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Eye health AI: Deep Learning for Retinal Disease Classification from Fundus Images

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ABSTRACT

Accurate and timely prediction of multiple retinal diseases is the key to appropriate medical intervention and prevention of significant vision loss. These conditions typically develop silently and result in substantial impairment if they are not diagnosed early. In this paper, we present an innovative ensemble approach using Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs) to aid in early detection from fundus images. We make use of state-of-the-art image preprocessing techniques such as augmentation, enhancement, and segmentation to highlight essential features such as blood vessels, the optic nerve, and the macular region. EfficientNet, ResNet, and VGG are evaluated as CNN architectures to determine which models are the best fit for the ensemble. This strategy aims to achieve high precision, sensitivity, and specificity for disease detection. It is a useful strategy for efficient patient care and health care delivery. EyeHealth AI marks a new stage in ophthalmology artificial intelligence.

*Keywords:*Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs), Deep Learning, Early Disease Detection, Image Pre-Processing, Retinal

Fundus Images

I. **INTRODUCTION**

Retinal diseases such as diabetic retinopathy, agerelated macular degeneration, and glaucoma are the leading causes of global vision impairment and blindness. Early detection of these diseases and treatment during the early stages have been cited as significant factors in preserving vision and improving patient outcomes. However, traditional diagnostics are entirely based on the expertise of ophthalmologists, which relies on the availability of resources and subjective nature of manual evaluations. As a result, there is a growing demand for automated, accurate, and efficient diagnostic tools that can facilitate early detection and allow for widespread screening. Recent advancements in deep learning and computer vision have opened new avenues for the automated analysis of medical images. Convolutional neural networks (CNNs), in particular, have shown remarkable success in various medical imaging tasks, including the detection of abnormalities in fundus images. These networks are able to learn complex features directly from the data, potentially outperforming traditional image analysis techniques. In this paper, we present

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EyeHealth AI, an advanced deep learning framework designed to detect retinal diseases from fundus images. Our approach integrates state-of-the-art CNN architectures with a robust training pipeline to enhance diagnostic accuracy and reliability. We aim to address key challenges, including the variability in image quality and the need for high sensitivity and specificity in disease detection. By leveraging a large dataset of annotated fundus images, we demonstrate that EyeHealth AI can achieve significant improvements in detection performance compared to existing methodologies. The following sections will detail the methodology employed in developing EyeHealth AI, present the results of our evaluation, and discuss the implications of our findings for clinical practice and future research in retinal disease diagnosis. The increasing prevalence of

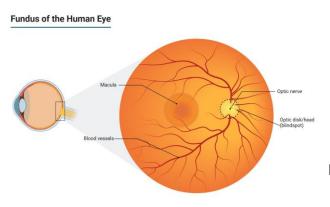


Fig. 1. Fundus of the Human Eye

retinal diseases, including diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma, and age-related macular degeneration, present a significant public health challenge worldwide. These conditions often develop silently and asymptomatically, leading to significant vision impairment and, in severe cases, irreversible blindness if not detected and treated promptly. Early detection and intervention are critical to preventing severe outcomes and improving patient quality of life. Despite advances in ophthalmology, many healthcare settings still rely on traditional diagnostic methods that can be time-consuming and prone to human errors. Advanced technologies, especially deep learning and AI, can perhaps transform the detection and diagnosis of retinal diseases. Using

CNNs and large datasets of retinal fundus images, EveHealth AI seeks to maximize the speed and accuracy in the detection of disease. Motivation Developing EyeHealth AI has been motivated based on the necessity of having a robust, scalable, and efficient solution that can assists ophthalmologists in clinical practice. With high-end image analysis the system can techniques, detect minute pathological changes that are sometimes missed by a human observer. This supports the timely clinical decision-making process but also helps design personalized treatment approaches for the needs of an individual patient. Also, AI-driven retinal disease detection aligns with the precision medicine movement towards data-driven insights for targeted interventions. By improving diagnostic accuracy, EyeHealth AI can contribute to better patient outcomes, reduce healthcare costs associated with latestage disease management, and enhance overall healthcare efficiency. EyeHealth AI lies in addressing the urgent need for advanced diagnostic tools in ophthalmology. By leveraging deep learning techniques to analyze retinal fundus images, the system aspires to improve early detection, optimize treatment strategies, and ultimately enhance patient care in the fight against retinal diseases.

I. LITERATURE REVIEW

Recent studies have heavily utilized deep learning (DL) and machine learning (ML) models for retinal disease classification, which has shown promising results. For example, [1] employed ResNet50 and InceptionV3 to capture complex features related to diabetic retinopathy, which achieved 96% accuracy. However, their approach was limited to the prediction of a single disease, restricting its broader clinical applicability. Similarly, [2] compared EfficientNetB0, VGG16, and ResNet152V2, finding that EfficientNetB0 achieved the highest accuracy of 98%, though constraints like limited features and reduced training epochs potentially affected model robustness. introduced [3] an automatic segmentation method for the field of view (FOV) using histogram and threshold techniques, effectively segmenting FOV areas across various image qualities, without notable limitations. In another approach, [4]utilized the VGG16

architecture to recognize eye-related conditions in low-quality images, achieving 87% accuracy, though its reliance on a limited number of disease classes constrained its wider applicability. [5] used CNN-based models such as MobileNetV3-Large and UNet. which achieved low computational complexity, but the lack of experiments of actual retinal fundus images restricted the real-world availability of their results. [6] discussed transformer-based models with ensemble methods, which achieved better performance in handling class imbalance without any reported limitations. Similarly, [7] applied a CNN model with batch normalization, which achieved high accuracy with low memory usage, though dependency on a single dataset could affect generalizability. [8] assessed multiple architectures, including ResNet50, VGG16, Xception, and EfficientNetB7, enhancing diagnostic accuracy through image enhancement techniques, though the focus was mainly on retinal disorders related to diabetes. [9] utilized transfer learning with RA-ResNet, demonstrating improved CNN performance but facing high computational costs. [10] developed an image quality enhancement algorithm with ResNet, along improving classification accuracy from 73% to 92%, though data availability issues posed challenges. Lastly, [11] applied Generative Adversarial Networks (GANs) for image enhancement and data augmentation, which resulted in 93% accuracy but high computational requirements and limited datasets proved to be practical challenges, whereas [12] incorporated image augmentation and noise reduction in CNNs, U-Net, and ResNet, with high performance but with the problemlike less interpretability and availability of labeled data.

III. PROPOSED SYSTEM

The proposed system for retinal disease detection begins with the acquisition of retinal fundus images. The datasets comprise images with varying resolutions and qualities, each annotated with labels corresponding to the presence of diseases, including diabetic retinopathy and glaucoma. The first stage involves comprehensive image pre-processing, which is essential for standardizing and enhancing the quality of input images to ensure robust feature

extraction. Key techniques employed in this phase include image enhancement techniques such as Contrast Limited Adaptive Histogram Equalization (CLAHE) are used to improve the contrast by working with local histograms, which helps in highlighting critical features in the image and data augmentation strategies (e.g., random rotations, horizontal and vertical flips, and brightness/contrast adjustments) to enhance the diversity of the training dataset and reduce the risk of overfitting. For segmentation, methods like Gaussian blur and adaptive thresholding are employed to isolate regions of interest. Gaussian blur helps to reduce noise and smooth the image, making it easier to focus on specific anatomical structures, such as the optic nerve and macula. Adaptive thresholding is then applied to dynamically adjust to local variations in intensity, enabling clearer delineation and enhancement of these areas, facilitating better analysis of the target structures.

The ensuing phase feeds pre-processed images into several pre-trained Convolutional Neural Networks to extract a set of features. The system applies transfer learning, exploiting established architectures like EfficientNet, ResNet, and VGG, selected based on their capacity for capturing the hidden patterns inherent in medical images. EfficientNet: Provides a fine balance of accuracy and speed due to the effective scaling. ResNet uses for creating deeper residual connections architectures, while VGG does better on extracting hierarchical features using deep layers of convolution. These outputs of the respective models of CNNs are further averaged out and learned in weighted voting or averaging the model so as to boost their performance of predictive by playing out their individual strength. The softmax activation function processes the outputs of the ensemble to provide efficient multi-label classification, effectively highlighting co-occurrences of various retinal diseases.

The final output of the system consists of a comprehensive list of diseases it predicts, associated with their respective confidence scores and formatted for better understanding by the clinicians. The above predictions are further refined by the application of post-processing techniques, including thresholding, which defines the presence of disease based on a predefined probability cutoff, and confidence calibration methods (e.g.. Platt scaling or isotonic regression) to ensure that the predicted probabilities reflect the true likelihood of disease occurrence. Moreover, it involves a feedback loop for continuous learning: misclassified cases and new annotated data are reintegrated into the training pipeline for periodic re-training of CNN models. Such an approach guarantees the up-to-date state of $\overset{A}{}$. system with continuously improving the performance in order to provide clinical decision support with real-time, accurate disease prediction leading to treatment.

TABLE I

Acronym	Full Name	
DR	Diabetic	
	Retinopathy	
NORMAL	Normal Retina	
MH	Media Haze	
ODC	Optic Disc	
	Retinopathy	
TSLN	Tessellation	
ARMD	Age-Related	
	Macular	
	Degeneration	
DN	Drusen	
MYA	Myopia	
BRVO	Branch Retinal Vein	
	Occulation	
CNV	Choroidal	
	Neovascularization	
RS	Retinitis	
ODE	Optic Disc Edema	
LS	Laser Scars	
CSR	Central Serous	
	Retinopathy	
HTR	Hypertensive	
	Retinopathy	

FULL FORMS OF CLASSES OF EYE DISEASES ^{b.}

ASR	Arteriosclerotic
	Retinopathy
CRS	Chorioretinitis
OTHER	Other Disease

IV. ADVANTAGES OF THE PROPOSED SYSTEM

EyeHealth AI comes with several key advantages that can significantly enhance the detection and management of retinal diseases:

High Accuracy and Reliability:

EyeHealth AI uses state-of-the-art deep learning algorithms to analyze fundus images, thereby leading to high accuracy in diagnosing various retinal conditions. This accuracy can help in reducing misdiagnosis and timely interventions.

Early Detection:

The system's capability to detect minor changes in retinal images can lead to the early detection of diseases, such as diabetic retinopathy and agerelated macular degeneration. Early diagnosis is essential for effective treatment and can prevent severe vision loss.

C. Improved Clinical Workflow:

EyeHealth AI can improve clinical workflows by automating the analysis of retinal images. This efficiency enables healthcare professionals to spend more time on patient care rather than manual image review, it boosts productivity overall.

D. Consistent Performance:

While human evaluation is prone to errors due to lack of concentration or bias, EyeHealth AI delivers uniform performance. It thus guarantees every patient the same quality of diagnosis.

E. Facilitating Clinical Decision-Making:

EyeHealth AI can act as a reliable decision-support tool for healthcare professionals. The system can offer actionable insights and recommendations to help clinicians make informed decisions according to each patient's requirements.

F. Cost Reduction for Healthcare:

Increased diagnosis accuracy and earlier intervention ability of EyeHealth AI can then be utilized to cut long-term healthcare costs in terms of treatments and complications for advanced stages of diseases.

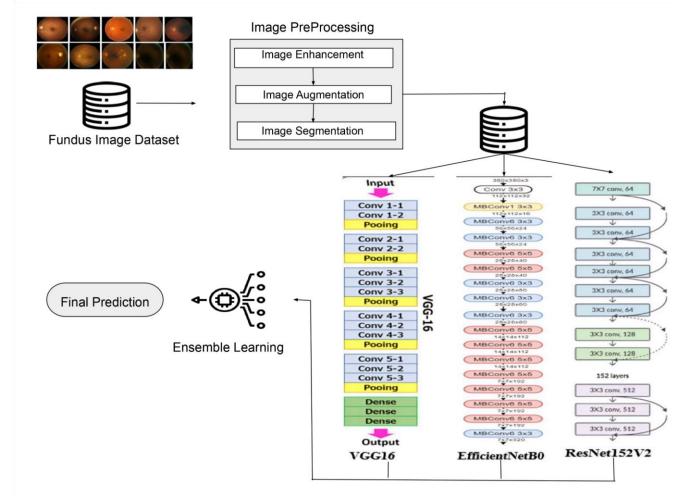


Fig. 2. Proposed model architecture

V. MATHEMATICAL MODEL

A. Fundus Image Representation

System: {X, Functions, Y}

Input: Let X be the input fundus image, represented as a 3D tensor of shape (*H*, *W*, *C*), where:

- *H* is the height (number of pixel rows),
- W is the width (number of pixel columns), C = 3 is the number of color channels (RGB).

Each image $I \in \mathbb{R}^{H \times W \times C}$, with each pixel $I_{i,j,k}$ representing the intensity at position (i,j) in the k-th channel (Red, Green, or Blue):

- $I_{i,j,1}$ represents the red intensity at pixel (i,j),
- $I_{i,j,2}$ represents the green intensity at pixel (i,j),
- $I_{i,j,3}$ represents the blue intensity at pixel (i,j).

Dataset Representation: A dataset D of N fundus images can be expressed as a collection of matrices: $I_{i,j}$: New intensity value of the pixel at position (i,j) $D = \{I(1), I(2), \dots, I(N)\}$

the dataset. The set D represents the collection of raw input fundus images for further processing in the CNN model.

B. Image Preprocessing

1) Image Enhancement Using CLAHE: System: {I, Func-

tions, I'

Input: Let I be the input fundus image, with intensity values $I_{i,j}$ at pixel position (i,j).

Functions: CLAHE (Contrast-Limited Adaptive Histogram Equalization).

Output Image Generation: The output image I' is generated through the following process:

$$I'_{i,j} = (L-1) \cdot \min\left(1, \frac{1}{h \cdot w} \sum_{k=0}^{k} \frac{I_{i,j}}{H'(k)}\right)$$

where:

• $I_{i,j}$: Intensity value of the pixel at position (i,j) in the input image.

after applying CLAHE.

where each image $I^{(n)} \in \mathbb{R}^{H \times W \times C}$ is the *n*-th image in \cdot H'(k): Clipped histogram of the local region (tile) around pixel (i,j) for intensity level k, where excess pixel counts are redistributed to prevent overamplification.

> • $h \cdot w$: Size of the local region (tile) around the pixel, with *h* as the tile height and *w* as the tile width.

Output: The output image I contains enhancled Ppixel intensity values that improve the contrast in thefundus image, making it more suitable forsubsequent analysis.2) Image Augmentation: System: { I , Functions, I }Input: Let $I \in \mathbb{R}^{H \times W \times C}$ be the enhanced fundusimage from the CLAHE step, where: H : Height, W : Width, C : Number of channels (grayscale $C = 1$ or RGB C $=$ $=$ 3).Functions: The augmented image I' is generatedusing an augmentation transformation function: $I'' = Taug(I', \theta)$ where T_{aug} is the augmentation parameters such as:Rotation: 1 $I''(x',y') = I'(xcos \theta rot - y sin \theta rot, xsin \theta rot, xsin \theta rot, xsin \theta rot$	$lif Iblurred(i,j) \ge Tadaptive(i,j)$ $I_{binary}(i,j) = 0$ if Iblurred(i,j) < Tadaptive(i,j) where $T_{adaptive}(i,j)$ is calculated using a local Gaussianweighted mean. Create a Strict Circular Mask:
Flipping: Horizontal Flip: $I'(x',y') = I'(H - x,y)$ Vertical Flip: $I''(x',y') = I'(x,W-y)$ Output: The augmented image $I'' \in \mathbb{R}^{H \times W \times C}$ is thet) final transformed image, ready for further processing in the deep learning model. 5) <i>3) Image Segmentation:</i> Convert to Grayscale: 6) <i>j</i>) = 0.2989 · $I(i,j,\text{red})$ +0.5870 · $I(i,j,\text{green})$ + 0.1140 · $I(i,j,\text{blue})$ This converts the RGB image into a single intensity value for each pixel	$F1 = W3 \cdot P1 + b3$ Dropout Layer: $F_2 = \text{Dropout}(F_1)$ Softmax Output: $Y = \text{softmax}(W_4 \cdot F_2 + b_4)$

 $D_2 = \text{MBConvBlock}(D_1)$ 3) Global Average Pooling: $P_1 = \text{GlobalAveragePooling2D}(D_2)$ 4) Fully Connected Layer (ReLU): $F_1 = \operatorname{ReLU}(W_2 \cdot P_1 + b_2)$ 5) Dropout Layer: $F_2 = \text{Dropout}(F_1)$ 6) Softmax Output: $Y = \operatorname{softmax}(W_3 \cdot F_2 + b_3)$ VII. 3) VGG16: • Input: Segmented image $X' = I_{seg}$ or $I_{global seg}$. • Operations: 1) Convolution + ReLU (13 Blocks): $D_1 = \text{ReLU}(W_1 * X' + b_1),$ $D_2 = \text{ReLU}(W_2 * D_1 + b_2)$ This operation is repeated for 13 blocks. 2) Max-Pooling (After Each Block): $P_1 = \text{MaxPooling2D}(D_2)$ 3) Fully Connected Layers (ReLU): $F_1 = \operatorname{ReLU}(W_3 \cdot \operatorname{Flatten}(P_1) + b_3),$ $F_2 = \operatorname{ReLU}(W_4 \cdot F_1 + b_4)$ 4) Dropout Layer: $F_3 = \text{Dropout}(F_2)$ 5) Softmax Output: $Y = \operatorname{softmax}(W_5 \cdot F_3 + b_5)$ D. Ensemble Model • Predictions from Base Models: VIII. $pred_{vgg} = VGG16(X), pred_{eff} = EfficientNetB0(X),$ $pred_{res} = ResNet152V2(X)$

- Ensemble Prediction: $Y = \frac{1}{2}$ (predvgg + predeff + predres)
- Final Class Label:

$$y(X) = \arg \max Y(j)$$

 $j \in \{1, 2, ..., 20\}$

VI.

EyeHealth AI is a revolutionary use of deep learning for retinal diseases detection from the Interpretability and Trust: images of fundus. By using the state-of-the-art algorithms, the system classifies a wide range of retinal diseases correctly, which supports the early diagnosis and takes proper medical action promptly. This approach significantly improves the ability to detect subtle changes in retinal images that indicate

disease progression, helping to reduce the risk of severe vision impairment. The accuracy and consistency of EyeHealth AI can bring great benefit in clinical work-flow while ensuring relevant information is always at hand to support decision making in treating specific patients. Thus, its contribution towards enhanced outcome in patient management and eye care quality stands high as an integrated application of AI in ophthalmology.

FUTURE SCOPE

In the immediate future, this EyeHealth AI holds significant opportunities for further development and clinical integration. Future versions could include multimodal data such as optical coherence tomography (OCT) scans, visual field tests, and demographic information of patients to give a more complete picture of a patient's eye health and yet allow for more accurate diagnoses. A bigger and wider dataset will make the system able to classify a wider variety of retinal diseases, thus providing a great tool for comprehensive eye examination. Further, integrating EyeHealth AI into telemedicine platforms could facilitate real-time monitoring of patients, especially in remote areas where specialist care is limited, enabling timely interventions and improving long-term patient outcomes through continuous engagement and monitoring.

CHALLENGES

While EyeHealth AI holds significant promise in the detection and management of retinal diseases, several challenges must be addressed to ensure its effective implementation and widespread adoption:

A. Data Quality and Diversity:

The performance of EyeHealth AI heavily depends on the quality and variety of the training dataset. Scarce datasets especially with underrepresentation from populations with diverse characteristics can compromise on the result or the model's generalization capability.

Healthcare providers need to have confidence in AI-based diagnoses so that model predictions become palatable. This will be possible only if the EyeHealth AI can explain the reasoning behind the predictions. This will help build trust among

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clinicians who will be using the model for judgment¹] Ricardo Leonardo, Joao Goncalves, Andre Carreiro, Beatriz in their clinical decisions.

C. Clinically Integrated With Workflows:

EyeHealth AI can be tough to integrate within the existing clinical workflow. Healthcare professiona^{[[42]} often resist embracing new technologies in the event such changes require profound modifications to prior established practices, or additional extensiv^[13] training.

D. Computational Requirements:

Deep models require a heavy amount of computing power, unavailable in many care settings, specifically in low-resourced environments. The challenge ahead is to mitigate the computational overload while maintaining as much accuracy. REFERENCES

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