



**International Journal of
Applied Data Science in Engineering and Health**
<https://ijadseh.com>



Artificial Intelligence in Radiology: Concepts and Applications

Fatemeh Hosseinabadi¹, Younes Ghasemi²

¹ Assistant Professor of Radiology, Zahedan University of medical Sciences, Iran

² Islamic Azad University, Tehran Medical Branch, Tehran, Iran (Email: Younes.ghasemi24@gmail.com)

Received date: May 23, 2025; Accepted date: June 16, 2025

Abstract

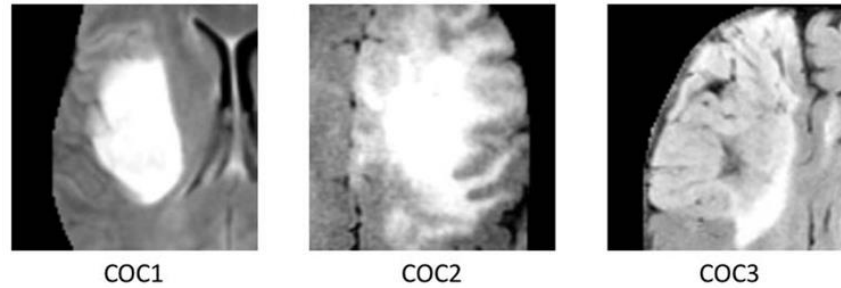
Artificial Intelligence (AI) is rapidly transforming radiology by enhancing diagnostic accuracy, streamlining workflows, and enabling data-driven decision-making. As imaging volumes grow and clinical demands increase, AI tools are becoming integral to modern radiological practice. In this paper, we review the core concepts of AI—including machine learning, deep learning, and image preprocessing—and their relevance to radiology. We highlight key clinical applications across modalities such as X-ray, CT, and MRI, covering tasks like classification, segmentation, detection, and image enhancement. The paper also discusses current challenges and future directions, with a focus on explainable AI, federated learning, and clinical integration.

Keywords: Radiology; MRI; CT; Artificial Intelligence; Deep Learning

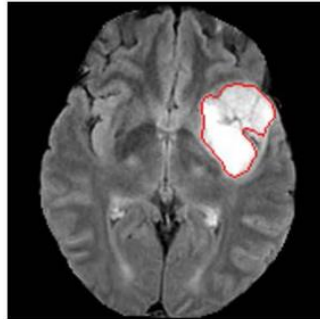
Introduction

Radiology has undergone transformative changes over the past century, evolving from simple X-ray imaging to highly sophisticated, multi-modality platforms such as Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI), Computed Tomography (CT), Positron Emission Tomography (PET), and Ultrasound. These modalities generate vast amounts of visual and quantitative data, demanding advanced tools for interpretation, management, and clinical decision-making. In this context, Artificial Intelligence (AI), particularly machine learning (ML) and deep learning (DL), has emerged as a powerful paradigm capable of revolutionizing radiological practice by automating image analysis, enhancing diagnostic accuracy, and streamlining workflows.

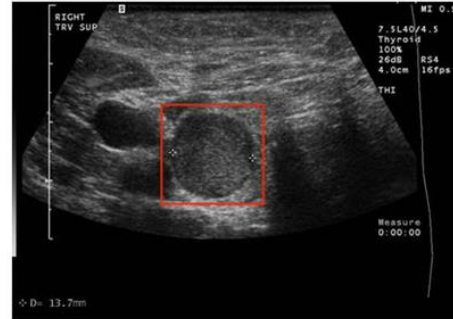
AI in radiology is not merely an auxiliary tool but is increasingly being seen as a co-pilot to radiologists, enabling faster and more reliable interpretation of images, triaging of urgent cases, and reduction of diagnostic errors [1]. Early successes in tasks such as lung nodule detection, fracture identification, and brain tumor segmentation have paved the way for a wide array of applications across various imaging modalities. Moreover, AI models are now being developed for more advanced functions including radiogenomics, predictive analytics, and treatment planning—ushering in a new era of personalized and precision medicine [2,3].



A. Classification



B. Segmentation



C. Detection

Figure 1 Examples of deep neural network applications to radiology: (A) a classification model using convolutional neural networks (CNNs) to differentiate genomic subtypes (clusters of clusters) of lower-grade gliomas in MRI scans; (B) automated segmentation of low-grade glioma tumors in MRI; and (C) detection of thyroid nodules in ultrasound images [4].

The conceptual foundation of AI in radiology encompasses several key techniques: supervised and unsupervised learning, convolutional neural networks (CNNs), transfer learning, attention mechanisms, and explainable AI (XAI). These methods have been adapted to handle radiological data with high dimensionality, noise, and heterogeneity. Despite its promise, AI in radiology faces several challenges, including algorithmic bias, limited generalizability across populations and imaging devices, regulatory hurdles, and the need for explainable decisions. Therefore, a comprehensive understanding of the core AI concepts, practical applications, and translational barriers is essential for clinicians, data scientists, and healthcare policymakers alike.

This review aims to provide a narrow overview of the current landscape of AI applications in radiology. It covers fundamental concepts, highlights key clinical applications across imaging modalities, explores integration into clinical practice, and discusses the major challenges and future directions for research and deployment. By doing so, this paper seeks to bridge the gap between technological innovation and practical implementation in radiological practice.

AI in Radiology

Artificial Intelligence in radiology is grounded in a series of computational and mathematical principles that enable machines to learn patterns from imaging data and make diagnostic or prognostic inferences. This section introduces the foundational concepts of AI that underpin current and emerging radiological applications, including machine learning paradigms, deep learning architectures, imaging data types, and essential data preprocessing techniques.

Machine Learning (ML) and Supervised Learning

Machine Learning refers to algorithms that learn from data and improve over time without being explicitly programmed. In radiology, supervised learning is the most commonly used paradigm, where models are trained on labeled datasets—such as annotated MRI or CT scans—to classify abnormalities, predict outcomes, or segment anatomical structures. Algorithms such as support vector machines (SVM), random forests (RF), k-nearest neighbors (KNN), and logistic regression have historically been used for structured data extracted from images (e.g., radiomic features).

Deep Learning and Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs)

Deep learning, a subset of machine learning, employs artificial neural networks with many layers to automatically learn hierarchical representations from raw data. The most widely adopted deep learning architecture in radiology is the Convolutional Neural Network (CNN), which excels at identifying spatial patterns in images. CNNs learn filters (or kernels) that extract features such as edges, textures, and shapes—making them ideal for tasks such as disease classification, lesion detection, and organ segmentation. Advanced CNN architectures, including ResNet [5], DenseNet [6], and EfficientNet [7], are frequently used in medical imaging.

Transfer Learning and Pretrained Models

Due to the limited size of labeled medical datasets, transfer learning is a critical strategy. It involves leveraging models pre-trained on large datasets (such as ImageNet) and fine-tuning them on domain-specific radiology tasks. This approach significantly reduces training time and improves model performance, especially when high-quality annotations are scarce. Pretrained models can also be adapted to different imaging modalities or diseases with minimal re-training.

Data Modalities in Radiology

Radiology encompasses a wide range of imaging modalities, each offering unique anatomical and functional insights that influence how Artificial Intelligence (AI) models are designed and applied. X-ray imaging is the most widely used modality, providing fast, low-cost, two-dimensional views often used in chest, bone, and dental assessments. Computed Tomography (CT) offers cross-sectional, three-dimensional images with high spatial resolution, making it invaluable for trauma, oncology, and vascular evaluations. Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) provides superior soft tissue contrast and functional imaging capabilities, particularly useful in neuroimaging, musculoskeletal assessments, and tumor characterization. Ultrasound delivers real-time imaging using sound waves and is widely applied in obstetrics, cardiology, and abdominal exams, though it can be operator-dependent. Positron Emission Tomography (PET) and Single Photon Emission Computed Tomography (SPECT) offer metabolic and molecular imaging, often fused with CT or MRI for anatomical context. Each modality presents unique challenges for AI—including differences in resolution, noise characteristics, and dimensionality—requiring tailored preprocessing and modeling approaches to ensure robust and clinically meaningful results.

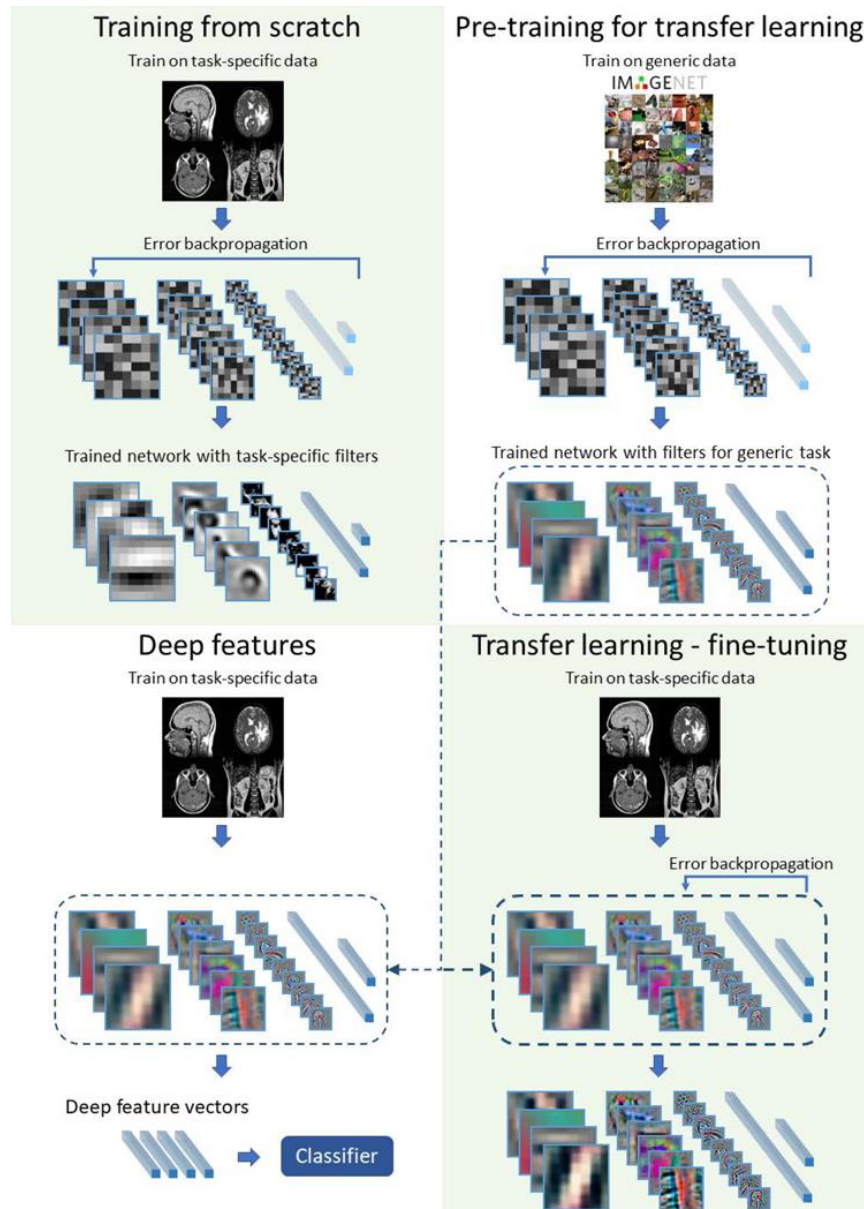


Figure 2 An illustration of various training strategies in deep neural networks includes: (1) training from scratch, where the model learns all parameters directly from a task-specific dataset; (2) transfer learning, where a model pre-trained on a large dataset (such as ImageNet) is fine-tuned on medical imaging data to improve performance and reduce training time; and (3) deep feature extraction, where features learned by a pre-trained network are used as fixed representations for downstream tasks, often combined with traditional machine learning classifiers. These approaches offer flexibility in adapting deep learning models to the limited and specialized datasets commonly found in medical imaging [4].

Data Annotation and Preprocessing

High-quality labeled data is essential for training AI models. However, medical image annotation is resource-intensive and requires expert radiologists. Annotation tasks include classification labels, bounding boxes, and pixel-wise segmentation masks. Various semi-automated tools and active learning approaches are being developed to reduce the manual burden. Data preprocessing steps typically include:

- Normalization: Adjusting intensity values for consistency
- Resampling: Aligning voxel dimensions across scans
- Data augmentation: Generating synthetic data by rotating, flipping, or scaling images to improve generalizability
- Noise reduction and artifact correction: Ensuring cleaner input for model training

Explainable AI (XAI)

One of the major concerns in applying Artificial Intelligence (AI) to clinical radiology is interpretability—the ability to understand and trust how an AI model arrives at its conclusions. Unlike traditional algorithms with transparent logic, deep learning models, particularly convolutional neural networks (CNNs), are often seen as "black boxes" due to their complex, non-linear internal representations. To address this, the field of Explainable AI (XAI) has emerged, offering techniques that make model decisions more transparent and understandable to clinicians. Common XAI methods include saliency maps, which highlight the most influential pixels or regions in an image; Gradient-weighted Class Activation Mapping (Grad-CAM), which visualizes class-specific regions of interest by mapping the gradient information from the last convolutional layers; and SHAP (SHapley Additive exPlanations), which assigns importance scores to input features based on cooperative game theory [8].

Model Evaluation Metrics

Evaluating the performance of AI models in radiology requires the use of robust and clinically meaningful metrics that reflect both the accuracy and reliability of the model's predictions. Common classification metrics include accuracy, which measures overall correctness; sensitivity (recall), which captures the model's ability to correctly identify positive cases; and specificity, which reflects its ability to correctly identify negative cases. Precision assesses how many of the predicted positives are actually correct, and the F1-score provides a balance between precision and recall, especially useful in datasets with class imbalance. For segmentation tasks, metrics like the Dice Similarity Coefficient (DSC) and Intersection over Union (IoU) quantify the overlap between predicted and ground-truth regions, offering insight into spatial accuracy. In detection tasks, Receiver Operating Characteristic (ROC) curves and the Area Under the Curve (AUC) are widely used to evaluate performance across varying thresholds. Beyond these traditional metrics, recent approaches also consider calibration, uncertainty estimation, and clinical relevance—ensuring that AI models not only perform well statistically but also align with diagnostic priorities in real-world settings. Proper metric selection and validation on diverse, external datasets are critical for assessing generalizability and guiding safe clinical implementation.

Applications in Radiology

Artificial Intelligence has rapidly transitioned from research to clinical environments across the spectrum of radiological imaging. Its utility spans from automating routine tasks such as image classification and segmentation to more complex applications such as disease prognosis and radiogenomics. This section categorizes the main AI applications in radiology by task type and imaging modality, highlighting notable use cases, technical developments, and clinical impacts.

Image Classification

AI models, particularly deep learning classifiers, have become integral in detecting and categorizing a wide range of pathologies in medical imaging. By analyzing input images and assigning them to one or more predefined diagnostic categories, these models can assist clinicians in screening, diagnosis, and disease staging. Leveraging convolutional neural networks (CNNs), such systems learn to recognize complex visual patterns that may be subtle or challenging for the human eye to discern, often with high sensitivity and specificity.

One of the most well-known applications is in chest X-ray interpretation, where models like CheXNet, a 121-layer CNN trained on the NIH ChestX-ray14 dataset, can detect conditions such as pneumonia, pneumothorax, pleural effusion, cardiomegaly, and lung nodules [9]. These models have shown performance levels on par with or exceeding that of general radiologists, especially in triage settings where rapid prioritization is critical [10]. In mammography, deep learning algorithms support the classification of breast lesions by distinguishing between benign and malignant findings [11]. These tools not only aid in early detection of breast cancer but also help reduce false positives and unnecessary biopsies, thereby improving patient outcomes and lowering healthcare costs. AI has also been shown to augment radiologist performance in double-reading workflows, improving consistency and reducing inter-observer variability. In brain MRI, classification models have been developed to assist in the diagnosis and staging of neurological conditions such as Alzheimer's disease, by analyzing structural changes in brain regions like the hippocampus [12]. Similarly, CNN-based approaches can identify and differentiate types of brain tumors, such as low-grade and high-grade gliomas, based on subtle variations in MR signal intensity and spatial patterns. These tools contribute to early intervention strategies, prognosis estimation, and treatment planning [13].

Object Detection and Lesion Localization

In clinical radiology, accurately identifying and localizing specific abnormalities—such as tumors, fractures, and hemorrhages—is critical for timely diagnosis, treatment planning, and patient triage. Traditional manual review of medical images is time-intensive and subject to inter-reader variability. AI-based object detection algorithms offer a powerful solution by automatically scanning images to detect and annotate regions of interest (ROIs), thereby enhancing diagnostic efficiency and consistency. Advanced deep learning architectures, such as YOLO [14] have been adapted for medical imaging tasks to enable real-time and high-precision detection.

One prominent application is pulmonary nodule detection in chest CT scans, a crucial step in early lung cancer screening. AI models trained on large-scale CT datasets can highlight suspicious nodules—even small, subsolid, or part-solid lesions—with sensitivity matching or surpassing experienced radiologists [15]. By flagging subtle findings that may be overlooked in routine workflows, these models facilitate earlier interventions and improve survival outcomes. In neurological imaging, AI has demonstrated strong performance in detecting intracranial hemorrhage (ICH) on non-contrast head CT scans [16]. These models are especially valuable in emergency settings, where rapid triage is vital. Deep learning algorithms can detect different types of ICH—such as epidural, subdural, subarachnoid, and intraparenchymal bleeds—and localize them with heatmaps or bounding boxes, often within seconds of image acquisition. Integration of such tools into emergency PACS systems has been shown to significantly reduce door-to-treatment

time for stroke patients. Another impactful application lies in fracture detection in musculoskeletal radiographs [17]. AI systems trained to detect fractures in areas such as the wrist, hip, shoulder, or spine have demonstrated diagnostic accuracy comparable to orthopedic specialists and often exceed the performance of general practitioners or junior clinicians. These tools not only accelerate diagnosis in busy trauma units but also assist in reducing missed injuries, especially in subtle or complex cases.

Image Segmentation

Image segmentation is one of the most fundamental yet labor-intensive tasks in radiology. It involves the pixel-level delineation of anatomical structures, pathological regions, or functional zones within medical images. Accurate segmentation is essential for quantification, treatment planning, monitoring disease progression, and radiomics-based analysis. Traditionally performed manually by radiologists or medical physicists, segmentation is time-consuming, subjective, and prone to variability. With the advent of Artificial Intelligence (AI), particularly deep learning-based architectures like U-Net and its numerous variants, the process of segmentation has become significantly faster, more reproducible, and scalable.

One of the most widely adopted applications is tumor segmentation, where AI models are trained to precisely outline tumor boundaries in modalities such as brain MRI or liver CT scans [18,19]. For instance, segmenting glioblastomas in brain MRI is critical for surgical planning, radiotherapy design, and evaluating treatment response. AI-driven segmentation tools can differentiate between tumor core, edema, and necrotic tissue—tasks that are otherwise challenging and subject to inter-observer variability [18]. Similarly, in liver imaging, accurate segmentation of hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC) or metastatic lesions is essential for determining resectability and monitoring response to chemotherapy or ablation [19]. Organ segmentation is another key area where AI has demonstrated considerable utility. Deep learning models can automatically generate anatomical contours for organs such as the heart, lungs, kidneys, liver, and prostate [20]. In radiotherapy planning, where precise definition of target volumes and organs-at-risk (OARs) is mandatory, AI-based segmentation significantly reduces planning time and increases standardization. For example, prostate segmentation in multiparametric MRI is crucial for localized cancer therapy, and automated tools now support this process with high accuracy and consistency [21]. In vascular imaging, vessel segmentation plays a vital role in cardiovascular diagnostics and risk stratification. AI algorithms can extract detailed representations of arterial walls, luminal structures, and atherosclerotic plaques from CT angiography or MR angiography scans [22]. These models facilitate the assessment of stenosis, aneurysm detection, and plaque burden, which are essential for guiding interventions in coronary artery disease and cerebrovascular disorders.

Image Reconstruction and Enhancement

Beyond detection and diagnosis, Artificial Intelligence is playing a transformative role in enhancing image quality and accelerating image acquisition. Imaging quality directly impacts diagnostic accuracy, while faster acquisition reduces patient discomfort and increases scanner throughput. Traditionally, improvements in image quality or speed required trade-offs, such as increased radiation dose in CT or longer scan times in MRI. However, deep learning-based reconstruction and enhancement models have introduced new ways to improve image fidelity and efficiency without sacrificing patient safety or diagnostic performance.

A major application is in low-dose CT enhancement, where AI-based denoising algorithms allow radiologists to maintain high diagnostic quality at significantly reduced radiation exposure [23]. These models are trained on paired low-dose and standard-dose CT datasets to learn noise patterns and effectively suppress them during reconstruction. This is particularly valuable in screening programs, such as lung cancer screening, where cumulative radiation exposure is a concern, or in pediatric imaging where dose minimization is essential. In the domain of Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI), AI enables fast acquisition and accelerated reconstruction [24]. Traditional MRI is time-intensive, requiring patients to remain still for extended periods, which can lead to motion artifacts and incomplete scans. AI-powered reconstruction methods—such as deep convolutional autoencoders or physics-guided neural networks—allow for substantially faster imaging protocols while preserving or even enhancing image quality. This not only improves patient comfort but also increases scanner availability and reduces cost per scan, making MRI more accessible in high-volume clinical settings.

Challenges and Future Works

Despite the promising advances in applying Artificial Intelligence (AI) to radiology, several challenges remain that must be addressed to ensure safe, ethical, and widespread clinical adoption. These challenges span technical, clinical, regulatory, and societal domains. At the same time, future directions in research and development offer exciting opportunities to overcome current limitations and unlock the full potential of AI in radiological practice.

Challenges

Data Quality, Availability, and Labeling

One of the key challenges in developing reliable AI models for radiology is the limited availability of high-quality, well-labeled imaging data. Medical data is often siloed across institutions, governed by strict privacy regulations, and varies in format and quality. Public datasets are scarce and may not represent diverse patient populations or real-world conditions, leading to poor model generalizability. Moreover, creating accurate annotations is labor-intensive, costly, and subject to inter-observer variability, especially for complex tasks like tumor segmentation. Inconsistent labeling standards further hinder data harmonization. Addressing these issues requires collaborative data sharing, standardized annotation protocols, and the adoption of semi-supervised learning to maximize the utility of limited labeled data.

Model Generalizability and Robustness

A major challenge in deploying AI in radiology is ensuring model generalizability and robustness across diverse clinical environments. Models often perform well on their training data but struggle with domain shift when applied to new settings with different scanners, patient populations, or imaging protocols. This can lead to reduced accuracy and increased bias, particularly when rare conditions or artifacts are underrepresented in training. To address this, models should be validated on external, multi-institutional datasets, and enhanced through domain adaptation, data augmentation, and uncertainty estimation. Without these measures, AI tools may lack reliability and limit safe clinical adoption.

Future Directions

Federated and Privacy-Preserving Learning

A major barrier to training robust AI models in radiology is the inability to share large, diverse datasets across institutions due to privacy regulations and data ownership concerns. Federated learning (FL) offers a solution by enabling collaborative model training without transferring patient data. Instead, models are trained locally at each site, and only the updated parameters are shared for centralized aggregation. This approach preserves privacy while allowing AI to learn from varied imaging protocols, scanners, and populations. In radiology, FL improves model generalizability and supports compliance with data governance laws, making it ideal for multi-center and international collaborations.

Beyond federated learning, other privacy-preserving techniques such as differential privacy, homomorphic encryption, and secure multiparty computation are also being explored to further enhance security and protect sensitive patient information during training and model exchange. However, federated learning introduces its own set of technical challenges, including communication overhead, system heterogeneity, and maintaining model performance in the presence of non-identically distributed (non-IID) data. Research is ongoing to optimize algorithms for federated optimization, model synchronization, and federated validation, as well as to ensure transparency and fairness in decentralized learning environments.

Foundation Models and Multimodal AI

The emergence of foundation models—large-scale deep learning models pre-trained on vast and diverse datasets—has significantly advanced the capabilities of AI, particularly in natural language processing (NLP) with models like GPT. This paradigm is now making its way into medical imaging, where foundation models trained on massive volumes of radiological data are poised to generalize across imaging modalities, diseases, and clinical tasks. Unlike traditional task-specific models, foundation models are designed to learn broad visual representations that can be adapted, or fine-tuned, for a wide range of downstream applications, including disease classification, segmentation, report generation, and prognosis estimation. Their scalability and adaptability open new possibilities for developing unified AI systems that can operate effectively across various radiology workflows.

Beyond imaging, the integration of radiological data with other clinical data streams is giving rise to multimodal AI systems. These models are capable of combining information from different sources—such as electronic health records (EHRs), laboratory test results, genomic profiles, pathology slides, and free-text clinical notes—alongside radiological images. This multimodal fusion enables a more comprehensive understanding of patient health, facilitating personalized risk assessments, early disease detection, and context-aware decision-making. For instance, a model analyzing a chest CT scan can improve its diagnostic confidence and accuracy by incorporating patient history, vital signs, smoking status, and lab findings. In oncology, integrating imaging with molecular and genetic data can support the prediction of treatment response and tumor progression, enhancing precision medicine efforts. Recent research has demonstrated the feasibility of such models using architectures that combine vision transformers, graph neural

networks, and cross-modal attention mechanisms to learn joint representations. These systems are already showing promise in tasks such as automated report generation, tumor subtyping, and triage prioritization, where single-modal models fall short. However, challenges remain, including the need for harmonized multimodal datasets, complex model training requirements, and ensuring interpretability across data types.

Conclusion

Artificial Intelligence is rapidly reshaping the field of radiology, driving a shift from manual, human-centered interpretation to data-driven, computationally augmented diagnostics. From basic image classification and lesion detection to sophisticated tasks like segmentation, radiogenomics, and predictive analytics, AI has demonstrated impressive performance across a wide range of imaging modalities and clinical applications. This review has outlined the foundational concepts underpinning AI in radiology, including machine learning algorithms, deep learning architectures, and the essential role of high-quality annotated data. We highlighted the practical applications of AI in diagnostic accuracy, workflow optimization, image enhancement, and personalized medicine. Moreover, we discussed key challenges such as limited data generalizability, lack of interpretability, regulatory complexities, and integration barriers that continue to hinder widespread clinical adoption. Despite these obstacles, the future of AI in radiology is bright. Advances in federated learning, explainable AI, and multimodal integration are paving the way for more robust, ethical, and trustworthy systems. As AI models evolve and healthcare infrastructure adapts, the synergy between radiologists and intelligent systems will likely enhance diagnostic confidence, reduce clinical workloads, and ultimately improve patient outcomes. To fully realize this potential, sustained collaboration is essential among radiologists, data scientists, engineers, and policymakers. Together, they must ensure that AI tools are rigorously validated, ethically developed, and thoughtfully integrated into clinical workflows. Only through such multidisciplinary efforts can the promise of AI in radiology transition from technological innovation to tangible impact in everyday patient care.

Conflict of interest

The authors declared no conflict of interest.

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