eISSN 2581-8996
ONLINE
THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ADVANCED RESEARCH IN MULTIDISCIPLINARY SCIENCES (IJARMS)
A BI-ANNUAL, OPEN ACCESS, PEER REVIEWED (REFEREED) JOURNAL
Vol. 07, Issue 01, January 2024

Liver Cancer Detection, Prognostic Modeling, and Treatment Response Prediction using AI

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Received: 20 Jan 2024, Accepted: 28 Jan 2024, Published with Peer Reviewed on line: 31 Jan 2024

Abstract

Artificial intelligence (AI) is transforming the treatment of liver cancer by improving clinical decision-making, improving prognostic modeling, and boosting early detection. By using deep learning methods, big data analytics, and sophisticated machine learning algorithms, AI systems are able to examine complicated datasets, including genomic profiles, imaging modalities (e.g., MRI, CT), and electronic health records, to find minute patterns that could be signs of hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC) and other hepatic cancers in their early stages.

AI-driven technologies perform better in early detection than conventional diagnostic techniques by increasing sensitivity and specificity, which makes prompt intervention possible. AI combines clinical factors and multi-omics data for prognostic modeling, allowing for the development of tailored treatment plans by predicting disease progression, response to treatment, and survival outcomes with previously unheard-of accuracy.

Additionally, by offering evidence-based suggestions, lowering diagnostic uncertainty, and expediting interdisciplinary workflows, AI supports clinical decision-making. Notwithstanding these developments, issues including model interpretability, data heterogeneity, and ethical implications still exist. This abstract highlights the revolutionary potential of AI in the treatment of liver cancer, but it also emphasizes the necessity of thorough validation and clinical practice integration to fully reap its benefits.

Keywords- AI, Liver Cancer, Early Detection, Prognostic Modeling,

Introduction

Excessive extracellular matrix protein accumulation, particularly collagen, is a hallmark of liver fibrosis, which distorts the natural architecture of the liver and impairs liver function. Cirrhosis, which is a leading cause of morbidity and death globally, is brought on by advanced liver fibrosis (Addissouky, T. A et. Al., 2023).With 854,000 new cases and 810,000 fatalities annually, liver cancer ranks as the second most prevalent cause of cancer-related deaths worldwide and the fifth most common cancer overall, making up 7% of all cancers. (Galle, et al ., 2018). As a key organ for metabolism and detoxification, the liver is vulnerable to a variety of pathological insults, such as autoimmune diseases, excessive alcohol use, viral infections (including hepatitis B and C), and non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD) (Sharma, A., et al.,).

Hepatitis C (HCV)-related cirrhosis accounts for the majority of new cases (50% to 70%) of hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC), which has been on the rise in the United States for the past three decades. (White, D. L., et al., 2018).HCC is still linked to a poor prognosis in patients with an advanced disease upon diagnosis, even with recent advancements in therapeutic strategies.

The goal of managing HCC is "cancer control," which includes lowering mortality and enhancing patient quality of life. (Sato, M., et al., 2021). For better patient outcomes, HCC must be diagnosed early. It is advised to screen high-risk groups, such as those with a history of hepatitis B or C virus infection. Recent studies have examined the use of imaging methods including ultrasound and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) in conjunction with non-invasive biomarkers like glypican-3 (GPC3), des-gamma-carboxy prothrombin (DCP), and alpha-fetoprotein (AFP) for the early diagnosis of HCC. Imaging features (e.g., quantitative and qualitative features such as tumor size, volume, morphology, enhancement patterns, and vascular invasion data from MRI or CT), endogenous serum protein and/or nucleic acid quantification, circulating tumor-derived molecules, and genomic expression data are some of the categories of HCC biomarkers that have been proposed.

These can all be combined with clinical parameters to create a multi compartmental biomarker panel. (Mansur, A.,et al., (2023). One of the most revolutionary uses of artificial intelligence (AI) in the treatment of liver illnesses is the development of diagnostic imaging.

Conventional imaging techniques including computed tomography (CT), magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), and ultrasound (US) have long been the mainstay for identifying and tracking liver diseases. By visualizing the liver's structural and, to a lesser extent, functional features, these modalities make it possible to identify diseases such as cirrhosis, hepatic fibrosis, and hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC) (Sharma, A., Das etal.,).Various artificial intelligence (AI) technologies, especially deep learning and its variations like transformers and convolutional neural networks (CNNs), have demonstrated encouraging outcomes in multimodal data integration and medical picture analysis.

Transformer neural networks, or simply "transformers," offer greater versatility and performance in a variety of tasks, improving performance in medical image processing (e.g., predicting biomarkers from histopathology slides) and enabling better integration of multiple data types, even though CNNs initially emerged as the best tools for image processing. There are a number of classifications and risk ratings for assessing the complexity of laparoscopic liver resections in order to get beyond the limits that are frequently connected with doing these procedures.

The IWATE criteria are now the most widely used option in practice. Intraoperative complications can include trocar implantation, liver lobe mobilization, and tumor perforation from shear forces. An alternate technique was augmented reality (AR), which necessitates the employment of robotic liver surgical technology for guidance in difficult anatomical areas. In contrast to an open hepatectomy, the robotic system still has the drawbacks of a minimally invasive procedure, even with the better depth awareness offered by the 3D visualisation and the enhanced video resolution and magnification.

This chapter explores how AI is transforming these critical areas, drawing on evidence from recent open-access research, and discusses the opportunities and challenges ahead.

AI in Early Detection of Liver Cancer

The likelihood of curative treatments and a high overall survival rate are increased by early identification of HCC. The majority of HCC patients, however, receive their diagnosis at the intermediate to late stages, which drastically lowers their total survival rate. Recently, Lin et al. automated the classification of HCC differentiation using multiphoton microscopy and deep learning. Additionally, Li et al. used a combination of various convolutional neural network approaches and an extreme learning machine to grade the nuclei in HCC (Chen, M., et al., 2020).

Table 1: Types of AI models used for liver cancer diagnosis and management.

AI Model	Data Type	Advantages	Limitations	Example Applications	Ref.
Random Forest (RF)	Clinical Data	Excellent in high-dimensional, complex, and diverse feature patterns and tabular data	Works well only with tabular data	microarray-based cancer classification	Yang,et al., (2021)
Logistic Regression	Clinical Data, MR Imaging	Easier implementation and interpretation, -Comparatively simpler to train the model	Can be adapted to 2 classes categorical data problems but not a good fit for multiclass categorization	Gene selection for liver cancer prediction	Calderaro et al.,(2022)
Convolutional Neural Network (CNN)	MRI, CT Scan, Ultrasound	Works exceptionally for Image recognition and Computer Vision Tasks - Auto detection of features without human input.	Computationally heavy - Works poorly with high-resolution datasets - Large data requirement for model training.	Classification of liver lesions on CT scans	Kuzina, et al.,(2019)
Artificial Neural Network (ANN)	Genomic, Clinical, Pathology, Radiology, MR Imaging	Ideal for complex and nonlinear data - Can run parallelly on different data elements for faster processing.	Hardware intensive and needs long training time - Unexplainable pattern of the solution – 'black box.	Detecting tumor grade and liver masses	Li, D., et al.,(2021)
K-Mean Clustering	Clinical data, Pathology data	Relatively simpler implementation - Works on	Clusters everything including outliers and	Cluster detection from a diverse	Liu, Z., et al.,(2010)

		unlabeled dataset	noise in data - Inconsistent result when running on same dataset unless centroids are in fixed position.	dataset, feature annotations	

Ultrasound-Based Detection

One useful technique for characterizing localized liver lesions is contrast-enhanced ultrasonography (CEUS). Clinicians typically have to do a number of laborious activities during the CEUS examination, such as size measurements and analysis of enhanced characteristics while keeping an eye on tissue perfusion. According to several studies, CEUS can detect liver metastases with a sensitivity of up to 80% to 90%, which is equivalent to CECT and CEMRI. Additionally, investigations have indicated that CEUS is especially helpful for metastases smaller than 10 mm. A meta-analysis of 18 trials with 828 metastases found that the overall sensitivity of CEUS for metastasis diagnosis was 91% (95% CI: 87–95%) (Dietrich, et al.,2020).During multistep hepatocarcinogenesis, the inflow blood system, tumor sinusoids, and outflow blood system undergo significant changes. CEUS is a useful tool for illustrating the variations in hemodynamic perfusions among various HCCs. We created a deep learning (DL)-based Radiomics approach to improve CEUS interpretation. An new technology called DL-based Radiomics aims to support clinical decision making by identifying prognosis-related features in medical pictures that may not be visible to the human eye or traits that are defined by humans (Liu, F., et al ., 2020).

CT and MRI Applications

Higher resolution liver tumor identification is possible with CT and MRI, and AI has been used to take use of the vast information these modalities provide. With a true positive rate of 89% and a Dice similarity coefficient of 0.85, a CT-based DL method for automatic liver tumor detection and delineation, demonstrating accurate tumor segmentation.

Infiltrative hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC) on CT and MRI presents as a poorly defined, large mass with varying enhancement and satellite nodules in up to 52% of cases. On MRI, it may exhibit diffusion restriction, T2 hyperintensity, T1 hypointensity, and hypointensity in the hepatobiliary phase with hepatobiliary agents. In contrast-enhanced CT and MRI, portal vein tumor thrombosis appears as an enhancing thrombus near the main tumor, causing vein expansion. (Vernuccio, et al.,2021).

These developments indicate that AI can enhance radiologists' skills, decreasing the likelihood of overlooked diagnoses and facilitating prompt treatment.

Prognostic Modeling with AI

AI techniques for liver disease detection, prognosis, and treatment. One of the main characteristics of chronic liver illnesses is hepatic fibrosis, which can range in severity from mild fibrosis to decompensated cirrhosis and manifest differently in various people. In order to delay the progression of the disease, lower the risk of end-stage liver diseases like cancer, and lower mortality, omics technologies may be able to diagnose and treat early-stage fibrosis. Together, these two broad overarching categories of SLD—alcohol-associated liver

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disease (ALD) and metabolic dysfunction-associated steatotic liver disease (MASLD)—are the future causes of liver disease.

Predicting Recurrence and Survival

Particularly in the West, metabolic dysfunction-associated steatohepatitis is the HCC etiology that is expanding the fastest. Even after treating their initial relapse, many people will experience a second one, with a reported prevalence of 50% to 70% (Abdelhamed, et al., 2023). RFA, salvage liver transplantation, and repeat hepatic resection (rHR) are curative therapy options for recurrent HCC. The lack of donors, particularly in Asia, limits the number of liver transplants that may be performed. Therefore, rHR and RFA are the two main curative treatments for recurrent HCC (Zhong, et al., 2022). While patients with advanced disease may benefit from a variety of existing systemic medications, those with intermediate stages of the disease are the main candidates for transarterial chemoembolization (TACE). Unfortunately, individuals still experience recurrences even after receiving curative treatment. In addition, many patients' liver function is compromised by recurrent hepatectomy, RFA, and TACE therapies, which can result in liver failure or tumors that are resistant to systemic therapy and cause mortality (Llovet, et al., 2021).

Treatment Response Prediction

Monitoring the course of a patient's illness is essential for selecting the best treatments and organizing long-term care. Researching the efficacy of AI and machine learning in cancer treatment is crucial as these technologies develop in the medical field. (Mansur, et al.,(2023)

AI is improving the process of using biomarkers to predict treatment results for liver cancer. To assess how blood biomarkers such as AFP, ALBI grade, and circulating angiogenic factors predict the efficacy of lenvatinib in patients with incurable HCC, for instance, Hsu et al. created a random forest-based decision tree model. (Hsu, et al.,(2022).

Challenges and Limitations

AI has quickly taken over the domains of medical imaging, illness prognosis, and management automation in a number of diseases to the point that doctors are experts in their respective fields. It is now starting to spread into the diagnosis and treatment of liver cancer. Put something in brief by paraphrasing it. Radiologists and pathologists can diagnose liver cancer using AI algorithms, although some still have issues before being used in clinical settings. This also calls for the need for cancer diagnosis and management is the 'black box' attribute of these models. (Bakrania et al.,(2023). AI has the potential to improve patient classification and HCC identification, but its application in clinical settings is still uncommon. Standardization, thorough assessment using indicators like as patient outcomes and service quality, stakeholder involvement, and supervision are all necessary for the safe translation of DL models. (Calderaro, et al.,(2022)

Future Directions

Enhancing biomarker detection in liver cancer screening, diagnosis, and treatment is a promising use of AI and machine learning. To increase the precision of diagnosis and prognosis, a biomarker panel might be created by integrating multimodal biomarkers, such as imaging and lab data, utilizing machine learning and deep learning. (Mansur, et al.,(2023). An growing trend can be explained. AI and DL that can be interpreted (Sebastian, et al.,(2022). It is difficult to explain which input features influence decisions, like treatment recommendations, because of model opacity, which limits the practical application of AI despite its high performance in medical research. In the future, AI is predicted to have a clinical role in cancer therapy, aiding in faster diagnosis, customized medicines, and potential cures. Additionally, developments in AI will likely boost accessibility, improve survival rates, optimize treatment effectiveness, and decrease negative effects (Shao, et al.,(2022).

Conclusion

AI has the potential to revolutionize the treatment of liver cancer by improving clinical decision-making, improving prognostic modeling, and boosting early detection. AI promises a paradigm shift in how doctors manage this fatal illness, from increasing the sensitivity of imaging modalities to making treatment result predictions with previously unheard-of accuracy.

To reach its full potential, though, issues like interpretability, data restrictions, and regulatory barriers must be resolved. AI has the potential to usher in a new era of precision oncology, lowering the incidence of liver cancer and increasing patient survival globally, as research advances and interdisciplinary efforts increase.

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