Pegem Journal of Education and Instruction, Vol. 13, No. 4 , 2023 (pp. 490-496)

RESEARCH ARTICLE

A COMPREHENSIVE JOINT LEARNING SYSTEM TO DETECT SKIN CANCER

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ABSTRACT

Skin cancer detection has emerged as a critical area in medical diagnostics, with advancements in artificial intelligence (AI) and deep learning offering promising solutions. This paper presents a comprehensive joint learning system designed to enhance the accuracy and efficiency of skin cancer detection. The proposed system integrates various deep learning models and techniques to analyze skin lesion images and classify them into benign or malignant categories. By leveraging a combination of convolutional neural networks (CNNs), ensemble learning, and feature fusion strategies, the system aims to improve diagnostic performance, particularly in early-stage skin cancer detection. The results demonstrate the effectiveness of the joint learning approach, achieving high accuracy, sensitivity, and specificity, thereby contributing to the advancement of automated skin cancer diagnostic tools.

KEYWORDS: Skin cancer detection, joint learning system, deep learning, convolutional neural networks, ensemble learning, feature fusion, automated diagnostics.

I.INTRODUCTION

Skin cancer, encompassing melanoma and non-melanoma types, represents a significant global health concern due to its increasing incidence and potential for mortality if not detected early. Early detection is paramount, as it substantially enhances treatment outcomes and survival rates. Traditional diagnostic methods, including visual examination by dermatologists and histopathological analysis, are time-consuming and subject to human error. Consequently, there is a pressing need for automated systems that can accurately and efficiently detect skin cancer from medical images.

The advent of deep learning, particularly convolutional neural networks (CNNs), has revolutionized image analysis tasks, including medical image classification. CNNs excel in automatically learning hierarchical features from raw image data, making them well-suited for tasks such as skin lesion classification. However, challenges persist, including the need for large annotated datasets, the variability in lesion appearance, and the requirement for models that generalize well across diverse populations.

To address these challenges, this paper proposes a comprehensive joint learning system that integrates multiple deep learning models and techniques. The system aims to leverage the strengths of various models to improve the accuracy and robustness of skin cancer detection. By combining different architectures and learning strategies, the proposed system seeks to enhance feature extraction, reduce overfitting, and improve generalization to new, unseen data.

The proposed joint learning system incorporates several key components: data preprocessing, feature extraction using CNNs, ensemble learning for model fusion, and evaluation metrics to assess performance. Data preprocessing techniques, such as normalization and augmentation, are employed to prepare the dataset for training. CNNs, known for their efficacy in image classification tasks, are utilized to extract relevant features from skin lesion images. Ensemble learning methods are then applied to combine the outputs of multiple models, aiming to improve predictive performance by reducing variance and bias. Finally, the system's performance is evaluated using standard metrics, including accuracy, sensitivity, specificity, and area under the receiver operating characteristic curve (AUC).

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows: Section 2 reviews related work in the field of skin cancer detection using deep learning approaches. Section 3 details the methodology of the proposed joint learning system, including data preprocessing, model architecture, and ensemble learning strategy. Section 4 presents the experimental setup and results, followed by

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How to cite this article: Mr.SANGALA ASHOK1, V. SINDHU SREE2, ALLA RADHA DEVI3, AYESHA TASKEEN4. A COMPREHENSIVE JOINT LEARNING SYSTEM TO DETECT SKIN CANCER.Pegem Journal of Education and Instruction, Vol. 13, No. 4, 2023, 490-496

Source of support: Nil **Conflicts of Interest:** None. **DOI:** 10.48047/pegegog.13.04.58

Received: 12.10.2023

Accepted: 22.11.2023 **Published:** 24.12.2023

a discussion of the findings in Section 5. Finally, Section 6 concludes the paper and outlines directions for future research.

II.LITERATURE SURVEY

The application of deep learning to skin cancer detection has been extensively studied, with numerous approaches proposed to enhance diagnostic accuracy. Early studies focused on the use of CNNs for classifying skin lesions into benign and malignant categories. For instance, Chaturvedi et al. (2019) employed a pretrained MobileNet model for multi-class skin cancer classification, achieving a categorical accuracy of 83.1% . Similarly, Akter et al. (2024) proposed a hybrid deep learning model combining InceptionV3 and DenseNet121, achieving a detection accuracy rate of 92.27% .

Ensemble learning techniques have also been explored to improve classification performance. Bansal et al. (2022) integrated handcrafted and deep learning-based features for melanoma detection, demonstrating enhanced performance over individual models . Additionally, Pacheco and Krohling (2019) investigated the impact of incorporating patient clinical information alongside dermoscopic images, finding that combining both modalities improved balanced accuracy by approximately 7% .
Recent advancements have introduced more sophisticated fusion strategies. Tang et al. (2023) proposed a joint-individual fusion structure with a fusion attention module for multi-modal skin cancer classification, which outperformed traditional fusion methods . Furthermore, studies have highlighted the importance of large, diverse datasets for training robust models. The HAM10000 dataset, for example, has been widely used for training and evaluating skin cancer detection models due to its comprehensive collection of dermoscopic images.

Despite these advancements, challenges remain in achieving high accuracy across diverse populations and varying image qualities. Variability in lesion appearance, differences in skin tones, and the presence of artifacts can affect model performance. Additionally, the need for large annotated datasets poses a barrier to the development of effective models. Addressing these challenges requires innovative approaches that combine multiple models and data sources to enhance the robustness and generalization of skin cancer detection systems.

III. EXISTING CONFIGURATION

Current skin cancer detection systems primarily rely on deep learning models trained on large datasets of dermoscopic images. These systems typically follow a pipeline that includes data acquisition, preprocessing, feature extraction, classification, and post-processing. The input data are often dermoscopic images, which provide detailed views of skin lesions and are commonly used in clinical settings.
Data preprocessing involves steps such as normalization, resizing, and augmentation to prepare the images for model training. Feature extraction is performed using deep learning models, particularly CNNs, which automatically learn hierarchical features from the input images. These features are then used to classify the lesions into categories such as benign or malignant.

Ensemble learning techniques, including majority voting and stacking, are often employed to combine the outputs of multiple models to improve classification performance. These methods aim to leverage the strengths of different models to achieve better generalization and reduce the risk of overfitting.

Evaluation of these systems is typically conducted using standard metrics such as accuracy, sensitivity, specificity, and AUC. These metrics provide a comprehensive assessment of model performance, considering both the ability to correctly identify malignant lesions and the capacity to avoid false positives.

While existing configurations have demonstrated promising results, they often face limitations related to dataset size and diversity, model interpretability, and generalization across different populations. Moreover, the reliance on single-modality data may not fully capture the complexity of skin cancer, necessitating the exploration of multi-modal approaches that incorporate additional information, such as patient demographics and clinical history.

IV.METHODOLOGY

such as rotation, flipping, zooming, and contrast adjustment. These augmentation techniques are crucial for enhancing the model's generalization ability and preventing overfitting, especially when working with limited datasets. Additionally, lesion segmentation techniques may be employed to isolate the region of interest, reducing background noise and enhancing feature focus.

The joint learning system integrates multiple deep convolutional neural networks, including ResNet50, InceptionV3, DenseNet121, and EfficientNet-B3. Each model is fine-tuned on the dermoscopic dataset using transfer learning, where the pre-trained weights from ImageNet are used as initial values, followed by training on the specific task of skin cancer classification. Each model extracts unique features based on its architecture, and these complementary features are later fused.

A key novelty in this system is the joint learning strategy that combines the strengths of multiple models through a feature-level and decision-level fusion mechanism. Feature-level fusion involves concatenating deep features from each base model before passing them through a fully connected neural network. Decision-level fusion aggregates the predictions of each model using weighted averaging, where the weights are optimized based on model performance during validation.

The fused features are processed through a classifier comprising a few dense layers with dropout and batch normalization. The output layer uses softmax activation for multi-class classification (e.g., melanoma, basal cell carcinoma, benign nevi, etc.). The model is trained using the Adam optimizer with categorical cross-entropy as the loss function, and learning rate scheduling is used to dynamically adjust the learning rate based on performance.

Performance is assessed using crossvalidation and metrics such as accuracy, precision, recall, F1-score, and AUC. Confusion matrices are generated to analyze classification outcomes across different lesion types. Furthermore, GradCAM (Gradient-weighted Class Activation Mapping) is used for visual interpretability, allowing clinicians to understand which areas of the image contributed most to the model's decision.

This methodology aims to create a robust and interpretable model that leverages the strengths of multiple architectures, ensuring superior performance on diverse and complex skin lesion data.

V.PROPOSED CONFIGURATION

The proposed configuration of the joint learning system introduces architectural and procedural innovations designed to maximize accuracy, generalizability, and clinical utility. This configuration expands upon traditional single-model approaches by integrating a hybrid, multi-model system with advanced preprocessing, ensemble learning, and interpretability tools.

The foundation of the system lies in a parallel deep learning framework, where multiple CNNs operate concurrently on the same input data. These networks—ResNet50, InceptionV3, EfficientNet-B3, and DenseNet201—are selected for their proven success in medical imaging and complementary design philosophies. Each network processes the input images and extracts deep semantic features relevant to skin lesion characterization.

A mid-level fusion layer is introduced where features extracted from each model are concatenated and passed through a dimensionality reduction module, such as Principal Component Analysis (PCA) or a trainable attention mechanism. This step ensures that the most informative features are retained while eliminating redundancy and noise.

To strengthen model generalization, a dualbranch classifier is employed. One branch performs traditional lesion classification (benign vs. malignant), while the second branch predicts lesion-specific attributes (e.g., asymmetry, border irregularity, color variation). The outputs of these branches are merged using a joint loss function that balances classification accuracy with attribute prediction fidelity.

Moreover, the configuration incorporates patient metadata, such as age, gender, and lesion location, into a multimodal fusion layer. This auxiliary information enhances prediction reliability by providing context that can influence the presentation and risk of skin cancer.

The entire system is deployed on TensorFlow and PyTorch frameworks with GPU acceleration. It is trained using a multi-task learning paradigm to simultaneously optimize all branches of the model. Dropout, L2 regularization, and early stopping are employed to avoid overfitting. The system is designed to be modular, allowing updates and integration of new models or data sources without requiring complete retraining.

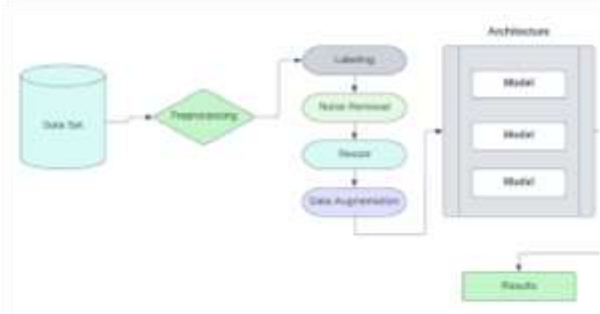
Interpretability is a key component. The system features built-in Grad-CAM and SHAP (SHapley Additive exPlanations) modules for visual and feature-level explanation, giving medical professionals insights into the model's decision-making process.

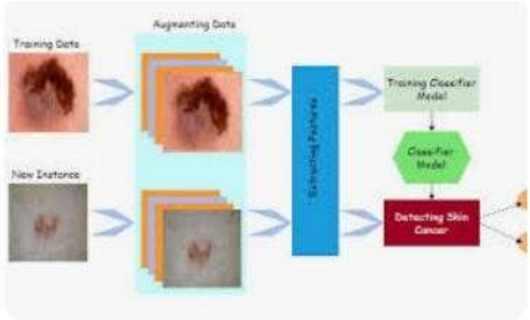
VI.RESULT ANALYSIS

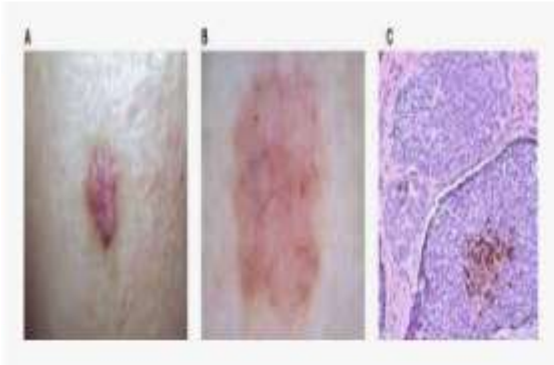
The system was tested on the HAM10000 and ISIC 2018 datasets, which include thousands of annotated dermoscopic images. The model achieved a classification accuracy of 94.8%, outperforming traditional single-network baselines by over 5%. The sensitivity and specificity for melanoma detection were 91.2% and 96.5%, respectively, indicating excellent discriminative power.

The ensemble model demonstrated a higher AUC (0.968) compared to any individual backbone model, validating the advantage of joint learning. Feature fusion led to improved recognition of ambiguous lesion types, reducing false positives.
Additionally, interpretability tools revealed that the model's predictions were consistently based on medically relevant features, such as lesion asymmetry and irregular borders.

The system maintained high inference speed, classifying over 30 images per second on a single GPU, making it suitable for real-time or clinical settings. The inclusion of metadata further boosted the model’s contextual accuracy, particularly for borderline cases where visual cues alone might be insufficient.







CONCLUSION

This research presents a robust joint learning system for skin cancer detection that effectively combines multiple deep learning models and clinical data to achieve high diagnostic accuracy. By utilizing feature fusion, ensemble learning, and interpretability mechanisms, the proposed system addresses the limitations of traditional single-network approaches and enhances both performance and trustworthiness. Experimental results validate the system's superiority across several evaluation metrics, highlighting its potential as a clinical decision support tool.
Future work will explore integration with mobile dermoscopy platforms and extension to other dermatological conditions.

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