RMIT Classification: Trusted

What if AI hallucinates when people search for health information?

AI Overviews Eye Tracking Study

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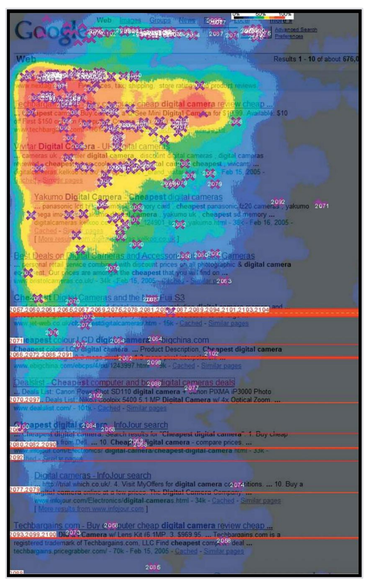
AI Overviews are not there yet, but people are still relying on them!

Missing context. AI Overview omitted a tobacco company's history and health harms [1].
No rules. There is "no policy or regulation" on how this information is presented [1].
Still relied on. People engage heavily with AI Overviews, but rarely click their sources [4, 5].

Why this matters for health

People turn to search engines for symptoms, medicines and treatments.
Search engines now put an **AI-generated summary** mostly above the ranked links.

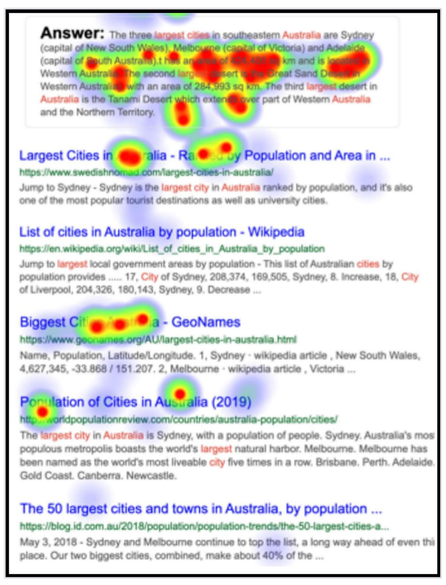
1 Twenty years of eye tracking on search



2005
Golden triangle [3]



2010
With ads [2]



2020
One answer + links [6]

None of them had an AI-generated answer on the page.

2 How we tested it

Real Google pages, captured and frozen so everyone saw the same results.

36
participants

10
search tasks

120 Hz
screen-mounted eye tracker



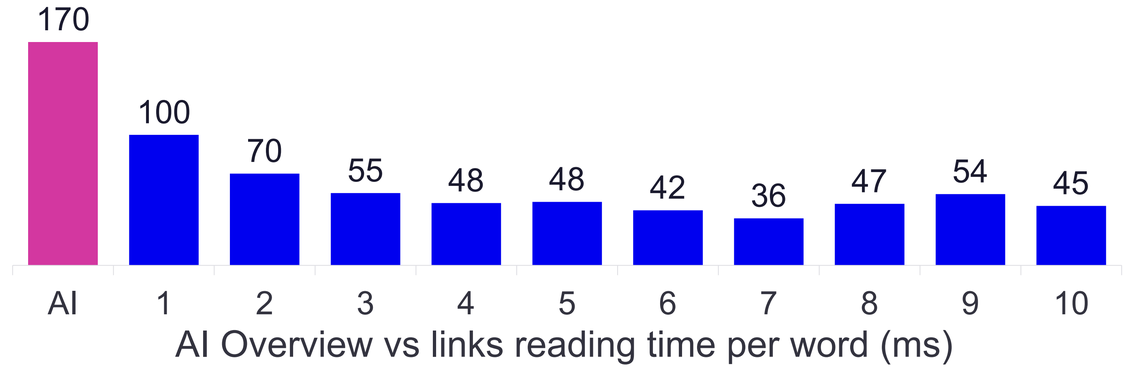
3 AI Overviews hold attention longer

AI Overview — **27 seconds**

All ten links combined — **15 seconds**

4 Not just because it is longer

80% of the attention per word is lost below the AI Overview.



5 The top link lost its seat

#1 before → **#4** now

The first link now gets the attention the fourth link used to get [6].

6 Trust has not caught up yet

Neither the AI Overview nor the ten blue links was rated more trustworthy or useful: responses were mixed.

10 of 33 people rated usefulness and trustworthiness differently.

What this means for Digital Health

1. **The AI answer is read first, and longest.**
2. **The links are read later, and less.**
3. **Trust is still unsettled.**

Beyond health: any domain where an unchecked AI answer can cause harm, such as finance, law and climate.
Future work: Research AI interactions on health and other high-stakes topics. Make the findings accessible beyond academia.

Paper

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[6] Wu et al. (2020). Providing direct answers in search results: a study of user behavior. CIKM.

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