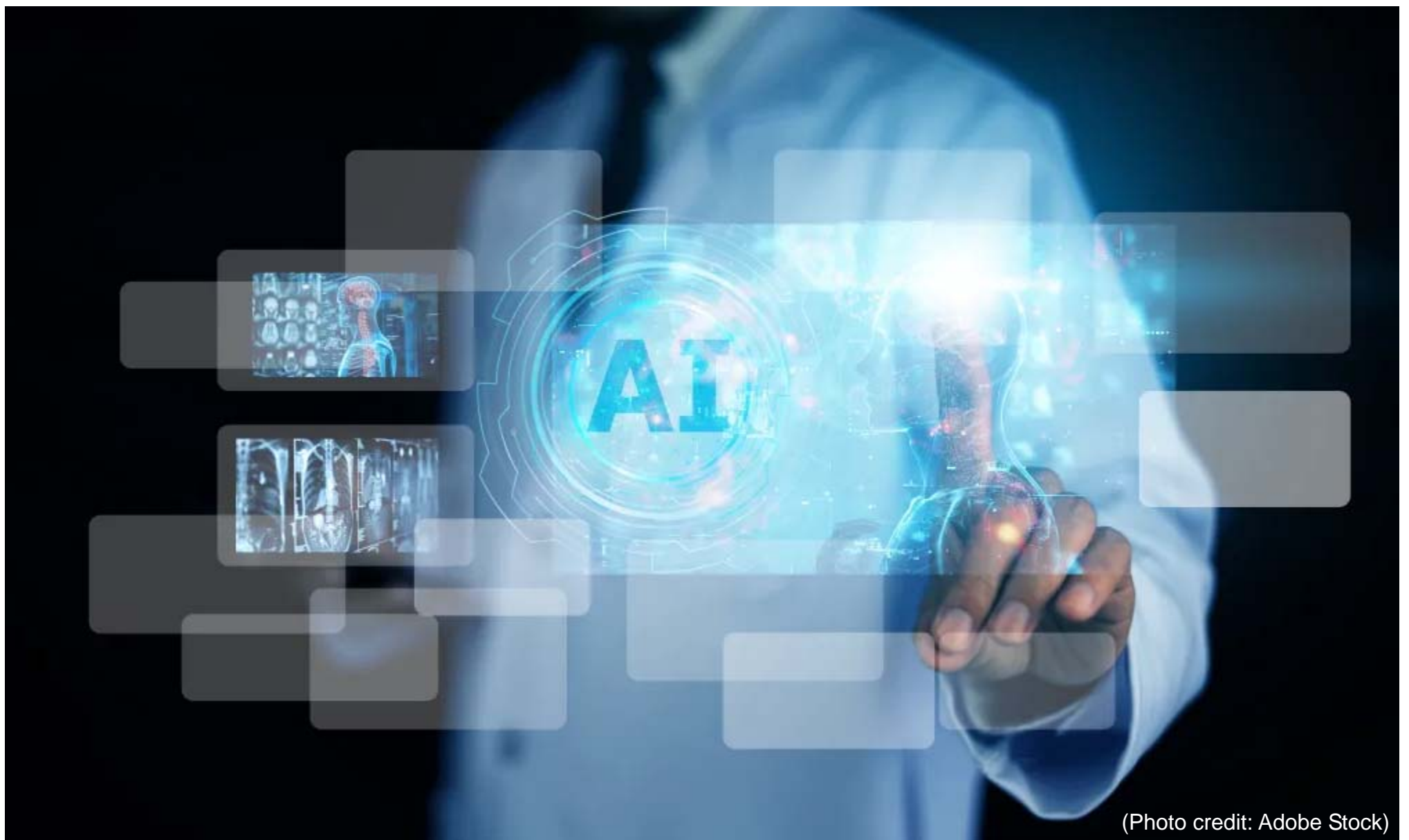


Could AI help detect a condition disproportionately impacting Black people?



(Photo credit: Adobe Stock)



by Kay Wicker
THE GRIO

Artificial intelligence is currently being developed to detect dementia and Alzheimer's disease, which Black people are twice as likely to develop.

(SCIENCE) - Artificial intelligence can be a controversial subject, especially in Hollywood or among artists. Many who contend with AI express concern about its potential for harm instead of good, like eventually being able to detect brain health.

In June, the National Institute on Aging reported that one day, researchers working alongside AI computer programs may be able to predict who is at risk of developing Alzheimer's disease, from medical records. According to an NIA-funded study, this would be possible by training certain self-educating programs — also known as machine learning algorithms — to spot risks in electronic health records. The results could ultimately be used to identify the underlying source of a person's risk.

This isn't the only way the technology could be used. The Washington Post reports that a device resembling a headband is in development to scan

brain activity, much like an ECG does for heart waves or a blood pressure cuff.

"We want to find ways to detect dementia as early as possible," Jennie Larkin, deputy director of the Division of Neuroscience at the National Institute on Aging told the outlet. "AI is primarily helpful in understanding and managing big data too large or complex for traditional analyses. Its potential is to be an incredible assistant in helping us understand rich medical data and identify possibilities we never could unassisted."

Though the technology is still at least a decade off from being fully ready, it has the potential to impact health outcomes for many people.

According to the Mayo Clinic, dementia is a broad term used to describe a variety of symptoms that impact memory, thinking, and social abilities. While not one disease in particular, dementia is most commonly caused by Alzheimer's disease.

The condition impacts roughly 6.9 million

Americans over the age of 65 and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention projects this figure to double by 2060. Black seniors also develop the condition at disproportionate rates. According to the Alzheimer's Association, 23.1% of Black people in their 70s and older have the disease and are twice as likely as white Americans to develop the condition. The reasons behind the disproportionate rates are hard to pinpoint, however systemic barriers to adequate health, lifestyle, and socioeconomic status may be factors.

Considering that there is still no known cure for both dementia and Alzheimer's disease and very few ways beyond medication to minimize it once it begins, some experts caution against the promise of this new and developing technology.

"Overall, AI in this case, is a good thing. But it carries a big 'but,'" Arthur Caplan, professor of bioethics at NYU Langone Health, said when speaking to the Washington Post.

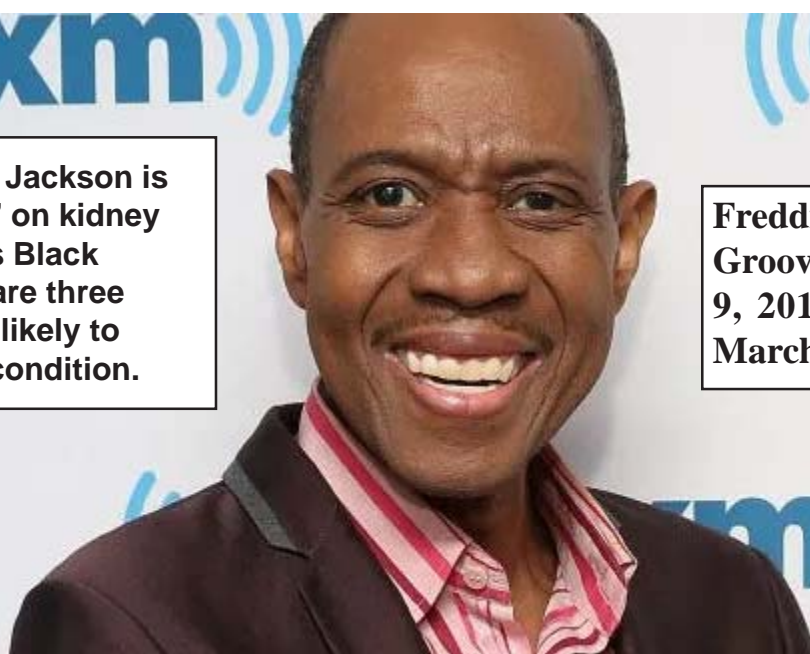


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Freddie Jackson, 67, announces kidney disease diagnosis; 1 in 3 Americans are also at risk

Singer Freddie Jackson is "shining light" on kidney disease as Black Americans are three times more likely to develop the condition.

Freddie Jackson performs on SiriusXM's The Groove Channel at SiriusXM Studios on May 9, 2017 in New York City. (Photo by Robin Marchant/Getty Images for SiriusXM)



(HEALTH) - R&B singer Freddie Jackson, who topped the charts in the mid-1980s with his iconic slow jams, recently announced he has been diagnosed with kidney disease.

On Wednesday, Sept. 4, the R&B legend, 67, shared his recent diagnosis and his reason for going public with the news in a video posted to Instagram.

"After a lot of thought and reflection, I've come to a point where I feel I'm ready to talk about a recent chapter in my life," the "You Are My Lady" singer began in the video.

"I have been diagnosed with kidney disease. This journey has had its challenges but I've decided to face it with openness and resilience," he continued. "It's important to me that I share this with you, not just as a part of my personal story, but as a way to make a positive difference."

Jackson further announced that he has partnered with the National Kidney Foundation to

raise awareness about kidney health and provide support to those impacted by the condition.

He thanked his fans for their support, adding, "As I take this step, I'm turning my personal experience into a platform for greater understanding and advocacy. With your help, we can work towards better awareness and improved outcomes for everyone with kidney disease."

According to the Mayo Clinic, kidney disease, also referred to as chronic kidney failure, is a "gradual loss of kidney function." Treatment for the condition can vary, depending on what is causing the kidneys to fail, but works to slow its progression. There is no known cure for kidney disease, and it can progress to "end-stage kidney failure," which can be fatal.

The National Kidney Foundation reports that while 33% of U.S. adults are at risk for developing kidney disease (one in three people), Black Americans are more than three times as likely to develop

the disease than white Americans.

According to the organization, Black Americans remain at such an increased risk due to several systemic factors, including health discrimination, increased risk for other risk factors such as heart disease and diabetes, and economic disparities, as the disease is costly to manage. The National Kidney Foundation also notes, "the way in which kidney disease was traditionally diagnosed underestimated the presence and/or severity of disease in Black or African American people, delaying important interventions to preserve kidney function."

In Jackson's video, he added how he hopes his work with the National Kidney Foundation will "help shine a light on the importance of this issue."

In the post's caption, he added, "Your love and support mean the world to me as I take this step forward for my health and well-being. Together, we can make a difference. I love you and blessings to you all."