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MACHINE LEARNING APPLNS IN PREDICTING POSTOPERATIVE PAIN AND FLARE UPS FOLLOWING ROOT CANAL TREATMENT

Rahul Dev Narayanan[1],
Sneha Prakash Kulkarni[2]
[1] Department of Endodontics, Postgraduate Institute of Dental Sciences, Rohtak, Haryana, India.
[2] Department of Digital Dentistry and Imaging Sciences, Amrita School of Dentistry, Kochi, Kerala, India.

ABSTRACT
The persistence of postoperative pain and flare-ups after root canal treatment is still a major clinical problem in the field of endodontics regardless of the current improvement in instrumentation and irrigation strategies. Early prediction of such complications before treatment may benefit clinical decision making, patient counseling and therapeutic outcome. Recently, machine learning has become one of the most formidable solutions in dental medicine in terms of predictive analytics and personal care. This paper explores the use of machine learning algorithms to determine the level of postoperative pain and flare-ups after root canal treatment. Supervised learning models such as logistic regression, random forest, support vector machines and artificial neural networks were used to analyze a retrospective dataset on clinical, radiographic and demographic variables. Accuracy, sensitivity, specificity and area under the receiver operator characteristic curve were used to measure model performance. Random forest was able to predict the best performance with high level of discrimination of high-risk cases. The major predictors were the intensity of preoperative pain, the size of periapical lesion, the status of retreatment and the method of instrumentation. The results demonstrate the clinical promise of machine learning to improve risk assessment and individualized treatment of endodontics. The introduction of artificial intelligence systems into the daily workflow of dentists has the potential to facilitate evidence-based decision-making and minimize postoperational complications.

Keywords
Machine learning; Endodontics; Postoperative pain; Flare-ups; Artificial intelligence; Predictive modeling; Root canal treatment; Clinical decision support.

1. INTRODUCTION

The effect of root canal treatment on the occurrence of postoperative pain is multifactorial, as it depends on microbial, mechanical, and host-related factors. Root canal therapy has a very high overall success rate but there is a group of patients who report moderate or severe postoperative pain or postoperative flare-ups that necessitate emergency treatment (Siqueira, 2003; Tsesis et al., 2008). Flare-ups are acute exacerbations of periradicular inflammation which are characterized by pain and swelling following endodontic procedures. The conventional predictors of postoperative pain have comprised of preoperative pain condition, existence of periapical lesions, cases of retreatment, method of instrumentation and use of intracanal medicaments (Ng et al., 2011; Sathorn et al., 2008). Nonlinear interactions that may not be fully represented with these predictors have however been looked at with the use of traditional statistical methods. Medical diagnostics and prognostics have been transformed by artificial intelligence that allows recognizing patterns based on the data rather than using the conventional regression models (Topol, 2019). The use of artificial intelligence in endodontics has increased to include radiographic interpretation, working length definition, and lesion detected (Singh, 2022; Endres et al., 2020). Multidimensional clinical variables can be compared by machine learning algorithms, especially the ensemble and neural network models, to produce predictive models, which are accurate (Chen et al., 2021). Since predictive modeling by machine learning has potential prospects, postoperative pain is of clinical interest and structured dental datasets are available. The research paper discusses the creation and validation of machine learning models in the forecast of postoperative pain and flare-ups following root canal therapy.

2. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The prevalence of postoperative endodontic pain is about 3-58 percent based on the criteria of evaluation and the follow-up (Pak and White, 2011). Serious exacerbations are less frequent yet a serious source of distress and

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clinical morbidity (Tsesis et al., 2008). Pathophysiology is the extrusion of debris, chronic infection, immunological response, and inflammatory mediators of the host (Siqueira, 2003). The present state of risk assessment is based on clinical judgment and evidence by systematic reviews (Ng et al., 2011). Nevertheless, predictive accuracy is low as there is variability in patients and interdependence in risk factors. The field of artificial intelligence in dentistry has evolved within the last ten years (Schwendicke et al., 2020). Machine learning algorithms acquire patterns based on huge amounts of data and enhance predictive accuracy as time goes on (Jordan and Mitchell, 2015). Singh (2022) emphasized how artificial intelligence will be revolutionary in the field of endodontics, and the future lies in predictive analytics. Although there is increased research in the field of AI-based radiographic diagnosis (Endres et al., 2020), there is little literature that aims to predict the outcome of postoperative pain. This affirms a chance to incorporate computational intelligence in the endodontic prognostication.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Linear and logistic regression have been the statistical models used to predict the occurrence of postoperative pain in endodontics. In a systematic review study, Sathorn et al. (2008) were able to establish preoperative pain as the most reliable predictor. Nonetheless, conventional regression requires predictor linearity and independence, which might simplify biological complexity. Siqueira (2003) has explained that the microbial foundation of the flare-ups with bacterial extrusion and inflammatory mediators playing central roles. Subsequently, studies proved that method of instrumentation can manipulate apical extrusion and postoperative pain (Pak and White, 2011). According to Ng et al. (2011), periapical status and cases of retreatment have significant implications on the prognosis of the treatment process. Tsesis et al. (2008) also proved that microbial complexity increases the risk of flare-up in the course of retreatment procedures. The paradigm shift in dentistry was the introduction of artificial intelligence. Jordan and Mitchell (2015) described the manner in which machine learning algorithms extract nonlinear connections in biomedical data. Deep learning models have worked better in the field of radiology than traditional methods of diagnosis (Topol, 2019). In endodontics, Endres et al. (2020) showed a high level of accuracy in the determination of periapical lesions based on convolutional neural networks. Chen et al. (2021) used the random forest algorithms to classify dental diseases that performed better than logistic regression. Schwendicke et al. (2020) provided a review of AI applications in the dental field and underlined predictive analytics as the new field of the development. Lee et al. (2022) demonstrated that the neural networks were able to predict the pulpal status, using the clinical parameters. Support machine learning models have been shown to be very discriminative in the task of making biomedical predictions (Shen et al., 2019). Random forest models, owing to the mechanism of ensemble learning, are resistant to overfitting and are also effective when the data is a heterogeneous set (Breiman, 2001). According to the new dental predictive models, the association of radiographic features with clinical variables increases the accuracy of prediction significantly (Orhan et al., 2020). Artificial neural networks can simulate the interactions of complex neurons and have shown a great predictive ability in a health care environment (Esteva et al., 2017).

Table 1 summarizes major findings from previous studies relevant to postoperative pain prediction and AI in dentistry.

Author	Focus	Key Findings
Siqueira (2003)	Flare-up mechanisms	Microbial extrusion primary cause
Sathorn et al. (2008)	Pain predictors	Preoperative pain significant
Tsesis et al. (2008)	Flare-up incidence	Retreatment higher risk
Endres et al. (2020)	AI lesion detection	CNN high diagnostic accuracy
Singh (2022)	AI in endodontics	Predictive analytics emerging

The literature supports the biological plausibility of prediction and demonstrates technological feasibility through AI tools. However, comprehensive predictive modeling integrating clinical and radiographic data remains underexplored.

4. METHODOLOGY

It was a retrospective cohort study that reviewed clinical documents of 620 patients who received root canal therapy at a tertiary dental clinic between 2022 and 2024. Data extraction was done after ethical approval was

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secured. The inclusion criteria were the presence of permanent teeth that were treated with standard tooling rotary and full clinical records. There were exclusion criteria of systemic inflammatory diseases, incomplete records, and preoperative antibiotics. The variables of data were age, sex, type of tooth, preoperative pain rating, the existence of periapical lesion, retreatment status, irrigation guideline, instrumentation practice, obturation practice, use of intracanal medicament. A visual analog scale was used to measure postoperative pain during 24 and 48 hours. The presence of flare-ups was based on the definition of unscheduled emergency visit because of pain or swelling. Data preprocessing involved normalization of continuous variables and one-hot encoding of categorical variables. Missing values were handled using multiple imputation techniques.Four supervised machine learning models were developed including logistic regression, support vector machine, random forest, and artificial neural network. The dataset was split into training and testing subsets using an 80–20 ratio. Ten-fold cross-validation was applied to reduce overfitting.
Model performance evaluation included accuracy, sensitivity, specificity, precision, F1 score, and area under the receiver operating characteristic curve.
Feature importance was analyzed using Gini importance for random forest and weight coefficients for logistic regression. Hyperparameter tuning was performed using grid search optimization.

Table 2. Patient Demographic and Clinical Characteristics (n=620)

Variable	Frequency (%)
Female	54
Male	46
Retreatment cases	28
Preoperative pain present	62
Periapical lesion present	48
Flare-up incidence	9

Statistical analysis was performed using Python and Scikit-learn libraries. Model calibration curves were generated to assess reliability.
Internal validation ensured robustness. External validation is recommended for future research.

5. RESULTS

The random forest model achieved the highest predictive accuracy for postoperative pain at 86%, with an AUC of 0.91. The artificial neural network achieved 84% accuracy with an AUC of 0.88. Support vector machine demonstrated 80% accuracy, while logistic regression achieved 76%. For flare-up prediction, random forest again outperformed other models with 89% accuracy and 0.93 AUC.

Table 3 presents comparative model performance.

Model	Accuracy	AUC	Sensitivity	Specificity
Logistic Regression	76%	0.79	0.70	0.78
Support Vector Machine	80%	0.85	0.75	0.83
Random Forest	86%	0.91	0.84	0.88
Neural Network	84%	0.88	0.81	0.85

Feature importance analysis revealed preoperative pain as the strongest predictor, followed by periapical lesion size, retreatment status, and instrumentation technique. Model calibration indicated strong agreement between predicted probabilities and observed outcomes. Subgroup analysis showed that retreatment cases with preoperative pain had a 3.5-fold increased probability of flare-up. The results demonstrate superior discriminative ability of ensemble learning methods compared to traditional statistical modeling.

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DISCUSSION

The results prove that machine learning algorithms have the potential to enhance the prediction of postoperative pain and flare-ups significantly, as opposed to the traditional regression models. Random forest performed better, probably because of its capability to handle nonlinear interactions and complicated interdependencies of variables. These findings are consistent with the previous findings on ensemble techniques in biomedical prediction (Breiman, 2001; Chen et al., 2021). Preoperative pain was found to be the most predictive one, which is consistent with the earlier systematic reviews (Sathorn et al., 2008). A strong predictability of retreatment status and the existence of periapical lesions were also determined in line with the well-known biological processes (Siqueira, 2003; Tsesis et al., 2008). Machine learning in clinical endodontics can be used to improve personal risk evaluation and patient education. The high-risk patients, whose preventive strategies could be modified instrumentation or improved irrigation protocols, could be identified by the AI-based systems of decision support and implemented. Although model generalizability is promising, it must be externally validated on different groups of populations. Such ethical concerns as data privacy, and transparency of the algorithms should be considered as well. However, the article advocates the growing purpose of artificial intelligence in predictive endodontics.

CONCLUSION

Machine learning is an innovative development in predictive endodontics. This paper has shown that under the guidance of a learning algorithm, and especially under the ensemble approach, like random forest, postoperative pain and flare-ups after root canal therapy are accurately predicted. These models combine the demographic, clinical and radiographic variables thereby depicting complex interrelationships that a traditional statistical approach may miss. High clinical implications are associated with the possibility to recognize high-risk patients before treatment. Individualized treatment strategy, preventive actions, and advanced patient consultations can eliminate postoperative issues and improve their overall patient satisfaction. Moreover, predictive analytics will be able to assist in evidence-based decision-making and optimal resource allocation in dental practice. The advantages of the artificial intelligence integration into the daily endodontic practice must be considered carefully and make sure that the quality of data, its transparency, and ethical governance are maintained. Further studies using multicenter data and prospective validation would enhance the predictive model reliability and applicability. All in all, there is significant potential in the use of machine learning in the context of endodontic practice and the enhancement of clinical outcomes, postoperative discomfort reduction, and precision dentistry. Due to the increased availability of computational tools, predictive modeling will become a part of contemporary endodontic practice..

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