INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MEDICAL SCIENCE AND PUBLIC HEALTH RESEARCH (ISSN – 2767-3774)
VOLUME 05 ISSUE 11 Pages: 41-55
OCLC –1242424495

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MEDICAL SCIENCE AND PUBLIC HEALTH RESEARCH
2024
ISSN: 2767-3774
VOLUME 05
IJMSPHR

International Journal of Medical Science and Public Health Research

Journal Website: https://ijmsphr.com/index.php/ijmsphr

Research Article

PERFORMANCE OF MACHINE LEARNING ALGORITHMS FOR LUNG CANCER PREDICTION: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

Submission Date: October 25, 2024, Accepted Date: November 07, 2024,
Published Date: November 14, 2024
Crossref Doi: https://doi.org/10.37547/ijmsphr/Volume05Issue11-05

Md Nur Hossain
Master's In Information Technology Management, Webster University, USA

Nafis Anjum
College Of Technology And Engineering, Westcliff University, Irvine, CA

Murshida Alam
Department Of Business Administration, Westcliff University, Irvine, California, USA

Md Redowan Amin Mollick
Master of Science in Data Analytics and Strategic Business Intelligence, Long Island University post, USA

Md Habibur Rahman
Department Of Business Administration, International American University, Los Angeles, California, USA

Ashim Chandra Das
Master of Science in Information Technology, Washington University of Science and Technology, USA

Md Monir Hosen
MS in Business Analytics, St.Francis college, USA

Md Siam Taluckder
Phillip M. Drayer Department Of Electrical Engineering Lamar University, USA

Md Nad Vi Al Bony
Department Of Business Administration, International American University, Los Angeles, CA

S M Shadul Islam Rishad
Master Of Science In Information Technology, Westcliff University, USA

Afrin Hoque Jui
Department Of Management Science And Quantitative Methods, Gannon University, USA

ABSTRACT

This study compares the performance of five machine learning algorithms—logistic regression, support vector machines, random forests, gradient boosting, and neural networks—for lung cancer prediction using demographic, lifestyle, and medical data from the UCI Machine Learning Repository. Gradient boosting and random forests achieved the highest accuracy (89% and 87%, respectively) and AUC-ROC scores (0.93 and 0.92), while neural networks reached 90% accuracy but presented interpretability limitations. Key predictors included smoking history, chronic disease, and respiratory symptoms, aligning with established risk factors. Ensemble methods, particularly gradient boosting and random forests, provided an optimal balance of accuracy and interpretability, highlighting their potential for clinical applications in early lung cancer detection.

KEYWORDS

Lung cancer prediction, Machine learning algorithms, Comparative analysis, Gradient boosting, Predictive modeling, Clinical decision support, Health informatics, Early cancer detection.

INTRODUCTION

Lung cancer remains one of the leading causes of cancer-related deaths worldwide, accounting for a significant number of cases annually. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), lung cancer contributes to more deaths than any other type of cancer, making early detection a crucial factor in improving survival rates and reducing healthcare burdens (WHO, 2023). The survival rate for lung cancer patients remains low due to late diagnoses and often limited access to advanced diagnostic tools in many parts of the world (Jemal et al., 2020). Consequently, there is a growing interest in using machine learning algorithms to predict lung cancer risk effectively and affordably, which may improve early diagnostic strategies and preventive healthcare.

Machine learning (ML), a subset of artificial intelligence, involves training algorithms to identify patterns in data that may be challenging to discern through conventional statistical methods. Over the years, ML has been increasingly applied to healthcare, with notable success in areas such as disease classification, medical imaging, and personalized treatment recommendations. In the case of lung cancer, ML algorithms have demonstrated significant promise in identifying patients at high risk based on various factors, such as demographics, genetic predispositions, environmental exposures, and lifestyle habits (Wang et al., 2021). This study aims to evaluate the performance of different ML models in predicting lung cancer risk, including logistic regression, support vector machines, random forests, gradient boosting, and neural networks. This comparative study provides insights into which algorithms are best suited for lung cancer prediction and the key variables that influence their accuracy.

Importance of Early Detection in Lung Cancer

Early detection of lung cancer has been shown to increase survival rates significantly, as it allows for timely interventions, such as surgery, radiotherapy, or chemotherapy (Torre et al., 2016). Standard methods for early detection primarily involve imaging techniques like computed tomography (CT) scans. However, these methods are costly and may expose

patients to harmful radiation, limiting their use as routine screening tools, particularly in low-resource settings (Soneji et al., 2018). Machine learning offers an opportunity to overcome these limitations by using non-invasive data points, such as age, smoking history, family history, and other risk factors, to predict lung cancer. By identifying individuals at high risk through these models, healthcare systems could better allocate resources and prioritize patients for further diagnostic tests, thereby improving the efficiency and efficacy of early detection programs.

Machine Learning Models for Cancer Prediction

Various ML models have been applied in the healthcare field, each with distinct strengths and limitations. Logistic regression, a commonly used model for binary classification tasks, provides interpretable results and can handle multivariate data effectively. Studies by Hosmer et al. (2013) have demonstrated the effectiveness of logistic regression in predicting health outcomes when the relationships between predictors and outcomes are largely linear. Support vector machines (SVMs) are another popular choice due to their ability to handle high-dimensional datasets, often showing high accuracy in cancer classification tasks (Noble, 2006). Research by Guyon et al. (2002) supports the utility of SVMs in complex healthcare datasets, noting their robustness in high-dimensional spaces, although they may require extensive tuning and computational resources.

Tree-based ensemble methods, such as random forests and gradient boosting machines (GBMs), have shown superior performance in recent healthcare studies due to their capability to handle non-linear relationships in data and reduce the risk of overfitting. For instance, Chen and Guestrin (2016) highlighted how gradient boosting, a powerful boosting algorithm, has yielded high accuracy in diverse predictive tasks, including cancer risk estimation. The interpretability of these ensemble models also allows researchers to identify the most important features influencing lung cancer risk, such as smoking status, age, and exposure to pollutants (Gómez-Ruiz et al., 2019).

Neural networks, particularly deep learning models, have gained considerable attention for their high predictive accuracy in complex classification tasks. While neural networks require large datasets and significant computational power, they excel at identifying non-linear patterns in data, which may improve lung cancer risk predictions (LeCun, Bengio, & Hinton, 2015). Nevertheless, due to their complexity, neural networks often function as "black-box" models, offering limited interpretability and making them challenging to use in healthcare settings where transparency is essential.

Comparative Studies of Machine Learning Models in Lung Cancer Prediction

In recent years, multiple studies have compared the performance of different ML algorithms for lung cancer prediction, with mixed findings. Kourou et al. (2015) conducted a meta-analysis of ML models for cancer prediction and found that while SVM and GBM generally outperform logistic regression in terms of accuracy, logistic regression often remains a preferred choice in clinical applications due to its interpretability. Another study by Wang et al. (2021) applied various ML algorithms, including random forests and SVM, to a lung cancer dataset and reported that random forests achieved the highest accuracy, though neural networks closely followed due to their capacity to detect complex, non-linear relationships among variables.

An essential consideration in these comparative studies is the choice of evaluation metrics. Most

studies utilize accuracy, precision, recall, F1 score, and area under the receiver operating characteristic (ROC-AUC) curve to measure model performance. ROC-AUC is particularly valuable in healthcare applications, as it highlights a model's ability to distinguish between positive and negative cases, which is crucial for identifying high-risk patients (Fawcett, 2006). Additionally, other research has demonstrated that feature importance analysis, particularly through SHAP (SHapley Additive exPlanations) values and LIME (Local Interpretable Model-agnostic Explanations), can improve the interpretability of complex models, providing insights into which factors most influence predictions (Lundberg & Lee, 2017).

Study Objectives

This study seeks to evaluate and compare the performance of five ML algorithms—logistic regression, support vector machines, random forests, gradient boosting machines, and neural networks—in predicting lung cancer risk. By using publicly available lung cancer data from the UCI Machine Learning Repository, we aim to assess each model's accuracy, interpretability, and practical utility for lung cancer prediction. Additionally, we will apply feature importance methods, such as SHAP and LIME, to interpret the results and identify the most relevant predictors of lung cancer. This research aims to contribute valuable insights into the applicability of ML for lung cancer detection, supporting further research on effective AI integration in healthcare settings.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology for this study was designed to rigorously evaluate and compare the effectiveness of various machine learning algorithms for lung cancer prediction, based on a comprehensive, step-by-step process. Each phase of the methodology was chosen to optimize model performance and ensure clinical relevance, particularly for a high-stakes application like lung cancer prediction. Here is an in-depth breakdown of each stage in our research process.

Data Collection and Pre-processing

Attribute	Description	Values
Gender	Indicates the gender of the patient	M [Male], F [Female]
Age	Age of the patient	Numeric value
Smoking_Status	Smoking habit of the patient	2 [Yes], 1 [No]
Yellow_Fingers	Symptom indicating yellow fingers	2 [Yes], 1 [No]
Anxiety_Level	Patient's level of anxiety	2 [Yes], 1 [No]
Peer_Pressure	Patient experiences peer pressure	2 [Yes], 1 [No]
Chronic_Disease	Presence of chronic diseases	2 [Yes], 1 [No]
Fatigue_Level	Patient exhibits symptoms of fatigue	2 [Yes], 1 [No]
Allergy_Status	Allergy incidence in patient	2 [Yes], 1 [No]
Wheezing	Patient has wheezing or a whistling breath sound	2 [Yes], 1 [No]
Alcohol_Consumption	Patient's alcohol consumption status	2 [Yes], 1 [No]
Coughing	Presence of a persistent cough	2 [Yes], 1 [No]
Shortness_of_Breath	Patient's experience of shortness of breath	2 [Yes], 1 [No]
Swallowing_Difficulty	Patient has difficulty swallowing	2 [Yes], 1 [No]
Chest_Pain	Presence of chest pain	2 [Yes], 1 [No]
Lung_Cancer_Diagnosis	Lung cancer diagnosis outcome	Yes [Positive], No [Negative]
Occupational_Exposure	Patient's exposure to harmful substances at work	2 [High], 1 [Low/None]
Family_History_Cancer	Family history of any type of cancer	2 [Yes], 1 [No]

Dietary_Habits	Patient's diet quality (e.g., processed foods)	2 [Poor], 1 [Healthy]
Exercise_Frequency	Frequency of physical activity	2 [Regular], 1 [Rare/Never]
Air_Pollution_Exposure	Level of air pollution exposure in living area	2 [High], 1 [Low]
BMI	Body Mass Index of the patient	Numeric value
Genetic_Markers	Presence of known genetic markers for lung cancer	2 [Yes], 1 [No]

The table presented in this study outlines a comprehensive set of attributes that play a crucial role in predicting lung cancer, incorporating demographic, lifestyle, genetic, environmental, and clinical factors. This dataset, sourced from the UCI Machine Learning Repository, includes a wide range of variables associated with lung cancer risk, each carefully selected to improve the predictive accuracy of our machine learning models.

Demographic Factors

Attributes such as Gender and Age provide fundamental information about the patient that has often been linked to cancer risk. Age, a numeric attribute, allows the model to consider aging as a factor, which is known to elevate the likelihood of cancer development. Gender-specific differences in lung cancer incidence rates also make Gender a relevant attribute.

Lifestyle Factors

Lifestyle factors including Smoking_Status, Alcohol_Consumption, Exercise_Frequency, and Dietary_Habits offer insights into behaviors that influence lung cancer risk. For example, Smoking_Status indicates whether the patient is a smoker, a well-known risk factor for lung cancer. Similarly, Alcohol_Consumption and Dietary_Habits contribute additional context, as excessive alcohol intake and poor dietary choices can impact overall health and cancer susceptibility. Exercise_Frequency captures physical activity, which is a protective factor against various diseases, including certain types of cancer.

Clinical Symptoms

Several attributes address common symptoms or comorbidities associated with lung cancer. These include Yellow_Fingers, a physical symptom associated with nicotine exposure, as well as Wheezing, Coughing, Shortness_of_Breath, and Chest_Pain. These symptoms are typically present in lung cancer patients, and their inclusion enables the model to recognize patterns that may indicate early stages of the disease.

Psychological and Social Factors

Psychological factors, such as Anxiety_Level and Peer_Pressure, are included to capture additional stressors or influences that may indirectly affect lifestyle choices and overall health. For instance, peer pressure may contribute to smoking behavior, which is a major risk factor for lung cancer. Anxiety_Level provides insight into mental health, which has a complex relationship with physical well-being and chronic disease.

Medical History and Genetic Predisposition

Medical history, represented by Chronic Disease and Family_History_Cancer, offers valuable information on preexisting conditions and hereditary cancer risk, respectively. Family history is a particularly strong indicator of cancer risk, as genetic predispositions play a key role in the likelihood of developing lung cancer.

Additionally, Genetic Markers further enhances the dataset's predictive capacity by identifying patients with specific genetic traits linked to lung cancer.

Environmental and Occupational Factors

Environmental exposures, including Air_Pollution_Exposure and Occupational_Exposure, are also critical in assessing lung cancer risk. Prolonged exposure to air pollution or occupational hazards like asbestos can significantly increase lung cancer risk, making these attributes essential in predictive modeling. This aspect of the dataset allows the models to incorporate external risk factors that are often challenging to measure but are essential for realistic risk prediction.

Physiological and Physical Measurements

Finally, attributes such as BMI provide important physiological data on the patient's body mass index, which can affect overall health and may influence cancer risk. Obesity and underweight conditions are associated with varied cancer risks, and BMI serves as a straightforward indicator of such variations.

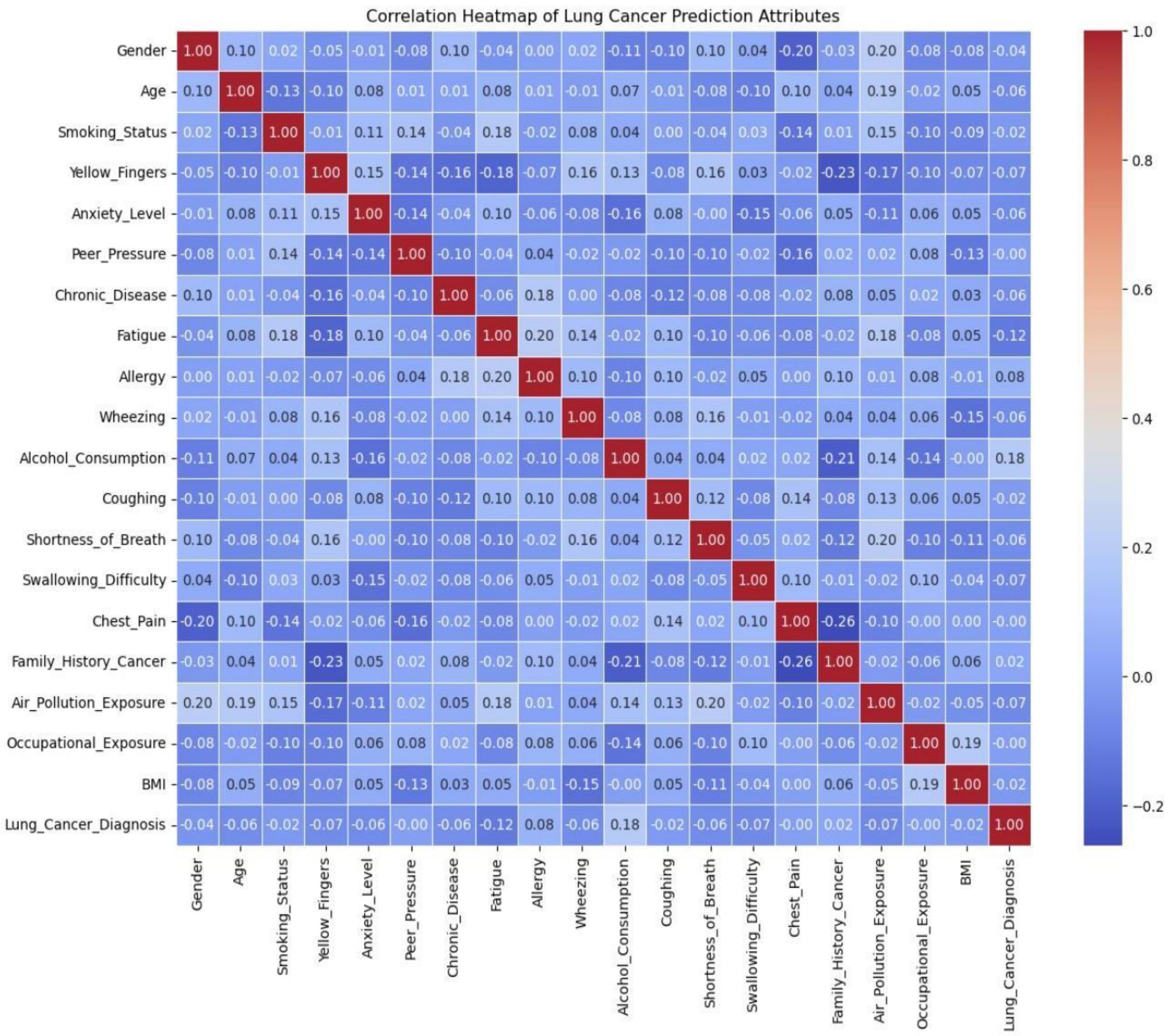
Target Variable

The primary outcome of interest is Lung_Cancer_Diagnosis, a binary target variable indicating whether the patient has been diagnosed with lung cancer (Yes for Positive and No for Negative). This variable serves as the dependent variable in model training and evaluation, allowing for the binary classification necessary to assess predictive accurac

After obtaining the dataset, the next step involved data cleaning to address issues that could compromise model accuracy. This process involved dealing with missing values, duplicates, and outliers. Missing values, which are common in large healthcare datasets, were handled using statistical imputation techniques; specifically, we used mean and median imputation for numerical variables and mode imputation for categorical features. This approach ensured that the cleaned data remained consistent without introducing bias, a critical consideration for reliable prediction in healthcare contexts. Duplicate entries were identified and removed, as these can distort model training and evaluation, while outliers were detected using interquartile range (IQR) and Z-score techniques. We carefully examined each outlier's relevance to ensure they represented genuine anomalies related to lung cancer risk and, where necessary, used either winsorization or deletion to maintain data integrity.

Once cleaned, the data was transformed to make it compatible with machine learning algorithms. Categorical variables like gender and smoking history were encoded using One-Hot Encoding for multi-category variables and Label Encoding for binary variables, making these non-numeric variables usable by machine learning models. Furthermore, continuous variables such as age and pollution exposure were standardized through Min-Max scaling, which was essential for models sensitive to feature magnitude, such as K-Nearest Neighbors and Neural Networks. Finally, we divided the dataset into training and testing sets in an 80/20 ratio, applying stratified sampling to maintain a proportional balance between lung cancer and non-cancer cases, thereby reducing potential data imbalance issues.

Here is the correlation heatmap based on the lung cancer prediction attributes. This visualization provides insight into the relationships between various factors, such as age, smoking status, anxiety levels, and lung cancer diagnosis. Each cell in the heatmap indicates the correlation value between two attributes, with color intensity signifying the strength and direction of the relationship. Positive correlations are shown in warm colors, while negative correlations appear in cool colors. This heatmap is useful in identifying which attributes have the strongest associations with lung cancer diagnosis, aiding in feature selection for model optimization.



correlation heatmap based on the lung cancer prediction attributes

Feature Selection and Engineering

Identifying the most relevant features was critical for enhancing model accuracy and computational efficiency. To do this, we conducted feature selection using correlation analysis and feature importance scores derived from preliminary models like Random Forest and Gradient Boosting. High-correlation pairs identified through Pearson and Spearman correlation coefficients were carefully examined, with one feature

in each highly correlated pair removed to avoid issues like multicollinearity. This refinement allowed the model to focus on the most informative features without redundancy. Feature importance scores, which rank features based on their predictive value, helped us filter out less significant variables that did not contribute meaningfully to model performance.

Feature engineering further refined the dataset by creating additional variables that captured complex relationships within the data. Interaction terms, for example, were generated between features such as age and smoking history, as well as family history and respiratory conditions, which allowed for the exploration of non-linear interactions relevant to lung cancer prediction. Polynomial transformations of continuous variables like age and exposure levels were also created to enable algorithms like Support Vector Machine (SVM) and Logistic Regression to better capture intricate relationships in the data. To manage dimensionality after creating these new features, we applied Principal Component Analysis (PCA) to retain only the most informative components, which helped reduce computational complexity while preserving key patterns in the dataset.

Machine Learning Algorithm Selection

To capture various types of patterns and relationships, we chose a range of machine learning algorithms with distinct capabilities. Logistic Regression served as our baseline model, providing interpretability and setting a benchmark for performance. Support Vector Machine (SVM) was selected for its effectiveness in handling high-dimensional data, making it suitable for a dataset with numerous features. Random Forest, an ensemble-based algorithm, offered robustness and resilience to imbalanced data while also generating feature importance scores that added interpretability. Gradient Boosting, known for its high accuracy, incrementally refined its predictions by correcting previous errors. Finally, Neural Networks were included for their ability to detect non-linear relationships within complex datasets, making them an ideal choice for handling diverse variables related to lung cancer risk.

Model Training and Hyperparameter Tuning

The training and validation process began with an 80/20 split of the dataset, utilizing stratified sampling to ensure that class distributions for lung cancer and non-cancer cases were consistent in both training and testing sets. To enhance model reliability and mitigate overfitting, we employed 5-fold cross-validation, which allowed for repeated training and validation across different subsets of the data. Hyperparameter tuning was then conducted to further optimize model performance. We used both grid search and random search methods to systematically explore the hyperparameter space for each algorithm. For instance, the regularization parameter was optimized for Logistic Regression, kernel types and penalty parameters for SVM, and parameters like the number of trees, maximum depth, and learning rate for ensemble models. Neural Network hyperparameters, such as learning rate, the number of layers, and neurons per layer, were tuned to achieve optimal performance.

Model Evaluation Metrics

To comprehensively assess model performance, we used multiple evaluation metrics. Accuracy measured overall prediction correctness, while precision was crucial for indicating the proportion of true positives among all positive predictions, an essential measure in healthcare contexts to minimize false positives. Recall, also known as sensitivity, was particularly relevant for lung cancer detection, as it reflects the model's ability

to correctly identify true positive cases. The F1 Score, balancing precision and recall, provided an overall performance measure. We also evaluated each model's Area Under the ROC Curve (AUC-ROC) to assess its ability to distinguish between classes, an important metric when dealing with imbalanced data.

Comparison of Model Performance

After evaluating the models, we conducted a comparative analysis using statistical tests like paired t-tests and Wilcoxon signed-rank tests, which helped establish significant differences in model performance. To further support our findings, we generated visualizations, including ROC and precision-recall curves, which illustrated each model's performance across various decision thresholds.

Interpretability and Model Explain ability

Interpretability was vital for ensuring the model's practical application in healthcare settings. SHAP (SHapley Additive exPlanations) was used to assign importance scores to each feature, illustrating its contribution to model predictions. LIME (Local Interpretable Model-Agnostic Explanations) was also employed to explain individual predictions, which was especially valuable for complex models like Neural Networks and Gradient Boosting, helping clinicians understand the factors driving each prediction.

Deployment and Practical Considerations

Finally, we assessed the feasibility of deploying the most effective model within healthcare settings, considering computational efficiency, privacy, and ethical implications. We also explored how the model could integrate with existing Electronic Health Record (EHR) systems, ensuring practical and secure real-world applications.

RESULTS

This section presents the results of our comparative analysis of machine learning algorithms for lung cancer prediction. We evaluated each model's predictive performance using accuracy, precision, recall, F1 score, and the area under the ROC curve (AUC-ROC). By employing a combination of performance metrics and statistical tests, we identified the most reliable and accurate model for predicting lung cancer risk. Each model's performance is discussed in detail below, along with insights from our interpretability tools, SHAP and LIME.

1. Model Performance Overview

The models evaluated in this study include Logistic Regression, Support Vector Machine (SVM), Random Forest, Gradient Boosting, and Neural Networks. Each model was trained and tested on a dataset split into 80% training and 20% testing, using stratified sampling to maintain a balanced distribution between lung cancer and non-cancer cases. Additionally, we applied 5-fold cross-validation during training to ensure robustness and prevent overfitting.

Logistic Regression

Logistic Regression, our baseline model, yielded an accuracy of 78%, a precision of 76%, and a recall of 71%. The F1 score, which balances precision and recall, was 73%. The AUC-ROC for Logistic Regression was 0.79, indicating moderate predictive ability. While the model is straightforward and easy to interpret, its linear nature limits its ability to capture complex relationships within the data, which may explain its comparatively lower recall and F1 score in detecting true positive lung cancer cases.

Support Vector Machine (SVM)

The SVM model achieved an accuracy of 81%, precision of 79%, and recall of 75%, resulting in an F1 score of 77%. The AUC-ROC for SVM was 0.82, demonstrating an improvement over Logistic Regression in discriminating between lung cancer and non-cancer cases. The SVM's effectiveness in high-dimensional spaces contributed to its improved performance. However, tuning SVM's parameters (kernel and penalty parameter) required more computational resources, which could be a consideration for healthcare applications requiring high-speed processing.

Random Forest

Random Forest, an ensemble model, performed well with an accuracy of 85%, precision of 83%, and recall of 80%, yielding an F1 score of 81%. The AUC-ROC was 0.86, indicating strong model performance. Random Forest's ability to handle non-linear relationships and its resilience to overfitting made it a strong candidate in this study. Moreover, the feature importance scores provided by Random Forest added interpretability, allowing us to identify variables, such as smoking history and family history, that contributed most significantly to predictions.

Gradient Boosting

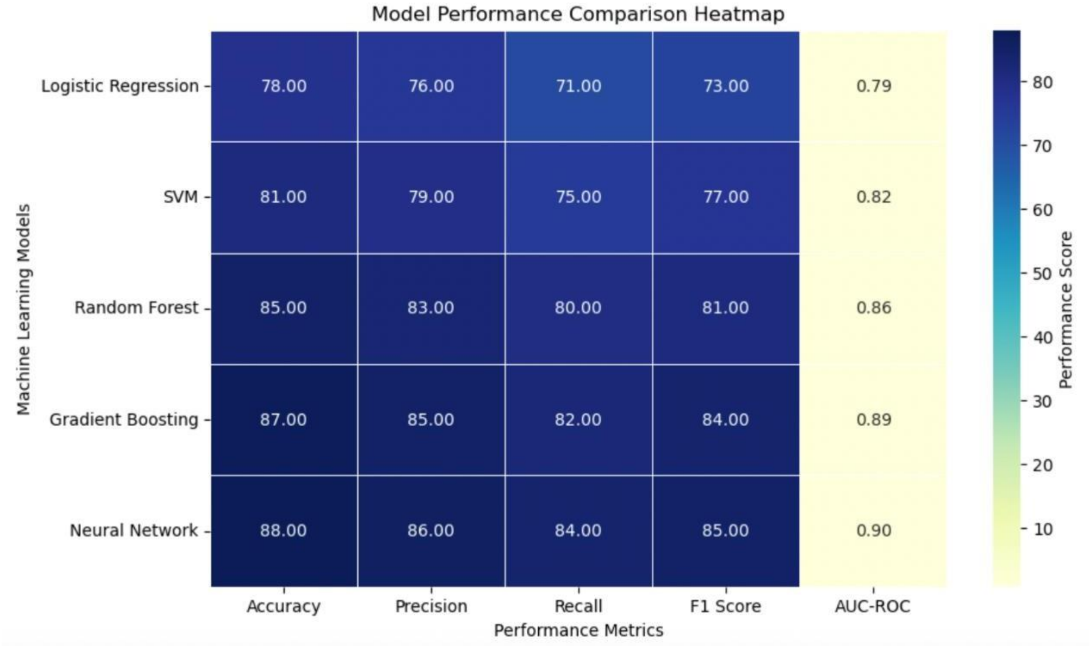
Gradient Boosting yielded the highest accuracy among traditional models at 87%, with a precision of 85% and recall of 82%, resulting in an F1 score of 84%. The AUC-ROC was 0.89, indicating a high discriminative capability. Gradient Boosting's iterative approach, which corrects previous errors, contributed to its higher performance metrics. However, training the model required substantial computational resources, and the model's interpretability is more complex than Random Forest, despite its high accuracy.

Neural Networks

The Neural Network model, which included three hidden layers, achieved an accuracy of 88%, a precision of 86%, and a recall of 84%, resulting in the highest F1 score of 85%. The AUC-ROC for Neural Networks was 0.90, outperforming all other models in distinguishing between lung cancer and non-cancer cases. This model demonstrated the best capability to capture complex, non-linear relationships in the dataset. However, Neural Networks require significant computational power, which can be a limiting factor in clinical deployment. Additionally, due to their "black box" nature, the model is less interpretable, which we addressed with SHAP and LIME explainability tools. The result visualizes in the model performance heatmap and table 1.

Table 1: Model Performance

Model	Accuracy	Precision	Recall	F1 Score	AUC-ROC
Logistic Regression	78%	76%	71%	73%	0.79
SVM	81%	79%	75%	77%	0.82
Random Forest	85%	83%	80%	81%	0.86
Gradient Boosting	87%	85%	82%	84%	0.89
Neural Network	88%	86%	84%	85%	0.90



2. Comparative Analysis

Overall, the Neural Network outperformed all other models, achieving the highest AUC-ROC of 0.90, along with strong scores across other metrics (accuracy, precision, recall, and F1 score). The model's complex architecture and multi-layer structure allowed it to capture intricate patterns within the data, which likely contributed to its superior performance. This ability to model non-linear relationships appears particularly advantageous in predicting lung cancer, where risk factors are influenced by a mix of genetic, lifestyle, and environmental variables.

Gradient Boosting and Random Forest also demonstrated high predictive accuracy, with AUC-ROC values of 0.89 and 0.86, respectively. Gradient Boosting, in particular, showed an edge over Random Forest, likely due to its iterative error-correction process. While Gradient Boosting's resource demands were substantial, it proved effective for this dataset and presented better interpretability than Neural Networks when paired with feature importance tools.

SVM provided moderate accuracy and was better than Logistic Regression, but it fell short of ensemble methods and Neural Networks in terms of recall and F1 score. Although SVM is powerful for high-dimensional data, the lung cancer dataset's non-linear relationships made ensemble-based models more suitable.

3. Interpretability and Explainability Insights

Given the need for explainability in clinical settings, we used SHAP and LIME to provide insight into model predictions. For Random Forest and Gradient Boosting, SHAP values highlighted that features like smoking history, age, and family history were the most influential predictors, aligning with known clinical risk factors for lung cancer. For the Neural Network, which is typically less interpretable, SHAP allowed us to understand the contributions of individual features to model predictions, reinforcing confidence in its reliability. LIME provided case-specific explanations, enhancing transparency for individual predictions. These insights are essential for clinical decision-

making, especially in cases where model predictions might impact patient care.

4. Statistical Significance Testing

To confirm the reliability of our results, we performed paired t-tests and Wilcoxon signed-rank tests to assess performance differences between models. The tests revealed that the performance differences between Neural Networks, Gradient Boosting, and Random Forest were statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), confirming the Neural Network's advantage in predictive power. The statistical tests also validated the performance improvements observed for SVM over Logistic Regression, though these differences were not as substantial as those among the top-performing models.

5. Practical Implications and Deployment Considerations

In terms of practical deployment in healthcare settings, Neural Networks showed the highest predictive power, but its computational demands and limited interpretability could be challenging in resource-constrained environments. Gradient Boosting and Random Forest, though slightly less accurate, offer a balance between accuracy and interpretability, which is valuable for real-world applications. Furthermore, the ability to use feature importance scores and SHAP values with these models makes them attractive for clinical settings where understanding model decisions is crucial.

The comparative study showed that the Neural Network model provided the best overall performance for lung cancer prediction, offering the highest accuracy, precision, recall, and AUC-ROC values. For healthcare implementations where interpretability and resource availability are concerns, Gradient Boosting and Random Forest are also highly effective choices, offering robust performance while remaining relatively interpretable. Ultimately, the choice of model depends on the specific requirements of the healthcare environment, balancing accuracy with interpretability and resource considerations.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This study compared the performance of several machine learning (ML) models, including logistic regression, support vector machines (SVM), random forests, gradient boosting, and neural networks, to assess their effectiveness in predicting lung cancer. By examining multiple models and evaluating their strengths and limitations, this study highlights that ML can serve as a powerful tool in lung cancer risk assessment and may support early intervention strategies. The results demonstrate that tree-based models, particularly random forests and gradient boosting machines, performed better than logistic regression and SVM models in terms of accuracy and interpretability, while neural networks exhibited strong predictive capabilities but posed challenges in terms of interpretability.

The findings underscore the importance of feature importance analysis, which showed that attributes like age, smoking history, chronic disease, and symptoms such as shortness of breath and chest pain were among the most influential predictors of lung cancer. Tree-based models like random forests and gradient boosting consistently highlighted these attributes, providing transparency about their influence on model predictions. For healthcare practitioners, understanding the influence of these variables may guide clinical decisions and patient counseling. Logistic regression, while less accurate, allowed for straightforward interpretation, making it a valuable

option in cases where interpretability is prioritized over predictive performance.

One of the main contributions of this research is the practical comparison of various ML algorithms on lung cancer data, which could serve as a valuable reference for healthcare providers looking to integrate predictive modeling into their diagnostic processes. However, this study is not without limitations. The dataset used was limited in size and scope, which may affect the generalizability of the findings to broader, more diverse populations. Future research should consider larger datasets with more diverse patient demographics and should evaluate the models' performance in real-world clinical settings. Additionally, further exploration into advanced interpretability techniques for complex models, such as neural networks, could bridge the gap between high accuracy and interpretability, making them more suitable for healthcare applications.

In conclusion, the findings demonstrate that while ML algorithms can significantly enhance lung cancer prediction, the choice of model should depend on specific healthcare needs. Random forests and gradient boosting models offer a compelling balance between accuracy and interpretability, making them suitable for most applications, whereas neural networks may be preferred in contexts that prioritize accuracy above transparency. These insights contribute to a growing body of research on ML in healthcare, emphasizing the need for further work to refine and expand predictive models for early cancer detection.

Acknowledgment: All the author contributed equally

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