International Journal of Computer Science and Engineering Survey (IJCSES), Vol.15, No.6, December 2024

ANEMIA DETECTION FROM EYES, PALM AND FINGERNAILS WITH MACHINE LEARNING MODELS

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ABSTRACT

This literature review provides a comprehensive examination of non-invasive methods for detecting anemia using advanced machine learning (ML) models, with a focus on analyzing images of hands, palms, and fingernails. Anemia, a prevalent global health issue, particularly affects vulnerable groups such as children and pregnant women. Traditional diagnostic methods, while accurate, are often invasive and less accessible in resource-limited settings, creating the need for alternative approaches. By synthesizing current research, this review explores various ML techniques, including Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs) and ensemble learning methods, assessing their accuracy and reliability in diagnosing anemia based on image analysis. A unique aspect of this research is the use of smartphone technology for capturing images, making the diagnostic process more accessible, user-friendly, and cost-effective. The findings underscore the promise of non-invasive ML-based approaches for detecting anemia, particularly in underserved populations, but also reveal significant gaps in current research. These include the need for larger, more diverse datasets and improved algorithms that can enhance diagnostic precision and adapt to real-world conditions. While existing models, ranging from conventional machine learning to more advanced neural networks, have shown considerable improvement, further development is necessary for effective real-time testing and application. By leveraging advancements in image processing and ML, this review highlights the potential for these technologies to offer timely medical interventions, improving health outcomes for millions affected by anemia worldwide.

KEYWORDS

Anemia, Non-invasive Methods, Machine Learning, Image Analysis, Convolutional Neural Networks, Smartphone Technology, Predictive Analytics, Healthcare Accessibility, Feature Extraction, Deep Learning.

1. INTRODUCTION

Anemia is not a disease; rather, it is a symptom of a disease state. It is a global public health problem that occurs in individuals, especially children younger than five years and pregnant women in developing countries. Nearly half of the world's population experiences anemia, as well as a huge number of presentations; mothers are one of the victims of anemia. The identification of anemia during its experimental stage among vulnerable populations can prevent that anemia from worsening into more severe conditions. To address anemia, the availability of an effective and productive method that allows for an independent and quick anemia test will indeed be a valuable tool. A fundamental methodology for the screening and prediction of anemia is indeed important because anemia is associated with evidence of impoverished physical and mental health status. It has been verified that anemia among women of childbearing age is a negative issue with respect to several types of indicators, such as a lack of nutrition, starvation, unavailability of appropriate nutrition, and limited blood loss. The screening of anemia also holds an important position during labor and postpartum illness. Traditional methods involve medical experts, specialized instruments, and a stringent laboratory setting to assess and predict the hematological amounts of hemoglobin, erythrocyte count, cell size or mean corpuscular volume, mean cell hemoglobin, mean cell hemoglobin concentration, hematocrit, and erythrocyte distribution width from films of peripheral blood or a complete peripheral blood count test on blood without hesitation. Although the assessment and model have already been created to predict anemia based on smartphone images and retinal fundus images. Diabetes has also been identified and quantified by exploiting indicators derived from retinal fundus images. Indeed, the outcomes, as established by the photographs, display reasonable performance when applied to measures of anemia or even diabetes, where the scale of the indication is binary. This research recognizes and predicts anemia-related values (such as hemoglobin, mean corpuscular volume, mean corpuscular hemoglobin, and mean corpuscular hemoglobin concentration) from images of the body. Moreover, it is expected that the objective of future research would include the investigation of the extraction of more values from the body's images and the expansion of the study to more populations.[6]

1.1. Global Significance of Anemia

Anemia is a condition characterized by a lack of hemoglobin, which causes the blood not to carry enough oxygen. This leads to severe fatigue and shortness of breath, among other symptoms including heart failure and organ damage. The condition seriously impacts pregnant women, children under five years old, and older adults. The global cost of anemia is roughly 500 billion per year from an estimated reduction in productivity, with healthcare consumption adding another significant amount. The global abundance in nature, humans, and economic impact, associated with the complexity of the factors that could contribute to the condition, suggests the urgency of a machine learning-based portable and affordable diagnostic tool. To assist us in creating a primary diagnostic indicator, we rely on image and signal processing algorithms that use machine learning models to extract meaningful features. The extraction of these models utilizes eyes, palms, and fingers for providing iron deficiency and achieving diagnostically reliable and painless measurements. We show that most of these machine learning models are generalizable, which means that, with minimal architecture adjustments, they can also be employed in the development and enhancement of new diagnostic tools for other important and costly diseases.[2]

1.2. Challenges of Traditional Diagnostic Methods

Traditional diagnostic methods for anemia, iron deficiency, and vitamin deficiencies necessitate laboratory analysis of blood specimens. The lack of blood sampler availability, inadequate transportation of blood samples, blood examination complexity, expensive tools, and insufficient medical assistance are only a few of the primary barriers affecting the effectiveness of blood examinations. A long waiting time for blood test results may also decrease the probability of vulnerable individuals at risk of anemia in prescreening. To carry out the exam, a highly qualified specialist is needed. Inexperienced handling of blood specimens and equipment can produce incorrect results, creating a considerable hazard for life. With limited access to medical care, a consumer-friendly and low-cost method accessible in remote areas for point-of-care anemia and vitamin deficiency diagnosis is desirable. Clinical checks of the mucosa, skin, conjunctiva, and palms are widely recognized as plain indicators of anemia, which is a severe clinical symptom. They cannot provide definitive diagnoses of anemia and deficiencies. The lack of precise diagnosis can postpone treatment and induce danger to pregnant women and newborns. In recent years, some studies have investigated exploiting a mobile telephone application to analyze anemia, but the diagnosis alone using only these scanners was not accurate because the employed light source and image preprocessing conditions are often not standardized. The color of the light sources and characteristics of the camera did not identify it in the environment. The outcome could not be trusted as a diagnostic tool. None of them use color information from different anatomical positions, and none of them considered information from intelligent technology for data analysis. In conclusion, there is a need for fast and dependable prescreening for anemia, iron deficiency, and vitamin deficiency that does not necessitate blood tests. [3]

1.3. Role of Machine Learning in Non-Invasive Anemia Detection

Comprehensive and early detection of anemia can improve the quality of our lives. Machine learning algorithms are widely used for such detections in a more convenient, accessible, and reliable way, where these models can learn from the data and help in making predictions [26][27][28][29][30][31]. The exploitation of these advanced algorithms in the medical field provides more accurate, user-friendly, and timely analyses [32][33][34][35][36]. The advent of big data and deep learning is strengthening these algorithms with new opportunities. This review specifically focuses on the convergence of these latest technologies, especially machine learning, on non-invasive and widely available concepts that could enrich the estimation of anemia and improve universal healthcare, even in resource-poor settings [1]. Artificial intelligence and machine learning techniques, with input from a variety of sensors, lead to the betterment of diagnoses through the smart screening of diseases. The cost and time involved in the initial diagnosis of anemia are high, often leading to a lack of tracking in underdeveloped nations. Expensive instruments and visiting a medical facility lead to a very low number of informed decisions. In order to address this severe lack of effective healthcare awareness, especially in young children and pregnant women, non-invasive and cost-effective techniques are urgently needed. Among the available non-invasive techniques designed and in progress for the detection of anemia, the concept of machine learning-based approaches provides the requisite immediacy, benefiting a large community and bringing available health hardware from instructor-trainer approaches up to the crowd-sharing level [2].

1.4. Use of mobile phone applications based on ML to detect anemia

Anemia may be detected non-invasively using the approach presented in this research [41]. Blood samples are traditionally drawn using needles for the hemoglobin test. To train the neural network-based method, we used camera pictures of patients' fingertips taken at various hemoglobin levels. The designed non-invasive gadget displays the hemoglobin level using the technique discussed before. Prior to the aforementioned process, the patient is asked to fill out a questionnaire and create an account within the mobile app. Lastly, a machine learning technique is used to extract the final output from both the mobile app and the device. Patients would be able to notice the first signs of anemia based on the results. In order to identify anemia using machine learning approaches, this study [42] concentrated on pallor analysis and utilized pictures of the conjunctiva of the eyes. The researchers in this study employed a dataset that is open to the public and consisted of 710 pictures of the eye's conjunctiva taken using a special device that filters out background light. Running on a Fast API server linked to a React Native frontend mobile app, the authors constructed a conjunctiva detection model and an anemia detection model using a combination of Convolutional Neural Networks, Logistic Regression, and the Gaussian Blur technique. With an average performance time of 50 s and a sensitivity of 90%, specificity of 95%, and accuracy of 92.50%, the created model may identify anemia by recording and processing a patient's conjunctiva using a smartphone app. The purpose of the research [43] was to find out how well the HealthTrender app on smartphones could detect anemia and how many people could use it.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Traditional vs. Non-Invasive Diagnostic Approaches

Anemia diagnosis has historically relied on invasive methods, primarily through blood tests that assess hemoglobin levels. Although these methods are accurate and widely used, they have significant drawbacks, particularly in resource-limited settings. Blood tests require specialized equipment, trained personnel, and pose risks associated with infection and the disposal of biohazardous waste. Moreover, they are costly and uncomfortable for patients, particularly for children and pregnant women, who are most vulnerable to anemia [1] [4] [8] [19] [24]. These limitations have driven the need for non-invasive and accessible diagnostic alternatives, particularly for low-resource environments. Recent advances in non-invasive methods for anemia detection aim to reduce the need for blood samples by utilizing visual cues from various parts of the body. A common approach leverages pallor detection from body areas such as the conjunctiva, fingernails, and palm, all of which show visible signs of anemia. This shift from invasive to non-invasive techniques is particularly important in underserved populations, where laboratory resources are often scarce. The transition toward machine learning (ML) and deep learning (DL)-based diagnostics has demonstrated significant potential to improve access and scalability, using commonly available tools like smartphones for image acquisition. [4] [6] [10] [24]

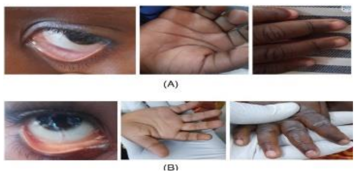

Image sources: Conjunctiva, finger nails and palms

2.2. Machine Learning in Healthcare Diagnostics

ML and DL have been transformative in various areas of healthcare diagnostics, including the detection of diseases like cancer, diabetes, and cardiovascular conditions. These technologies are now being applied to anemia detection through the analysis of medical images, capitalizing on ML models' ability to identify patterns and anomalies that may not be easily visible to the human eye. The most commonly used ML models in anemia detection are Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs), Support Vector Machines (SVMs), Naïve Bayes, k-Nearest Neighbors (k-NN), and Decision Trees [1] [11] [19] [21].

2.3. Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs)

CNNs, known for their proficiency in image classification, have been the most widely used and successful in anemia detection. CNNs are designed to automatically learn and extract hierarchical features from images, making them particularly suited for medical image analysis. One study [27] showed that CNN models, when trained on a dataset of conjunctiva, fingernail, and palm images, achieved an accuracy of 99.12% in detecting anemia. The CNN's ability to process high-dimensional visual data and automatically learn features without manual intervention makes it an ideal model for this application.

Another key contribution of CNNs is their ability to generalize across diverse populations and image conditions. For instance, in studies focusing on conjunctiva images, the color variations captured by CNNs directly correlate with hemoglobin levels, allowing for a more objective and reliable diagnosis compared to human visual inspection. The use of CNNs in detecting anemia through conjunctiva images has consistently yielded high accuracy and sensitivity, as reported by multiple studies [8] [10] [19] [21].

2.4. Support Vector Machines (SVMs)

Support Vector Machines, though less effective than CNNs in image-based tasks, have been applied to anemia detection with moderate success. SVMs work by finding a hyperplane that best separates different classes of data—in this case, anemic vs. non-anemic patients. In comparison to CNNs, SVMs are more reliant on feature engineering and are less suited to large-scale image classification tasks. However, studies like those conducted by [37] [38] have shown that SVMs can achieve accuracy rates around 95.34% when applied to smaller datasets with well-engineered features. While SVMs are effective in some cases, their performance is generally outclassed by more advanced DL techniques like CNNs when dealing with complex image datasets.[19] [23]

2.5. Naïve Bayes and Decision Trees

Naïve Bayes classifiers and Decision Trees have also been explored as alternatives for anemia detection. These models are particularly effective when working with small datasets, as they are simpler and less prone to overfitting compared to more complex models like CNNs. Studies such as this one [39] reported that Naïve Bayes models achieved 98.96% accuracy when applied to a dataset of 527 images of conjunctiva, palm, and fingernails. Similarly, Decision Trees, which provide interpretable decision-making paths, have achieved comparable results. However, these models require careful feature selection and are more sensitive to noisy or inconsistent data, which can reduce their effectiveness in real-world applications.

The three primary body parts used for non-invasive anemia detection—conjunctiva, fingernails, and palm—offer distinct advantages and challenges in terms of image acquisition and analysis. These areas are chosen due to their tendency to exhibit pallor in individuals with anemia, providing visual cues that can be captured and analyzed by ML models.

- Conjunctiva

The conjunctiva, a thin membrane that covers the white part of the eye, is a highly indicative area for anemia detection. Pale conjunctiva is a well-established clinical sign of anemia, as reduced hemoglobin levels directly impact its coloration. Numerous studies have shown that CNN models can accurately classify anemia using conjunctiva images, often yielding the highest accuracy among all body parts [22] [40]. The conjunctiva's rich visual information provides a strong basis for ML models to learn and detect anemia with minimal error. However, challenges remain in ensuring consistent image quality due to variations in lighting conditions and camera quality, which can introduce noise into the data.

-Fingernails and Palm

Fingernail and palm images have also been used in non-invasive anemia detection. Fingernails often show pallor or discoloration in anemic patients, and palms can exhibit reduced color intensity. Studies [37] [38] have shown that models trained on fingernail and palm images can achieve competitive accuracy levels. However, these areas tend to provide less distinct visual features compared to the conjunctiva, making ML models slightly less effective. Some models, like k-NN and SVMs, have been particularly effective in detecting anemia from palm and fingernail images, but their accuracy tends to be lower than CNNs applied to conjunctiva images [6] [8] [11] [19] [22] [24].

2.6. Evaluation Metrics

A common theme across the literature is the use of a standardized set of evaluation metrics to assess the performance of ML models in anemia detection. These metrics include accuracy, sensitivity (recall), specificity, precision, and F1-score. The highest reported accuracy for non-invasive anemia detection was achieved by a CNN model, with a reported 99.12% accuracy and 99.89% sensitivity [12]. In contrast, SVM models typically achieve around 95% accuracy, and Naïve Bayes and Decision Trees perform slightly lower but still above 98%.

CNN models also consistently outperform other techniques in terms of specificity and precision, making them particularly valuable for reducing false positives in anemia detection. In clinical settings, where the cost of false positives or false negatives can be high, the robustness of CNN models makes them the most reliable choice. However, simpler models like Naïve Bayes and Decision Trees still have their place in environments where computational resources are limited or where dataset sizes are small. Despite the promising results demonstrated by these models, several challenges remain. First, image quality is a significant issue. Variability in lighting conditions, camera resolution, and other factors can negatively impact the performance of ML models. Additionally, many studies have relied on relatively small datasets, which raises concerns about overfitting and the generalizability of the findings to larger, more diverse populations. Generalization across different demographic groups remains another concern, as most studies have been conducted within specific populations. Standardizing image acquisition protocols and increasing the diversity of datasets could help address these limitations [25].

3. DISCUSSION

In this work, we have compared state-of-the-art machine learning models for non-invasively detecting anemia from computer vision of under-eyelid palpebral conjunctiva images. We proposed redness and paleness as the visual defining pathological content in the collected research. The inherent diversity of the general RGB visual content is our primary goal in this research. Medical image processing is a fundamental problem of computer vision. Not only can ophthalmology benefit from our research, but also dermatology and mucosal image analysis. We are not aware of another research applying state-of-the-art computer vision methods to automatic non-invasive anemia detection from under eyelid palpebral conjunctiva images. Currently, in many parts of the world, anemia is diagnosed at local healthcare providers' offices during periodic check-ups. It includes drawing blood, sending it for testing, and waiting for the results, which can be cost- and resource-prohibitive, especially in resource-limited areas, for both the patient and the healthcare provider. Such business models are susceptible to misalignments of benefits and responsibilities, information asymmetry, and short-term and narrow perspectives—part of the socioeconomic disadvantage of anemia risk. By allowing self-detection, our research ideas have the potential to democratize access to basic anemia diagnosis with principles from state-of-the-art machine learning. Computer vision non-invasively detects pathology from natural visual content; photo and video are already FDA-approved, for example, finding growth in toddlers from an eye photo. This study presents a systematic comparison of various machine learning methodologies for anemia detection from palms, conjunctiva, and nails images. research indicates that commonly used models, such as ResNet50 and VGG19, may underperform on real-life data, while specially designed architectures can achieve F1 scores of up to 90%, even when developed by non-experts in medical signal processing [4] [10] [22].

The following section presents detailed performance metrics for various models across three datasets: palm images, eye images, and fingernail images, as shown in the accompanying tables.

3.1. Tables

TABLE 1. PALM METRICS

METHOD	ACCURACY	SENSITIVITY	PRECISION	F1 SCORE	DATASET
Convolutional Neural Network (CNN) [23]	99.92	99.98	99.79	99.89	2635 Images
Decision Tree (DT) [20]	95.62	97.92	98.60	98.01	Kaggle Anemia Dataset
AlexNet + Spatial Attention [5]	86.97	89.67	90.71	88.93	Mendeley Image
Proposed AMSA Model [22]	99.58	99.95	99.97	99.97	Real-time clinical trial data
Random Forest (RF) [7]	99.92	99.87	100.00	99.94	4260 from palm images

TABLE 2. CONJUNCTIVA METRICS

METHOD	ACCURACY	SENSITIVITY	PRECISION	F1 SCORE	AUC	DATASET
Decision tree [21]	97.32	98.49	93.67	96.02	97.70	710 images of the conjunctiva
ViT[3]	84.08	83.5	83.3	83.3	84.1	CP-AnemiC dataset includes 710 images

TABLE 3. FINGERNAILS METRICS

METHOD	ACCURACY	SENSITIVITY	PRECISION	F1 SCORE	DATASET
CNN [21]	98.33	97.44	97.64	97.54	non-anemic, anemic
KNN [21]	90.26	85	85	84	non-anemic, anemic

4. CONCLUSIONS

This research is promising, suggesting that a compact model including the compared techniques could be feasibly deployed on hospital servers. Furthermore, the methodology may extend beyond human applications to identify pathogens or hereditary diseases, offering accurate diagnostics at a reduced cost compared to specialized equipment. This research raises important questions about the application of deep learning in analyzing human-generated images captured from different fields. Future studies could Compare machine learning methodologies focused on palms, conjunctiva, and nails images with those analyzing label maps, utilizing shapes for enhanced accuracy. Additionally, practical data augmentation methods may prove more effective than adversarial techniques for anemia detection. The experiments summarized were driven by the goal of identifying anemia, highlighting the need for further research into images of palms, conjunctiva, and nails. By utilizing basic signal processing tools that complement color space representations in the analyzed research, we demonstrated significant performance improvements when comparing with state-of-the-art convolutional neural networks [11] [19] [25].

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