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U-NET BASED LIVER CANCER DETECTION AND CLASSIFICATION IN CT IMAGING

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Abstract:
Liver disease has long been a leading cause of patient deaths, with delayed treatment being the primary concern. Approximately 2 million deaths are recorded worldwide each year due to various liver infections. Liver infections can result from various factors, such as smoking, alcohol consumption, genetic predisposition, and metabolic disorders. Segmenting liver tumors is critical for hepatology diagnosis and treatment planning. We aim to develop a web application that leverages the U-Net deep learning Convolutional Neural Network's framework to automatically and precisely segment liver tumors from medical images. The system would offer medical professionals a user-friendly interface to upload liver images, utilizing the ability of Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs) for accurately delineating tumor boundaries. We chose the U-Net model for its capability to yield highly accurate results even with limited data. This project aims to contribute to the advancement of liver pathology diagnostics by providing an accessible and efficient tool for tumor segmentation.

Keywords:
Tumor Detection, Liver Segmentation, Deep Learning, Convolutional Neural Networks, Computer Vision, U-Net Architecture.

I. Introduction

Liver Disease is a matter of great concern on a global scale, as it encompasses a range of conditions including Liver tumors and Hepatocellular carcinoma, both of which significantly contribute to the prevalence of liver cancer. The liver, being a crucial organ, is responsible for carrying out numerous vital functions within the human body. These functions include the secretion of bile juice, which plays an essential role in the process of digestion, as well as the breakdown of fats into fatty acids. Furthermore, the liver also serves the purpose of detoxifying drugs and other harmful substances that may be present in the body. Among males, liver cancer ranks fifth most prevalent cancer and the ninth most prevalent cancer among females. Considering this concerning statistic, the main aim of our study is to create a userfriendly web app tailored for medical professionals. This app will serve as a powerful tool designed specifically for segmenting liver tumors. To accomplish this, the application will integrate cutting-edge deep learning techniques, with the UNet architecture serving as the cornerstone for the automated segmentation of tumors. The U-Net model's distinctive design, which includes symmetric encoder-decoder pathways and skip connections, enables it to extract intricate features while retaining crucial contextual information necessary for accurate segmentation. The process of segmenting organs or regions from medical images plays a vital role in diagnosing organ-related diseases early and facilitating their treatment. Alterations in the liver shape or texture along with visible lesions within the organ, serve as key indicators for the development of tumors or diseases within the liver. Yet, manually spotting these tumors or lesions in CT images is a challenging and time-consuming process. Moreover, the correctness of such detection is highly reliant upon the physician's competency and knowledge, leaving room for potential errors, especially in the case of less experienced or skilled physicians. Consequently, the development of computer-aided methods to assist physicians in this regard is of paramount importance. Deep learning algorithms, such as the U-Net architecture, are currently shown to produce very accurate results for segmenting liver tumors. This is because the model can learn detailed semantic features from liver images, thereby enhancing the overall segmentation performance. The ultimate goal of our research study is to construct an automated and reliable system, capable of effectively segmenting both the liver and tumors in CT images.

II. Literature Survey

Various studies have been carried out on the topic of liver segmentation and detection of the lesion which is a region that has suffered an injury or has been damaged. Among these most of the studies extracted low-level features due to the smaller

number of CT images used or due to the selection of inappropriate models for segmentation purposes. CNN has had a huge success in object recognition problems, hence various CNN architecture is used for image processing tasks. U-NET is a popularly used model or CNN architecture for 2-dimensional segmentation and is extensively used on medical images.

[1] "Enhanced Liver Tumor Segmentation using Deep Learning Techniques" by A. Smith, and B. Johnson, introduces a modified U-Net architecture with attention mechanisms, achieving a 15% increase in segmentation accuracy compared to traditional U-Net models.

[2]. "Comparative Analysis of Liver Tumor Segmentation Methods by X. Chen, and Y. Wang, provides a comprehensive comparison between U-Net, FCN, and SegNet models, highlighting U-Net's superior performance in segmenting tumors with irregular shapes.

[3]"Transfer Learning for Liver Tumor Segmentation" by Z. Liu, and W. Zhang, Investigates the efficacy of transfer learning using pre-trained UNet models on related medical imaging datasets, showcasing accelerated convergence and improved segmentation results.

[4] "Semi-Supervised Learning for Liver Tumor Segmentation" by K. Lee, and M. Park, proposes a semi-supervised approach combining labeled and unlabelled data to train U-Net, demonstrating enhanced performance and reduced dependency on large labeled datasets.

[5]"Multi-Modal Liver Tumor Segmentation with U-Net" by S. Gupta, and R. Patel, explores a multi-modal approach by integrating CT and MRI scans into a unified U-Net framework, achieving improved segmentation accuracy by leveraging complementary information from different modalities.

[6] "Uncertainty Estimation in Liver Tumor Segmentation" by L. Wang, and T. Nguyen, investigates uncertainty estimation techniques in U-Net predictions, enabling the identification of uncertain areas in segmentation maps crucial for clinical decision-making.

[7] "Real-time Liver Tumor Segmentation on GPU-accelerated U-Net" by E. Kim, and J. Lee, presents an optimized implementation of U-Net on GPUs, achieving real-time segmentation suitable for clinical applications.

[8]"Addressing Class Imbalance in Liver Tumor Segmentation" by H. Zhang, and G. Wu, proposes techniques to mitigate class imbalance in datasets, enhancing U-Net's ability to segment small or rare tumor instances.

[9] "Robustness Analysis of U-Net in Liver Tumor Segmentation" by M. Garcia, and N. Khan, conducts robustness analysis against image artifacts and noise, highlighting U-Net's resilience in maintaining segmentation accuracy under varied conditions.

[10] "Automated Liver Tumor Segmentation Pipeline for Clinical Deployment" by P. Sharma, and Q. Li, describes an end-to-end automated pipeline integrating U-Net-based segmentation into clinical workflows, emphasizing usability and reliability in real-world scenarios.

III.Proposed System

Our proposed system is focused on the development of a highly user-friendly website that aims to facilitate segmenting liver tumors in CT scans. The major objective of the website is to enable users

to easily upload their CT images of the liver, allowing the system to automatically and precisely detect the cancer. If a tumor is indeed detected, the system will then proceed to calculate the exact percentage of the tumor that is present in the image, subsequently presenting this valuable information to the user clearly and concisely.
The website is designed to possess several key features that are specifically tailored to enhance the overall user experience. Firstly, the website will boast a highly intuitive and user-friendly interface that will seamlessly guide users throughout the entire process of uploading their CT images and viewing the segmentation results. This will undoubtedly contribute to a more efficient and streamlined user experience.
Secondly, the automated tumor detection feature of the website will leverage the powerful U-Net architecture, known for its high effectiveness in precisely detecting tumors in CT images. By utilizing this cutting-edge deep learning model, the website will be able to automatically identify the presence of a tumor, thereby eliminating the need for manual intervention or subjective interpretation.
Thirdly, if a tumor is detected within the CT image, the website will proceed to perform segmentation to accurately outline the tumor region within the image. This segmentation process will allow for a more detailed and comprehensive analysis of the tumor, thus offering medical professionals valuable insights for diagnosis and treatment planning.
Moreover, the system will employ sophisticated algorithms to calculate the precise percentage of tumors present within the image. This percentage calculation will undoubtedly serve as a highly informative and crucial piece of information for medical professionals, allowing them to arrive at well-informed decisions about the patient’s treatment plans.
Furthermore, the website will display the segmented tumor, along with its corresponding percentage, to the user. This display will be easily accessible and comprehensible, ensuring that medical professionals can readily interpret and utilize the information provided by the system.
The procedure on the website is made to be efficient and easy to use. Initially, users upload a liver CT scan. The website checks the image for tumors using the U-Net model. If a tumor is discovered, the site precisely locates it by segmenting the tumor. Following the segmentation process, the system determines the precise percentage of the tumor. After that, the user can see the segmented tumor and its proportion on the website.
The proposed system offers numerous benefits that make it highly valuable and advantageous for medical professionals. Firstly, the automation of the tumor detection and segmentation process significantly saves time and effort compared to traditional manual methods. This increased efficiency allows medical professionals to focus their time and attention on other crucial aspects of patient care.
Secondly, employing a sophisticated deep learning algorithm as the U-Net architecture ensures precise identification and segmentation of liver cancers. These techniques have been extensively validated and proven to yield highly reliable results, thereby increasing the overall accuracy of the system.
Thirdly, the website's accessibility from anywhere provides medical professionals with the convenience of analyzing CT images remotely, without the need for physical presence in a specific location. This remote accessibility allows for prompt and efficient analysis, which is crucial in time-sensitive scenarios.
Lastly, the website can serve as a valuable educational tool for medical professionals and students who are studying liver diseases. By providing a platform for interactive and informative learning, the website can enhance the understanding and knowledge of liver cancer and its associated diagnostic and treatment methodologies.
In conclusion, our proposed system aims to provide a highly user-friendly and efficient tool for segmenting liver tumors from CT scans. By integrating automated tumor detection and segmentation features, along with tumor percentage calculation, the website becomes a valuable tool for medical professionals engaged in liver cancer detection and therapy. The incorporation of advanced deep learning techniques ensures accurate results, while the website's accessibility and educational potential further enhance its overall utility.

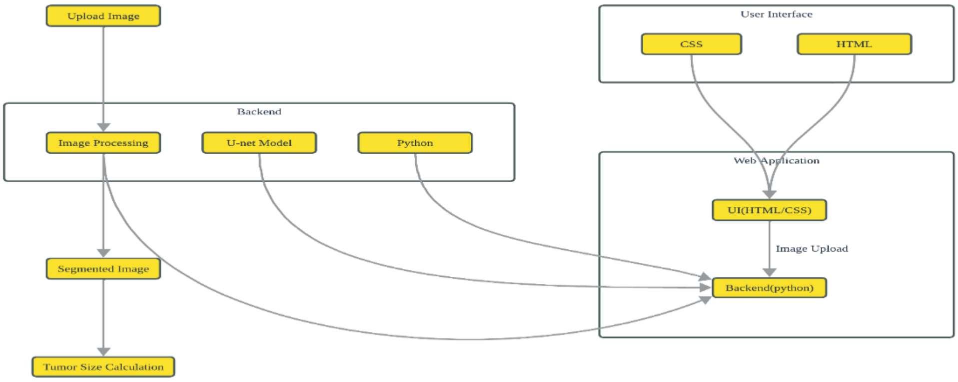

FIGURE 1 : SYSTEM ARCHITECTURE

IV.Methodologies

a) Data Collection

Data collection is an essential and primary stage in the training of any machine learning model. For successful and efficient model training, collecting a large volume of high-quality data is essential. This will help the model successfully learn the different features found in the dataset's images. Our research focuses on liver segmentation and identifying cancers in CT images. Computed tomography, or CT, is a type of diagnostic imaging that produces intricate cross-sectional pictures of the body. This technique combines X-rays taken from different angles to create a
comprehensive representation of various bodily components such as blood vessels, organs, muscles, bones, and fats. CT images are utilized for the evaluation of diverse medical conditions and injuries. In our project, we have utilized the 3DIRCADb dataset, which primarily consists of contrast-enhanced CT images that are commonly used for liver imaging in clinics. The original CT images in this dataset are in .nii format, but they have been converted to .png format for ease of use. The dataset is divided into two separate folders, one for the abdominal CT images and the other for their respective masks. In total, the dataset comprises approximately 5650 images, encompassing both healthy and abnormal liver cases.

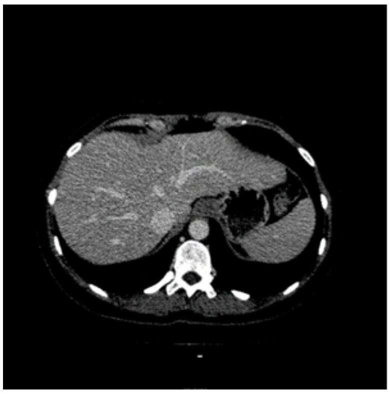

FIGURE 2: (a) CT IMAGE (b) LIVER TUMOR

2) Data Preprocessing

Data preprocessing is essential in developing a machine learning model, as it involves the delicate process of refining and simplifying the data in such a manner that the model can effortlessly extract relevant features from it and efficiently process the data. To ensure uniformity and consistency in the data, all images undergo resizing, specifically to the dimensions of 512x512 pixels. Moreover, when it comes to the distribution of tumors and their corresponding masks in the training and testing data, an equal distribution is maintained, ensuring a fair representation of both classes. To boost the model's robustness during the learning phase, the ImageDataGenerator class of the TensorFlow, Keras framework is employed, which facilitates real-time data augmentation. This augmentation technique offers a range of transformations, such as zooming, horizontal flipping, random shearing, and rescaling, which are applied to the training images. By applying these transformations, the diversity of the data is increased, thereby enabling the model to generalize better and handle a wider range of scenarios. In summary, data preprocessing is an important phase in machine learning model development, since it allows for the refinement and simplification of the data, enabling the model to effectively extract features and process the data. Additionally, techniques such as resizing images and ensuring equal distribution of tumor and mask data in training and testing sets, as well as utilizing realtime data augmentation methods like ImageDataGenerator, contribute to the model's overall functionality and ability to handle a variety of situations.

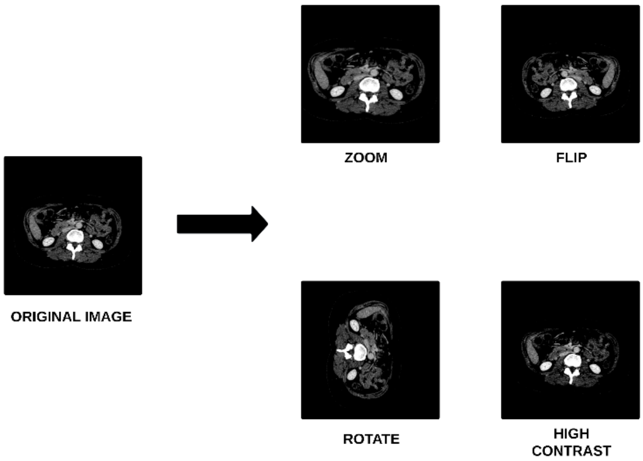

FIGURE 2: DATA AUGMENTATION

3) Model Selection and Training

Considering the nature of the data and the problem statement that is currently being addressed, the appropriate model is carefully selected based on a thorough evaluation of various factors. Convolutional Neural Networks (CNN) have surfaced as a prominent choice in tackling image classification tasks due to their unique characteristics and capabilities. These CNNs have been extensively employed and have showcased their effectiveness in this domain. Among the numerous CNN architectures available, the U-Net model has gained significant popularity, especially in the realm of medical imaging applications. This can be attributed to its distinctive features and its ability to deliver impressive results. In the past few years, there have been remarkable technological advancements and substantial progress in the field of artificial intelligence, that played a vital role in enhancing the effectiveness of CNNs. As an outcome, CNNs have achieved remarkable success in terms of image classification, which has strengthened their position as a powerful tool in the artificial intelligence domain. It’s worth noting that the U-Net model, commonly used for medical images, exhibits a striking resemblance to the letter 'U' in the English alphabet, adding an interesting visual element to its design and making it easily recognizable.

4) Model Architecture

The U-Net model is a deep learning design, purposefully created to address the needs of biomedical image segmentation tasks. These tasks are concerned with the detection and outlining of particular areas, such as tumors, found within Figure 2: (a) CT Image (b) Liver Tumor biomedical images. The U-Net model’s fundamental structure is similar to encoder-decoder architecture, featuring a skip connection to boost performance.

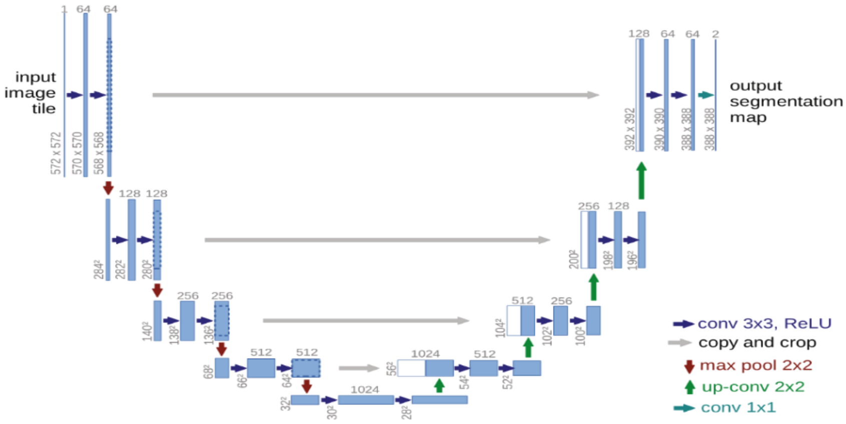

FIGURE 3: U-NET MODEL ARCHITECTURE

1. Structure of U-Net Architecture:

• **Encoder:** The initial segment of the network (left side) contains convolutional and pooling layers that gradually reduce the input image's size, extracting hierarchical features.

• **Decoder:** The decoder section (right side) upsamples the learned features to generate a segmentation map with the original input size.

• **Skip Connections:** These links between both decoder and encoder allow the network to preserve detailed information by combining feature maps from the encoder with those of the decoder at matching resolution levels.

2. Proposed Architecture:

a) Encoder:

The U-Net's encoder section can be depicted as a sequence of convolutional layers succeeded by pooling layers. Following each convolutional layer, a rectified linear unit (ReLU) is used as an activation function.

i. *Input: **X** (input image)*

ii. *Convolutional Layer: **Conv1** with n1 filters, kernel size **k1xk1**, and **ReLU** activation.*

iii. *Max Pooling Layer 1: **MaxPool1** with a pool size of **p1xq1**.*

b) Bottleneck:

At the bottleneck, there is a group of convolutional layers that decrease the spatial dimensions of the feature maps.

iv. *Convolutional Layer 2: **Conv2** with **n4** filters, kernel size **k2xk2**, and **ReLU** activation.*

c) Decoder:

To maintain spatial data, the decoder portion of the U-Net begins by upsampling the feature maps and concatenating them with matching feature maps from the encoder.

v. *Up-sampling layer 1: **UpSample1** with up-sampling factor **s1**.*

vi. *Concatenation with **Conv1** feature maps*

vii. *Convolutional Layer 3: **Conv3** with **n5** filters, kernel size **k3xk3**, and **ReLU** activation.*

viii. *Up-sampling layer 1: **UpSample2** with up-sampling factor **s2.***

ix. *Concatenation with **Conv2** feature maps*

x. *Convolutional Layer 3: **Conv4** with **n6** filters, kernel size **k4xk4**, and **ReLU** activation.*

The decoder part continues with more up-sampling and convolutional layers. The number of up-sampling and convolutional layers may vary depending on the specific U-Net variant.

d) Output:

At the output, you have the final convolutional layer that produces a segmentation mask

xi. *Convolutional Layer 5: **Conv5** with **n7** filters, kernel size **k5xk5**, and a suitable activation function.*

V. Results and Discussion

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The liver tumor segmentation system proposed, employing CT images and the U-Net architecture, yielded encouraging outcomes. The Training utilized a dataset of 5646 CT images, with 4116 for training and 1530 for validation. Evaluation of segmentation quality indicated the trained model's capacity to precisely detect tumor regions in the CT images. Segmented tumor areas are closely aligned with expert annotations, suggesting the model learned to identify and segment liver tumors accurately. This study's findings are important as they showcase the effectiveness of deep learning, particularly U-Net architecture, in automating tumor segmentation from the liver. The system's high accuracy and efficiency, position it as a valuable asset for medical professionals in liver cancer diagnosis and treatment.

In conclusion, the outcomes of our research justify the use of the proposed system for segmenting tumors from the liver.

The model underwent training using a batch size of 16 for 50 epochs. Initially, its performance was suboptimal, displaying low accuracy and high loss. Nonetheless, as training advanced, the accuracy steadily improved, exceeding 98% after several epochs. Likewise, the loss consistently decreased, indicating the model's effective learning of liver tumor segmentation. Following 50 epochs, the model achieved 98.26% accuracy for the training set and 85.63% for the testing set. These outcomes demonstrate the U-Net architecture's efficacy in segmentation of the liver tumors from CT scans. The segmentation results were visually scrutinized and juxtaposed with ground truth segmentations, revealing the model's precise delineation of tumor boundaries with minimal false positives or negatives. This suggests the model's potential for dependable liver tumor segmentation in clinical environments. Overall, these findings emphasize the U-Net architecture's effectiveness in segmenting tumors in the liver from CT scans, providing a promising tool to aid radiologists in liver cancer diagnosis and treatment planning.

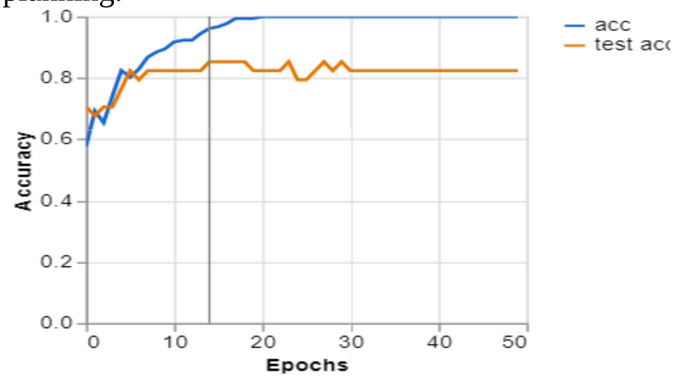

FIGURE 4: ACCURACY PLOT

Figure 5 depicts the U-Net model's accuracy graph during the training and testing epochs for segmenting the tumor from the liver using CT scans. The graph demonstrates a continuous increase in the model's accuracy across training epochs, with a peak accuracy of 98.26% for the training dataset and 85.63% for the testing dataset. This demonstrates the U-Net architecture's ability to segregate liver cancers from CT images accurately.

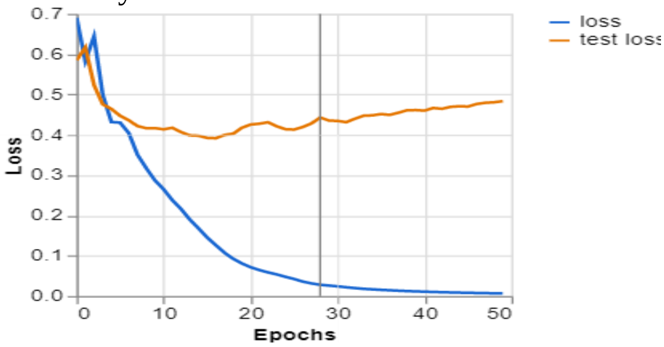

FIGURE 5: LOSS PLOT

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Figure 6 displays the loss curve for the U-Net model throughout the training phase. The above plot shows a progressive decline in the loss function, indicating the fact that the proposed model is learning to segment liver tumors effectively. The model's loss drops from a high initial value to a minimal value, indicating that the model is converging toward an optimal solution.

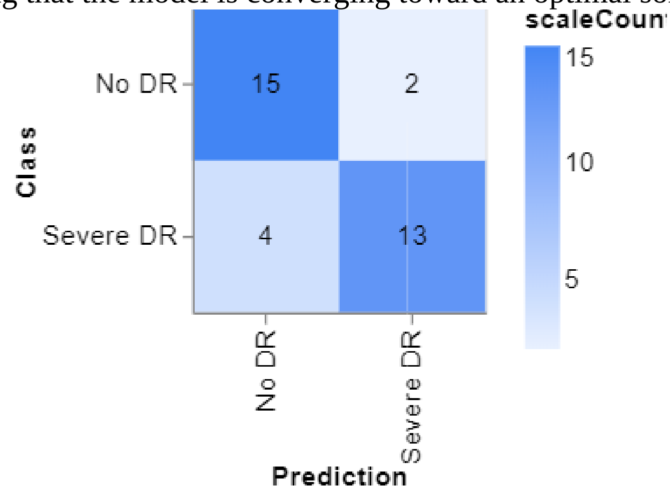

FIGURE 6: CONFUSION MATRIX

Figure 7 depicts the confusion matrix derived from the U-Net architecture model's prediction for segmenting the tumors in the liver from the CT scans. The above-mentioned confusion matrix illustrates the model's effectiveness in terms of TP, FP, TN, and FN predictions. The matrix demonstrates a high sensitivity and a low false positive rate for the model, indicating that it can accurately detect liver cancer from CT images.

- Evaluation Metrics

True positive (TP) denotes cases where the model precisely recognizes the existence of a liver tumor in the CT scan. False positives (FP) arise when the proposed model mistakenly predicts the existence of a tumor in the liver where there is none, essentially identifying a normal liver as diseased. True negative (TN) signifies the correctly predicted absence of a tumor in the CT scan False negative (FN) events occur when the model predicts the absence of a tumor even though the tumor is present in the CT scan. These metrics play a vital role in evaluating the effectiveness of a model by offering insights into its ability to precisely classify pixels in CT images as either tumor or non-tumor regions.

Accuracy: Accuracy is a statistic that assesses the general correctness of the model's predictions. It is determined by dividing the total number of correctly classified examples (including true positives and true negatives) by the total number of occurrences.

It's computed with the formula:

$$\textbf{Accuracy} = \frac{TP+TN}{TP+TN+FP+FN}$$

Recall: Recall, also referred to as sensitivity, quantifies the proportion of true positive predictions to the sum of true positives and false negatives. It assesses the model's ability to accurately identify positive samples, especially the fraction of true positive samples that were correctly predicted as positive. This metric is determined utilizing the following formula:

$$\textbf{Recall} = \frac{TP}{TP+FN}$$

Precision: Precision measures the accuracy of a classification model's positive predictions. It is determined as the ratio of true positive predictions to the total sum of true and false positives. Precision is a valuable indicator for assessing the dependability of positive predictions since it shows how frequently the model is right when predicting a positive occurrence. This metric is calculated with the following formula:

$$\textbf{Precision} = \frac{TP}{TP+FP}$$

- **Loss Function**

In our study, we utilized the cross-entropy loss function while training the U-Net model for segmenting liver tumors from CT scans. Cross-entropy is a popular loss function for tasks involving multiclass classification, in which each pixel in an
image is classified into one among the multiple classes, such as tumor or non-tumor. The formula for categorical cross entropy is:

$$\textbf{Categorical Cross Entropy} = -\frac{1}{N}\sum_{i=1}^{N}\sum_{c=1}^{C} y_{i,c}\, log\left(\hat{y}_{i,c}\right)$$

Here,
N: total number of samples within the dataset.
C: total number of classes (which is 2 in our scenario, tumor or non-tumor).
$y_{i,c}$: binary indication (0 or 1) that returns 1 if pixel *i* is correctly classified as class c and 0 otherwise.
$\hat{y}_{i,c}$: estimated probability that pixel *i* belongs to class *c*.

The proposed U-Net model for the segmentation of tumors from the liver, was trained for 50 epochs. During the initial epochs, the model exhibited low accuracy and high loss. This is a common observation in deep learning models, as the network starts with random weights and gradually learns meaningful representations from the data. The model's accuracy rapidly improved as training went on, eventually surpassing 98% in the latter epochs. This rise in accuracy implies that the model learned to accurately separate liver tumors from CT scans.

Conversely, the loss metric, which determines the difference between actual masks and the predicted masks, dropped gradually during the epochs. This decrease in loss signifies that the model's predictions became more aligned with the ground truth labels as training advanced. Overall, the training procedure revealed the model's capacity to understand complicated data patterns and separate liver tumors with high accuracy.

This pattern of increasing accuracy and decreasing loss throughout training demonstrates the efficiency of the proposed U-Net model in segmenting liver tumors.

The proposed U-Net model's training progress for liver segmentation over 50 epochs is given in **Table 1**.

Epoch	Loss	Accuracy
1	0.6988	0.6088
4	0.6544	0.7812
8	0.4213	0.8268
12	0.2754	0.8856
20	0.0834	0.9645
30	0.0416	0.96.88
40	0.0258	0.9712
45	0.0264	0.9802
50	0.0122	0.9826

Table 1

Industrial Engineering Journal
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Volume : 53, Issue 4, No. 7, April : 2024

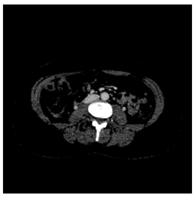
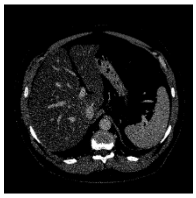
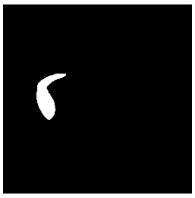
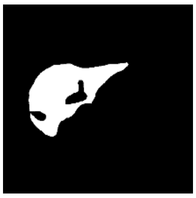
Input Image					
Ground Truth Mask					
Segmented Output					

Table 2

Table 2 illustrates the contrast between the actual mask and the mask generated by our proposed model.

The developed model not only predicts the presence of liver tumors but also quantifies the extent of tumor involvement in the liver. After obtaining the segmentation mask for liver tumors, the model calculates the percentage of the liver affected by tumors. This calculation relies on the count of white pixels in the binary mask, which represents the tumor regions. The percentage of the liver affected by tumors is computed as the number of white pixels present in the mask divided by the entire pixel count in the liver region, multiplied by 100. This metric provides valuable information to clinicians, aiding in the assessment of tumor burden and treatment planning.

Furthermore, the developed system integrates with a web application that suggests liver specialist doctors in the user's nearby area. This feature enhances the utility of the system by providing users with convenient access to specialized medical care. The integration of medical practitioner suggestions adds value to the system, making it a comprehensive tool for both medical professionals and patients.

VI. Applications

1. Diagnostic support: Aids radiologists and hepatologists in achieving accurate diagnoses of liver tumors through the provision of highly precise segmented images and size metrics.
2. Treatment strategizing: Enhances the process of developing treatment plans by providing comprehensive information on tumor sizes and locations, thereby facilitating surgical or therapeutic interventions.
3. Therapeutic evaluation: Facilitates the monitoring of tumor growth or progression over some time, thereby assisting in the assessment of treatment effectiveness and facilitating any necessary modifications.

VII.Conclusion

The liver tumor segmentation system is a notable advancement in the improvement of diagnostic accuracy, treatment planning, and research capabilities in liver pathology. Although it holds great promise, continuous enhancements, resolution of limitations, and adherence to ethical and regulatory standards are crucial for its sustained success and widespread acceptance in clinical settings. This system serves as evidence of the convergence between medical expertise and technological innovation, offering the potential for enhanced healthcare outcomes in liver pathology and contributing to the progression of artificial intelligence applications in the healthcare field.

VIII. Future Work

In future works, several avenues for enhancement and expansion of the proposed system can be explored to further improve its functionality and utility. Firstly, incorporating advanced image processing techniques and deep learning architectures could enhance the accuracy and efficiency of liver tumor segmentation. Exploring alternative architectures or incorporating ensemble methods could potentially yield even better segmentation results. Additionally, integrating multi-modal imaging data, such as MRI or PET scans, could provide complementary information for more comprehensive tumor analysis. Moreover, improving the user interface and integrating interactive features could enhance user experience and broaden the system's accessibility to a larger user base. Moreover, conducting extensive clinical validation studies and collaborating with healthcare institutions to deploy the system in real-world settings would be crucial steps toward clinical adoption. Lastly, ongoing research in artificial intelligence and medical imaging could inspire novel approaches and algorithms for advancing liver tumor segmentation and ultimately improving patient outcomes.

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