

OPINION

AI Will Raise the Bar

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AI has become the newest tool in the scientific toolkit, and quickly a favorite one. Whether you love it or hate it, the way we work is already changing to integrate it, and there is no opting out.

But there is something that concerns me — a narrative I keep hearing: that AI makes our work easier, that it saves us from stress, that tasks which once took weeks now take days, and that this is an unqualified win. We will all be relieved, right?

Not quite.

The problem begins the moment AI becomes the new standard rather than an optional shortcut. When everyone is expected to use it, deadlines shrink and quality expectations rise — regardless of how much human thought a task actually demands. That is not stress relief. That is a tighter vice. A survey by Upwork found that 77% of employees using AI reported that their overall workload had actually increased, not decreased — a phenomenon increasingly referred to as “technostress” [1].

Consider how AI actually works best: it produces strong results when the task is defined with precision. An experienced researcher can get excellent output in a couple of well-crafted prompts, because they already know what “good” looks like. But what about someone earlier in their career? Can a junior scientist even evaluate whether the output is good enough? Yet that person is now held to the same turnaround time as the expert, because the AI is supposedly “doing the work”. In medical AI, this gap has been formally documented: there is a significant disparity between the quality of prompts formulated by domain experts and those written by non-specialists, with direct implications for patient safety and health equity [2].

This is where the conversation needs to shift. The real question is not how much AI can produce — it is how much we are now expected to produce in less time. The compression of timelines does not eliminate cognitive labor; it just hides it. And when no time is left for thinking — for questioning assumptions, reconsidering approaches, or simply sitting with a problem — we are not working smarter. We are just sprinting from one deliverable to the next. An analysis of over 40 million academic papers found that scientists who use AI pub-

lish more and accumulate more citations, but the range of ideas explored across fields is narrowing —

AI is funneling researchers into the same crowded intellectual corners rather than expanding the frontiers of discovery [3].

We need to protect the space for thinking. AI does its best work when we bring clarity, and clarity requires time. So instead of using AI to shrink every deadline, we should use it to deepen every result. I believe AI can give us more time to think — but only if we have the discipline to actually take that time, rather than surrendering it to the next task on the list.

References

- [1] Upwork. (2024). Research Study on AI and Workforce Impact. <https://aiworkplacewellness.substack.com/p/ai-in-the-workplace>.
- [2] Various authors. (2025). In the search for the perfect prompt in medical AI queries. PubMed Central. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC12665726/>
- [3] Dolgin, E. (2026). AI Boosts Research Careers but Flattens Scientific Discovery. IEEE Spectrum, March 2026. <https://spectrum.ieee.org/ai-science-research-flattens-discovery>