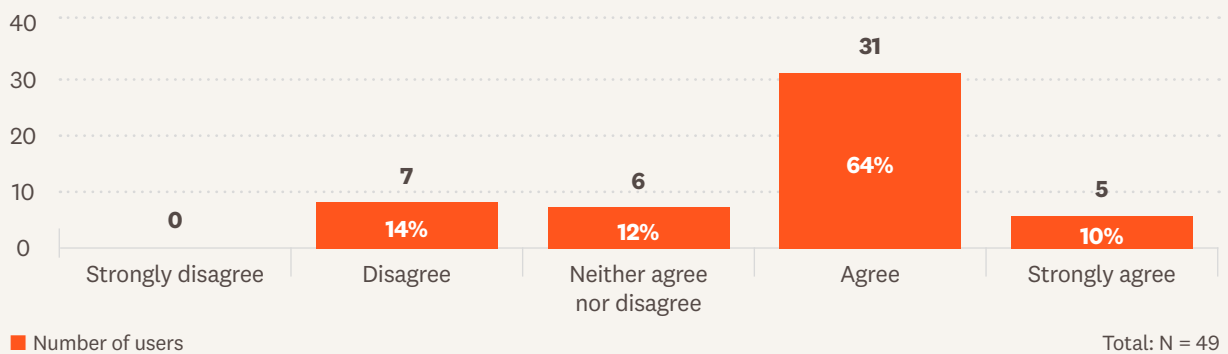
Agreement with statement: It's easy to find information that's at the right level for me (not too simple or too advanced)



Source: StudyFinder AI ANZ Pilot — Survey 1 Readout, Slide 12

Single-select question

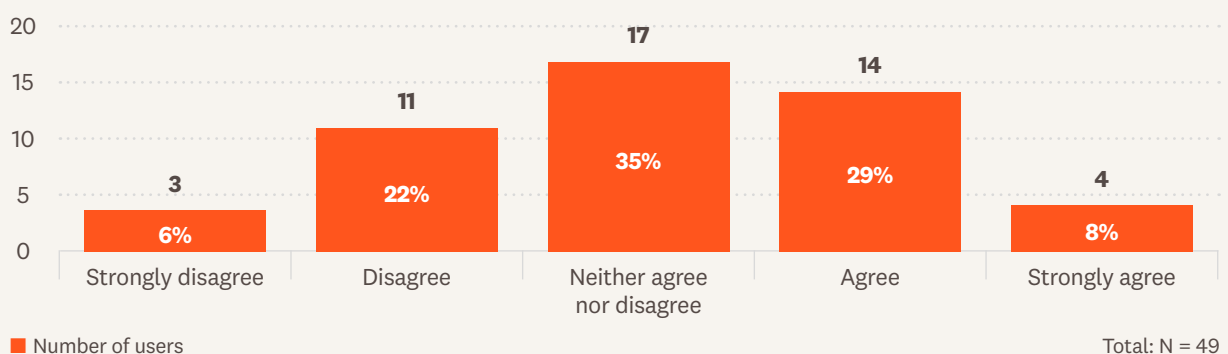
Agreement with statement: It's easy to navigate to information I need



Source: StudyFinder AI ANZ Pilot — Survey 1 Readout, Slide 13

Single-select question

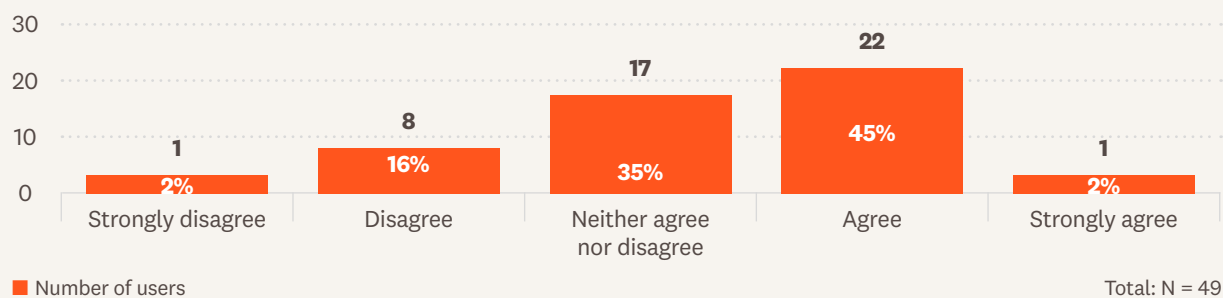
Agreement with statement: It's easy to find effective and relevant resources for learning different topics or concepts



Source: StudyFinder AI ANZ Pilot — Survey 1 Readout, Slide 14

Single-select question

Agreement with statement: It's easy to study efficiently



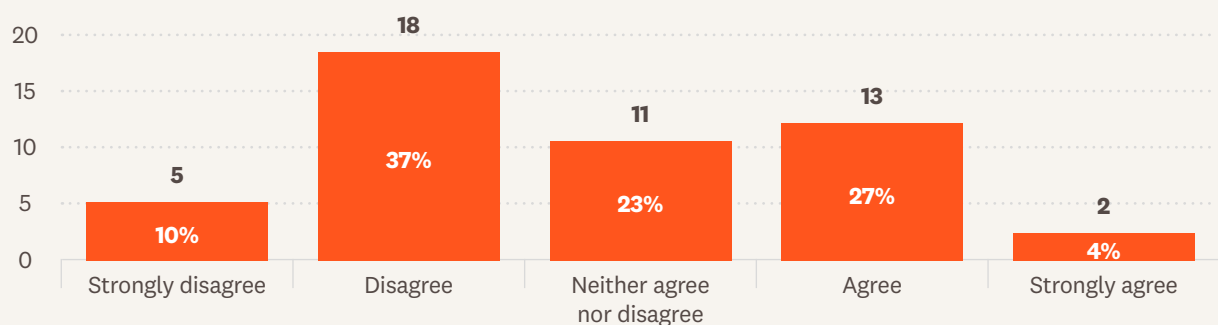
Number of users

Total: N = 49

Source: StudyFinder AI ANZ Pilot — Survey 1 Readout, Slide 17

Single-select question

Agreement with statement: It's easy to find information aligned to my curriculum



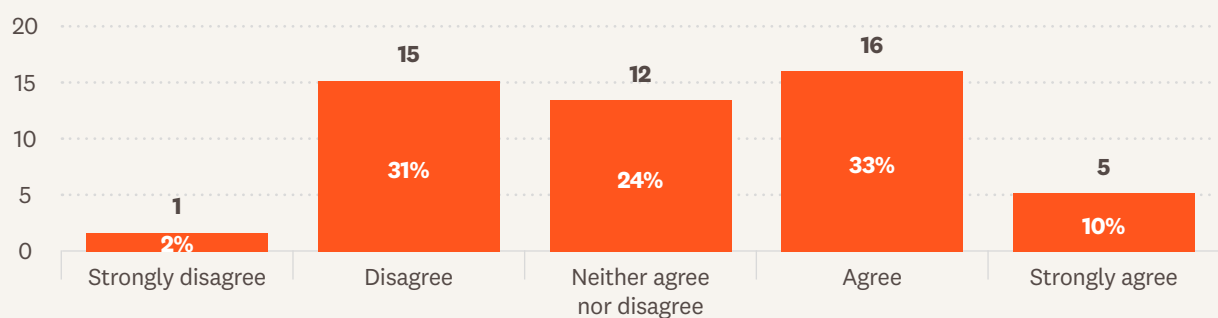
Number of users

Total: N = 49

Source: StudyFinder AI ANZ Pilot — Survey 1 Readout, Slide 13

Single-select question

Agreement with statement: It's easy to find information in the format that meets my learning preferences



Number of users

Total: N = 49

Source: StudyFinder AI ANZ Pilot — Survey 1 Readout, Slide 15

Single-select question



74% of students find it easy to navigate to information they need using general AI tools, but only 31% find it easy to find curriculum-aligned content

Navigation is the clearest strength of current AI tools. 74% of students agree that it is easy to navigate the information they need, and 55% agree that it's easy to find information that's at the right level for them. However, finding appropriate-level information is not consistent or effortless, students noted it often requires prompt refinement, clarification and verification before a useful result is obtained. Students were also moderately satisfied with finding information in their preferred learning format, and the majority generally felt that AI helped them study efficiently.

Where current tools fall short is in relevance and curriculum alignment. When asked whether it is easy to find effective and relevant learning resources, experiences were mixed and inconsistent with no clear majority either way. Curriculum alignment was the most significant pain point of the six: 47% of students disagreed that it is easy to find content aligned to their curriculum, with only 31% agreeing.

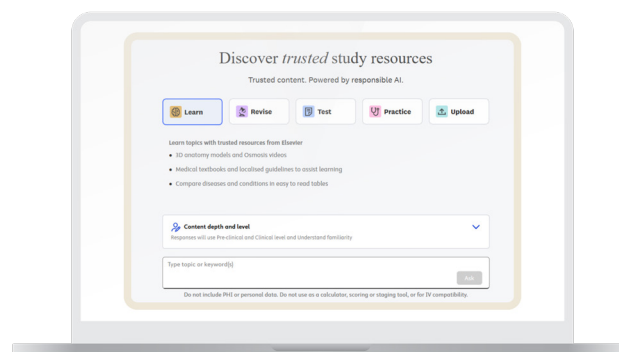
General AI tools lack the contextual awareness needed to connect students with content that matches their specific program and needs, and the data makes it clear that students feel this gap acutely.

StudyFinder AI: Built specifically for the rigorous demands of medical education

Unlike generic models, StudyFinder AI within ClinicalKey Student is designed for the specific needs of medical learners. It directly addresses the three key pain points identified in this survey:

- **Aligned to curriculum and learning level** — content consistent with what students are learning in class, tailorable via level and depth filters
- **Less verification, higher confidence** — cited, textbook-based information grounded in peer-reviewed Elsevier content
- **Reduced “prompt tax” and fewer tools** — strong responses with fewer follow-ups, and linked resources (videos, question banks, study materials) in one place

A second phase of this pilot study is currently underway, in which participants are using StudyFinder AI over a structured two-week trial. Findings, including direct comparisons across trust, curriculum alignment, verification need and overall usability, will be published in a forthcoming report.



Want to find out more?

Explore StudyFinder AI and see how it's changing the way medical students study:



Visit the [StudyFinder AI landing page](#)



Watch the [demo video](#)



Download the [flyer](#)

The path forward

Artificial intelligence has permanently altered the landscape of medical education. However, the current reliance on generic, unverified tools is proving to be unsustainable for the rigorous demands and high stakes of modern medical education.

As our ANZ pilot survey clearly indicates, there is a fundamental shift in student requirements. They need tools that seamlessly combine the conversational efficiency of AI with the accuracy of trusted medical resources.

Delivering dependability with StudyFinder AI

By directly addressing the pain points associated with general large language models, Elsevier's StudyFinder AI offers a tailored, purpose-built solution. It significantly reduces the "prompt tax" and eliminates the heavy burden of constant fact-checking and verification that currently slows students down.

Furthermore, by directly aligning its responses with university curricula and trusted, evidence-based medical content, it provides a highly relevant learning environment. StudyFinder AI offers the dependability medical students need to study efficiently, confidently and safely.



Empower your medical students with the confidence of trusted, AI-driven learning.

[Get in touch](#) with our team to learn more about StudyFinder AI and schedule a demonstration today.