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Interpretable Skin Cancer Detection via Optimized CNN Models for Smart Healthcare Solutions

Gajendra Kumar Deshmukh[1], Satyam Jadhav[2], Aditya Kadam[3], Sumit Aware[4], Twinkle Shukla[5,*]

Abstract

Skin cancer is a common and potentially life-threatening condition, highlighting the importance of reliable and efficient diagnostic techniques. Recently, convolutional neural networks (CNNs) have demonstrated significant potential in automating the classification of skin cancer using thermoscopic images. Despite these advancements, the lack of interpretability in these models poses a barrier to their widespread use in clinical settings. In this study, we propose an interpretable CNN architecture optimized for skin cancer classification within a smart healthcare system. Our proposed model leverages a combination of traditional CNN layers with attention mechanisms and feature visualization techniques to enhance interpretability. Through extensive experimentation and hyperparameter tuning, we optimize the architecture to achieve both high accuracy and interpretability. We train and evaluate the model on a large dataset of thermoscopic images, ensuring its robustness across different skin cancer types and variations. Furthermore, we integrate the optimized CNN model into a smart healthcare system, allowing for seamless integration into clinical workflows. The system offers real-time feedback to dermatologists, helping them make better decisions and enhancing the accuracy of their diagnoses. Moreover, the interpretable nature of our model enables clinicians to understand the underlying features driving classification decisions, fostering trust and acceptance. Our experimental results demonstrate superior performance compared to state-of-the-art methods, achieving high accuracy in skin cancer classification while providing meaningful insights into the decision-making process. Overall, our proposed approach represents a significant advancement toward the development of interpretable and effective tools for skin cancer diagnosis in smart healthcare systems.

Keywords: Skin cancer, healthcare, artificial intelligence, deep learning, OpenCV, RNN

INTRODUCTION

Skin cancer is one of the most prevalent types of cancer globally, with melanoma being the most aggressive form. Timely and precise diagnosis is essential for successful treatment and better patient outcomes. In recent years, advancements in artificial intelligence, particularly convolutional neural networks (CNNs), have shown promise in automating the classification of skin lesions from thermoscopic images. However, the adoption of these AI-based systems in clinical practice has been hindered by challenges related to interpretability and trustworthiness.

Interpretability is vital when using machine learning models in healthcare, as clinicians need clear decision-making processes to trust and comprehend diagnostic results. Although traditional CNNs are skilled at detecting intricate patterns in data, they often operate as black boxes, which can make it challenging for clinicians to understand their predictions. As a result, there is a growing demand for interpretable AI models that can provide insights into the underlying features driving classification decisions [1–3].

***Author for Correspondence**
Twinkle Shukla
E-mail: twinkleshukla44@gmail.com

[1–4]Student, Department of Information Technology, P.G. Moze College of Engineering, Pune, Maharashtra, India.
[5]Professor, Department of Information Technology, P.G. Moze College of Engineering, Pune, Maharashtra, India.

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In this context, we present a novel approach for skin cancer classification using an optimized convolutional neural network within the framework of a smart healthcare system. Our primary objective is to develop a model that not only achieves high accuracy in classification but also provides interpretable explanations for its decisions. By combining traditional CNN architecture with attention mechanisms and feature visualization techniques, we aim to enhance the transparency and trustworthiness of our model [4–6].

Furthermore, we recognize the importance of seamless integration into existing clinical workflows. Therefore, our proposed system is designed to provide real-time feedback to dermatologists, assisting them in decision-making processes. The interpretability of our model enables clinicians to understand the salient features contributing to each classification, facilitating collaboration between AI systems and healthcare professionals.

In this paper, we describe the architecture and optimization process of our proposed CNN model for skin cancer classification. We share experimental results that highlight its effectiveness in terms of both accuracy and seamless integration. Additionally, we discuss the implications of our approach for smart healthcare systems and its potential to improve diagnostic accuracy and patient care [8–10].

INDENTATIONS AND EQUATIONS

Convolution Operation

The convolution operation between an input image X and a filter W can be represented mathematically as:

Output feature map $Y[i.j] = (X * W)[i,j] = \sum_m \sum_n X[m,n].W\ [i-m, j-n]$

where i and j are the spatial dimensions of the output feature map, and m and n are the spatial dimensions of the filter W.

Activation Function

In CNNs, activation functions introduce non-linearity to the network. A commonly used activation function is the rectified linear unit (ReLU), defined as:

$\oint(x) = \max\ (O, x)$

where x is the input to the activation function.

Pooling Operation

Pooling layers downsample the feature maps obtained from convolutional layers. A commonly used pooling operation is max pooling, which extracts the maximum value from a local neighborhood. mathematically, max pooling can be represented as:

Output feature map $Y[i,j] = maxX[i * s + m, j * s + n]$

where s is the stride of the pooling operation, and m and n iterate over the pooling window.

Fully Connected Layer

In a fully connected layer, each neuron is connected to every neuron in the previous layer. The output of a fully connected layer can be computed as:

$Z = W\ .A_{prev} + b$

where W represents the weight matrix, A_{prev} is the output of the previous layer, and b is the bias vector.

SoftMax Function

In the final layer of a CNN used for classification, the SoftMax function is often employed to convert raw scores into class probabilities. The SoftMax function is defined as:

$$softmax(zi) = \frac{e^{zi}}{\sum_{j=1}^{K} e^{zj}}$$

where Zi is the raw score for class i and K is the total number of classes.

Skin Cancer Trends and Statistical Analysis

The global incidence of skin cancer has been steadily increasing, as shown in Figure 1, which highlights the trends in skin cancer risk (%) among males and females from 1982 to 2020. The figure underscores a consistently higher risk in males, peaking around 2012, before a slight decline in recent years. In contrast, females show a relatively stable yet gradually rising trend. These differences could be attributed to factors, such as occupational sun exposure, lifestyle habits, and biological variations. Understanding these trends is crucial for designing gender-specific interventions and raising awareness about skin cancer prevention and management (Figure 1).

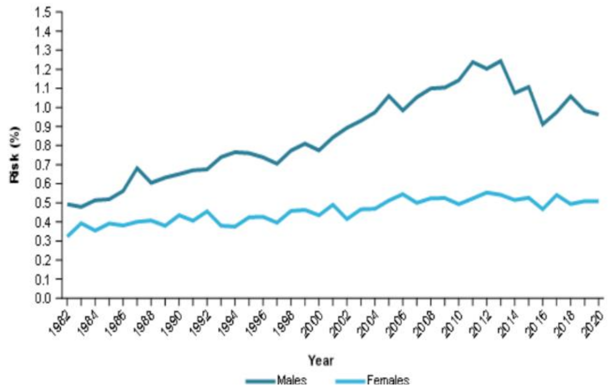

Figure 1. Trends in skin cancer risk (%) among males and females from 1982 to 2020.

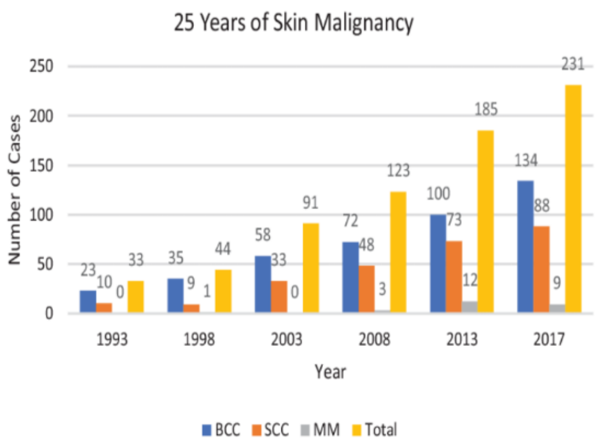

Figure 2. Rising trends in skin malignancy cases (1993–2017) by type and total count.

The chart in Figure 2 presents the distribution of skin malignancy cases over a span of 25 years, from 1993 to 2017. It highlights the rising incidence of different skin cancer types, including basal cell carcinoma (BCC), squamous cell carcinoma (SCC), and malignant melanoma (MM). Notably, the total number of cases has increased significantly, peaking in 2017 with 231 reported cases. This upward trend emphasizes the growing prevalence of skin malignancies and underscores the importance of early detection, public awareness, and improved preventive measures.

CONCLUSIONS

In summary, using convolutional neural networks (CNNs) for detecting skin cancer marks a breakthrough in the field of medical image analysis. Through the utilization of deep learning techniques, CNNs have demonstrated remarkable capabilities in accurately classifying skin lesions, thereby assisting in early detection and diagnosis of skin cancer. The inherent architecture of CNNs enables them to autonomously learn and extract pertinent features from dermatological images, enabling differentiation between malignant and benign lesions with a high degree of precision.

Moreover, the development of CNN-based skin cancer detection systems presents numerous advantages, including scalability, efficiency, and potential integration into clinical practice. These systems possess the capability to swiftly process large datasets, facilitating timely diagnosis and treatment decisions. Additionally, their non-invasive nature minimizes patient discomfort and reduces the necessity for invasive procedures.

Nevertheless, despite the promising outcomes achieved by CNNs in skin cancer detection, several challenges and limitations remain. Issues, such as dataset bias, variability in lesion appearance, and interpretability of model decisions necessitate further investigation and refinement. Furthermore, the deployment of CNN-based systems in real-world clinical settings mandates rigorous validation and regulatory approval to ensure reliability and safety.

In conclusion, while CNNs hold considerable promise in revolutionizing skin cancer detection, sustained research, collaboration, and innovation are imperative to maximize their potential impact on enhancing patient outcomes and alleviating the global burden of skin cancer.

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