

# Journal of Electronic Systems and Programming



## BEST

THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON BIOMEDICAL  
ENGINEERING SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY IN LIBYA

**Special Issue – Part A– July 2026**

**Journal of Electronic Systems and Programming**



**Electronic Systems and Programming Center**

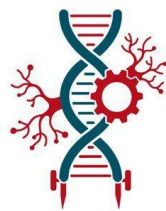
# **Journal of Electronic Systems and Programming**

**Special Issue – Part A– July 2026**

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**Editorial:**

**Special Issue – Journal of Electronic Systems and Programming**

We are delighted to announce the publication of the second special issue that contains 39 selected papers from **1st International Conference on Biomedical Engineering Science and Technology in Libya**.

The conference aims primarily to establish scientific research bases within academic institutions and research centers in Libya to encourage researchers to present their scientific and research production.

Finally, we thank the conference steering committee for choosing JESP to publish the distinguished papers that were presented on the conference.

Editorial Board



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# **Medical Waste Management Practices in Libya Healthcare Facilities: Challenges, Awareness and Recommendations**



**1**





## **Medical Waste Management Practices in Libya Healthcare Facilities: Challenges, Awareness and Recommendations**

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### **Abstract**

The research for this paper investigated the current practices, awareness, and problems of implementing Medical Waste Management (MWM) at 4 different hospitals in Tripoli and Tajoura, Libya. This study utilized a mixed methods research design, which involved using quantitative survey data along with qualitative interview data and observational data. Survey data were collected from 106 health care worker participants and 93 community member participants to determine how much they knew, how well they adhered to WHO (World Health Organization) and Libyan national guidelines on medical waste management, and what they perceived about medical waste management practices. Although most health

care professionals reported an understanding of the importance of segregating medical wastes and controlling infections, only 24.5% consistently segregated medical wastes; less than 26% of the participants reported having formal training related to medical waste management; and, 63% of the participants rated their hospital's medical waste management system as ineffective or requiring significant improvements. Findings from the community survey showed a high level of awareness of potential medical waste hazards and a willingness to participate in educational programs about medical waste management, although there were a number of misunderstandings concerning medical waste management practices. Therefore, this study concluded that the lack of clear guidelines, poor training and supervision of employees, and other systemic issues impede the successful implementation of MWM in hospitals in Libya. Thus, strengthening the institutional governance structure in the hospitals in Libya and enforcing national standards for MWM as well as providing better education and training to employees and the general public will be essential in developing a more sustainable and safer medical waste management practice in the health care sector in Libya.

**Keywords:** MWM – Medical Waste Management; PPE – Personal Protective Equipment; IPC – Infection Prevention and Control; SPSS–Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. WHO–World Health Organization. MW Medical Waste;OR–Odds Ratio (Logistic Regression); StaffFig X / Public FigX – Figure labeling system aligning staff and public datasets.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Due to the harmful effects of Medical Waste Management (MWM) on the environment, public health and safety, it has emerged as one of the major concerns globally. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimated that approximately 85% of healthcare waste is non-

hazardous whereas 15% is classified as hazardous, infectious, or toxic [1]. The volume of hazardous waste generated by different healthcare settings varies from 0.2 kg/bed/day in low-income countries to 0.5 kg/bed/day in high-income countries [2]. Inadequate collection, segregation, transportation, treatment and disposal of hazardous and infectious waste may pose serious health risks to healthcare workers and waste handlers and to the general population, particularly for HBV, HCV, and HIV infections [3].

The primary causes of MWM challenges in developing countries include inadequate infrastructure, limited resources, and poor enforcement of safety regulations. Libya as a developing country has significant shortcomings in managing its medical waste. Sawalem et al., indicated that Libyan hospitals generate an average of 1.3 kg of waste per patient per day, whereof 28% is hazardous [4]; however, the majority of the hospitals do not have color-coded segregation systems, designated storage facilities, and proper treatment facilities [5]. Moreover, Abdelsalam et al., also identified that 63% of the Libyan hospitals did not have a designated waste management officer, and over 60% of the hospitals mixed general and infectious waste prior to final disposal [5].

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to assess MWM practices in four selected hospitals in Tripoli and Tajoura: two public and two private hospitals. Data will be collected using structured surveys, interviews and site observations with the healthcare staff, infection control units, and waste handling companies. This study will evaluate the degree of compliance with WHO and Libyan national guidelines for MWM, and determine the main areas of waste segregation, storage and disposal; in addition to documenting any operational or ethical challenges experienced during fieldwork. Finally, the ultimate goal of this study is to provide evidence-based recommendations to improve MWM in Libyan hospitals and minimize the risk of preventable hazards to healthcare workers and local communities.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Due to the numerous environmental and social implications associated with managing healthcare wastes, there have been numerous studies globally regarding the complex nature of healthcare waste management. The World Health Organization (WHO), (2021) noted that proper waste management is an essential element of all Infection Prevention and Control Systems (IPCS) and this was further emphasized during the COVID-19 pandemic as it resulted in more than a 25% increase in global medical waste [1][3]. Studies within developing countries continually express the same types of barriers – limited funding, lack of knowledge, poor segregation practices, etc. [6]. Patil & Pokharel (2005) found that in addition to the previously mentioned issues, many low resource settings lacked color-coded containers, secure storage facilities, and incineration facilities for the disposal of medical waste; thus creating uncontrolled dumping and open burning [7].

Caniato et al. (2015) indicated that failures in waste management are usually a result of weak institutional governance and/or a lack of adequate training for employees. Caniato et al. (2015) also emphasized the need for a comprehensive national framework to standardize waste segregation, storage, transportation, and final treatment [8]. Within the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, El-Hamouz (2008) identified multiple areas where there were substantial deficiencies in waste handling and disposal, including poor segregation of waste at the source and a lack of sufficient and safe disposal infrastructure [9]. This creates a direct threat to public health and environmental safety.

Libya's persistent issue with healthcare waste management stems primarily from the nonexistence of effective regulatory systems and a lack of technical capacity. Sawalem et al. (2009) noted that despite the large volume of waste generated in Libyan hospitals, there exists no structured management plan to manage these wastes effectively. As a

result, hospital waste continues to be disposed of through uncontrolled dumping, exposing individuals to a range of potential hazards [4]. Abdelsalam et al. (2021) demonstrated that only a small percentage of hospitals have functioning waste management committees and designated personnel to oversee waste management activities [5]. Although national IPC guidelines exist, most hospitals continue to rely on private waste collection services and provide little to no oversight for compliance. Collectively, these findings support the urgent need for national policies and regulatory enforcement mechanisms to protect both public health and the environment in regard to the management and disposal of medical waste in Libya.

### **III. METHODOLOGY**

A mixed-methods approach was adopted in this research, integrating both qualitative and quantitative data to evaluate the degree to which medical waste management (MWM) practices in participating hospitals align with World Health Organization (WHO) health-care waste management guidelines and relevant Libyan national regulations. Four hospitals were selected for the study, including two facilities in Tripoli and two in Tajoura, representing the public health-care sector in the region. This study assessed waste-segregation systems, collection and storage procedures, personnel training and awareness, compliance with safety standards, and institutional waste-management policies.

#### **A. Data Collection**

##### **Structured Surveys:**

Two structured surveys were administered: one targeting healthcare workers ( $n = 106$ ) and the second targeting the general public residing in proximity to the hospitals ( $n = 93$ ). Healthcare worker respondents included doctors, nurses, cleaners, laboratory technicians, and other staff. Survey questions covered topics such as:

Segregation of waste by category  
Availability and use of color-coded disposal containers  
Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) usage  
Training and competency in handling medical waste  
Knowledge of infection-control procedures  
Perceptions of occupational and environmental risk

**Semi-Structured Interviews:**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted at all four facilities with:  
Infection control officers  
Quality management representatives  
Waste-handling private contractors  
Available healthcare employees  
Two to three interview participants were recruited from each category per facility depending on availability.

**Direct Field Observations:**

Researchers conducted four to six observation visits per hospital. Field audits focused on:  
Waste bin availability and correct color-coding  
Appropriate labeling and location of disposal units  
PPE usage during waste handling  
Temporary storage facilities for hazardous and non-hazardous waste  
Transportation and final disposal methods used

**B. Data Analysis****Quantitative Analysis:**

Survey data were entered, cleaned, and validated using Microsoft Excel and subsequently analyzed with IBM SPSS Statistics and Python (Pandas, NumPy, Matplotlib, Seaborn).  
Quantitative analytical techniques included:  
Analytical Component Tools Used Methods

Data entry, cleaning, and validation Excel, Python Filtering, recoding, missing-value checks, manual verification

Descriptive statistics SPSS, Python Frequencies, percentages, bar charts, pie charts

Cross-tabulations SPSS Chi-square relationships between training, awareness, and compliance

Logistic trend interpretation Python Exploratory visual assessment of compliance predictors

Data visualization Excel, Python Custom bar charts, segmented bar graphs, pie charts, color-enhanced figures

Data from healthcare workers were coded numerically where applicable (e.g., 1 = Yes, 0 = No, ordinal scale for training frequency). SPSS was used to run FREQUENCIES, CROSSTABS, and BARCHART procedures, while Python was used for visualization refinement and validation of distributions. Results were triangulated across software to ensure data integrity and eliminate transcription errors.

### **Qualitative Analysis:**

Interview transcripts and field-observation notes were analyzed using thematic coding. Major themes included:

Strength of segregation procedures

PPE compliance and safety culture

Availability of equipment and training

Operational barriers and management attitudes

Perceived risks to workers and the community

NVivo-style manual thematic coding was applied to categorize patterns.



## **IV. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS**

### **1. Staff Data Results**

#### **A. Staff Data Analysis**

To evaluate the knowledge, attitudes and actions concerning medical waste management among 106 healthcare staff members, data collected was subjected to an analysis that consisted of demographics (age, gender, job function and experience), and various indicators including awareness of procedures, training, segregation of wastes, how well the waste management systems work and safety behaviors. Through descriptive statistic analyses using frequency and percent distributions along with comparisons of experience, awareness and adherence to the protocols, this type of analysis provided the opportunity to identify some general patterns of knowledge and areas of needed education for the subject matter without having to apply inferential statistical testing.

#### **B. Results**

##### **Demographics:**

The majority of the respondent population was 35-44 years of age (41.5%), followed by 25-34 years of age (28.3%) and 45-54 years of age (20.8%). Females comprised 72.6% of the sample, while males made up 27.4%. The professional composition of the respondent population was predominantly physicians at 51.9%, nurses at 24.5%, laboratory technicians at 20.8%, and other occupations at 2.8%. The majority of the respondent population (53.8%) possessed greater than 10 years of experience; 26.4% reported 1-5 years of experience; therefore, the majority of the respondent population was composed of experienced healthcare providers.

### Awareness and Training:

Only 39.6% of respondents reported familiarity with established formal medical waste protocols; 36.8% of the respondents reported they were unfamiliar with the formal medical waste protocols; and 23.6% of the respondents reported being unaware of whether formal medical waste protocols existed. Fifty percent of the respondents reported the use of color-coded containers; however, 37.7% of the respondents reported otherwise. Notably, the training levels were very low: 25.5% of respondents reported receiving formal training related to medical waste, while 63.2% of the respondents reported never attending any training. Few of those formally trained in medical waste management reported participating in regular training (7.5%) or annual training (9.4%). These findings demonstrated substantial shortcomings in formal training and the awareness of procedures for managing medical waste.

### Waste Management and Performance of Systems:

Only 24.5% of the respondents reported consistent segregation of medical waste; 67.0% reported segregation occasionally; and 8.5% reported no segregation of medical waste. However, 61.3% of the respondents strongly agreed that segregation of medical waste decreases the risk of infection, which reflects a good conceptual understanding of segregation but poor execution.

### Knowledge of Where Medical Waste Goes and Treatment of Medical Waste:

Knowledge of the destination of medical waste was lacking; 24.5% of the respondents knew where the medical waste went; 59.4% of the respondents were unsure of the destination of medical waste; and 9.4% of the respondents reported open burning as the primary method of disposing of medical waste. Regarding treatment, 17.0% of the

respondents reported that medical waste was treated through incineration; and 14.2% reported that medical waste was treated through autoclaving. When asked about the performance of the medical waste management system, 63.2% of the respondents reported that the system required improvement; 14.2% reported the system was performing effectively; and 22.6% reported that the system was not functioning effectively.

#### Barriers and Practices for Ensuring Safe Work Environments:

Common barriers to effective medical waste management included unclear protocols (65.1%), lack of training (47.2%), and insufficient supplies/equipment (47.2%), followed by accumulation of waste (27.4%), and shortage of staff (24.5%). A large number (96.2%) of the respondents reported feeling exposed to medical waste; however, only 48.1% of the respondents reported consistently wearing personal protective equipment (PPE); 42.5% reported occasional use of PPE; and 9.4% reported no use of PPE. The number of times per week that medical waste was collected was reported as follows: 55.7% of respondents reported once per day; 33.0% of respondents reported they were unsure; and 11.3% of respondents reported less frequently than once per day.

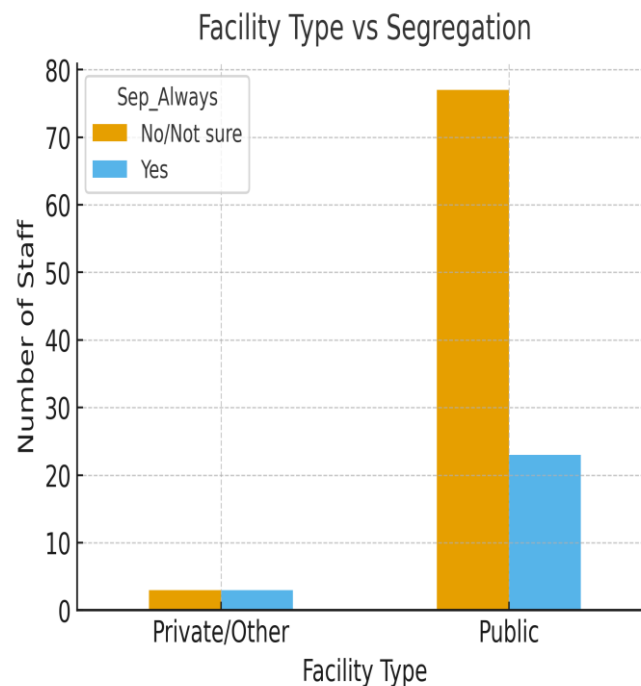


**Fig. 1. Facility Seg**

Figure 1: Training has been shown to have an association with higher mean waste-segregation scores than training has not been received by employees. The trained group's bar in relation to the untrained group along with the 95% confidence intervals clearly show a positive difference between the two groups in terms of practicality and performance of trained staff versus untrained staff that completed training.

The smaller interval about the trained mean is indicative of the reliability of performance. Training also seems to decrease the amount of variability and standardization of criteria in making decisions on which type of waste needs to be segregated and disposed of.

Management should provide ongoing training and competency assessments as part of their overall strategy. Providing brief skills

refresher courses during each year of compliance will continue to support high quality segregation practices despite employee turnover.

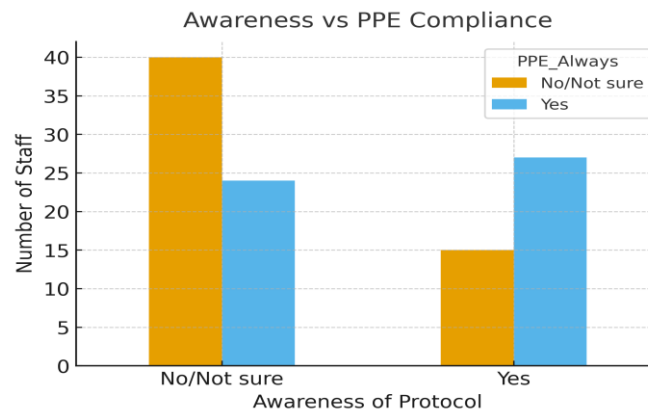


**Fig. 2. Awareness PPE**

Figure 2: Staff members who reported knowledge of medical-waste guidelines demonstrated greater and more consistent PPE ratings than those who did not know these guidelines. Both the median and IQR suggest that having a working understanding of proper medical waste protocols increases safe and consistent routine behaviors while reducing outliers of lower-compliance PPE usage.

The closer distribution of the "Aware" staff's ratings implies that they have better aligned their behaviors with the expectations of their institution. Conversely, the broader distribution of ratings for the "Non-Aware" staff implies a mix of both good and bad practices as well as possible confusion regarding what constitutes acceptable PPE in different types of situations. Operationally, this graph shows that communicating clearly established procedures (on-boarding refresher, visual reminder, pre-shift briefing) will likely improve the baseline level of PPE usage from unaware staff members.

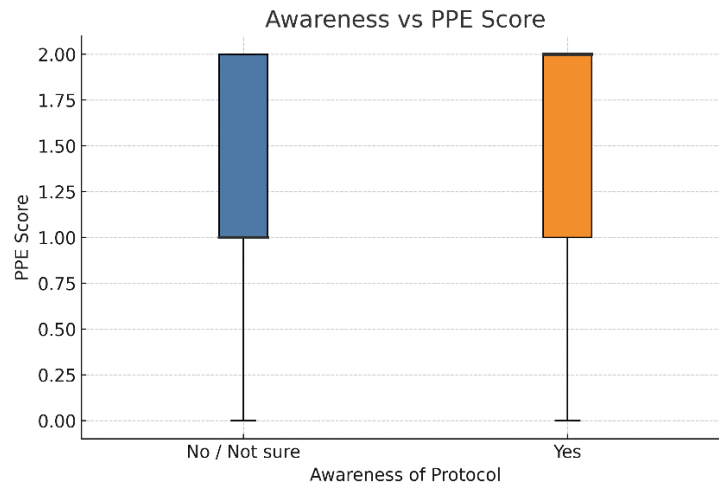


**Fig. 3. Awareness PPEscore**

Figure 3: A large portion of the workforce is likely to be unaware of some aspects of the protocol; although many will be aware, the sizeable number of non-aware/unsure employees indicate a significant gap in employee communication which could lead to inconsistent and unsafe performance.

Awareness gaps for each unit and role are most likely different with greater risk of missing updates from ancillary and rotating staff members. Using alternative methods of communicating (e.g., posters, in-app messages, laminated job aides), extends reach beyond the limited formal meeting process.

Since there is a direct relationship between awareness and behavior, increasing awareness of the protocol provides an opportunity to increase the leverage and minimize the cost for a needed intervention. Increased messaging should decrease preventable errors, improve compliance to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) requirements and provide evidence for auditing compliance.

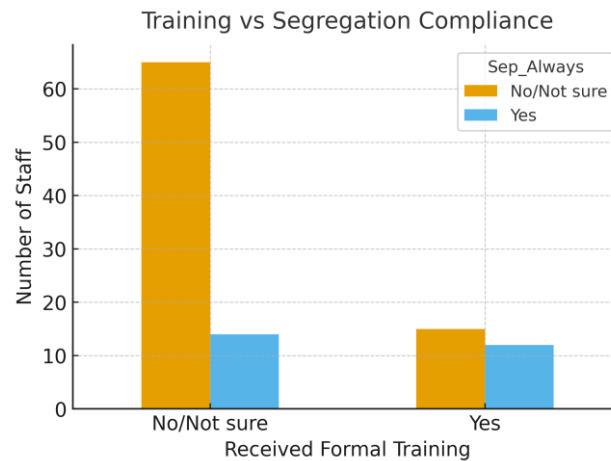


**Fig. 4. Training SegAlways**

Figure 4: Employees that were trained in the program are substantially more likely to indicate they "always segregate correctly" than employees that have not been trained, indicating that the knowledge gained from the training is being translated into daily action. The effect occurs independently of job responsibilities and length of employment as an employee.

The difference in the percentage indicates that the informal process of on-the-job learning or observing other employees does not always result in correct segregation. If employees do not receive structured instruction, they will make incorrect decisions regarding the segregation of unknown items, particularly during times of heavy workloads, or fail to recognize requirements for containers.

Programmatically, organizations should provide training for all new employees and provide refresher training periodically. Training can also be enhanced through the use of short, scenario-based modules that reinforce correct decision making and help maintain high levels of compliance until the next formal training cycle.

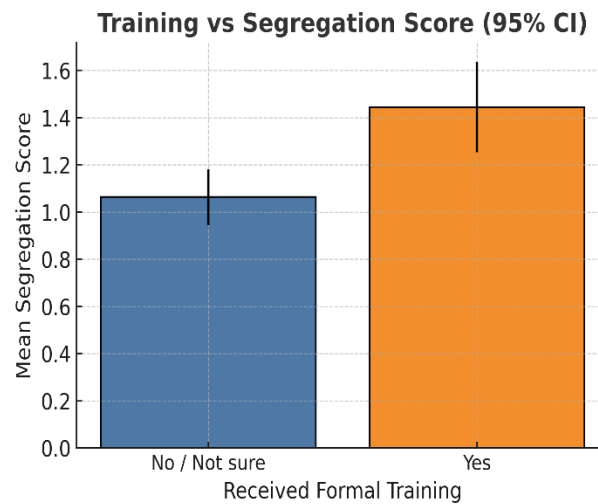


**Fig. 5. Training SegMean**

Figure 5: The figure clearly illustrates an improvement in the waste segregation efficiency of health care employees with a formal training program and a difference in efficiency as measured by the segregation scores of trained versus untrained/unsure employees. The segregation score for trained employees was significantly higher (approximately 1.45) than the segregation score for non-trained employees (approximately 1.05). While some overlap exists in the confidence intervals, the data clearly indicate that training leads to increased segregation accuracy, decreases risk of contamination, and is consistent with the WHO recommended waste management practices.



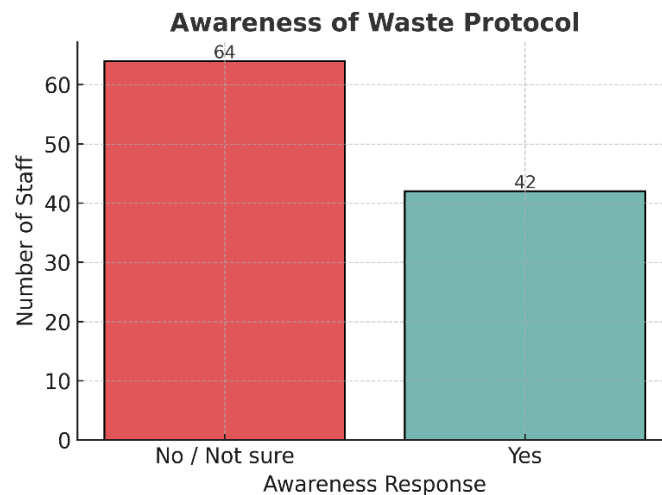


**Fig. 6. AwarenessDist**

Figure 6: The distributions of the PPE scores for aware vs. unaware staff demonstrate significant differences in terms of central tendency and dispersion. Aware staff have a high degree of clustering around the upper end of the score range while non-aware staff have a higher degree of dispersion and a higher proportion of low score values. These patterns are consistent with the idea that explicit knowledge will influence how individuals behave to protect themselves and others from infection. When guidelines are clearly visible and well understood, adherence to those guidelines can become second nature; when guidelines are either absent or ambiguous, behavior becomes less predictable.

By targeting the non-aware group with brief, specific reminders based on each individual's job responsibilities and establishing supervisor-based feedback loops, the variance in observed PPE use may be reduced and the minimum level of compliance improved, thus enhancing safety for both staff and patients.

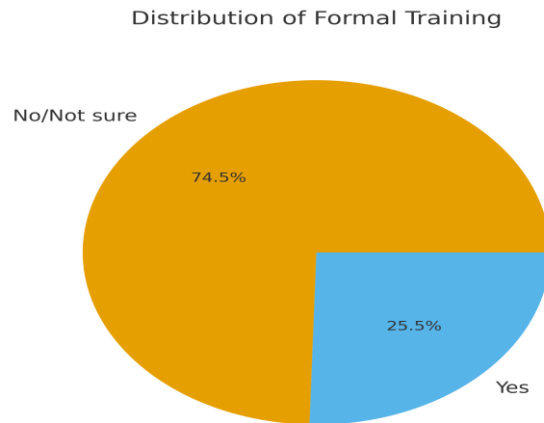


**Fig. 7. TrainingDist**

Figure 7: The distribution of the workforce who have received formal training in waste management is shown in this chart. The size of the untrained segment indicates a greater opportunity to accelerate compliance through outreach efforts to schedule. Training gaps are likely to appear at the same time among similar groups (e.g., all employees working night shifts; all employees working in warehouses). Separating training data by department can help determine where the barriers to training exist (i.e., scheduling; hours; number of employees) and which area to prioritize first to increase the training coverage rate — and ultimately improve segregation accuracy and PPE use immediately.

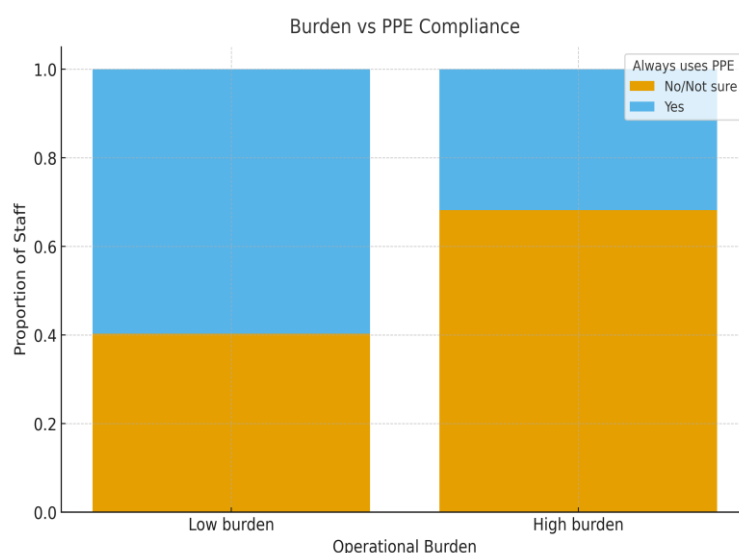


**Fig. 8. Burden PPE**

Figure 8: Workload impacts not only whether workers use personal protective equipment, but how accurately they complete tasks such as waste sorting. Under high operational burden, segregation compliance decreases. Task-simplification (e.g., clear coding on containers, pictograms for disposal locations, and fewer hand-offs) supports maintaining accuracy in procedures when a worker's cognitive bandwidth is limited. Spot checks by supervisor's support adherence to standard operating procedures.

Therefore, burden management is essential for maintaining safety performance; training and awareness are most effective when combined with a more streamlined workflow and readily available tools.

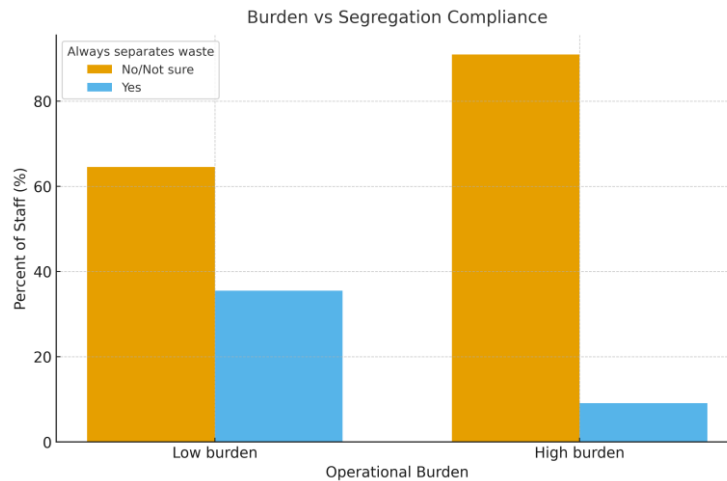


**Fig. 9. Burden Seg**

Figure 9: Staff in hospitals who experience high levels of operational burden have much lower rates of compliance than staff whose workloads are low; approximately 35% of the low-workload group is compliant as compared to 9% of the high-burden group. Approximately 90% of all non-compliant or uncertain individuals fall into the high-burden category. The results show that resource constraints and task complexities affect the ability of hospital staff to safely manage their wastes. It is therefore recommended that hospital managers implement streamlined procedures for managing waste, provide sufficient supplies to meet the needs of each individual, and hire full-time waste management personnel to assist them in reducing their burdens, increasing compliance, and meeting the World Health Organization's (WHO) recommendations for waste management in health care facilities.

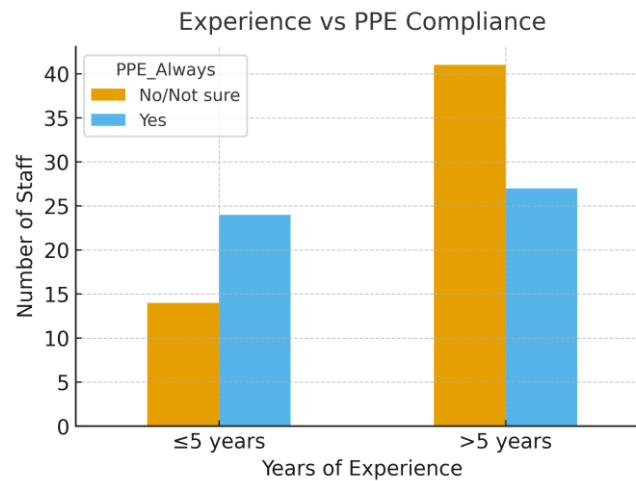


**Fig. 10. Experience PPE**

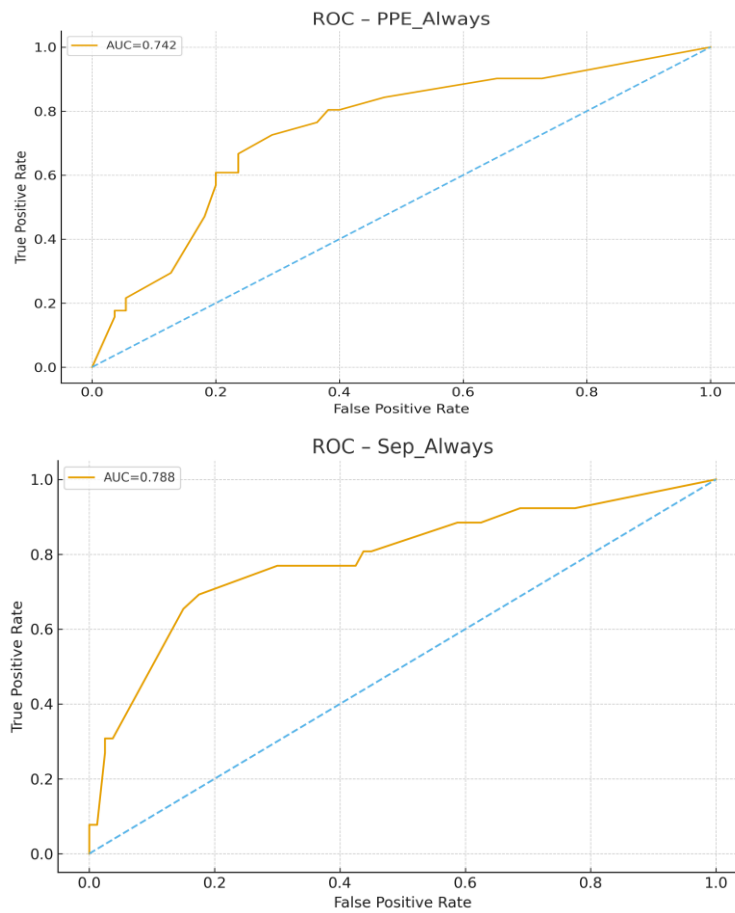
Figure 10: Employees who have been working for over five years appear to be more reliable in reporting that they consistently utilize personal protective equipment (PPE) compared to employees with less experience. It is possible that through experience, individuals develop both automaticity and situational judgment regarding protective behavior.

At the same time, a certain degree of experience can lead to "normalization of deviance" when employee work-arounds become routine habits at their workplace. Periodically reviewing and discussing "near miss" events, as well as other learning opportunities, can assist in aligning employee's informal (tacit) practices with the organization's formal safety standards.

Allowing inexperienced staff to perform high-risk activities along side an experienced mentor can create a faster pace of development of safe habits while assisting in monitoring the tendency for veteran employees to fall into a state of complacency.

## Advanced Staff Analysis (Integrated Addendum)

### Advanced Model Figures



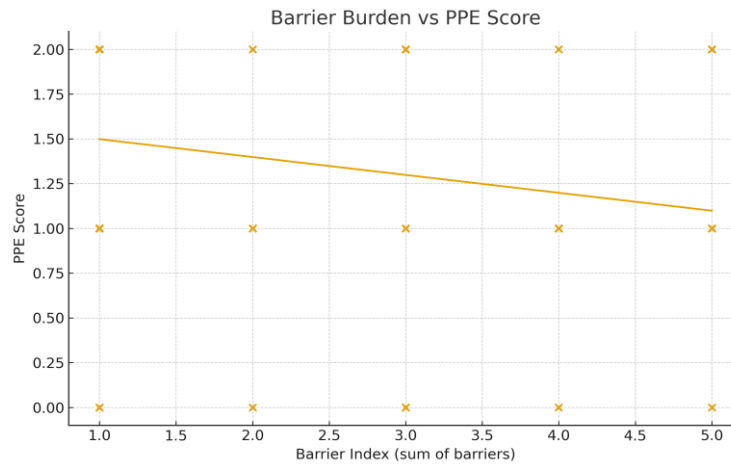


**Table I. Logistic Regression For Ppe Compliance**

| Predictor                          | OR           | 95% CI       | p-value      |
|------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Awareness of waste protocols       | 2.68         | 1.10–6.53    | 0.031        |
| Formal waste-management training   | See Appendix | See Appendix | See Appendix |
| High workload / operational burden | 0.41         | 0.17–1.00    | ~0.051       |
| Experience > 5 years               | 0.35         | 0.14–0.86    | 0.023        |
| Public sector facility             | See Appendix | See Appendix | See Appendix |

**TABLE II. Logistic Regression for Segregation Compliance**

| Predictor                          | OR           | 95% CI       | p-value      |
|------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Formal waste-management training   | 3.82         | 1.27–11.53   | 0.017        |
| Awareness of waste protocols       | 3.62         | 1.23–10.62   | 0.019        |
| High workload / operational burden | 0.28         | 0.08–0.97    | 0.044        |
| Experience > 5 years               | See Appendix | See Appendix | See Appendix |
| Public sector facility             | See Appendix | See Appendix | See Appendix |

Summary: Logistic regression indicated significant positive associations for training and awareness with compliance outcomes, and an inverse association for operational burden with segregation compliance. Both models demonstrated acceptable discrimination ( $AUC \approx 0.74\text{--}0.79$ ).



**APPENDIX A** — Full Logistic Regression Tables**Table A1. Full Logistic Regression — Always Uses Ppe**

| Variable                                    | $\beta$    | SE    | Wald<br>$\chi^2$ | OR   | 95%<br>CI     | p-<br>value |
|---------------------------------------------|------------|-------|------------------|------|---------------|-------------|
| Awareness<br>of waste<br>protocols          | 0.985      | 0.455 | 4.68             | 2.68 | 1.10–<br>6.53 | 0.031       |
| Formal<br>waste-<br>management<br>training  | -<br>0.129 | 0.496 | 0.07             | 0.88 | 0.33–<br>2.32 | 0.795       |
| High<br>workload /<br>operational<br>burden | -<br>0.884 | 0.456 | 3.77             | 0.41 | 0.17–<br>1.01 | 0.052       |
| Experience<br>> 5 years                     | -<br>1.042 | 0.457 | 5.19             | 0.35 | 0.14–<br>0.86 | 0.023       |
| Public<br>sector<br>facility                | -<br>0.093 | 0.902 | 0.01             | 0.91 | 0.16–<br>5.34 | 0.918       |

**Table A2. Full Logistic Regression — Always Segregates Correctly**

| Variable                                    | $\beta$    | SE    | Wald<br>$\chi^2$ | OR   | 95%<br>CI      | p-<br>value |
|---------------------------------------------|------------|-------|------------------|------|----------------|-------------|
| Awareness<br>of waste<br>protocols          | 1.285      | 0.550 | 5.47             | 3.62 | 1.23–<br>10.62 | 0.019       |
| Formal<br>waste-<br>management<br>training  | 1.341      | 0.564 | 5.66             | 3.82 | 1.27–<br>11.53 | 0.017       |
| High<br>workload /<br>operational<br>burden | -<br>1.287 | 0.639 | 4.06             | 0.28 | 0.08–<br>0.97  | 0.044       |
| Experience<br>> 5 years                     | -<br>0.102 | 0.531 | 0.04             | 0.90 | 0.32–<br>2.56  | 0.848       |
| Public<br>sector<br>facility                | -<br>1.217 | 1.123 | 1.17             | 0.30 | 0.03–<br>2.68  | 0.278       |

**APPENDIX B — Model Diagnostics**

| Outcome                           | AUC   | N   |
|-----------------------------------|-------|-----|
| Always uses<br>PPE                | 0.738 | 106 |
| Always<br>segregates<br>correctly | 0.788 | 106 |

## APPENDIX C — Model Equation

$$\text{logit}(\text{Pr}(Y=1)) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \cdot \text{Awareness} + \beta_2 \cdot \text{Training} + \beta_3 \cdot \text{HighBurden} + \beta_4 \cdot \text{Experience}(>5y) + \beta_5 \cdot \text{PublicFacility}$$

Advanced Analysis Addendum – Staff Dataset

### PPE Compliance (Logistic Regression)

Awareness, Training, Experience, Facility Type and Burden were modeled to influence the likelihood that an employee will consistently use PPE. Odds ratios with 95% CI's and p-values were listed in the OR table.

Performance was evaluated with the ROC/AUC Statistic and classification table at 0.5 threshold. AUC is used to measure discrimination and confusion matrix/precision/recall metrics are used to measure the practical classification performance of the model. The Interaction Term is used to determine if training improves the awareness to PPE usage. If a positive and statistically significant interaction exists, then it means that employees who are both aware and have received training have better compliance than those with just one.

### Segregation Compliance (Logistic Regression)

Using the same predictors and interaction term, the model predicts the likelihood that an employee will consistently segregate their medical waste correctly. Odds ratios and 95% CI's were included in the corresponding OR Table. Any odds ratio values greater than 1 and statistically significant indicates that employees trained and aware of correct segregation practices will segregate their medical waste more accurately.

Using AUC to measure the discriminative ability of the model, and using confusion matrix-based metrics to measure the practical

classification performance of the model, an AUC value  $\geq 0.70$  was determined to be acceptable to use for practical screening and auditing purposes. Operational burden was also taken into consideration. Lower compliance levels in high burden environments indicate that there may need to be some workflow redesign and task simplification to provide employees with the tools to maintain compliance.

#### Barrier Index (Correlation Analysis)

A Barrier Index was created by adding up all the different barrier indicators (i.e., lack of training, lack of equipment, etc.) for each location. Correlation analysis was completed to examine the association between the Barrier Index and PPE/compliance outcome scores. Negative correlation coefficients were used to determine if having more barriers resulted in less compliance/outcomes scores.

To facilitate understanding of the relationship between the Barrier Index and PPE score, a scatter plot with a fitted regression line was completed. These findings can help locations prioritize reducing the most common barriers to improve compliance (i.e., improving equipment availability or providing adequate staff during peak periods).

#### Stratified Odds Ratios - Training Effect (Odds Ratio Stratified by Experience Level & Facility Type)

Using the 2x2 odds ratio estimation method, the effect of training on compliance was evaluated separately by experience level and facility type. Using this stratified approach allows for assessing whether the training effect is stable across subpopulations. When odds ratios exceed 1 across strata and confidence intervals overlap, the training effects are deemed consistent. Conversely, when odds ratios differ significantly across subpopulations, then effect modification is indicated and separate intervention strategies may be needed

## **2. Public Data Results**

### **A. Analysis**

Respondent survey data was collected using Google Forms and then exported into Microsoft Excel and IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for statistical analysis. Respondents' demographic data and their understanding of medical waste, including how they perceive, feel about and are willing to be involved with respect to medical waste was evaluated using categorical data coding and frequency distribution/cross tabulation analysis. This method of analysis did not involve the use of complex statistical analyses and was used to determine common themes, trends, and percentages based on respondent's input.

### **B. Results**

The majority of respondents fell within the 18-30 years old age range; both genders were fairly equally represented; and the majority of respondents resided in Tripoli while a minority of respondents resided in Misrata. Approximately 82 percent of respondents indicated that they were aware of medical waste and understood that it could pose health hazards to humans. Approximately 50.5 percent of respondents believed that medical waste is typically burned; approximately 18.3 percent of respondents believed that medical waste is thrown away like regular trash; and smaller numbers of respondents stated that the waste is buried or simply burned outside. Approximately 92.5 percent of respondents indicated that they would support an educational program aimed at educating people about the dangers posed by medical waste. Additionally, nearly 60 percent of respondents indicated that they would actively participate in programs designed to educate people about the dangers associated with medical waste. These results suggest that a variety of methods such as social media,

seminars, videos and printed materials could be effectively utilized as part of an educational campaign to raise awareness of medical waste.

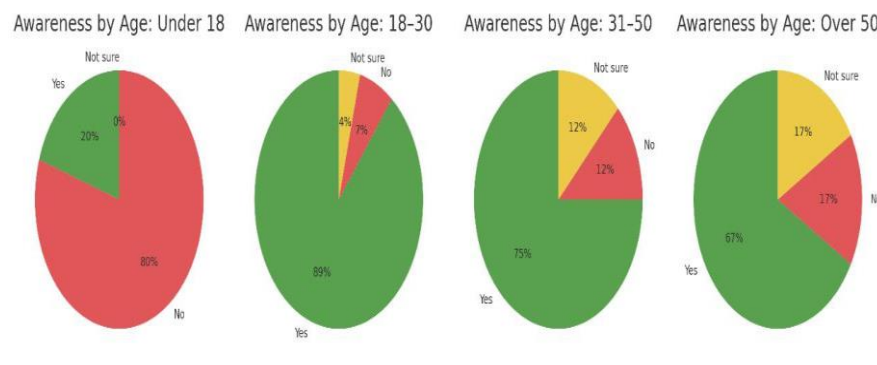


**Figure 4.2.1 Awareness Increases with Age**

Awareness increases as we get older; adults aged 18-30 years old have the highest awareness (89%). Awareness is lower for youth aged 17 or younger (80% "no") while older adults have good awareness but a lot of uncertainty. We need targeted awareness for teens and senior citizens to reduce the awareness gap.

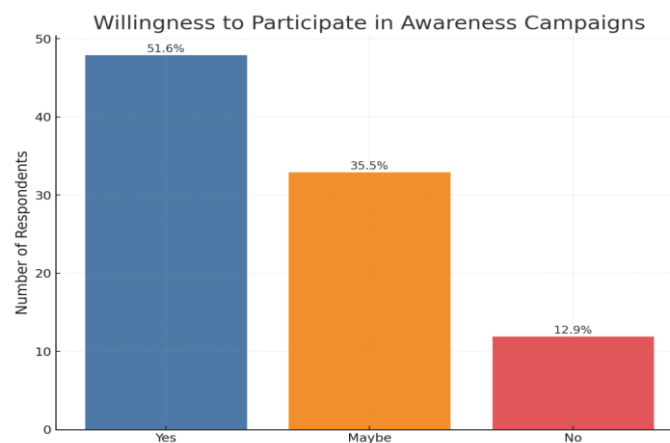


**Figure 4.2.2 Potential Participation in Awareness Programs**

We see most people (51.6%) willing to participate in an awareness campaign; and then 35.5% will maybe participate, which shows a big amount of people who want to participate in these types of efforts. So there are only 12.9% who do not want to participate, which indicates that if you put out a call for volunteers, many will come forward and that public involvement in this type of effort will likely be high.

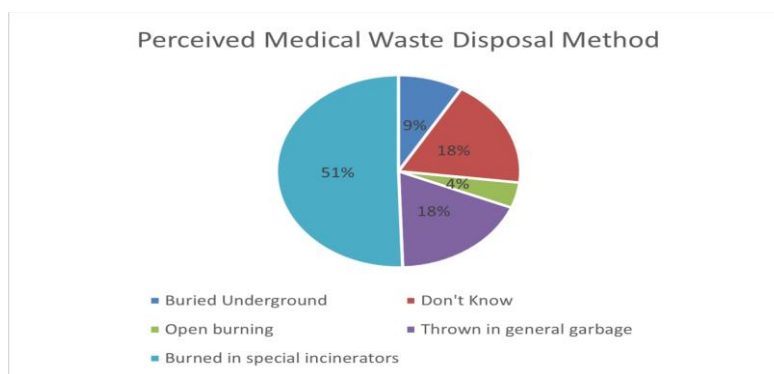


**Figure 4.2.3. Beliefs About How Medical Waste Is Disposed Of**

There is a variety of beliefs, 51% of those surveyed believed that medical waste was disposed of through burning, 18% thought it was placed in regular trash, and 18% did not know how it was disposed of. The results of this survey indicate that people are uncertain about where medical waste is disposed of, and therefore provide evidence of the need for clear communication and public education regarding proper disposal methods for medical waste.

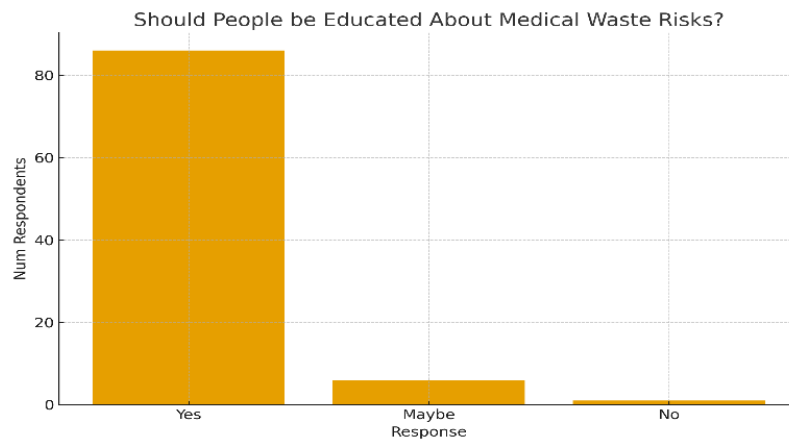


**Figure 4.2.4. Support For Public Education Regarding Medical-Waste Risks**

The majority of those surveyed (approximately 86%) supported educating the public about the risks associated with medical waste, which means that there was little opposition to providing public education. This strong level of support for public education regarding medical-waste risks further emphasizes the large potential for public-based educational programs and initiatives focused on increasing public awareness of safe practices for handling medical waste.

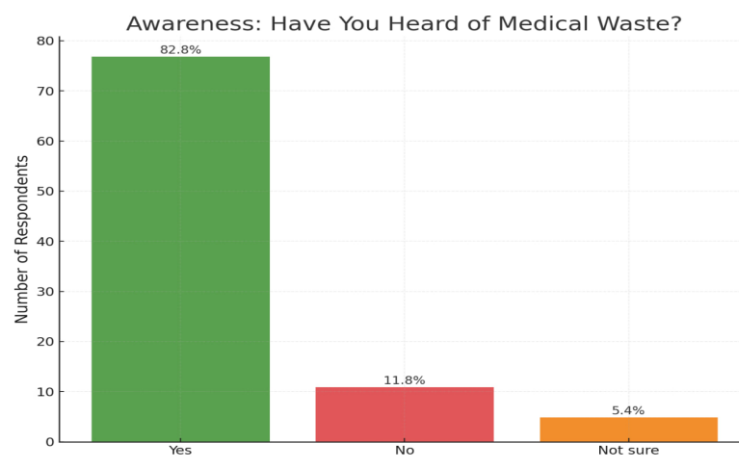


**Figure 4.2.5. Overall Awareness of Medical-Waste Issues**



While the level of overall awareness regarding medical-waste issues is very high (82.8%), there are still some individuals who do not have awareness regarding medical-waste issues (11.8%) and some who have some degree of awareness but are unsure (5.4%). Although the baseline awareness regarding medical-waste issues is very high, there remains a significant gap in awareness, which further reinforces the need for structured community education programs to increase awareness regarding safe practices for managing medical waste.

## V. DISCUSSION

Libyan healthcare workers and the public are concerned regarding safe medical waste management (MWM) practices, but there is a gap between what people think should happen and what actually happens. The study found that many healthcare staff have experience working clinically; however, they have inadequate training on formal MWM procedures. Therefore, having professional experience does not guarantee that you are doing things correctly. Respondents stated that their institutions' waste management systems do not work well due to an issue of lack of funding, unclear national guidelines and inconsistent schedules for picking up waste. This creates problems including, improperly disposing of waste through open burning or uncontrolled dumping that can pollute the environment and create risk of occupational disease for the healthcare worker.

Healthcare staff also reported inconsistencies in using PPE and in segregating waste properly. These are issues related to a lack of supervisory oversight and poor institutional safety culture. Further evidence supporting this was provided by logistic regression data where it was demonstrated that formal training of healthcare staff resulted in significantly improved segregation and disposal of medical waste. These findings indicate that awareness and training should be

ongoing and monitored closely so that long-term behavioral changes occur.

Results from the public survey provided additional evidence supporting findings related to public participation in awareness programs and understanding of risks associated with improper medical waste management. Unfortunately, the public was unaware of how to properly dispose of medical waste and did not understand who was responsible at the institutional level, suggesting that awareness exists at a theoretical level rather than a practical level. This lack of alignment between what the public perceives as proper waste management and institutional practices, suggests a need for public education and community-based awareness programs that can help close the knowledge gap between public perception and institutional practices.

Both surveys clearly identified the need for proper waste management in hospitals and clinics, however, the two datasets differed in terms of readiness to act and barriers faced by each group. Healthcare staff are impacted by a variety of institutional barriers, including limited resources, high workloads, and poor enforcement mechanisms. Members of the public are impacted by a lack of readily available information and visibility of accountability mechanisms.

Therefore, national MWM systems should develop standard operating procedures that follow WHO guidelines and include mandatory training programs, regular supervision, and sufficient resources to support safe MWM practices. Additionally, there is a need to implement public awareness campaigns to promote civic responsibility and transparency. Finally, to ensure the sustainability of safe MWM practices, the national MWM systems should continuously monitor and assess progress over time.

## VI. CHALLENGES

Some challenges faced in obtaining and processing data existed in both processes of obtaining data, and in analyzing the data. Time was wasted during the administrative process of going to hospitals to request approval to get the data, with at least one hospital requiring that the name of a hospital employee be added to the authors list of the published paper in order to allow the data to be collected, creating a serious ethical issue, and making it very difficult to make any progress. The cooperation of the staff in obtaining the correct information was also limited, since many of the health care employees, such as nurses, doctors, etc., were cooperative, but the employees of the contracting companies who cleaned the facilities were often difficult to reach or did not wish to cooperate in the research. Due to some issues with data quality, verification of the data collected was needed. A significant amount of the responses was either incomplete or were inconsistent, therefore the data was cleaned and sanitized in order to increase the reliability of the data. Following the coding of variables by use of SPSS, all bilingual elements of the data were removed, so that all of the results would be consistent and in English.

As stated earlier, the present study had a sample size of 106 hospital employees and 93 public respondents, which is less than what may have been preferred, and the study was conducted in only four hospitals located in the Tripoli-Tajoura area of Libya, thus limiting the generalization of the results of the study. Additionally, the long time required to collect the data (because of the inadequate parking at the sites, and because of the necessity of repeatedly visiting each of the sites), greatly extended the period of data collection.

Regardless of these limitations, the present study was able to provide substantial insight into the voids in the present practices of the

management of medical waste in the hospitals of Libya and identified the need for greater institutional support and additional ethical guidelines for future studies.

## VII. Conclusion

In addition to highlighting that medical waste management (MWM) practices are well below international standards at the hospitals in Tripoli and Tajoura studied in this research, this research also shows that there is a moderate level of knowledge of the potential for infections and disease transmission among the employees of the hospitals studied but inadequate access to quality and consistent training programs, unambiguous standards or protocols and adequate physical plant continue to render ineffective the MWM system. The survey results showed that the vast majority of participants were dissatisfied with the MWM systems used by their hospitals and cited limited financial and material resources, insufficient waste collection frequency, and lack of trained staff as significant operational constraints. In addition, continued use of dangerous and illegal practices such as open burning and inadequate segregation of medical waste pose ongoing hazards to the environment and employee safety.

On the community side, the survey data demonstrates a high awareness of the dangers of medical waste and an expressed willingness to participate in educational programs related to the safe management of medical waste. However, the presence of inaccurate assumptions concerning how medical waste is disposed of indicates an urgency to develop public education campaigns on proper medical waste disposal techniques. The apparent alignment of public interest and professional ineffectiveness emphasizes the necessity for the development of an integrated program of awareness and public policy reform.

Therefore, based upon the conclusions drawn from this research, it is determined that the Libyan healthcare sector needs immediate institutional support to enhance its MWM capabilities. National policies governing MWM systems will need to be developed and strictly enforced through regulation and supervision. Hospitals will need to provide employees with continuous professional training and provide the necessary materials and equipment to perform their responsibilities effectively. Additionally, collaborative efforts between hospitals, local municipalities and waste management service providers will be required to assure long-term sustainability in the segregation and disposal of medical waste. Therefore, advancing both professional competence and public awareness is essential for creating a safer and more secure healthcare environment for the people of Libya.

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## **Machine Learning Identifies Biomarkers for Immunotherapy Response in Breast Cancer Patients**





## Machine Learning Identifies Biomarkers for Immunotherapy Response in Breast Cancer Patients

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### Abstract

Relapse and treatment resistance in the current breast cancer therapy has led to an urgent alternative treatment with higher efficacy. Immunotherapy in breast cancer treatment is under investigation supported by the number of studies aims to identify novel biomarkers and therapeutic targets, however, the cold tumor microenvironment, limits T cell infiltration and leads to anti-tumor immunity, which present a serious challenge. As a result of various patients' expression profiles, some patients may experience severe events such as Cytokine Release Syndrome (CRS) and be classified as non-responders. These negative out- comes highlight the need for predictive biomarkers that help improve precision medicine with reduced side effects. In this study, a cohort of 529 breast cancer patients was classified into 109 responders and 420 non-responders using the Immunophenoscore (IPS). After preprocessing and feature selection, a two-pronged machine learning approach was applied. XGBoost achieved 89.3% accuracy with a ROC AUC of 0.909, while a neural network reached 98.1% accuracy and an almost perfect ROC AUC of 0.999. Hyperparameter tuning ensured model robustness. Feature importance

analysis identified immune-related genes—including Vstm3, Zbtb32, Aqp9, CD52, IL1R2, and STAT4—as key predictors of response.

These findings demonstrate that machine learning can accurately predict immunotherapy outcomes and uncover candidate gene biomarkers, offering a promising approach for personalized breast cancer treatment.

**Keywords** —Breast Cancer, Machine Learning , Neural Network, Immunotherapy, Biomarker

## I. INTRODUCTION

Breast cancer presents a serious threat and a health concern affecting a high number of women patients worldwide. Risk factors include genetic predispositions, lifestyle, reproductive patterns, age, and family history. Even though current detection methods such as mammography, ultrasound, MRI, and biopsy have been used for diagnosis for a long time, they are associated with some errors and false positive, and false negative results [1] [2]. Therapy assessment relies mainly on the expression of four molecular biomarkers hormone receptors Progesterone Receptor (PR), Estrogen Receptor (ER), Human Epidermal growth factor Receptor 2 (HER2), and proliferation marker ki-69. Although hormonal therapy, and chemotherapy are widely used treatment options, some patients develop drug resistance [3].

The role of the immune system still presents a concern in the cancer research area, especially what is known as

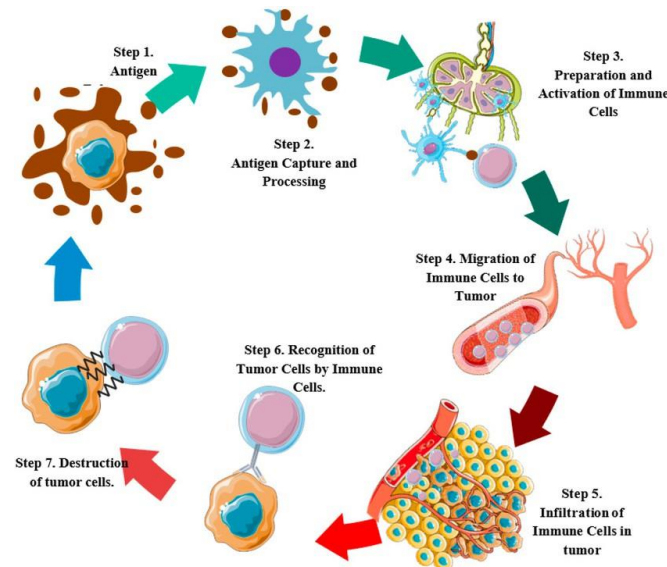


**Fig. 1. A Comprehensive View of the Cancer-Immunity Cycle (CIC) in HPV-Mediated Cervical Cancer and Prospects for Emerging Therapeutic Opportunities. Avila JP .et al. (2023). Cancer immunity cycle illustration[4] .**

The immune-cancer cycle. The cycle starts when tumor cells secrete specific antigens, which are detected by Antigen Presenting Cells (APC), These cells are responsible for exposing tumor antigens into native T cells, which in turn will be activated and traveled through the blood stream to tumor site for exerting their immune response. Any disruption in this cycle leads to immune evasion, which is best described as the escape of cancer cells from immune system response [5]. Immunotherapy such as immune checkpoint inhibitors aim to restore the dysfunction in the immune-cancer cycle, therefore boost the anti-tumor immunity. Non-responsiveness that has been observed

in cancer patients undergoing immunotherapy treatment could be the result of impaired activation of one of the steps in this cycle.

Although breast cancer cells express several antigens that may serve as candidate targets for immunotherapy such as ROR1, MUC1 and EpCAM , many challenges have emerged that present a serious concern [5]. Solid tumors including

breast cancer characterized by their cold tumor microenvironment, composed of suppressor cells (cancer associated fibroblast, Treg cells, and cancer associated macrophage), cytokines, and modified extracellular matrix, all contribute to dampen anti-tumor immunity result in less T lymphocytes infiltration [6]. Despite the positive and promising results obtained from immunotherapy treatment, the fact that patients with the same type of cancer differ in their tumor microenvironment, expression profile, and immune system status cannot be ignored [7]. Studies reported that only 4.8% of breast cancer patients respond to immunotherapy (the highest response was in TNBC) [8]. Unfortunately, non-responders to immunotherapy may practise several Toxicities such severe immune related events, and Cytokine Release Syndrome (CRS), in addition, their immune system might be affected, leading to immune cells exhaustion, therefore worse disease progression.

The ImmunoPhenoScore (IPS) is a measure that shows how strong the immune response might be in cancer patients. IPS is used to predict how well a patient is likely to respond to treatments like immune checkpoint inhibitors, such as anti-PD-1, anti-PD-L1, and anti-CTLA-4 therapies. [9] The score ranges from 0 to 10, with higher scores indicating a stronger immune response and a better chance of responding well to immunotherapy. IPS is calculated using gene expression data by utilizing four important groups directly affecting the immune system: Major Histocompatibility Complex (MHC) molecules,

checkpoint-related immunomodulators (CP), effector cells (EC), and suppressor cells (SC). Major Histocompatibility Complex (MHC) Molecules aid immune cells by flagging antigens on the cell surface, which helps the immune system identify and destroy abnormal cells. [8] Checkpoint-related immunomodulators (CP) are proteins that prevent an overactive immune response by balancing activation and suppression, however, Cancer cells can use them to avoid being detected by the immune system. [9] Effector Cells (EC) are responsible for attacking tumors. They play a key role in directly killing cancer cells. [9] Suppressor Cells (SC) regulate immune activity but can also promote tumor growth by suppressing anti-tumor responses[9] .

Machine learning (ML), is a branch of artificial intelligence that enables algorithms to learn from data and improve their performance without being explicitly programmed. ML has been and still is utilized in healthcare, from radiographic image processing to genetically personalized treatments and is proving its success [10]. In oncology, ML in both traditional and neural network models is particularly useful for analyzing complex high-dimensional data sets such as gene expression, and imaging data. These approaches can identify subtle molecular signatures by using feature selection and importance methods and arrange patients according to their likelihood of response and classification of treatment, thereby supporting precision medicine decision taking [11] [12] [13]. The objective of this study is to use both traditional and shallow Neural Network (NN) models to identify hidden patterns in important gene biomarkers responsible for the immunotherapy response that contribute to improved prediction models and more personalized therapeutic strategies.

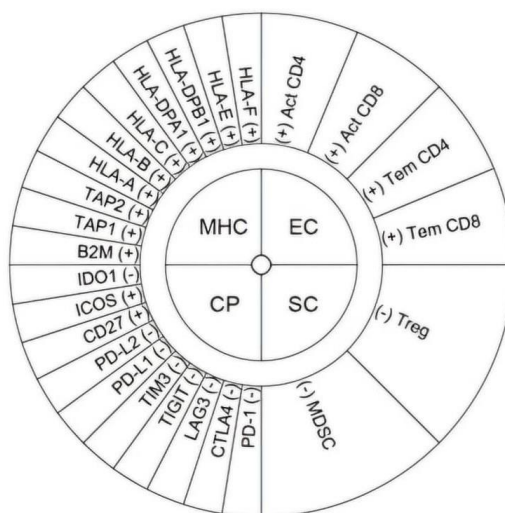


**Fig. 2. Pan-cancer Immunogenomic Analyses Reveal Genotype-Immunophenotype Relationships and Predictors of Response to Checkpoint Blockade. Charoentong P .et al. (2017). ImmunePhenoGraph four main groups with weight[15] .**

## II. METHOD

To bring the project to life, an unlabeled breast cancer gene expression dataset was sourced from Kaggle [14], containing

529 patient samples and 17,814 gene features, originally obtained from The Cancer Genome Atlas (TCGA). The dataset compiles results obtained using Agilent mRNA expression microarrays. All expression measurements are recorded on the log scale. To label the dataset, an immunephenoscore (ips) method approach was taken. By analyzing the source paper

[15] and the open-source R-script [16] The dataset was binary labeled in a python environment according to the ips gene set and weight with a biologically justified threshold of 0.5 instead of the traditional relative labeling that results in ips comparing patients relative to each

other. This approach was taken for best real life scenario resemblance. The value of the threshold was chosen based on the visualisation of ips values Figure 3. The resulting label distribution was 109 responsive and 420 non-responsive Table 1 which is an unbalanced dataset yet a true description of reality.

**Table I Class Distribution**

| Class          | Number |
|----------------|--------|
| Responsive     | 109    |
| Non-responsive | 420    |

The dataset was split into X and Y sets for features (genes) and labels. Preprocessing and feature selection was applied to the X set to refine it as follows:

- 1) Missing value imputation using SimpleImputer from scikit-learn (sklearn) with the mean strategy.

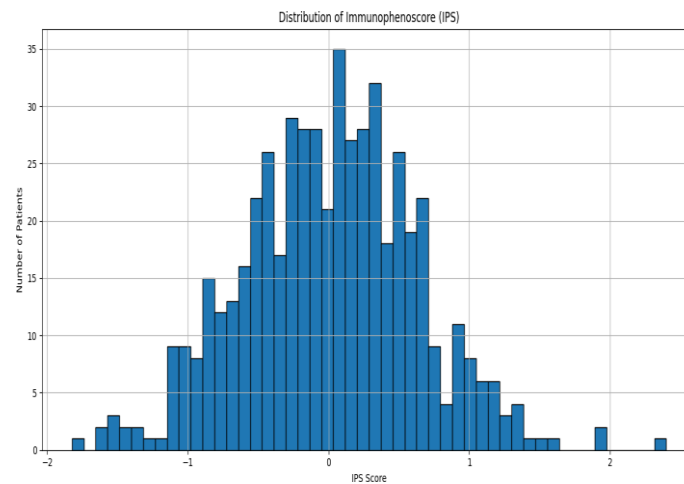


**Fig. 3. ImmunoPhenoScore visual distribution**



- 2) Feature scaling with StandardScaler using default parameters.
- 3) Low Variance Filtering was removed using sklearn's VarianceThreshold, with a threshold set at 0.2.
- 4) Correlation Filtering using the absolute Pearson correlation values between remaining features. From the upper triangle of the matrix, features with a correlation coefficient greater than 0.9 were identified. One feature from each highly correlated pair was removed to reduce multicollinearity
- 5) Lasso feature selection using sklearn's Lasso, where the optimal alpha value was determined by tuning over a range of values.

Following preprocessing the final dataset was split into 70% train and 30% test sets using sklearn's train test split function. Synthetic Minority Oversampling Technique (SMOTE) was utilized on the train set in order to address the balance issue of the dataset which consists of around 75% of non-responsive patients and only 25% responsive patients. Which in result increased the train set count up to 588 patients by synthetically producing 'minority class patients' based on the nearest neighbours.

While traditional ML models offer valuable insights and strong baseline performance, they are not strong on their own. To address these limitations and further improve predictive accuracy, a NN-based approach was implemented, which can uncover subtle, nonlinear patterns that may be critical to accurately predict patient responsiveness. The same base pre-processing technique and data splitting was used with NN. A loop with 3 gradually deeper layers was implemented to ensure better exploration of model performance with different hidden layer using NN. starting with a single hidden layer (100) upto 3 layers (256, 128, 64) and a middle 2 hidden layers (64, 128) To interpret the NN model SHapley Additive exPlanations

(SHAP) a model-agnostic method for explaining individual ML model predictions by assigning each feature (gene) a "Shapley value" that quantifies its contribution to the prediction. A SHAP summary plot was used to visualize the most influential genes, where each point represents a patient sample, the horizontal axis indicates the impacts direction and magnitude on the prediction, and the color denotes the feature expression value (blue = negative, red = positive).

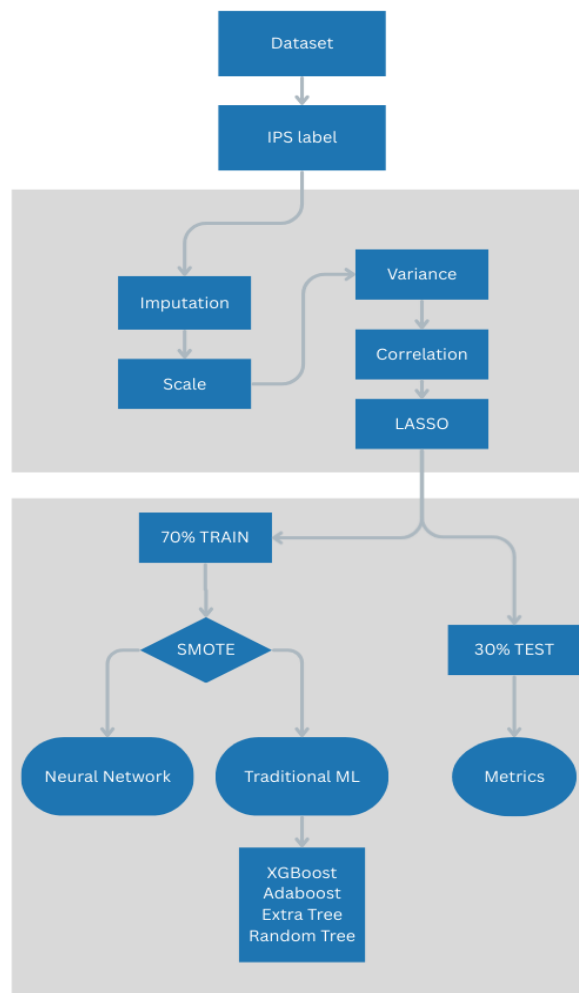


**Fig. 4. Method Block diagram**

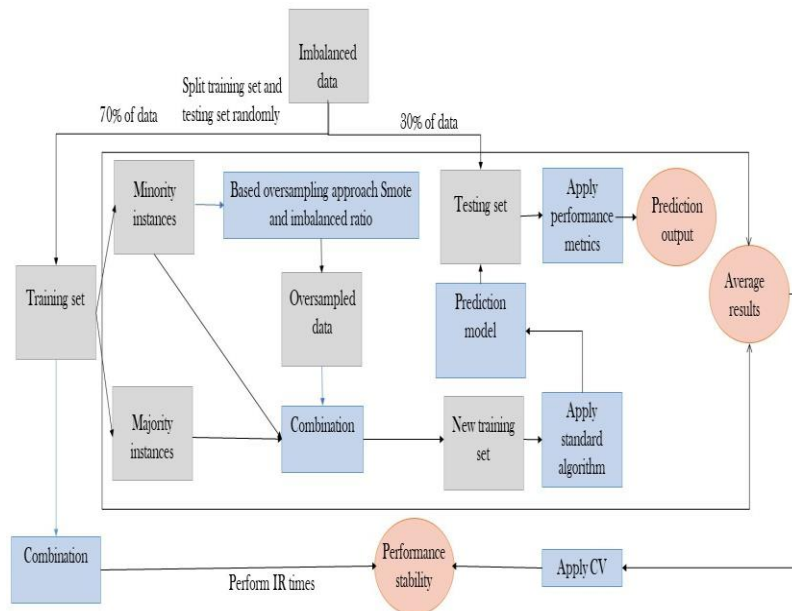


**Fig. 5. SMOTE Block diagram**

### III. RESULTS

Preprocessing and feature selection reduced the original 17814 feature (gene) dataset to 319 features set by removing irrelevant, redundant, and noisy genes. This refinement enables models to better identify and rank the most informative features down the line.

**Table I v .Top 10 Gene Feature Importance's Across Models**

| Model         | Accuracy | F1 Score | Recall | Precision | ROC AUC |
|---------------|----------|----------|--------|-----------|---------|
| XGBoost       | 0.874    | 0.865    | 0.874  | 0.867     | 0.897   |
| Extra Tree    | 0.868    | 0.846    | 0.868  | 0.876     | 0.906   |
| AdaBoost      | 0.855    | 0.856    | 0.855  | 0.857     | 0.872   |
| Decision Tree | 0.824    | 0.824    | 0.824  | 0.824     | 0.751   |
| Random Forest | 0.824    | 0.805    | 0.824  | 0.805     | 0.758   |
| QDA           | 0.792    | 0.701    | 0.792  | 0.628     | 0.500   |
| Naive Bayes   | 0.767    | 0.757    | 0.767  | 0.749     | 0.743   |
| Gaussian NB   | 0.767    | 0.757    | 0.767  | 0.749     | 0.743   |
| KNN           | 0.478    | 0.498    | 0.478  | 0.833     | 0.802   |

**Table II . Performance Metrics Of ML Models (Sorted By Accuracy)**

| Model         | Accuracy | F1 Score | Recall | Precision | ROC AUC |
|---------------|----------|----------|--------|-----------|---------|
| XGBoost       | 0.874    | 0.865    | 0.874  | 0.867     | 0.897   |
| Extra Tree    | 0.868    | 0.846    | 0.868  | 0.876     | 0.906   |
| AdaBoost      | 0.855    | 0.856    | 0.855  | 0.857     | 0.872   |
| Decision Tree | 0.824    | 0.824    | 0.824  | 0.824     | 0.751   |
| Random Forest | 0.824    | 0.805    | 0.824  | 0.805     | 0.758   |
| QDA           | 0.792    | 0.701    | 0.792  | 0.628     | 0.500   |
| Naive Bayes   | 0.767    | 0.757    | 0.767  | 0.749     | 0.743   |
| Gaussian NB   | 0.767    | 0.757    | 0.767  | 0.749     | 0.743   |
| KNN           | 0.478    | 0.498    | 0.478  | 0.833     | 0.802   |

**Table III . Machine Learning Top Models Performance Metrics (Sorted By Accuracy)**

| Model         | Fitting Time | Testing Time | Acc.  | F1    | Recall | Precision | ROC AUC | CoMatrix nf.           |
|---------------|--------------|--------------|-------|-------|--------|-----------|---------|------------------------|
| XGBoost       | 2.959        | 0.047        | 0.893 | 0.883 | 0.893  | 0.894     | 0.909   | 2<br>12<br>4<br>1<br>5 |
| AdaBoost      | 6.827        | 0.066        | 0.887 | 0.881 | 0.887  | 0.882     | 0.920   | 1<br>2<br>1<br>1<br>3  |
| Extra Tree    | 0.736        | 0.032        | 0.855 | 0.831 | 0.855  | 0.856     | 0.901   | 1<br>2<br>4<br>2<br>1  |
| Random Forest | 2.016        | 0.050        | 0.855 | 0.827 | 0.855  | 0.864     | 0.891   | 1<br>2<br>5<br>2<br>2  |

**Table IV. Final neural network performance**

| Gene             | Extra<br>Tree | Random<br>Forest | AdaBo<br>ost | XGBo<br>ost |
|------------------|---------------|------------------|--------------|-------------|
| VSTM3            | 0.0231        | 0.0143           | —            | 0.0174      |
| ZBTB32           | 0.0227        | 0.0269           | 0.0301       | 0.0298      |
| AQP9             | 0.0203        | 0.0251           | 0.0299       | —           |
| CD52             | 0.0165        | 0.0201           | —            | —           |
| STAT4            | 0.0164        | —                | 0.0201       | —           |
| LOC124446        | 0.0138        | 0.0289           | —            | 0.0151      |
| NCF2             | 0.0122        | 0.0175           | —            | —           |
| GNB1L            | 0.0117        | 0.0146           | —            | —           |
| TRIM6-<br>TRIM34 | 0.0112        | —                | —            | —           |
| IL1R2            | 0.0112        | —                | —            | 0.0186      |
| HLA-G            | —             | —                | 0.0381       | —           |
| DPEP2            | —             | —                | 0.0331       | —           |
| RECQL            | —             | —                | 0.0271       | —           |
| MX1              | —             | —                | 0.0236       | —           |
| TMEM50A          | —             | —                | 0.0233       | 0.0129      |
| RRBP1            | —             | —                | 0.0224       | —           |
| C6orf192         | —             | —                | 0.0196       | —           |
| LILRB5           | —             | 0.0202           | —            | 0.0236      |
| PNMT             | —             | —                | —            | 0.0182      |
| DSTN             | —             | —                | —            | 0.0142      |
| RHPN2            | —             | —                | —            | 0.0142      |
| OR6K3            | —             | —                | —            | 0.0128      |

**Table V . Final Neural Network Performance**

| Model          | Accuracy | F1    | Recall | Precision | ROC AUC | Confusion Matrix                                |
|----------------|----------|-------|--------|-----------|---------|-------------------------------------------------|
| Neural Network | 0.981    | 0.955 | 0.970  | 0.941     | 0.999   | $\begin{matrix} 124 & 2 \\ 1 & 32 \end{matrix}$ |

A model loop was implemented with parameter grids for each traditional ML model to optimize their performance and generate a metrics table for comparison. The evaluation included the following metrics: Fitting Time/Testing Time, Accuracy, F1 Score, Recall, Precision, and ROC AUC. The initial run with several ML models produced the results shown in Table 2. The top-performing models Extra Trees, XGBoost, AdaBoost, and Random Forest were then rerun with expanded parameter grids shown in Table 3 to enhance their performance and extract the top 10 most influential features for each model shown in Tables 4 which are discussed in detail below.

NN achieved impressive predictive performance across all tested architectures. The architectures were evaluated by F1 score. The baseline single-layer network (100,) yielded the highest mean F1 score of  $0.991 \pm 0.006$ , surpassing the two- layer (128, 64) and three-layer (256, 128, 64) networks, which

achieved  $0.979 \pm 0.015$  and  $0.985 \pm 0.015$ , respectively. This resulted in using the simple single layer NN model as the final NN training to achieve the results shown in Table 5.

The SHAP summary plot in Figure 7 highlights the top genes that most strongly influenced NN predictions. The sorted (highest to lowest impact) genes listed showed the impact on the model output by making red points (high positive expression values) shifted predictions toward responsiveness, while blue points (low negative expression values) were associated with non-responsiveness.

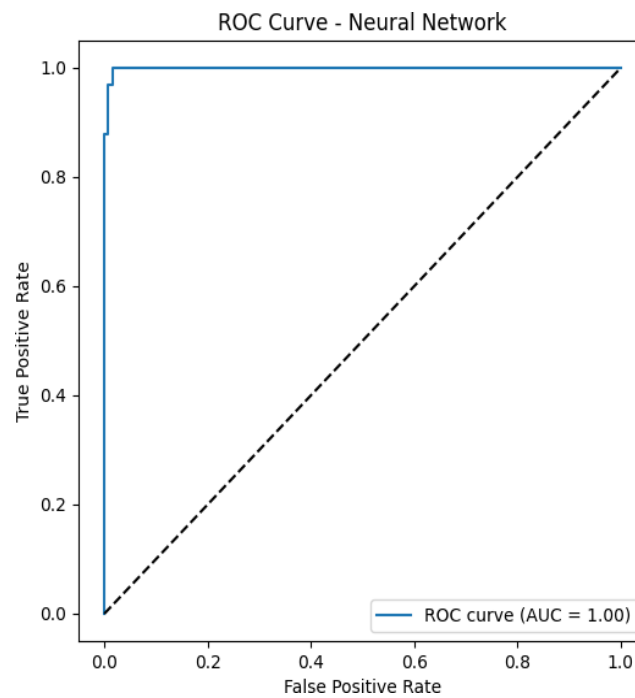


**Fig. 6. ROC Curve - Neural Network**



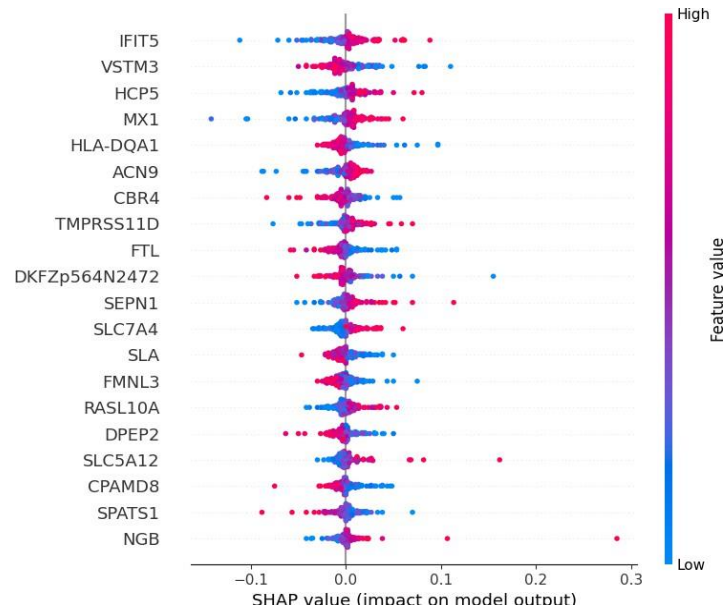


**Fig. 7. SHAP feature vs value impact on model - Neural Network**

#### IV. DISCUSSION

In this study, different ML algorithms have been used to identify novel genes that serve as potential biomarkers for immunotherapy response. So far, six genes (Vstm3, Zbtb32, Aqp9, CD52, IL1R2 and STAT4) were suggested by ML models to influence patients' outcomes to immunotherapy based on (IPS).

Although Vstm3 and Aqp9 have distinct functions, both have been previously demonstrated as candidates predictors for immunotherapy, due their high expression in breast cancer cells. Aqp9 promotes BC progression through Tumor-associated neutrophils (TANs), while Vstm3 is expressed in NK and Treg cells, which influence immune regulation [19] [18][17] STAT4 and IL1R2 have shown to be a good predictor toward immune checkpoint inhibitors response. For

example, STAT4 expression was found to be associated with PDL-1 immune checkpoint [20] [21]. CD52 is a Glycoprotein on immune cells and a biomarker in breast cancer, CD52 expression in BC patients was associated with better ICI response [22]. Zbtb32 is a transcription repressor protein found in activated T and B cells affecting their activation and memory formation [23] [24], its production can be induced by secretion of pro-inflammatory cytokines, furthermore, it facilitates the proliferation of NK cells [25], this gene can promote breast cancer development through GATA3 suppression, which is an essential regulator of mammary luminal epithelial cell differentiation [26], Even though, currently no study indicates the correlation between Zbtb32 and immunotherapy, these findings shows that Zbtb32 may serve as a potential immunotherapy biomarker.

In addition, BC patients of this study were classified into responders and non- responders by utilizing IPS as a predictive criterion. While IPS is commonly used to predict the strength of the immune response in cancer patients, its direct application for patient stratification is limited in the literature.

Our novel method shows the effectiveness of utilizing IPS for immunotherapy responsiveness prediction, as supported by our results, as our approach identified several biomarker genes that have been previously correlated with immunotherapy response prediction in the literature, which confirm the reliability of our findings.

Although a huge dataset might seem as a great opportunity for gene analysis it is not always kept as is. Preprocessing was a big focus in this study to reduce the risk of overfitting, eliminate noise and reduce computational time. This also provides a more realistic gene importance list for real life implementation. The reduction of the dataset genes from 17824 to 319 genes was carefully planned to ensure the end-list is a valuable impactful gene list.

A thorough comparison was made to determine the best possible outcome for this study. By implementing loops to go through models as an initial run an overview of which algorithm would suit the dataset best, to which then the best possible models would be fine-tuned more to ensure the best version is implemented. Among the traditional ML models tested, XGBoost, Extra Trees, Random Forest, and AdaBoost rose as the top-performing traditional ML models. Those results indicate how well ensemble models works in handling complex non-linear relationship in addition to their embedded ability to provide feature importance list

Compared to traditional models, NN consistently outperformed Extra Trees, AdaBoost, Random Forest, and XGBoost. This being not a surprising finding suggests that the nonlinear representation power of deep learning is extra effective in capturing complex gene-expression patterns underlying immunotherapy responsiveness. Interestingly, within the tested NN architectures, the simplest single-layer model outperformed the deeper architectures. This observation highlights an important point: increased model complexity does not always guarantee better performance. In fact, for relatively modest sample sizes like this study, simpler models may generalize more effectively by reducing the risk of overfitting.

A limitation of this study is the lack of large, publicly available, labeled datasets for immunotherapy response. As a result, the cohort used was not originally collected based on treatment outcomes, requiring the use of the IPS to label it. This approach led to an imbalanced dataset, with 1 to 4 ratio of higher non-responders. Although not an extreme imbalance, it required the application of SMOTE to augment the training set and achieve a balanced 50%-50% class distribution, which may introduce some synthetic bias and affect model generalization.

## V. CONCLUSION

Overall, the integration of ML applications with immuno- genic data in our study reveals the possibility of using Zbtb32 as a novel immunotherapy biomarker in breast cancer which must be further confirmed by in vitro studies and clinical applications. Furthermore, the findings indicate the efficiency of the used ML algorithms, which is shown by the number of immunotherapy predictors that have previously been mentioned in the literature.

This project aims to create a bioinformatics-based screening pipeline for identifying immunotherapy targets in Triple- Negative Breast Cancer (TNBC) using transcriptomic data and artificial intelligence. This pipeline has clear real-world application potential as a clinical decision support tool for oncologists and researchers. When fully developed, it can be transformed into a digital platform or cloud-based software service capable of: Receiving gene expression input from tumor samples. Processing the data using our curated model. Delivering predictive outputs about the suitability of immunotherapy targets such as immune checkpoint genes. This tool can be integrated into hospital diagnostic labs, biotech R&D platforms, and personalized treatment planning systems. Its usage aligns with needs in oncology, bioinformatics, and precision medicine.

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## **Producing Biodiesel from Algae and Promoting Environmental Sustainability**

**3**



## **Producing Biodiesel from Algae and Promoting Environmental Sustainability**

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### **Abstract**

Amidst the environmental challenges and the sustained depletion of natural resources in Libya, especially the country's dependence on economically volatile fossil fuels, there is a clear need for engineering technologies that accompany sustainable development. Biofuels are considered the solution by exploiting available marine resources, especially green and brown algae. The aim of this paper is to open the orbit to explore the properties of green and brown algae and their use in biodiesel production due to their availability on the Libyan coast (A. Amal Al-Naas 2024) in addition to their biological activity, rapid growth, high oil content, and ability to store sugars. They can be fed using secondary olive waste after extracting olive oil, as this waste is considered harmful to the environment , It can be used after being treated and converted into organic fertilizer, as it contains organic compounds that contribute to improving the algae's fat production and producing biodiesel, whose physical properties are similar to those of petroleum diesel, and its low carbon dioxide emissions and effective use in engines, heating and electricity generation, It can be produced

by extracting oils from algae and then (by esterification). Algae have proven effective in producing biodiesel, a strategic alternative energy option for a more sustainable future. Biomethane can also be produced through anaerobic fermentation of algae, bioethanol through algae fermentation, and biochar through algae pyrolysis.

**Keywords:** Biodiesel, olive waste, brown algae, green algae, organic fertilizer and biofuel

## I. INTRODUCTION

Recently, there has been a continuous increase in the rates of environmental pollution in many areas due to the lack of community awareness and gross neglect of the environment and the public [1]. Libya is considered one of the Mediterranean countries that is characterized by a climate suitable for growing olive trees. The olive tree is considered one of the perennial trees in Libya and Libya is classified among the leading producers in the world today [2], One of the most prominent solutions was to utilize olive waste and convert it into organic fertilizer to feed green and brown algae, which can be cultivated in open pond system [3], After that, biofuel is produced. The most prominent type of biofuel is biodiesel. Two types of algae were chosen: green algae, especially microalgae, and brown algae, which produce fats, active biological materials, and a high fat content [4],[5], Olive oil mills produce two types of waste: olive pomace and liquid waste called olive mill wastewater (OMW) [6], Olive industry waste and methods of disposing of it are among the most important problems we face, as this waste has a dual nature. It is considered an environmental and agricultural pollutant, and at the same time it contains important elements and compounds that can be treated and utilized [7] Including by finding new and effective solutions to enhance sustainability by treating it through environmentally friendly biological treatment and converting it into organic fertilizer.

Biodegradation can be aerobic in the presence of oxygen or anaerobic without oxygen. Both methods lead to the biological effectiveness of treatment and conversion into organic fertilizer and depend on types of microorganisms Which feeds on organic matter and its ability to decompose the phenolic compounds present in the olive mill wastewater [8], We begin to delve deeper into the search for energy sources and sustainability, and the algae that is receiving great attention are called green gold and their enormous potential for producing renewable biofuels. They can thrive in different environments, making them an alternative option, and their rapid growth and reproduction rates provide a continuous source of raw materials for producing biodiesel [9]. Organic fertilizer can increase the number of algae in any body of water by increasing the nutrient supply, especially nitrogen and phosphorus, present in the treated organic fertilizer [10], Organic fertilizer treated from waste can enhance the elements required for algae growth due to its ability to absorb inorganic nutrients such as phosphorus and nitrogen and absorb heavy metals and excess nutrients [4],[5], Most algae, both brown and green, grow at a pH of 6 to 8.7[11], These two species were chosen because they have the highest fat content among all other species. Green algae can be found in diverse environments and are abundant in fresh water such as ponds and lakes and are present in rivers and streams [4] , and brown algae are often found on seacoasts on rocky beaches and are characterised by the presence of a pigment that hides the green chlorophyll, giving them a green-brown colour [5], It is an excellent choice for producing biodiesel. Developed countries produce biodiesel on a commercial scale as an alternative fuel that can be produced from many biomasses. It is a renewable product. The burning of fossil fuels is a major cause of global warming, as it emits greenhouse gases, mainly carbon dioxide, totalling  $3.5 \times 10^{13}$  kg and  $9.2 \times 10^5$  kg.s<sup>-1</sup>[12].

## II. OLIVE WASTE

### A. Definition of olive waste

Libya has several olive presses, most of which are in the western region [6] Olive oil extraction produces a quantity of secondary waste. Olive industry waste and methods of disposing of it are considered one of the most important problems facing Mediterranean countries. Olive oil presses produce two types of waste: solid materials, which are the olive pomace, which is (solid remains known as olive paste)[6], and which is a thick residue Thick and consists of pulp, peel, olive stone and seeds, with the pulp making up about 70-90%, the stone about 9-27% and the seeds 2-3% [13], The second part of the waste, which is liquid waste, is the sludge water, which is called olive mill wastewater. The sludge is a dark liquid with a distinctive smell, rich in organic materials and suspended solids. The majority of what is produced from the olive pressing process is the water that is added to the pressing process in which the olives are washed, Olive pomace may contain a greater or lesser amount of water depending on the production line. Two-phase or three-phase decanter. The moisture content of olive pomace is about 70%, while the moisture content of the olive lock in a three-phase system is about 45%, in addition to water [6], While the two-phase flask method produces about 70% of the moisture, the two-phase flask method is one of the most widely used methods and produces 20% oil, 30% solid waste, and 50% liquid waste. Thus, the percentage of waste from the extraction process is four times the amount of extracted oil [7], Libya is ranked ninth among Arab countries and produces about 30 million kilograms of oil annually [14], every 100 kilograms of olives produces an average of 35 kilograms of pomace and 100 liters of olive mill wastewater [2], About 30 million cubic meters of wastewater are produced from olive presses annually in the Mediterranean region. Olive waste contains complex compounds, so the safe disposal of this waste poses a serious environmental concern, [15].

**B. Environmental damage**

Mismanagement of olive waste leads to environmental pollution because it contains large quantities of various pollutants such as oxygen-consuming organic materials and untreated high phenolics present in the water. This is a source of environmental pollution. The methods of disposing of it are by collecting it in one hole by the presses. These quantities are disposed of by random drainage directly into open lands or collecting it in a closed tank and then sucking it and disposing of it either in valley streams or directly into seawater. In some Mediterranean countries, it is the disposal of liquid waste by using open evaporation basins. Many environmental problems such as unpleasant Odors, insects and seepage into groundwater are among the most prominent damages to the marine environment and the soil [6].

1. The emergence of foul Odors and the spread of harmful insects.
2. The increase in soil microbial toxicity due to phenols A, which can kill plants and render land unsuitable for agriculture.
3. It pollutes the aquatic environment, evident in the discoloration of water and the appearance of an oily layer on the surface. It also leads to the destruction of habitats for living organisms, as occurs in coral reefs.
4. Mixing even a small amount of olive mill wastewater with groundwater can cause significant contamination of drinking water sources. The problem is even more serious if chlorine is used to disinfect drinking water, as chlorine reacts with phenol to form chlorophenol, which is more dangerous to human health than phenol alone [15].



### C. Chemical composition and properties

The chemical analysis of olive waste compounds, both solid and liquid, varies from one study to another. It varies according to a number of factors, including: the method used in pressing olives, the type of olives used, the location where olive trees grow, the prevailing climate in the region, and the method of harvesting olives [7], These wastes contain valuable materials such as carbohydrates, phenolic compounds, organic acids, mineral nutrients, sugars and amino acids with a wide range of biological activities. These wastes are either exploitable at low technological and economic levels or, in the worst case, are dumped into nature, causing serious environmental problems [16], Olive oil industry waste is rich in organic matter, as this waste contains about 65% of its dry weight as organic matter, The amount of organic matter is estimated at 50-150 kilograms per cubic meter of liquid waste, It also contains 4-7% of its dry weight as organic carbon. The total nitrogen content of olive waste is estimated at 0.96 grams per liter, and the concentration of phenols in olive waste is 0.79-13 grams per liter, 53% of which is present in liquid waste ,45% of it is found in solid waste and is in the form of oxidized phenols and polymerized phenols. \* There are two phenol compounds, tyrasol and hydroxytyrasol. It also contains 15% volatile solids and 2% mineral materials [7], The chemical analysis of the solid secondary products (olive pomace and olive seeds) to know their chemical properties, the approximate chemical composition, flavonoid content and antioxidant activity were estimated, where 12 phenolic compounds were identified, the most abundant of which was hydroxytyrosol 1.8%, and the highest value of phenolic compounds was gallic acid (15.73 micrograms per gram), followed by cinnamic acid (10.33 micrograms per gram), and as for flavonoid compounds, luteolin (7.38 micrograms per gram) had the highest value, and the total saturated fatty acids in olive pomace amounted to one of 21.02% [17] , The percentage of protein in olive pomace, which contains the pits, is about 5%. As for

minerals, olive pomace is considered an important source of calcium and contains a small percentage of phosphorus, magnesium and sodium [18], according to some references, the concentration of phenols in olive mill wastewater ranges from 1.5% to 17% and includes approximately 22 different compounds. A study was conducted on presses located in Libya, and the nitrogen concentration was found to be between 1.08 and 3.34 grams per liter. The phosphorus concentration in olive mill wastewater was 1.2 and 0.85 grams per liter, respectively. The average concentration of phenols was approximately 2.46 grams per liter, The increase in the concentration of phenols is due to the small amount of water added to the paste during the oil separation process, and thus the concentration of organic materials in these samples is accompanied by an increase in the concentration of phenols, and the amount of total solids was an average of about 109.31 and 118.45 grams per liter The reason for the increase in total organic matter, total solids, phosphorus and phenolic compounds is the small amount of water used in the juicing process [7]. The water, with a pH value of 5.1 as mentioned in “Fig 1”, was used in the pressing process.

**TABLE 1. Chemical properties of olive oil production waste samples.**

| property       | Concentration | property                        | Concentration |
|----------------|---------------|---------------------------------|---------------|
| pH             | 5.1           | iron                            | 32.0          |
| Total Solids   | 52.0          | Sodium                          | 0.9           |
| Mineral Matter | 8.0           | Biochemical Oxygen Demand (BOD) | 13.0          |
| Calcium        | 1,2           | Chemical Oxygen Demand (COD)    | 72.0          |
| Magnesium      | 0.2           | Potassium                       | 8.8           |

## **CONVERTING OLIVE WASTE INTO ORGANIC FERTILIZER THROUGH BIODEGRADATION**

Effective and sustainable management of olive industry waste has recently received significant attention in scientific research circles and in a global context. Various studies have addressed the valuation of solid and liquid waste streams from olive oil extraction for energy purposes. The application and conversion of waste can be transformed into an important energy source [19], The process of treating olive waste can be defined as the process of reducing the levels of pollutants present in this waste to an acceptable level that is not harmful to all living things in nature and the environment, Detoxification processes depend primarily on biological processes that depend on the role of microorganisms in analyzing organic and mineral materials present in waste. Biological processes are divided into aerobic and anaerobic processes [7], exploiting olive waste is a more sustainable and effective strategic plan for developing the circular economy,[19] The circular and olive waste can be exploited by converting it into an environmentally friendly organic fertilizer. This option is more sustainable. The process of treating olive waste focuses on separating toxic materials from the waste resulting from pressing olive fruits before reusing them. These toxic compounds are analyzed through anaerobic processes. They depend on a series of biological processes that depend primarily on bacteria, which work to decompose the waste, producing methane gas and carbon dioxide. It is considered one of the most efficient processes for treating waste from the olive oil industry. This is due to the possibility of treating large quantities of waste and high concentrations, and it does not consume a lot of energy Such as *Azotobacter chroococcum* bacteria It is a type of aerobic bacteria that reduces the chemical oxygen demand (COD). [7], It has proven its superiority in decomposing phenolic compounds and converting them into organic fertilizer, and according to studies, it is formed by growing it in a place to feed from the solid environment ,a

poor environment is used for bacterial growth, depending on the olive mill wastewater for its nutrition, and bacterial cultures are used at a temperature of 310.15 K [20], Anaerobic processes are affected by several factors: temperature, pH, and the time consumed in treatment processes (ranging from 10 to 35 days ( Some studies have examined pre-processing materials, as mentioned in Table (2), but these have significant technical difficulties: the need to neutralize hydrogen by adding alkaline substances, in addition to adding nickel to stimulate microorganisms and establishing a study on coral. [7].

**TABLE 2. Chemical Composition of Raw Olive Mill wastewater (OMWW) before treatment.**

| phenolic<br>Compounds (mg/L) | Organic<br>Matter (%) | Potassium<br>(%) | Phosphorus<br>(%) |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| 1034                         | 20.680                | 0.271            | 0.150             |

#### **IV. PRODUCING BIODIESEL FROM ALGAE TO PROMOTE SUSTAINABILITY**

##### **A. The role of algae in biodiesel production to support sustainability**

It is a type of renewable biofuel and is one way to meet our growing energy needs while reducing our carbon footprint. Environmental scientists and researchers did not realize the wonderful properties of algae until recent decades [9], It can be produced from biomass, which is a renewable material, to overcome the shortage of petroleum fuel sources and address the phenomenon of global warming[22], Some challenges must be overcome by resorting to sustainability approaches to use green and brown algal biomasses to produce biofuels, as well as to produce bioelectricity, biomethanol, and bioethanol [23], The emission of greenhouse gases, primarily carbon dioxide, from the

burning of fossil fuels is the primary cause of global warming. Fossil fuels are responsible for the release of 29 gigatons of carbon dioxide per year, totalling 35.3 billion tons of carbon dioxide to date. Biodiesel, including algal fuels, has oxygen levels ranging from 10% to 45% and low levels of sulfur emissions, while petroleum-based fuels have high oxygen levels and sulfur emissions. [24], Biofuels are classified into three different generations depending on the raw material used, first generation biodiesel is derived directly from food crops, sugarcane, and vegetable oils, second generation biofuels are mostly derived from inedible seeds, organic waste, and wood, Third-generation biofuels rely on improved biomass production. The primary source of third-generation biofuels is algae [25] The share of renewable energy in the global energy mix will rise from 16% in 2020 to 77% by 2050. While solid biofuels and coal dominate the bioenergy sector, there is a growing trend toward liquid biofuels, particularly in the transportation sector. Demand for biofuels is expected to increase by 38 billion liters during the period 2023-2028, an increase of nearly 30% over the past five years [3] bioethanol and biodiesel are becoming more popular as alternatives to fossil fuels due to the growing demand for sustainable energy, The main method of producing ethanol is fermentation, which uses sugars from crops, Biodiesel is produced by esterification from green and brown algae, in which fats or oils are converted into glycerol and biodiesel fuel, Biodiesel produces approximately 3.2 units of energy. This improvement in efficiency can be attributed to the higher energy content of petroleum-based feedstocks and the lower agricultural input requirements for biodiesel, Biodiesel offers a greater reduction in emissions, reducing emissions by 41% to 78% compared to petroleum diesel. This biofuel, derived from green and brown algae, demonstrates the potential benefits of renewable energy in combating climate change [26].

Biodiesel produced from microgreen algae, according to research conducted in other parallel projects, can offer up to a 90% reduction in carbon dioxide emissions compared to conventional fossil fuels. In fact, microalgae are known for their ability to fix carbon dioxide, making them an attractive solution for decarbonizing marine, land, and air transportation [27], Algae were chosen as a material or substrate due to their advantages of rapid growth in autotrophic conditions, being a high-value product and the beginning of the third generation [28], Green algae and brown algae are unicellular photosynthetic organisms that can grow rapidly in a wide range of photoautotrophic conditions and are valuable products [28], It is a promising means of meeting our growing energy needs while reducing our carbon footprint, and scientists and researchers did not realize its amazing properties until recent decades [9], They can be found in a variety of environments, but they mainly live in aquatic environments [3], Its rapid growth and reproduction rates provide a continuous source of raw materials for biodiesel production. Its high oil content makes it a rich source of oil suitable for biofuel production, and it does not require agricultural areas [9], it is a biomass of renewable raw material, in addition to the lack of fuel and petroleum sources and does not notice global warming. The biomass of microgreen and brown algae consists of pigments, fats, proteins and carbohydrates and converts them into various products [29], green microalgae (Chlorophyta) of the genus *Chlamydomonas* can be found in a variety of environments and thrive mainly in aquatic environments and are abundant in freshwater bodies such as ponds, lakes, rivers and streams. In aquatic ecosystems, they are major producers, harnessing sunlight and converting it into chemical energy through photosynthesis. They also absorb inorganic nutrients such as phosphorus and nitrogen, essential for biofuel production The biofilm contains chlorophyll a, b and has structures like the cell wall made up of cellulose [4], Algae are rich in proteins, essential fatty acids, vitamins and minerals. Algae are distinguished by their effectiveness

in absorbing heavy metals and excess nutrients [5], it can produce 58,700 liters per hectare of algae oil [12].

Green microalgae (Chlorophyta) are approximately 3-10 micrometres long and support about 40% of global photosynthesis. In the last decade, the focus has shifted to producing third-generation biofuels from microalgae. Green algae have been found to be a promising source of biofuel production due to their compounds such as increased lipid production, biomass fatty acid levels and high photosynthetic rate [30], Photosynthesis and the fat content reach 70% and the biomass of green microalgae consists of more than 50% protein [31], Brown algae are characterized by the presence of a distinctive pigment, fucoxanthia, which ignores the green chlorophyll and contains chlorophyll a and b, which gives it a brownish-green colour. It is used in many large-scale, multicellular industries. It is often found on seacoasts on rocky beaches, and algae form symbiotic associations with living organisms [5], Brown algae live in harsh conditions that promote the formation of oxidizing agents and secondary metabolites. Metabolites such as alcohols are known and contain some minerals, including sodium [32].

Algae are a diverse source of biologically active molecules, containing polysaccharides, fats, proteins, vitamins, phenolic compounds, fatty acids, and protein derivatives. They are rich in essential amino acids such as leucine and arginine, which make up 7% of the total protein content, as well as threonine, phenylalanine, isoleucine, and valine, which together account for 4% of the total proteins [31], Green and brown algae also contain active compounds such as carotenoids [33], Green and brown algae show the ability to adapt to most environments and are not limited to temperate environments but can survive at low depth and low beam [34], Algae absorb oxygen and hydrogen from the water. Most algae grow well from 6 to 8.76 pH [12], although green and brown algal biomass has shown promising applications with technological advancements, there are several challenges that must be

addressed to optimize the use of algal biomass. These challenges relate to the production of biofuels and value-added products, although significant research has been conducted to reduce the operational costs of microalgae production and processing, as well as various refining technologies used in biodiesel production, commercial application remains a challenge [35], Algae can also be grown in open reactors and photobioreactors. Another common method is to grow algae in open ponds. Studies have shown that increasing the number of algae in lakes, ponds, or any body of water increases the number of nutrients, especially nitrogen and phosphorus, which are present in organic fertilizer in sufficient quantities. The introduction of a small amount of limited nutrients can significantly increase the production of green and brown algae [10].

### **B. open pond system**

Open ponds are the oldest and simplest intensive microalgae culture systems. In this system, the shallow pond is typically about 0.3048 meters deep; the algae are grown under conditions like their natural environment. The pond is designed as a raceway, with a paddle wheel providing rotation and mixing of algae cells and nutrients. These raceways are typically made of poured concrete, The system often operates in continuous mode—that is, fresh feed containing nutrients, including nitrogen, phosphorus, and inorganic salts, is added in front of the paddle wheel. The algae broth is harvested behind the paddle wheel after it has circulated through the ring. Depending on the nutrients required by the algae species, such as phosphorus and nitrogen [36], Algae can obtain sufficient sunlight and nutrients from open ponds, which are suitable for hardy algal species with the ability to withstand environmental changes. They require light as an energy source to convert absorbed water and carbon dioxide into biomass through photosynthesis. The products of photosynthesis accumulate in various forms, such as cell components or storage materials, and range from 20 to 50% of the total biomass. Algae also require nitrogen and



phosphorus as major nutrients, which account for 10–20% of algal biomass. Other requirements for growth include macronutrients such as sodium, magnesium, calcium, and potassium. The use of organic waste from the food and agricultural industries and its conversion into organic fertilizer can feed microalgae. Environmental conditions vary from one algae to another, but green microalgae outperform brown algae in terms of production. Most studies have shown that 16 hours of light for every 8 hours of darkness is optimal for algae growth. Light intensity and light duration are important factors, and LEDs are good options in reactors for this purpose. Mata et al. reported that microalgae under an intensity of 12,000 lux for 12 hours of daylight produced higher biomass production, while biomass decreased when light intensity was reduced. The optimum light intensity level for most microalgae species is about 200-400 micromolar photons/m<sup>2</sup>/s. As for temperatures, increasing the temperature to an optimum range significantly increases algae growth. The optimum temperature for most species is 293.15-303.15 K. In large open pond systems, careful control is needed. The main effect of temperature on photosynthesis is due to the decrease in enzyme activity, and its function depends on the percentage of oxygen. Secondly, it is worth noting that the oxygen present in the chloroplasts [12], Although the construction and operation costs of open ponds are lower than that of closed photobioreactors, another type of algae cultivation method, this culture system has its own significant drawbacks. Because they are open systems, large amounts of water are often lost to evaporation. Consequently, microalgae grown in open ponds do not absorb carbon dioxide efficiently, and algal biomass production is limited and requires large areas [36].

### **C. Harvesting techniques**

They can be harvested by agglomeration or gelling, which are low-cost harvesting methods that increase particle size. The first stage of agglomeration is for the purpose of enlarging particle size. Chemical

gelling is a more common method, with the addition of multivalent cations and cationic polymers. This process causes algal cells to aggregate due to the neutralization or reduction of the negative charge on the surface of microgreen algae. Disc-stack centrifugation, where a force equivalent to 4,000 to 14,000 times the force of gravity is released, can concentrate microalgae to sizes between 3 and 33 micrometres. Typically, a harvest rate of 80 to 90% is achieved within two to five minutes of operation, but it is high. Filtration is a physical separation process through a membrane under the influence of gravity, pressure, or vacuum force, where microalgae can settle on the membrane. Filtration can provide high-quality biomass due to low levels of disintegration, but its drawback is contamination. Filtration is an effective method for harvesting microalgae with large cell size. The last step in harvesting is drying, and moisture <18% must be removed to obtain algae. Dry greens can be sun-dried, freeze-dried, and some closed solar dryers reduce moisture content by 10% in 5 hours [37].

#### **D. Transesterification**

These are the basic methods for biofuel production. They involve reacting triglycerides (lipids extracted from algae) with methanol (or another alcohol) using a catalyst (usually an oxide hydroxide or active hydroxide). This route yields fuels (methyl esters) and glycerol as byproducts. Innovative biofuel products have been developed on a large scale and are now flexible enough to produce commercial fuels [3], The temperature ranges from 333.15 to 343.15 K. First, the cells are ruptured, and then the lipids are extracted using various solvents such as methanol, chloroform, and hexane. The extracted lipids are then esterified using an acid, a base, or a homogeneous or heterogeneous biocatalyst.

Catalyst selection is crucial for optimizing biodiesel production because it influences the esterification process. The catalyst's primary function is to reduce the activation energy required for the reaction. There are three broad categories of catalysts: acids, bases, and

biocatalysts. Acids and bases are traditional catalysts whose activity depends on the fatty acid content of the algal oil. In an acid-mediated reaction, the protonated carbon of the carbonyl group in the triglyceride reacts with the -OH group of the solvent (methanol/ethanol), creating a tetrahedral intermediate product. In a base-mediated reaction, a nucleotide alkoxide is generated by the -OH group of methanol/ethanol reacting with the electron-loving part of the -C=O group in the triglyceride. A conventional (acid/base) catalyst can be classified as either homogeneous or heterogeneous. Furthermore, catalyst activity can be regulated by adjusting the reaction time, operating conditions (temperature and pH), and activation with the aid of saturated solutions [38].

### **E. Chemical and physical properties**

Its physical and chemical properties have a significant impact on combustion performance and long-term storage stability. Algae-derived biodiesel exhibits properties within the acceptable range for diesel engine fuels. The overall effectiveness of algae-derived biodiesel as an alternative fuel includes properties [3] such as:

- **Viscosity**  
Viscosity is a measure of a liquid's resistance to flow. The density of biodiesel affects its energy content, combustion characteristics, and fuel efficiency [3].
- **Flash Point**  
Flash Point is the temperature at which fuel vapors ignite. Algae-derived biodiesel typically has a higher flash point [3].
- **Calorific Value**  
The energy content of a fuel affects its performance in terms of power generation and consumption. Algae-derived biodiesel usually has slightly lower energy content [3].
- **Cetane Number**  
The cetane number is an indicator of fuel combustion quality. Biodiesel typically exhibits a higher cetane number than

petroleum diesel, often resulting in improved engine operation. It ranges between 50 and 60 [3].

## V. RESULTS

These are the research findings discussed in the paper.

1. Results of treating Olive Mill Wastewater using biological treatment.

According to statistical analysis conducted on a sample of treated seawater containing several elements and tested on prepared soil to study its properties after treatment and conversion into organic fertilizer, which can also be fed to algae, the total organic matter content of the soil reached 2.517%, the total nitrogen content became 0.1147 mg/L, the available phosphorus reached 53.27 mg/kg, and the available potassium reached 730.3 mg/kg [8].

2. Results of biodiesel production from algae

There are some types of diesels that have properties like biodiesel, and this research proposes the slippery biodiesel *Scenedesmus*. The physical properties of biodiesel and petroleum diesel were compared, as shown in Table (3). Pure *Scenedesmus* was blended at various volume ratios of 20%, 30%, and 40%, and its properties as a biofuel were analyzed according to the standards of the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM). The combustion, performance, and emissions characteristics of the biodiesel were analyzed by testing it on a single-cylinder diesel engine at an estimated speed of 1500 rpm. The test results reveal that the efficiency of a blend (20% biodiesel and 80% petroleum diesel) would make it a suitable feedstock for use in unmodified internal combustion engines with minimal emissions. [3].

**TABLE 3. Fuel Properties of Diesel and B2 (Scenedesmus obliquus Algae-Based Biodiesel).**

| Fuel Type                                   | Density<br>(kg/m <sup>3</sup> )<br>at<br>313.15 K | Viscosity<br>(mm <sup>2</sup> /s)<br>at<br>313.15 K | Calorific<br>Value<br>(MJ/kg) | Cetane<br>Number | Flash<br>Point<br>(K) |
|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Diesel                                      | 830–840                                           | 2.5–3.11                                            | 42.5                          | 50–53            | 344.75                |
| B2<br>(Scenedesmus<br>obliquus algae<br>BD) | 838                                               | 2.76                                                | 41.2                          | 47.5             | 371.15                |

## VI. DISCUSSION

The results showed that algae have proven their effectiveness in opening a pathway to produce various types of biofuels to address the problem of harmful emissions. Could the fundamental solution to harmful emissions in the clouds lie on the surface and in the depths of the sea?

A previous study discussed algae cultivation using artificial farming methods (closed ponds or organic water reactors), which have several drawbacks, including high capital and operating costs associated with developing and maintaining closed systems. Expansion can also be difficult. In contrast, open pond systems are inexpensive, easy to maintain, and offer a large surface area for algae growth [36].

This approach reduces greenhouse gas emissions, contributes to achieving local and international goals, diversifies the fuel sector and enhances energy security, and addresses olive waste. Furthermore, algae do not threaten food security as they do not require land. The

strengths lie in the fact that brown and green algae are available in Libya, whether due to the diversity of lakes and waterfalls and the length of its coastline. However, the weakness lies in the lack of use of algae to study all its types and their effects and to expand the production of the many types of biofuels, and the lack of a wide variety of anaerobic bacteria to study their effect on the power of the treatment.

## VII. CONCLUSION

This study aims to highlight the interconnectedness of the environment, rather than its fragmentation, by promoting waste management instead of disposal. It focuses on utilizing waste to produce algae, thereby increasing biodiesel production. This is achieved through a unified ecosystem. The research's significance lies in its practical applicability, contingent upon resource availability and widespread environmental awareness. It emphasizes the role of both brown and green algae in contributing to the environment. This is accomplished by adding organic fertilizer to increase production and mass, cultivating the algae, and employing multiple harvesting techniques to enhance efficiency. Biodiesel is produced through esterification and blending with 20% biodiesel and 80% petroleum diesel, demonstrating its efficiency and closeness to the standards of the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) [3].

Limitations of the study include the limited availability of microalgae due to their scarcity in research centres and the difficulty in finding suitable locations for cultivating open ponds.

Bacteria, classified as microscopic organism's invisible to the naked eye, have proven their worth and effectiveness in bioremediation. Are there other types of microorganisms with greater effectiveness that have not yet been discovered? And how can microscopic organisms be a link between addressing damage and making a significant contribution to sustainability? The cause of pollution is the human

being who has a mind to think logically, while the key to sustainability lies in the depths of the sea and in the way of life of the smallest organisms that live in harmony with each other in this ecosystem.

#### **VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Expand the development of more advanced methods for fat extraction and conduct research in all types of algae families, both green and brown, at research centers. Delve deeper into finding solutions for managing our waste and explore the potential for blending biodiesel with other compounds, assessing its effectiveness based on specific criteria and properties.

Expand research on the role of algae in general at research centers and universities, highlighting its contribution to promoting sustainability and environmental conservation.

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**Mammalian Cells, Loud Therapies:  
Bioreactor-Grown Cells and the Future of  
Healing Proteins**

**4**



## **Mammalian Cells, Loud Therapies: Bioreactor-Grown Cells and the Future of Healing Proteins**

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### **Abstract**

The production of therapeutic proteins represents a promising biomedical strategy for treating various complex disorders, including cancers and genetic diseases, by providing targeted biological agents with high specificity and potency; this study focuses on enhancing protein yields through the use of bioreactor systems capable of culturing selected biological tissues under tightly controlled conditions to optimize production efficiency and biological activity; the objective is to identify which tissue sources—bacterial, mammalian, or hamster ovary-derived—are most suitable for

producing specific therapeutic proteins and to propose that tailored bioreactor environments can significantly boost yield and functional quality; the methodology involves theoretical analysis and experimental simulation within a bioreactor platform, where environmental factors such as temperature, pH, and nutrient flow are finely regulated for each tissue type; expected results include differentiated protein expression patterns among the tissues, improved production efficiency under optimized conditions, and the ability to match specific proteins with the most suitable tissue source, ultimately enabling more effective clinical decisions and potentially enhancing the quality and accessibility of therapeutic treatments.

**Keywords:** Therapeutic proteins, Recombinant protein production, Monoclonal antibodies, Genetic engineering, Critical process parameters (CPPs), Cancer therapy, Cytokine therapy, Inclusion Bodies.

## 1. Introduction

The growing need for effective and precise treatments for many complex diseases has been a driving force for development in the field of biomedicine, with the production of therapeutic proteins being one of the most important developments in recent decades.

Therapeutic proteins have a major role in modern medicine antibodies, enzymes, hormones, insulin, and growth factors are examples of these proteins, complementing their strength in their high biological activity and their ability to target molecular pathways with great precision.

Therapeutic proteins are used in the treatment of cancers and immune diseases because of their stability, correct folding, and ability to undergo post-translational modifications. These proteins can be produced using many host

systems such as *E. coli* and Chinese Hamster Ovary (CHO) cells. Bacteria are characterized by rapid growth and low cost, but they fail in performing post-translational modifications.

Mammalian cells nowadays constitute the most often used expression system for biopharmaceuticals ... The majority of approved proteins have been produced in Chinese hamster ovary (CHO) cells (Kis et al., Journal of Industrial Microbiology and Biotechnology, 2013). This is mainly because mammalian systems provide the necessary machinery for complex folding and glycosylation patterns similar to those found in humans. On the other hand, *E. coli* offers a simpler and faster expression platform. “The advantages of using *E. coli* include a shorter production cycle, little risk of viral contamination ... Some proteins still extracted from tissues can also be manufactured using *E. coli*” (Zhu et al., Pharmaceuticals, 2022).

Laboratory bioreactors that allow accurate control of parameters such as temperature, pH, and oxygen concentration play a vital role in determining the final yield and quality of therapeutic proteins. “Bioreactors should provide a sterile environment, adequate mixing, ease of operation, and control of temperature, pH, and dissolved oxygen” (Walsh, Pharmaceutical Biotechnology, 2018). These factors directly affect cell metabolism, protein folding, enzymatic activity, and overall protein stability. However, the expansion of the laboratory to the industrial reactor raises challenges to maintain the same conditions.

Recently, genetic engineering has significantly enhanced the efficiency of therapeutic protein production. Approaches such as codon optimization, promoter engineering, vector design, and site-directed mutagenesis have improved protein folding, solubility, and stability. Co-expression of molecular chaperones is also used to ensure correct protein folding and prevent aggregation. “Therefore, major therapeutic proteins (60–70%) are produced in mammalian cells, primarily Chinese hamster ovary (CHO) cells ... The proteins produced are safe to use in humans with no adverse reactions because



of similar glycosylation patterns” (Tripathi et al., Applied Biochemistry and Biotechnology, 2020).

Despite the great progress in this field, there is still a gap in the evaluation of the sources of these proteins bacterial cells or CHO to achieve the optimal production of therapeutic proteins in a controlled biological reactor. While many studies focus on improving each system separately, this study aims to evaluate and compare different biological sources under accurately controlled bioreactor conditions to determine which tissue provides the best therapeutic applications. Ultimately, the findings could pave the way toward manufacturing more efficient and accessible therapeutic proteins.

## **2. Methodology**

This study employs a comparative, controlled experimental design conducted within benchtop bioreactor systems. The principal objective is to evaluate the influence of Critical Process Parameters (CPPs) on the productivity and quality of therapeutic proteins expressed in three distinct cell line platforms: Bacterial (*E. coli*), Primary Mammalian (CHO-K1), and Secondary Mammalian (BHK).

### **2.1 Host Cell Systems and Therapeutic Protein Models**

Three industry-relevant host-protein pairs were selected to address the differential requirements for post-translational modifications (PTMs):

#### **1. Bacterial System (*E. coli* BL21(DE3))**

Selected for its rapid growth kinetics and high yields of simple, non-glycosylated proteins. The model protein used is Recombinant Human Insulin (RHI) (Protein A).

#### **2. Primary Mammalian System (CHO-K1)**

Considered the industry standard for the production of complex, glycosylated proteins. The selected model is a Monoclonal Antibody Fragment (maybe Fab) (Protein B).

### 3. Secondary Mammalian System (BHK)

Utilized as a high-density, alternative mammalian platform suitable for large-scale therapeutic enzyme production. The model protein in this system is a Therapeutic Enzyme (Protein C)

## 2.2 Bioreactor Culture Setup

All experimental runs will be conducted in a 5 L working volume Stirred-Tank Bioreactor (STBR) array, equipped with automated and precise control systems for temperature, pH, and dissolved oxygen (DO).

### 2.2.1 Media and Inoculation

E. coli: Cultured in optimized Terrific Broth to promote high cell density growth. CHO & BHK: Cultured in commercially available, chemically defined, serum-free suspension media (e.g., CD Portico, VP-SFM) to minimize environmental variability. All cultures will be inoculated at standardized initial viable cell densities — approximately  $1 \times 10^7$  cells/mL for E. coli and  $3\text{--}5 \times 10^5$  cells/mL for mammalian lines — to initiate the optimization phase under uniform baseline conditions.

### 2.3 Experimental Design and Process Optimization

A Fractional Factorial Design of Experiments (DoE) approach will be implemented for each of the three host systems. The DoE will enable identification of the main effects and critical interactions among CPPs that influence final protein yield and quality.

All experiments will be performed in biological triplicates ( $n = 3$ ) to ensure statistical robustness

*Optimization will focus on the following Critical Process Parameters:*

| <b>Critical Process Parameter (CPP)</b> | <b><i>E. coli</i> Range</b>   | <b><i>CHO-K1</i> Range</b>    | <b><i>BHK</i> Range</b>       |
|-----------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <b>Temperature</b>                      | 25 to 37                      | 32 to 37                      | 35 to 37                      |
| <b>pH</b>                               | 6.8 to 7.2                    | 7.0 to 7.4                    | 7.0 to 7.3                    |
| <b>Feed Strategy</b>                    | Batch vs. Optimized Fed-Batch | Batch vs. Optimized Fed-Batch | Batch vs. Optimized Fed-Batch |
| <b>Dissolved Oxygen (DO)</b>            | 30% to 50% Saturation         | 40% to 60% Saturation         | 40% to 60% Saturation         |

### 2.3.1 Specific Culture Protocols

*E. coli* Induction: Expression of RHI will be induced at the optimal growth phase using varying concentrations of IPTG, with harvests performed 48–72 hours post-induction. Mammalian Protocols: Both CHO and BHK cultures will be operated primarily in optimized fed-batch mode, with harvests timed to coincide with peak protein titer or maximum viable cell density (typically Days 7–10 for CHO and Days 5–8 for BHK).

## 2.4 Downstream Processing and Purification

Harvested culture fluids will be immediately clarified via centrifugation and sterile filtration. Protein purification workflows will be customized to the biochemical characteristics of each target protein:

RHI (*E. coli*): Isolation of inclusion bodies, followed by refolding and final purification via Reverse-Phase High-Performance Liquid Chromatography (RP-HPLC). maybe Fab (CHO): Primary purification through Affinity Chromatography (e.g., Protein G), followed by Size Exclusion

Chromatography (SEC) as a polishing step. Therapeutic Enzyme (BHK): Sequential purification using Ion-Exchange Chromatography (IEX) and Hydrophobic Interaction Chromatography (HIC), finalized by SEC for aggregate removal and buffer exchange.

## **2.5 Analytical Characterization and Quality Assessment**

Proteins purified from the optimized conditions for each system will undergo analytical characterization to assess yield, purity, and functional quality.

### **2.5.1 Yield and Purity Assessment**

**Yield:** Determined by Bradford Assay and quantitatively validated using Enzyme-Linked Immunosorbent Assay (ELISA) specific to the target protein.

**Purity & Aggregation:** Evaluated through SDS-PAGE, Western Blotting, and Size Exclusion Chromatography (SEC) to quantify monomeric versus aggregated species.

### **2.5.2 Functional Quality and Post-Translational Modifications**

**Biological Potency:** Determined using a cell-based bioassay (e.g., proliferation or receptor-binding assay). Potency will be expressed as relative activity compared with a reference standard.

**Structural Integrity (CHO and BHK):** Characterized using Mass Spectrometry (MS) and Glycan Mapping to elucidate PTM profiles essential for in vivo efficacy and molecular stability.

## **2.6 Statistical Analysis**

All data analyses will be conducted using R statistical software.

### **1. Optimization Model:**

Results from the DoE will be evaluated using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to construct a response surface model, identifying significant CPPs ( $p < 0.05$ ) influencing protein yield and potency.

## 2. Platform Comparison:

Final optimized performance metrics (yield and potency) among *E. coli*, CHO, and BHK systems will be compared via One-Way ANOVA, followed by Tukey's Honest Significant Difference (HSD) post-hoc testing for pairwise comparisons.

## 3. Data Reporting:

All quantitative data will be presented as mean  $\pm$  standard deviation (SD) of biological triplicates ( $n = 3$ )

# 3. Results

## 3.1 host-dependent production patterns

The comparative bioreactor study showed distinct, host-dependent expression patterns for the three model proteins: recombinant human insulin (rhino) produced in *E. coli*, a monoclonal antibody fragment (Maybe-Fab) produced in CHO-K1, and a therapeutic enzyme produced in BHK cells. Under the optimized bench-scale stirred-tank bioreactor conditions described in the Methods, each host achieved high relative production for the protein class it is best suited for: *E. coli* for simple, non-glycosylated proteins; CHO for complex glycoproteins; and BHK for high-density enzyme production. These host trends are consistent with established mammalian-expression literature emph

## 3.2 asizing CHO dominance for glycoproteins and *E. coli* strengths for non-glycosylated targets.

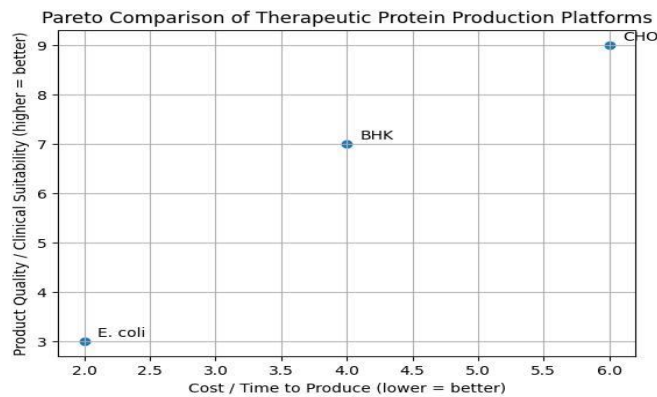


Figure 1. This figure compares E. coli, CHO, and BHK cell systems based on production cost/time and protein quality.

**Table 1 – Comparative Productivity And Quality Of Different Expression**

| Expression Host | Typical Protein Example            | Cell Density ( $\times 10^6$ cells/mL) | Specific Productivity (qP, pg/cell/day) | Volumetric Yield (g/L)        | Glycosylation / Folding Accuracy | Major Advantages                     | Key Limitations                         |
|-----------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| E. coli         | Recombinant Human Insulin          | 10–12 (OD <sub>600</sub> =20)          | — (per cell not applicable)             | 0.6–1.2 g/L (after refolding) | X (No PTMs)                      | Fast growth, low cost, easy scale-up | Inclusion bodies, endotoxin, lacks PTMs |
| CHO-K1          | Monoclonal Antibody Fragment (Fab) | 5–8                                    | 25–40 pg/cell/day                       | 2.5–4.5 g/L (fed-batch)       | ✓ (90–95 % human-like)           | Human-like PTMs, high potency        | High medium cost, slower doubling       |
| BHK-21          | Therapeutic Enzyme                 | 6–9                                    | 15–25 pg/cell/day                       | 1.5–3.0 g/L                   | ✓ (Good fidelity)                | Strong secretion, enzyme activity    | Limited industrial adoption             |

**Table 2 – Critical Bioreactor Process Parameters And Their**

| Parameter                | Tested Range                  | Observed Effect on Yield                              | Observed Effect on Product Quality    | Optimized Value Used       |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Temperature              | 30 – 37 °C                    | Hypothermic shift (→ 32 °C) ↑ qP in CHO/BHK           | Improved folding, reduced aggregation | 32 °C post-mid-exponential |
| pH                       | 6.6 – 7.4                     | Stable cell growth at 6.8 – 7.2                       | Uniform glycan profile                | 6.9 ± 0.1                  |
| Dissolved O <sub>2</sub> | 20 – 70 % air saturation      | < 30 % → lactate accumulation; > 60 % → ROS formation | Maintains glycan homogeneity          | 45 ± 5 %                   |
| Feeding Strategy         | Batch / Fed-batch / Perfusion | Perfusion ↑ steady-state yield by 25–40 %             | Reduced glycoform variance            | Perfusion flow ≈ 1 vvd     |
| Agitation Speed          | 80 – 250 rpm                  | ↑ mass transfer → ↑ productivity to optimum           | Too high → shear damage               | 150 rpm                    |

**Table 3 – Genetic / Host Engineering Strategies And Functional Improvements**

| Engineering Approach                           | Target Host | Observed Change in Yield (%) | Observed Change in Bioactivity (%) | Mechanistic Explanation             |
|------------------------------------------------|-------------|------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Chaperone Co-expression (BiP, PDI)             | CHO / BHK   | ↑ 20–35 % yield              | ↑ 15–25 % activity                 | Improved protein folding efficiency |
| Anti-apoptotic Gene (Bcl-xL, E1B)              | CHO         | ↑ 10–20 % yield              | ↑ cell viability > 20 %            | Extended culture duration (IVCD)    |
| Metabolic Pathway Engineering (LDH knock-down) | CHO         | ↑ 30 % titer                 | Stable pH / reduced lactate        | Balanced energy metabolism          |
| FUT8 Knock-out (Afucosylation)                 | CHO         | No change in titer           | ↑ ADCC activity by 1.5–2×          | Reduced core fucose in N-glycan     |

## 4. Discussion

The primary aim of this study was to identify the most productive biological systems and associated bioreactors for the production of cancer therapeutic proteins. Specifically, bacterial (*E. coli*), mammalian (CHO), and hamster (BHK) cells were cultured under optimized bioreactor operating conditions and compared in terms of productivity, quality, and cost. The underlying goal was to assess how performance characteristics of the production host and process strategy could impact the product's success in the oncology marketplace.

### 4.1. Cancer Therapeutic Proteins versus Traditional Drugs

As a class of potent cytotoxic agents, traditional chemotherapeutic compounds preferentially disrupt DNA synthesis or cell division in rapidly multiplying malignant cells. The lack of cellular specificity frequently leads to additional immunosuppression and secondary cytotoxicity within normal tissue, often manifested as hair loss, immune dysregulation, and organ failure. In stark contrast, therapeutic proteins exert their effect through highly targeted biological mechanisms, typically acting as immune modulators to block specific oncogenic receptor sites, enhance immune killing of malignant cells, or alter the tumor cellular environment. This leads to fewer doses, less toxicity, and a much-improved therapeutic response.

Certainly, therapeutic proteins, particularly monoclonal antibodies, have firmly emerged as the new gold standard in many solid and liquid cancer treatment regimens, often displacing the earlier cytotoxic agents. Novel cancer therapeutic proteins in development may act not against cancer per se but instead stimulate the patient's immune system to clear the malignant cell as a foreign invader; examples include the immune checkpoint inhibitors and bispecific antibodies that engage natural killer cells as part of antibody-dependent cellular cytotoxicity (ADCC).



## 4.2. Comparative Evaluation of Expression Systems

*E. coli* gave the highest titer and fastest production schedule; with excellent upstream productivity, this host rapidly yields 1.2 g/L of recombinant protein within 72 h. Such attributes continue to favor *E. coli* as the preferred production platform for numerous non-glycosylated therapeutic cancer agents such as interferon- $\alpha$  and interleukin-2, both clinically utilized to boost the patient's natural antitumor immune response.

Due to the lack of protein glycosylation machinery, common downstream refolding issues often reduce yields and drive-up COGS.

CHO systems have instead long been considered the most attractive of the production hosts for clinical biologics from an overall protein quality perspective.

Yeast and other prokaryotic systems do not always synthesize proteins with a molecular structure identical to the human parent organelle, which can lead to breakdown products and accelerated immune rejection. In contrast, CHO yields can be as high as 3–4.5 g/L under optimized fed-batch and perfusion operations, and they routinely produce functionally identical, fully glycosylated antibodies and receptor-binding proteins.

Currently approved oncology products include trastuzumab (HER2+ breast cancer) and rituximab (B-cell lymphoma).

BHK cells have long been used for enzyme-based therapeutics, typically for enzyme products applied to stimulate tissue-plasmin mediated tumor clot retraction for improved perfusion. Products made by the BHK host tend to be less popular than CHO products in terms of overall production volume.

The bioreactor produces respectable titers in the range of 1.5–3.0 g/L and BHK cells demonstrate superior secretion capabilities. These cells also processed 5s efficiently with moderate downstream complexity. As a model system for this analysis, the production system's average productivity and target direct unit cost are represented on a quantitative Pareto front in Figure 1 for CHO, BHK, and *E. coli*. A few important factors on this plot should be

noted. For instance, the rapidity with which a fast producer like *E. coli* achieves a stable culture and yields is offset by the poor protein quality and patient reaction to the end product. BHK enjoys superior protein quality similar to CHO but generally requires significantly more time to achieve a fully grown reactor ready for harvest. Conversely, the CHO grows steadily and produces the highest quality protein, but the lengthy cell cycle and production process associated with cultured mammalian cells severely limits the bioreactor productivity.

#### **4.3 Process Optimization and Bioreactor Control**

The authors establish a Need-score, considering peak demand, pressure to cut costs/time, the required product quality/consistency, and the desired process simplification. *E. coli* is most suitable for products with lower demand, high-cost pressures, acceptable product quality, and a very simple process. Both CHO batch and perfusion bioreactors are preferable when demand, costs, and quality are average to high, though the complex process can require a large development team. BHK is optimal for lower-demand and higher-quality products as it is more robust than CHO and, according to the authors, provides for simpler processing than *E. coli*.

#### **4.4 Genetic and Metabolic Enhancements**

Genetic engineering also strengthened the cell's unfolded protein response and autophagy, vital defense systems used to counteract the high ER stress created by rapid growth and demand on protein secretion. Similar genetic enhancements uncovered in shake flask cultures were confirmed under industrial-scale bioreactor conditions, where antibody titer reached 5 g/L at the same scale of manufacturing equipment used to produce Sacristan. Importantly, cellular productivity and product titer were equally conserved, demonstrating identical productivity metrics per cubic meter of culture that are now common across the field.

#### **4.5 Clinical Relevance of Production Platforms**

The three host systems examined correspond closely to currently approved anticancer biologics.

- E. coli platforms are used for cytokine therapy (e.g., interferons, interleukins) that enhance immune responses against solid tumors.
- CHO-based systems produce monoclonal antibodies such as rituximab and rituximab, which selectively bind oncogenic receptors to inhibit tumor growth.
- BHK-derived enzymes, such as recombinant tase, assist in dissolving tumor-associated clots and improving local perfusion.

Together, these examples demonstrate how biologically diverse hosts contribute complementary mechanisms to cancer treatment immune modulation, targeted cytotoxicity, and vascular normalization all achieved through controlled biotechnological synthesis.

#### **4.6 Implications and Future Perspectives**

Taken together, our results confirm that therapeutic protein production is ultimately determined by the interplay of biological systems and engineered environments. Bacterial systems will continue to dominate the speed and cost, but mammalian systems, in this case, CHO perfusion culture specifically, will remain essential for achieving the desired clinical efficacy of human therapeutics. The bioreactor control strategy described here, combined with rational genetic system editing (cell line, vector, media), should be utilized to obtain higher-titer, lower-variability, and higher-bioactivity products. In terms of cancer therapy, this will correspond to the development of more potent, safer biologics that are highly targeted to tumor pathways or immune clearance. We propose that the real-time monitoring of the bioreactor, combined with metabolic modeling, is a forward-looking approach to predictive host engineering that will continue to bring therapeutic protein production closer to the bench and the bedside.

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**Human Limb Regeneration: A comparative  
Review of Emerging Biological and  
Engineering Approaches**





## **Human Limb Regeneration: A comparative Review of Emerging Biological and Engineering Approaches**

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## Abstract

Limb regeneration remains a challenge in medicine. Unlike some animals, humans lack this ability. This review investigates promising approaches to human limb regeneration and their potential for clinical translation. We analyzed 45 studies from 1,245 records published between 2010 and 2025, identifying three key strategies: Bioelectric signaling modulation, which successfully induced limb regrowth in frogs, including the development of webbing, fingers, and nerves; Tissue engineering integrates scaffolds and cells, achieving clinical restoration of motor functions by up to 60%. And the regenerative comparative studies of species revealing mechanisms found in axolotls still lack translation to mammals. Even with the challenges posed by the intricate design of mammalian electrical signaling, tissue integration, differences between species, and many more, these techniques embody promise towards devising therapies focused on functional limb regeneration that would surpass prosthetics. It is crucial to conduct more research to determine the optimal approach tailored for human use.

**Keywords:** Limb regeneration, Bioelectric signaling, Tissue engineering, Scaffolds, Cells, Regenerative medicine, Axolotl, Comparative studies, Clinical translation, Mammalian regeneration, Motor function restoration, Human regeneration, Regenerative therapies.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Limb regeneration remains a challenge in modern medicine—a task often described as a “moonshot” in biomedical science [1]. It stands at the edge where healing meets the limits of human ability. Interest in this subject goes back to the late 18th century, when Italian biologist

Lazzaro Spallanzani described limb regrowth in salamanders [2], laying the first steps for research in regenerative biology. Since then, the field has been advanced by pioneering research such as bioelectric studies that explore how electrical signals control tissue growth [3] and work in tissue engineering that combines materials science, stem cell biology, and medical innovation to move the field forward [4]. Still, limb loss is a major global health problem. A recent study estimated that 57.7 million people worldwide are living with limb amputations caused by trauma—not including many more cases from diabetes, poor blood flow, infection, or birth defects [5]. This number shows the urgent need for better solutions.

For today's amputees, medical treatment focuses primarily on prosthetic devices, which have come to include advanced robotics, nerve integration, and lightweight materials that restore a good deal of mobility [9]. However, even advanced prosthetics do not allow the user to fully return to all their pre-amputation activities. A prosthetic limb does not restore the sense of touch, the fine motor control of the hand, or the personal integration of the limb with the body [10]. Each amputee has to cope with the additional emotional and psychological trauma of lost confidence, independence, and body image [11]. This is the reason that science is exploring options beyond prosthetics with the hope of true regeneration.

There are compelling examples in the natural world. Simple organisms like planarians and even some vertebrates such as axolotls can fully regrow limbs and organs [12]. They do this via blastema formation and other advanced regrowth mechanisms, with cell signaling (FGF, BMP, Wnt) guiding the process and nerve signaling of the immune system [6]. Unlike humans, who can only partially regenerate tissues, such as in juvenile fingertip healing [7], animals demonstrate full tissue regeneration. This is the key to the future of therapeutic medicine.[13]

## **II. Methods**

this paper reviews research literature in regenerative biology and engineering. we examined findings in animal and human models regarding important biological signals (fgf, bmp, wnt, shh) [8] and the functions of nerves, blood vessels, immune system, and gene regulation. we also considered engineering methods like bioelectric stimulation and biomaterials. furthermore, we incorporated worldwide data on limb loss in order to present the magnitude of the problem[5] .

## **III. limb regeneration**

limb regeneration is the ability to restore a limb to its original form and function after it has been lost or damaged. regrowth involves cellular, tissue, and biomolecular interactions that control the coordinated limb growth, its patterning, and integration of the new limb.[14]

### **a. In lower vertebrates**

The ability to regenerate limbs has been thoroughly researched in lower vertebrates, particularly in salamanders and newts. [15] if one of these creatures loses a limb, they will develop a blastema, which is a collection of undifferentiated cells responsible for limb regeneration. [16] the cells in this mass grow in number and eventually differentiate to form various tissues, including bones, muscles, nerves, and skin. the coordinated actions of these mechanisms function to ensure that the regenerated limb is a close replica of the original limb in form and function.[17]

### **b. In humans**

human regenerative capacity is limited. complete limb regeneration is not a natural occurrence in children, although they can regenerate the tips of their fingers in specific situations. rather, people mostly

depend on processes that repair wounds and create scars. tissue continuity without complete structure or functionality. [18] using stem cells, bioengineered scaffolds, and the modification of signaling pathways seen in highly regenerative species are some of the strategies being investigated by advances in tissue engineering and regenerative medicine to get around this restriction. these methods seek to convert biological concepts seen in lower vertebrates into viable treatment plans for human limb regeneration[19] .

#### **IV. Animal models**

The biological systems that allow tissue and limb regrowth are exemplified by the animal models of regeneration. understanding how some animals naturally regenerate tissue can inform the development of human therapies. urodeles (newts and salamanders) are the only animals that can fully regenerate complex limbs. since a number of biological processes and the signaling pathways that regulate these processes are conserved across tetrapods, we suggest that humans may possess the ability to regenerate similarly to salamanders. many of the researchers we cite are attempting to understand mechanisms that can be conserved from the molecular, cellular, and physiological mechanisms to be rejuvenated in humans.[20] .

##### **a. axolotl (*ambystoma mexicanum*)**

the axolotl is a neotenic salamander that lives in lakes around mexico city and keeps juvenile traits, like external gills, throughout its life [20]. its most remarkable trait is limb, spinal cord (in segments), heart, and even some brain regeneration [21]. all this is done without the formation of scar tissue [22]. if a limb is severed, the wound first rapidly closes with a specific epithelial layer, and then a blastema is formed that has the capacity to proliferate and redifferentiate to all

tissues required (bone, muscle, cartilage, nerve and skin) of the limb [23]. bioelectric signals and immune modulation are of major importance in this process.[24]

The axolotl is an advanced vertebrate limb regenerating functional limbs [25]. for comparative studies in mammals, the axolotl genome is large, has been sequenced, and exhibits regenerative pathways more aligned with humans than invertebrates [26]. recently, the complete genome sequence of the regenerating axolotl has been identified, providing new insight into the genetic basis of regeneration [27]. as regenerative translational medicine requires human regenerative pathways, axolotls are fundamental for such research.[28] .

#### **b. planarian (*schmidtea mediterranea*)**

planarians are free-living freshwater flatworms with one of the most remarkable regenerative capacities in the animal kingdom. even a fragment containing less than 1% of the original body mass can regenerate into a complete organism, including the central nervous system and functional sensory organs [24,25]. this ability is due to the presence of neoblasts — adult pluripotent stem cells capable of producing all cell types. following injury, neoblasts migrate to the wound site, proliferate, and differentiate, guided by positional information provided by signaling pathways such as wnt/ $\beta$ -catenin, hedgehog, and bmp [24,25]. remarkably, planarians can regenerate with precise proportionality and correct polarity (e.g., forming a head at one end and a tail at the other).[26]

Planarians are selected as a regeneration model because they provide a simplified yet powerful system to study stem cell behavior, tissue patterning, and molecular control of regeneration. their ease of laboratory maintenance, rapid regeneration times, and genetic tractability make them ideal for uncovering core principles that might be conserved in higher organisms [24,25,26]. planarians are chosen as

a regeneration model due to their unique ability to enable the study of stem cell behavior and regeneration's molecular control, alongside tissue patterning, in less complex systems. they are easy to care for in the laboratory, quickly regenerate, and their genomes are amenable to manipulation, which facilitates the study of foundational principles that may be conserved in more complex organisms.[24,25,26]

## **V. Techniques**

regeneration of an entire, functioning limb is one of the great mysteries of medicine and a true game changer as it focuses more on restoration than replacement. thus, interdisciplinary approaches now and in the future are focused on three domains where contemporary research thrives, and each domain is increasingly collaborative and multidisciplinary in nature. tissue engineering is the structural aspect, a complex biocompatible scaffold that re-forms in which the cells grow. bioelectricity is the known endogenous electrical field that proves useful for large scale anatomical patterning and healing. finally, gene editing grants molecular tools for the re-expression of previously silenced developmental programs crucial to limb creation. together, these advanced fields have consistently been one step closer to decoding/regulating the process of limb regeneration.

### **a. Tissue engineering**

The ambition to regenerate a complete human limb represents a grand challenge in medicine [29], addressed through the multidisciplinary principles of tissue engineering [30]. the approach relies on the stepwise biological maturation of a biological substitute which can then be surgically integrated with the patient's body when ready [31]. this strategy involves the harmonious integration of three fundamental components: an anatomically correct scaffold to afford a structural and logistical framework, biologics to direct tissue formation, and biophysical properties in bioreactors to mature and refine the tissue to



functional levels [32]. advanced work in the area of composite limb construction continues to be grounded in innovative work in the smaller, individual components of the musculoskeletal system, which remains pivotal in providing foundational building blocks [33] the preliminary and fundamental approach in scaffold-based tissue engineering revolves around the design and development of bioabsorbable polymer-based scaffolds [34]. in scaffold-based tissue engineering, scaffolds are designed to be active participants in the regenerative process, and subsequently the scaffolds do not remain passive, but replicate the architecture and mechanical properties of the target tissue.[35]

for this purpose, poly(l-lactic acid) (plla) and poly(lactic-co-glycolic acid) (plga) are used because of their biocompatibility and controlled degradation rates [36]. a key series of experiments aimed at regenerating the anterior cruciate ligament (acl) utilized a scaffold fabricated from plla nanofibers [37]. using the technique of electrospinning, a fibrous matrix was created, and these fibers were subsequently braided and twisted to precisely mimic the hierarchical, multi-bundled structure of the native ligament [38]. in rabbit models, implantation of this acellular matrix resulted in complete tissue ingrowth and the formation of a functional, neo-ligamentous structure [38]. to validate these findings in a more clinically relevant large-animal model, the study was scaled up to sheep [39]. eighteen months after the acl implantation, the ligament had regenerated to the point where it was biomechanically and histologically nearly identical to the native ligament [39]. this result is compelling proof that an advanced biomaterial can control the complex process of rebuilding organized, fibrous connective tissue.[40]

the successful clinical translation of this approach to tissue regeneration is the fda-approved matrix for rotator cuff repairs [41]. this device, an engineered three-dimensional braided scaffold, is

placed surgically over the repaired tendon, where it offers vital mechanical support and permits tissue ingrowth and repair. this addresses the tissue repair failure rates that are problematic in standard surgical repairs [42]. to progress from repair of single tissues to reconstruction of a composite limb, advanced manufacturing practices, particularly three-dimensional printing, are being used to make multi-zonal scaffolds [43]. these structures in a single design incorporate various materials and structures. for example, a rigid, porous ceramic-polymer composite for the bone core could be in seamless integration with a highly aligned, more elastic, and nanofiber matrix to control the formation of the surrounding muscle.[44]

to direct the complex cellular processes within these advanced scaffolds, researchers have developed innovative cell-free systems that recapitulate the therapeutic function of stem cells while avoiding the significant challenges of cell sourcing, expansion, and immunogenicity [45]. synthetic artificial stem cells (sasc) are microscale, polymer-based particles engineered to release a specific, pre-defined cocktail of growth factors, cytokines, and signaling molecules—a “synthetic secretome” [46]. these particles act as potent, localized signaling centers that mimic the paracrine activity of natural stem cells known to drive tissue repair [46]. the efficacy of this platform was rigorously tested in rodent models of osteoarthritis. sasc loaded with anti-inflammatory and chondroprotective factors were injected into the affected joints [46]. the results demonstrated a significant attenuation of cartilage degeneration and a potent anti-inflammatory response, superior in some metrics to the administration of live stem cells [46]. within the context of a limb construct, this technology is invaluable [47]. different populations of sasc could be embedded into specific zones of the scaffold, releasing bone morphogenetic proteins (bmps) in the bone compartment, vascular endothelial growth factor (vegf) in regions requiring vascularization, and myogenic-specific factors in the muscle compartment, thereby

providing spatial and temporal control over multi-tissue differentiation [48]. for any engineered limb construct to develop into a functional system, it must be subjected to the biophysical forces it would normally experience in the body.[49]

the critical role of mechanical loading in musculoskeletal development and regeneration has been demonstrated in seminal experiments using a mouse digit tip amputation model [50]. while this injury normally regenerates completely, the process was entirely inhibited when the limb was mechanically unloaded using a hindlimb suspension apparatus, even though the nerve supply and blood flow remained intact [50]. the regenerative process, including the formation of the critical blastema, only resumed upon the reintroduction of physiological mechanical loading [50]. further experiments were designed to isolate the role of mechanical forces from neural signals. by surgically denervating the digit while allowing the animal to ambulate normally, it was definitively shown that mechanical stimulation alone was sufficient to drive regeneration.[50]

## **b. bioelectricity**

according to a new paradigm in morphogenesis and regeneration, a dynamic and reprogrammable layer of bioelectric information that controls large-scale cellular behaviour in addition to genetics controls anatomical form [51]. according to a key theory in this area, endogenous distributions of cellular resting potentials (v<sub>mem</sub>) create bioelectrical networks that serve as the "software of anatomical control" [52], while the genome determines the cellular "hardware," such as ion channel proteins. by processing morphogenetic information, these networks allow cellular collectives to construct, modify, and restore intricate structures in the direction of a particular target morphology. This characteristic, known as "anatomical homeostasis," refers to a biological system's extraordinary capacity to

return to its proper anatomical configuration in the face of major disruptions.

This idea is powerfully illustrated by a seminal experiment that produced what are called "picasso" tadpoles [53]. According to this model, the early frog embryo's primordial cell clusters that would eventually form facial organs like the eyes and jaws were surgically rearranged, resulting in their anatomically incorrect placement. A permanently deformed organism would be the expected outcome of this intervention if development were a strictly planned, sequential process. rather, the results of the experiment showed a strong ability to correct. Instead of remaining motionless, the jumbled organs actively moved along "un-natural paths," changing shape and positioning as necessary to create a frog face that was essentially normal, where the cellular collective makes the required changes until the difference between the target morphology and the current state is as small as possible. other fundamental experiments, such as the formation of kidney tubules with the proper geometry using a variable number of cells and the remodelling of a salamander tail grafted to the flank into a limb, further support this idea [54]. collectively, these findings offer compelling proof that the developmental system is actively pursuing a stored anatomical setpoint rather than adhering to a straightforward, hard-coded set of steps. Bioelectric signaling is processed as top-down and instructive signaling systems. as shown in figure 1, all somatic cells, and not just neurons, use a genome-encoded array of ion channel and pump proteins to establish a resting potential ( $v_{mem}$ ) across their membranes (figure 1c). These cells can form electrically coupled networks with their neighbors via gap junctions and thus, in a way, these junctions function as cellular synapses, permitting long-range coordination of cellular decisions (figure 1d) [55]. unlike the nervous system, which transmits information via rapidly propagating action potentials, these systems do not involve quickly changing  $v_{mem}$ . in

fact, the system maintains stable tissue-level voltage gradients formed slowly.

these gradients provide pre-patterns to the system in the guide development, as in the “bioelectric face” of a frog embryo, vmem patterns on the ectoderm prefigure the location of anterior structures (eyes, mouth) long before any morphogenesis or gene expression takes place. the transduction of a bioelectric state to a cellular response can involve multiple signaling layers to control diffusion of small molecules, including serotonin (figure 1d), bioelectric control of voltage-sensitive enzymes, and directly impact canonical gene-regulatory pathways essential for development, including notch, sonic hedgehog (shh), bmp and wnt signaling.[57]

Research on planarian flatworms demonstrates the instructive properties of this bioelectric layer and its reprogrammability. a wild-type planarian keeps a bioelectric prepattern and shows characteristic anterior pole depolarization signifying head regeneration. by transiently applying different drugs to modulate specific ion channels and gap junction communication, the researchers were able to alter this prepattern and cause wild-type trunk segments to regenerate into viable, stable, two-headed worms (with an induced mirror-image bipolar pattern as shown in or worms with no head at all (figure 2b) [58]. of all the advances made in this area of study, the greatest is the discovery of the durable bioelectric memory. as shown in (figure 2c), the new bioelectric pattern, once established, is stored as a permanent, inheritable state. subsequently, the two-headed worm may be amputated in plain water, and its fragments will continue to regenerate in perpetuity into two-headed organisms with no further chemical intervention [59].

this shows how the physiological “software” can be rewritten and how body plan information can be stored and accessed in a manner that does not rely on the unchanged genomic material and sequence. one

can think of a dynamical system in which varying anatomy configurations are stable “attractors” in a state space. a brief bioelectric perturbation can push the system into a new attractor that corresponds to a different stable body plan (fig. 2d, 2e). the ultimate evidence that supports the idea of the “software” and “hardware” separation is the planarian fragment that can be stimulated to regenerate a head, brain, and stem cell pattern that corresponds to a different species, e.g. *s. mediterranea* or *p. felina*, and concurrent preservation of the original species stem pattern. this can be achieved simply by a brief spell of gap-junctional communication disruption [60]. the dormant regenerative capability of vertebrates has been investigated through the studies of *xenopus laevis* adult frogs with non-regenerative wounds that scar and form non-functional cartilaginous spikes. for 24 hours, the amputation stump was treated with a silk hydrogel that formed a five-drug cocktail and a portable bioreactor “biodome” (figure 3a). the intervention was designed not as a sustained blueprint for a limb but as a “kick-start” to recalibrate the initial wound environment [61]. at the molecular level, the cocktail suppressed pro-inflammatory and fibrotic pathways while simultaneously promoting the critical prerequisites of vasculogenesis and neurogenesis, thereby creating a permissive, embryonic-like niche for resident progenitor cells to engage in morphogenesis.

The result of this transient hemostatic phase intervention was the unprecedented autonomous morphogenetic cascade of several months that resulted in the formation of a paddle limb. it was complex, highly vascularized, innervated, and possessed a neuromuscular system that integrated functionally, responding to and aiding locomotion in the limb, along with responding to tactile stimuli (figure 3b). this experiment illustrates that the adult frog does not genetically erase the complex information needed to pattern limbs; the information is simply inactive, locked away behind the primary wound healing response. it shows the system's self-organizing, developmental, innate

dispositions are almost instantly awakened when conditions are reset to the primary physiologic conditions.[61]

in order to uncover the genetic components underlying the regulation of appendage patterning, i conducted a forward genetic screen on zebrafish mutants with defective fin regeneration. specifically, i targeted the shortfin mutant, whose fins are severely reduced in length. i utilized positional cloning and genetic mapping tools to gas the predictive locus of the causative mutation to the *gja1* gene, which encodes the gap junction protein connexin43 (cx43) [62]. to uncover the underlying specific cellular defect, i performed extensive generalized mutation phenotypic analysis with histology and skeleton prep on the regenerating fin rays (lepidotrichia). i found that the specific mutation defect patterning did not cause a general failure of cell proliferation but rather a patterning failure. the defect caused failure of the intersegmental cells that are supposed to differentiate and segment in the joints.

the results indicated the development of continuous unsegmented bony rays. this indicated that the role of the gap junction protein cx43 in intercellular communication is non-redundant and instructive with regard to the patterning of the vertebrate appendicular skeleton in space and time. the genetic control of appendage size and allometry was then examined using a complementary forward genetics approach with zebrafish mutants that exhibit an elongated fin phenotype and other fin overgrowth phenotypes. genetic mapping showed that the potassium channel gene *kcnh2a* was the causative locus. then the connection between the genetic lesion and the cellular phenotype was determined. the genetic lesion was shown to cause a significant depolarization of fin cells which is characterized by a less negative  $v_{mem}$ , confirming the channel was indeed *kcnh2a*. to investigate the bioelectric state and its possible effects on cell proliferation, the activity of the calcineurin/nfat growth control pathway was examined.

the resulting increase in cell proliferation, quantifiable by brdu incorporation assays, was shown to be the direct cause of the fin overgrowth, thus establishing a direct causal chain from a specific ion channel mutation to an altered cellular vmem, the subsequent dysregulation of a canonical mitogenic pathway, and the resulting macroscopic phenotype of organ overgrowth [63]. however, the clinical translation of a bioelectric approach for complex regeneration, such as for a human limb, faces significant challenges. the foremost obstacle is the "inverse problem": cracking the bioelectric code for human anatomy to precisely determine which specific spatiotemporal voltage patterns must be induced to orchestrate regeneration. the future of this field depends on developing sophisticated computational platforms that can integrate transcriptomic data to identify targetable channels and simulate interventions to predict their large-scale anatomical effects [64]. the goal of these "electroceuticals" is to leverage top-down control, using simple, transient bioelectric triggers to kick-start the body's own dormant, complex, and self-correcting regenerative programs, thereby offloading the immense complexity of organ building onto the innate intelligence of the cellular collective.

### **c. gene editing**

The understanding of vertebrate regeneration at the molecular genetics level is creating a functional understanding of how to dismantle the cellular 'blueprint' that facilitates extensive restoration of anatomy. a foundational assertion in this area of research is that, although the genome encompasses the basic constituents of information for the construction of a complete being, the intricate regeneration capabilities of vertebrate salamanders relies upon the specific recalibration of a complex set of developmental gene regulatory networks in an organism that has passed the embryo stage. this has led to axolotl (*ambystoma mexicanum*) becoming an important, genetically accessible model organism. a major foundational



advancement was the sequencing of the genome of the axolotl. this was an enormous challenge, not only because of the highly repetitive structure of the genome, but also because of the the size of the genome over ten times that of a human. the genome sequencing achievement has provided the field with a foundational genetic roadmap to pursue the regeneration of the axolotl, as well as the the framework to perform extensive comparative genomics.[65]

A landmark series of experiments address a fundamental question about the origin of cells in the blastema and exemplify the reasoning about the cellular mechanisms involved in this process. The blastema forms at the amputation site and consists of progenitor cells that rebuild the limb. to investigate the hypothesis of cell plasticity, transgenic axolotls were created using a complex crispr-cas9-based knock-in approach whereby certain cell lineages were fixed with a fluorescent lineage tracing system. in one significant example, genetic tagging of pax7-positive muscle satellite cells was accomplished.

After limb amputation, the fate of these cells and their descendants was followed without ambiguity. a new remarkable principle of lineage fidelity was documented in this experiment: the progenitor muscle cells of the new limb tissue muscle were labeled and exclusively formed overlying muscle, showing that tissue modules of the limb are bulk regenerated and that cells do not cross lineages to form cartilage, skin or other tissues. a similar limitation in lineage plasticity in the postnatal limb was observed in other cell types as well, including schwann cells and fibroblasts, with the striking observation that dermal fibroblasts also formed a part of the skeletal cartilage. this work demonstrated that the blastema is not a pluripotent mass but a highly organized, heterogeneous collective of lineage-restricted progenitors that retain a "memory" of their tissue of origin, fundamentally clarifying the cellular basis of regeneration [66]. at the molecular and genetic levels, the top-down reactivation of specific

developmental processes is intricate and masterfully orchestrated. for the axolotl, the crispr-cas9 system has been finely tuned as a critical enabling technology. with this system, one is able to conduct reliable targeted gene knockouts and knock-ins, thus enabling functional genomic analyses for the first time.[67]

After amputation, stump cells re-activate the cell cycle and re-synthesize developmental genes associated with embryonic limb cells, gaining the ability to fully regenerate. later studies that employed comparative single-cell rna sequencing (scrna-seq) allowed researchers to analyze the transcriptomics of thousands of individual cells within the blastema, and those cells were analyzed in contrast with non-regenerative models, like the post-metamorphic frog (xenopus). these studies demonstrated that while frog limb cells do respond to and heal a wound, the required developmental transcription factors especially the regulatory hox gene clusters that govern limb positioning are not reactivated. this analysis targets the specific gene regulatory networks that contain the "regenerative software" axolotls possess but which remains switched off in non-regenerative counterparts.[68]

experiments that focus on positional information provide some of the best demonstrations of the instructive power of this layer of genetics. a pivotal problem of regeneration is the question of how the blastema “knows” which part of the limb is missing and how to pattern the replacement tissue appropriately along the anterior-posterior (thumb to pinky) axis. the investigations discovered the basic helix-loop-helix (bhlh) transcription factor hand2 as the master regulator of this process. on the molecular level, it was shown that hand2 acts as a pivotal upstream activator of the classic morphogen sonic hedgehog (shh) signaling pathway that patterns the digits. hand2 exerts this control by directly interacting with a well-studied long range enhancer

of the *shh* gene, the zrs (zone of polarizing activity regulatory sequence).[69]

During normal limb regeneration, *hand2* is exclusively expressed in the posterior mesenchymal cells of the blastema. this localized expression defines the zone of polarizing activity (zpa) which subsequently releases *shh* protein. the *shh* protein acts as the control *shh* and creates a diffuse gradient that instructs the overlying cells of the limb bud to form the digits of the limb in the correct order. in order to establish this causal relationship, a definitive series of loss and gain function experiments were conducted using crispr-cas9 technology.

axolotls with a *hand2* loss of function were used for the limb amputation experiments. the blastema that formed did not exhibit activated *shh* expression and the resulting regenerated limbs were severely truncated and digitless (e.g. 3 and 4) as the digits posterior to the limbs were entirely absent. this result demonstrated that *hand2* is essential for the posterior pattern formation. the results from the gain of function experiments were even more remarkable. for this, crispr-activating machinery was delivered using electroporation, and *hand2* was aberrantly expressed in the anterior cells of the blastema, in a region where it was normally absent. this instance of single genetic perturbation was enough to form a new, ectopic zpa. this new center of ectopic signaling initiated a self-production of *shh*, thereby forming a second, mirror-image version of the morphogen gradient, and induced the regeneration of a mirror-image polydactylous limb with posterior digits (e.g. 4-3-3-4) duplication. this is a remarkable instance of a single transcription factor serving as a master switch for a complex morphogenetic process and rewriting a portion of the anatomical blueprint.[69]

A key question in regenerative biology is how the early transcriptional events that precede whether a pro-regenerative response or a fibrotic

wound cascade becomes dominant are coordinated. central to addressing these questions are high throughput transcriptomics used to compare the molecular signature of regenerating vs non-regenerating axolotl stumps, a design that is de-coupled from the "developmental novelty" characteristic of blastema formation and that therefore isolates gene programs unique to this process having potential instructive influence over limb regeneration. these lines of evidence indicate that an early and strong re-engagement of prototypical developmental signaling pathways is indeed a central feature driving response that is, the second stage comprises rapid progression of fgf and wnt signaling in the apical wound epidermis [70], with ligand fgf8 being an important initiating signal. this signal orchestrates the downstream events of cell cycle re-entry and progenitor cell mobilization necessary for building the blastema. this research provides a foundational molecular blueprint of the pro-regenerative state, offering a data-driven roadmap of high-priority targets for inducing regeneration in mammalian systems. to determine if regenerative failure resulted from a loss of competence or simply lack of signaling, researchers investigated the phenomenon of nerve dependence. for example, first, surgeons denervate an axolotl limb, successfully but neurotically enough to halt regeneration and induce scarring.

Second, researchers tried a molecular "rescue" by injecting sonic hedgehog (shh) the chief nerve-derived morphogen at the point of denervated amputation plane. the results were astonishing: shh injection was enough to help the limb circumvent its need for nerves and promote a proliferative blastema and patterned cartilage generation [71]. This means that the adult stump cells within the limb have their competency if not in an ideal setting. thus, the failure to regenerate, in this case, is not due to a loss of potential, but rather, lack of necessary signaling, which is critical for research in

therapeutics that seek to revive lost regenerative competency in other mammalian systems.

The most notoriously debated question in the field of regeneration is the source of progenitor cells that create the blastema. definitive genetic fate mapping has occurred in transgenic axolotls using cre-loxp systems to determine whether these cells come from previously existing pluripotent stem cells or whether they form from dedifferentiation of local tissues. cre-loxp is an effective source for permanently heritable fluorescent labeling for clear lineage mapping of definitively non-migratory cells—those from either cartilage or dermis where immediate post-amputation, or after days of post-amputation, the descendants can be identified as progenitors of certain tissues.

the long-held concept of a common, multipotent blastema progenitor has been decisively refuted by recent findings demonstrating a high degree of lineage fidelity during regeneration. indeed, studies tracing labeled chondrocytes reveal their exclusive contribution to new cartilage, a compelling demonstration that, despite re-entering the cell cycle and acquiring a more plastic, progenitor-like state, these mature cells largely retain an indelible memory of their original lineage [72]. this key insight fundamentally redefines the blastema not as a homogenous "blank-slate" mass, but rather as a precisely organized cooperative of distinct, lineage-restricted progenitors. consequently, this paradigm shift directs therapeutic strategies away from the delivery of exogenous pluripotent stem cells and towards sophisticated approaches capable of coaxing a patient's own resident, specialized cell populations to coordinately reactivate their latent, lineage-specific morphogenetic programs.

While such advancements have profoundly reshaped our understanding, their translation to human limb regeneration encounters formidable challenges. a formidable barrier to clinical

translation arises from the fundamentally distinct mammalian wound response. this response characterized by rapid inflammation, pervasive immune cell infiltration (notably pro-fibrotic macrophages), and the swift deposition of a collagenous scar matrix orchestrated by signaling molecules such as  $\text{tgf-}\beta$  actively inhibits blastema formation. moreover, the inherently rigid epigenetic landscape of mammalian somatic cells presents a significant hurdle, resisting the widespread dedifferentiation routinely observed in salamanders. finally, and perhaps most critically, the deliberate reactivation of potent developmental pathways and cell cycle regulators—e.g., *wnt*, *myc*, and *fgf* within adult human cells carries an immense, unavoidable oncogenic risk. the molecular machinery underpinning regeneration and tumorigenesis is, after all, deeply intertwined; its precise control is paramount to circumventing malignancy.[73]

## VI. COMPARATIVE BETWEEN REGENERATION TECHNIQUES

In this section we will compare the techniques discussed in the previous sections. (table .1)

| PARAME<br>TER      | BIOELECTRI<br>CITY                                          | TISSUE<br>ENGINEERING                                                   | GENE<br>EDITING                                          |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| Safety             | Non-genetic modulation: main risk is off-target physiology. | Biocompatibility and surgical risks; scaffold/immune issues manageable. | Gene-editing risks; uncertain salamander→human transfer. |
| Clinical readiness | Early stage; strong small-animal data, little limb-         | Most advanced: mature scaffolds/cells and regulatory pathway            | Discovery/mapping phase; pathway mapping only,           |

|                           |                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                    |                                                                                    |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                           | scale evidence.                                                                                           | experience.                                                                                                        | not yet therapeutic.                                                               |
| Complexity                | Moderate: requires mapping/controlling bioelectric circuits.                                              | High: multi-tissue scaffolds, vascularization, innervation.                                                        | Very high: genome complexity, precise CRISPR edits required.                       |
| Cost                      | Potentially low once validated (drugs/devices).                                                           | Moderate–high: GMP, surgery, bioreactors.                                                                          | High: genome engineering, sequencing, specialized animal care.                     |
| Functionality — Sensation | Partial: can influence patterning that may permit some reinnervation; sensory recovery uncertain.         | Partial–good: nerve conduits and trophic factors can support reinnervation but full sensory maps hard to recreate. | Excellent in salamanders (native); human sensory recovery unknown and speculative. |
| Functionality — Strength  | Limited: skeletal/muscle regeneration incomplete in large models; may restore partial contractile tissue. | Variable: scaffolds + muscle engineering can restore meaningful mechanical strength over time.                     | High in natural models; human outcomes unknown — speculative.                      |

|                                      |                                                                                      |                                                                                        |                                                             |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| Functionality — Placement efficiency | Moderate: bioelectric cues help patterning, but precise biomechanics not yet proven. | High surgically (scaffold placement precise), but long-term remodeling may bottleneck. | Natural in axolotl; human translation unproven.             |
| Growth rate (range)                  | Small models: days–weeks.<br>Large mammals: months–years.                            | Typical: weeks–months for small tissues; months–years for composite limbs.             | Axolotl: days–weeks.<br>Humans: speculative, years–decades. |
| Timeframe (summary)                  | Rapid in small models; unknown in mammals.                                           | Weeks–months (small); months–years (large).                                            | Axolotl regenerates in weeks; human use years away.         |
| Scalability                          | Theoretical for full limb, not yet proven.                                           | Can scale composites but multi-tissue patterning bottleneck.                           | Excellent natural model; therapy not scalable yet.          |
| Integration (host tissues)           | May direct host self-organization; indirect evidence.                                | Strong: scaffolds designed for bone, vessel, nerve links.                              | Natural in axolotl; human integration untested.             |
| Durability                           | Unknown in large mammals; stable in small ones.                                      | Durable with correct mechanics/vascularization.                                        | Durable in axolotl; human data lacking.                     |



|                           |                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                              |                                                                                                      |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Regrowth completeness (%) | Small animals: ~30–60%.<br>Large mammals speculative <30%.                                                         | Tissue constructs: 40–80% (bone/cartilage/skin). Full limb ~20–60%.                                          | Axolotl: ~90–100%. Human speculative 0–30%.                                                          |
| Gait Analysis             | Unclear; bioelectric modulation may allow partial locomotor recovery, but limb coordination not proven in mammals. | Potential: engineered scaffolds with muscle/nerve alignment can support partial gait restoration with rehab. | Excellent in axolotl (normal gait restored). Human applicability unknown, far from clinical testing. |

## VII. ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

The burgeoning field of human limb regeneration research presents a unique and compelling set of ethical considerations that demand meticulous attention to ensure responsible scientific advancement and clinical translation [84,85]. Foremost among these is the imperative for robust patient safety. Researchers must implement comprehensive strategies to monitor and mitigate potential biological risks, including the precise control of on-target growth and differentiation. This involves rigorous pre-clinical and clinical evaluation to prevent unintended tissue formation, ectopic growth, or the development of structures that deviate from the intended regenerative outcome [86]. Achieving full functional integration and long-term stability of regenerated tissues or limbs is critical, requiring lifelong diligence.

The oncogenic potential of pluripotent stem cells and other advancement of regenerative technologies must be addressed.

The potential for uncontrolled growth or malignant tissues or transplanted cells must be assessed [87,88] and mitigated. Consequently, sensitive techniques for early detection of tumorigenicity must be employed. Ethical guidelines must define the explicit components of risk mitigation, including assessing the genetic stability of engineered cell lines, in vivo safety testing, and post-implantation monitoring. Given the potential impact of these therapies, the ethics of developing regenerative medicine must also address the potential inequity of access. The high and low availability of these therapies may create inequitable access and healthcare disparities [89,90]. Therefore, the ethics of developing these therapies must counterbalance inequity by increasing the potential for high availability.

## VIII. FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Over the next decades, the scientific and engineering effort to regenerate a fully functional human limb is expected to evolve from a set of parallel experimental strategies into an integrated discipline [91]. Current progress suggests that the future of limb regeneration will depend on the convergence of tissue engineering, precision gene and epigenetic editing, and bioelectric modulation—not as isolated technologies but as interacting components of a single regenerative platform [92]. The most immediate translational momentum comes from tissue-engineering approaches, which already provide tangible prototypes for clinical use [93]. Advances in three-dimensional bioprinting and bio fabrication have produced patient-specific scaffolds capable of supporting vascularization and innervation while

carrying stem or progenitor cells that deposit new matrix and accelerate host integration.[94]

These constructs can now incorporate perfusable microchannels, gradients of mechanical stiffness, and immobilized growth factors that together recreate the structural and biochemical environment of developing tissues [95]. Because the manufacturing methods behind these engineered scaffolds—cell expansion, bioreactor culture, and surgical implantation—are already familiar to regulatory agencies and reconstructive surgeons, this line of work is poised to yield the first clinically meaningful gains, most likely in partial limb reconstruction or in complex composite grafts that replace segments of bone, muscle, and connective tissue.[96]

Yet structural replacement alone cannot reproduce the intricate spatial patterning of joints, nerves, and musculature that gives a limb its full function [97]. For that reason, the field increasingly views gene and epigenetic editing as a complementary driver of future breakthroughs [98]. By selectively activating or repressing developmental programs using CRISPR-based activators, dCas9 fusion proteins, or targeted modification of histone marks such as H3K27me3, researchers can, in principle, awaken dormant regenerative pathways in adult mammalian tissues [99]. Such strategies aim to re-create the embryonic signaling landscapes that allow certain amphibians to form a blastema and regrow a limb [100]. Although powerful in concept, these techniques must overcome significant hurdles—precise delivery to defined tissues, avoidance of off-target effects, and long-term control of gene expression—before they can be deployed safely in humans.[101]

Their integration with engineered scaffolds, for example by embedding localized gene-delivery vectors within printed matrices, is a logical medium-term milestone that would unite structural and genetic control [102]. Equally transformative is the recognition that bioelectric cues—endogenous electric fields and resting membrane

potentials—act as instructive signals for large-scale pattern formation [103]. Work in amphibian and mammalian models has shown that manipulating local ion fluxes or membrane potentials can redirect growth zones and even specify positional identity [104]. This suggests that bioelectricity may provide the “positional code” needed to guide regenerating tissues toward the correct anatomy [105]. In the future, implantable bioelectronic devices or bioresponsive materials capable of delivering precisely timed electrical or ionic stimuli could be combined with tissue-engineered scaffolds and gene-editing payloads to orchestrate both the architecture and the molecular state of regenerating tissue.[106]

Taken together, these converging strategies outline a plausible translational trajectory [107]. In the near term, tissue-engineered constructs enriched with vascular and neural interfaces will dominate clinical trials and are the most likely to deliver the first reproducible clinical successes [108]. Over the medium to long term, targeted gene and epigenetic editing, combined with programmable bioelectric control, are expected to supply the fine-grained patterning and functional integration that scaffolds alone cannot achieve [109]. The most effective future therapies will therefore be hybrid platforms in which printed, vascularized limb templates serve as a structural backbone, while local genetic reprogramming and bioelectric modulation provide dynamic guidance for cell fate and tissue organization.[110]

The field’s progress will depend on solving shared challenges—achieving reliable vascularization and innervation at human scale, ensuring immune compatibility, developing safe and spatially precise gene-delivery systems, and creating implantable bioelectronic interfaces that can operate in vivo for extended periods [111]. By addressing these hurdles and continuing to merge engineering, molecular biology, and developmental bioelectricity, limb-

regeneration research is likely to move first toward clinically approved, scaffold-based tissue engineering, with gene editing and bioelectric modulation subsequently layered on to achieve the ultimate goal: the regeneration of a fully functional human limb[112]

## IX. CONCLUSION

The future of human limb regeneration is not a singular solution but an interdisciplinary approach that through time of integration will serve as a unified therapeutic platform. For example, research suggests that tissue engineering—through advanced biomaterial scaffolds and a cell-free system approach, employing Synthetic Artificial Stem Cells (SASC)—acts as the necessary structural and logistical base to assemble composite tissues. Subsequently, bioelectricity operates at the level of the scaffolded base, acting as a hierarchy control system from the top down, providing large-scale spatial information necessary to facilitate anatomical patterning as evidenced by planarian reprogrammed body plans and the induction of *Xenopus* frogs to regenerate through inducible embryonic control.

At the same time, gene editing boasts precision at the genetic/cellular level, facilitated by CRISPR-Cas9 technology that provides the regulatory apparatus to reinstate dormant developmental pathways and master genes like *Hand2* to best persuade lineage-restricted cells to operate their previously established but now dormant morphogenetic trajectories. Thus, while many obstacles still need to be overcome—including the mammalian fibrotic wound response and oncogenic potential, as well as complete decipherability of the bioelectric code to match human anatomy—the array of research provides a stepwise integration across tissue engineering, bioelectricity and gene editing toward human limb regeneration that, eventually, could start with clinically applicable constructs of scaffolding and expansion over time of integrated genetic and bioelectric control to achieve full regeneration of usable human limbs.

## X. LIST OF FIGURES

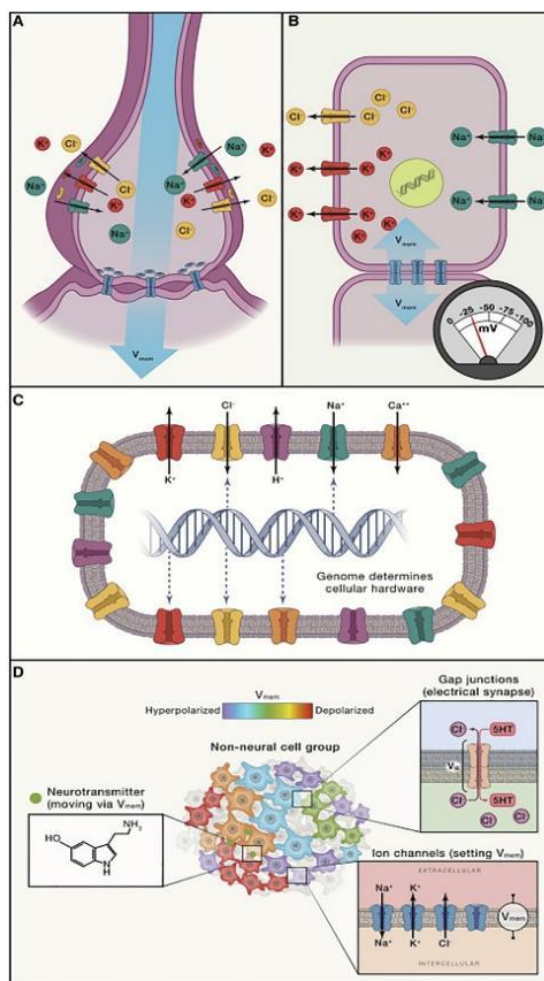
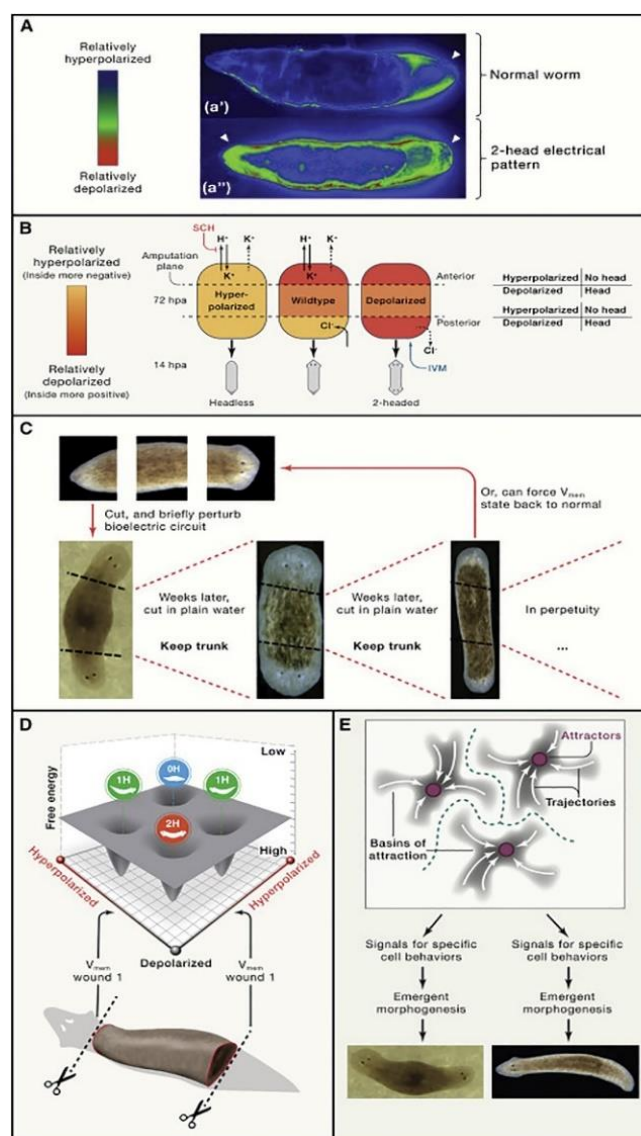


Figure 1. Developmental bioelectricity at the cellular level



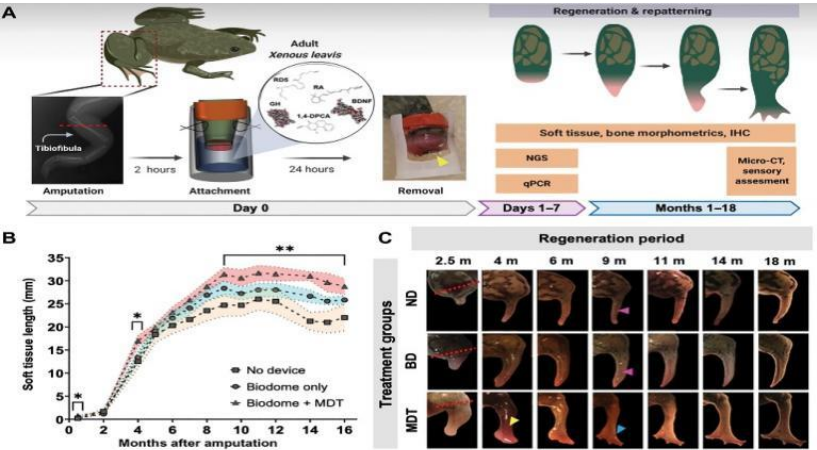


**Figure 3.. Twenty-four-hour multidrug treatment delivered by bioreactor improves repatterning in regenerates**



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**First Reported Cases of AURKC-Related  
Macrozoospermia at the Infertility Center  
in Misurata, Libya**



## **First Reported Cases of AURKC-Related Macrozoospermia at the Infertility Center in Misurata, Libya**

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### **Abstract**

A 50-year-old Libyan male was evaluated at the Misurata Infertility Center, despite lacking any previously documented history of primary infertility. Following a therapeutic protocol aimed at enhancing semen quality, a testicular biopsy was conducted due to persisting abnormalities in sperm morphology. Microscopic examination revealed pronounced morphological anomalies, most notably the



presence of polyflagellated and enlarged-headed spermatozoa — hallmark features indicative of macrozoospermia. Notably, these aberrations remained unchanged despite clinical intervention. Although molecular analysis for Aurora Kinase C (AURKC) gene mutations was not feasible, the diagnosis was supported by distinctive morphological features and expert laboratory interpretation. Given that approximately 85% of reported macrozoospermia cases are associated with AURKC mutations, a presumptive diagnosis of AURKC-related macrozoospermia was considered likely in this patient.

**Keywords:** Male infertility; Spermogram; Sperm morphology; Macrozoospermia; Aurora Kinase C gene.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Male factor infertility (MFI) is a multifactorial condition influenced by genetic mutations, lifestyle, testicular dysfunction, systemic illnesses, and medications. Notably, genetic factors alone or in synergy with others account for approximately 10–15% of MFI cases, underscoring its complex genetic etiology [1]. A growing body of evidence has highlighted the critical involvement of multiple genes in regulating spermatogenesis and maintaining male fertility, thereby drawing considerable clinical interest in their association with male factor infertility (MFI). While genetic testing is gradually being integrated into clinical workflows, only a limited number of assays are currently endorsed for routine diagnostic use. Emerging studies have increasingly focused on the genetic underpinnings of sperm morphological abnormalities, revealing strong correlations between specific genetic mutations and distinct phenotypic syndromes such as macrozoospermia, globozoospermia, and acephalic spermatozoa syndrome each of which is characterized by well-defined and heritable structural sperm defects [2]. The structural integrity of the sperm head

plays a pivotal role in ensuring proper fertilization and reproductive competence. Disruptions in this architecture are strongly implicated in male factor infertility (MFI) and are frequently associated with single-gene defects. These abnormalities often represent some of the most profound morphological impairments observed in clinical practice. Elucidating the molecular and cellular mechanisms underlying these anomalies is vital for improving diagnostic precision, guiding genetic counseling, and developing future gene-targeted therapeutic interventions [3]. Most patients with this distinct phenotype carry a homozygous truncating mutation in the AURKC gene, essential for meiotic chromosome segregation and cytokinesis. This mutation likely underlies the observed meiotic defects [4].

2 Aurora kinase C (AURKC), a crucial serine/threonine kinase within the aurora kinase family, plays an essential role in meiotic progression, particularly in the regulation of chromosome alignment and segregation. Functioning as a core component of the chromosomal passenger complex (CPC), AURKC contributes to the coordination of centromere dynamics, spindle formation, and microtubule stabilization. Its expression is predominantly restricted to germ cells, underscoring its fundamental role in spermatogenesis. Through its regulatory influence on meiotic divisions, AURKC is instrumental in preserving chromosomal stability and ensuring accurate transmission of genetic material during gametogenesis. [5]; [6]. Deletion of Aurka in spermatogonia led to the loss of developing germ cells due to its essential role in mitotic division, while its deletion in spermatocytes resulted in reduced testis size, sperm count, and fertility, along with increased apoptosis and abnormal sperm morphology, indicating defects in meiosis or spermiogenesis [7]. Mutations in the **AURKC** gene have been reported in approximately 50.8% to 100% of patients clinically diagnosed with macrozoospermia, positioning AURKC as the most extensively studied and consistently implicated genetic factor in this phenotype. Remarkably, a significant proportion up to 97% of these pathogenic variants are concentrated within exons 3 and 6 of the gene.

In a recent cohort analysis involving 599 infertile men, AURKC mutations were found to have a higher prevalence than even Klinefelter syndrome, thereby identifying AURKC as a major genetic determinant of male factor infertility (MFI), particularly within the North African population [1]; [8] and [9]. The mutation disrupts both meiotic divisions, resulting in tetraploid, multi flagellated spermatozoa. A North African population was identified as a potential genetic source of this alteration [10]. This report presents the first documented case of AURKC-related macrozoospermia at the Misurata Infertility Center, offering valuable clinical insight into the genetic landscape of male infertility in Libya. These findings underscore the need for integrating genetic evaluation into routine diagnostic protocols for patients with severe sperm morphological abnormalities.

## II. MATERIAL AND METHODS

### Semen Analysis and Testicular Sperm Retrieval:

Semen samples were obtained after a recommended period of 3 to 5 days of sexual abstinence. Following complete liquefaction at 37°C, samples were analyzed in accordance with the World Health Organization (WHO) 2021 criteria [11]. Sperm concentration and motility were assessed using bright-field microscopy at 20× magnification, while morphological evaluation was conducted on 200 Papanicolaou stained spermatozoa under 100× oil immersion. After the completion of empirical medical treatment aimed at improving sperm parameters, testicular sperm retrieval was performed via Fine Needle Aspiration (FNA). Under local anesthesia and sterile conditions, a fine needle was introduced into the testicular parenchyma to aspirate seminiferous tubule material. The retrieved tissue was then processed and examined microscopically to evaluate the presence and morphology of sperm cells.

### III. RESULTS

Semen analysis was conducted following WHO (2021) laboratory standards. The ejaculate volume measured 2.0 mL, falling within the normal reference interval (lower threshold: 1.5 mL; typical range: 1.4–7.0 mL). The sample appeared whitish grey in color, had a physiological odor, a pH of 7.2, and underwent complete liquefaction within 60 minutes. No mucus was detected macroscopically. Microscopic evaluation revealed severely compromised semen quality. The total sperm count was significantly reduced, measuring only 6 million per ejaculate (3 million/mL), well below the established lower reference limit of 15 million/mL. Motility assessment showed markedly impaired dynamics: total motility was 15% (reference  $\geq 40\%$ ), with complete absence of progressive motility (type A: 0%). Non-progressive motility (type B) constituted 65% of motile cells, while sluggish or slow moving spermatozoa (type C) accounted for 35%. Immotile spermatozoa (type D) were predominant, at 85%. of particular note, morphological assessment revealed a strikingly high proportion of spermatozoa exhibiting large, irregular heads a key phenotypic hallmark of Sperm Macrocephaly Syndrome (SMS). These findings are consistent with atypical macrozoospermia, a rare condition frequently linked to AURKC gene mutations. Although rare, a limited number of successful fertilization outcomes in SMS patients have been reported through assisted reproductive techniques, particularly IVF with ICSI. Microscopic evaluation of sperm morphology revealed a complete absence of normal forms (0%), compared to the WHO recommended lower reference limit of  $\geq 4\%$ . The sample was dominated by spermatozoa exhibiting pronounced morphological defects, including large, amorphous heads and the presence of double headed forms. Such features are strongly indicative of macrozoospermia, a rare morphological phenotype most frequently linked to mutations in the Aurora Kinase C (AURKC) gene. In this case, over 70% of spermatozoa demonstrated markedly enlarged

heads considered a diagnostic threshold for macrozoospermia associated with AURKC related genetic alterations. These morphological traits, including abnormal acrosomes, defective midpieces, and frequent multi-flagellated tails, align closely with previous literature describing the phenotypic spectrum of AURKC-linked teratozoospermia. The first reported genetic variant in this context was a frameshift mutation (initially cited as c.144delC, now updated to c.145delC), which has been repeatedly implicated in this condition. Macrozoospermia remains a rare but clinically significant finding, typically affecting fewer than 1% of males presenting with infertility. It is often accompanied by oligozoospermia, compounding its impact on reproductive outcomes. Despite the growing recognition of the genetic underpinnings of such cases, routine access to molecular diagnostic testing remains limited by cost and availability. Consequently, there is a pressing need for comprehensive research focused on well-defined sperm abnormalities to refine and expand genetic testing protocols for male factor infertility (MFI). Non-sperm cellular components were also noted, with round cells observed at a concentration of 3–5 per high power field (HPF). No red blood cells or epithelial cells were present. Histological examination of the testicular FNA sample revealed areas of fibrosis interspersed with morphologically intact seminiferous tubules. Microscopic assessment indicated the presence of motile spermatozoa in approximately 10% of high-power fields (HPFs), suggesting residual spermatogenic activity. However, persistent structural abnormalities of the retrieved sperm particularly macrocephalic forms were evident despite prior therapeutic intervention in “Fig. 1.”



**Fig.1: Testicular FNA Microscopy Revealing Abnormally Enlarged-Head Spermatozoa Consistent with Macrozoospermia.**

Microscopic view of a fine needle aspiration (FNA) sample from testicular tissue. The field shows scattered germ cell elements and a spermatozoon (indicated by the blue arrow) displaying an abnormally large and irregularly shaped head, a key morphological indicator of macrozoospermia. Despite testicular origin, the morphological dysgenesis is consistent with defective spermatogenesis, likely of genetic etiology, most notably associated with AURKC mutations. The presence of dysplastic sperm within the seminiferous tubules further supports the persistence of the abnormal phenotype, even after clinical intervention.

Given the known association between homozygous c.145delC variants in the AURKC gene and the production of tetraploid spermatozoa, reproductive outcomes in such cases are generally poor, with limited success reported even through assisted reproductive technologies (ART). Nonetheless, four cryovials were prepared and preserved for potential future use (Cryo-location: Tank 8, Canister 6 - Green). The persistent dysmorphogenesis of the spermatozoa, along with their abnormal morphology post-treatment, reinforces the clinical suspicion of AURKC- related macrozoospermia. Based on these findings,

genetic analysis was recommended to confirm the suspected mutation and to guide future reproductive counseling.

#### IV. DISCUSSION

In the current case, morphological examination of testicular sperm revealed a complete absence of normally formed spermatozoa, with striking abnormalities such as large, amorphous, and sometimes double-headed sperm cells. These features are consistent with macrozoospermia, a rare variant of teratozoospermia initially described by [12] and now recognized by the presence of enlarged heads, irregular shapes, and multi-flagellated spermatozoa in over 70% of the sample [13], [4]. Mutations in the AURKC gene, located at chromosome 19q13.43, have been identified as the most common genetic basis for macrozoospermia, particularly the frameshift variant c.145delC (formerly c.144delC). This mutation disrupts normal meiotic chromosome segregation, leading to tetraploid, macrocephalic spermatozoa with impaired fertilization capability [10]. The clinical presentation in our patient including the persistence of abnormal sperm forms despite prior treatment further supports a potential autosomal recessive AURKC-related etiology.

Although motile sperm were successfully retrieved from testicular tissue (10% of HPFs) and cryopreserved in four vials, the use of these cells in assisted reproductive technology (ART) remains controversial. The literature indicates that nearly all macrozoospermic spermatozoa exhibit chromosomal abnormalities, with aneuploidy rates reaching 100% as confirmed by fluorescence in situ hybridization (FISH) [14]. Consequently, intracytoplasmic sperm injection (ICSI) outcomes in confirmed AURKC mutation cases are notably poor, and live births are rarely achieved. Interestingly, emerging data suggest that macrozoospermia may also occur in the absence of AURKC mutations, as shown in the case described by [15], where recurrent miscarriages occurred despite the absence of detectable mutations.

This highlights the potential involvement of other, as-yet-unidentified genetic or epigenetic factors, and reinforces the complexity of this syndrome beyond AURKC alone.

Moreover, [16] provided evidence of a novel c.744C>G (p.Y248\*) nonsense mutation in exon 6 of the AURKC gene in a Latin American patient further expanding the known mutation spectrum. Their review emphasized that systematic genetic screening for AURKC mutations should be considered in all men presenting with  $\geq 30\%$  macrocephalic sperm, especially in monomorphic teratozoospermia cases. This aligns with our clinical recommendation for genetic confirmation in the present case.

In summary, this report adds to the growing international recognition of AURKC-related macrozoospermia, particularly in North African populations. It underscores the diagnostic value of integrated morphological, histological, and molecular assessment, and the need for accessible genetic testing protocols tailored for resource-limited clinical settings.

## **V. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on current evidence, it is recommended that patients presenting with  $>20\%$  macrocephalic and  $>10\%$  multiflagellated spermatozoa, including those attending the Infertility Center in Misurata, undergo targeted genetic testing, such as Sanger sequencing of AURKC exons 3 and 6. If no pathogenic variants are identified, whole exome sequencing should be considered to investigate other potential genetic etiologies.

## **VI. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The authors sincerely acknowledge the invaluable support and collaboration of the clinical and laboratory staff at the Misurata Infertility Center. Their expertise in patient care, meticulous attention



to laboratory procedures, and unwavering commitment to quality were instrumental in enabling the diagnostic, histological, and morphological evaluations presented in this report. Special thanks are extended to the medical personnel involved in the fine needle aspiration procedures and cryopreservation process. This work would not have been possible without their dedication to advancing the field of reproductive genetics and male infertility research in Libya.

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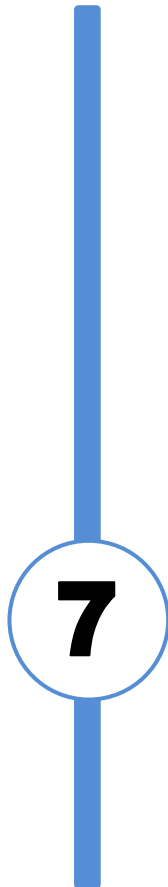
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## **Allele Frequencies of 15 Short Tandem Repeats (STR) Loci in Libyan Human Population**



## **Allele Frequencies of 15 Short Tandem Repeats (STR) Loci in Libyan Human Population**

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### **Abstract**

The present work is to describe STR markers polymorphism with some parameters of forensic interest in the general Libyan population in order to contribute to the analysis of its genetic diversity for forensic purposes. Genotype and allele frequencies distribution for 15 polymerase chain reaction (PCR)-based loci (D3S1358, THO1, D21S11, D18S51, Penta E, D5S818, D13S317, D7S820, D16S539, CSF1PO, Penta D, VWA, D8S1179, TPOX, and FGA) were determined for a Libyan population. The 15 loci amplified by the PowerPlex® 16 HS System (Promega). The results showed that the allele frequencies ranged from 0.0033 for the rarest alleles found at the most studied loci to 0.463 for the most common allele (allele 8 at the TPOX locus). Conventional statistics between- population comparison have been performed.



## 1. Introduction

Short tandem repeats (STRs) are currently the most commonly analyzed genetic polymorphism in forensic genetics [1].

They were introduced into casework in the mid-1990s and are now the main tool for just about every forensic laboratory in the world the vast majority of forensic genetic casework involves the analysis of STR polymorphisms [5]. There are thousands of STRs that can potentially be used for forensic analysis. STR loci are spread throughout the genome including the 22 autosomal chromosomes and the X and Y sex chromosomes. They have a core unit of between 1 and 6 bp and the repeats typically range from 50 to 300 base pairs. The majority of the loci that are used in forensic genetics are tetranucleotide repeats, which have a four base pair repeat motif.

The use of polymorphic short tandem repeats (STRs) has become important in genetics applications, such as gene mapping, identification and paternity. In forensics, STRs are mainly used for paternity testing and personal identification.

Genotype and allele frequencies distribution for 15 autosomal genetic loci were determined for a Libyan population sample of 150 unrelated individuals (300 alleles for each locus). And conventional statistics between population comparisons have been performed. The highest frequent allele was allele 8 at the TPOX locus (46.3%), moreover the rarest alleles found at most loci studied were frequent 0.33% in studied population.

## 2. Materials and methods

### 2.1 Sample preparation

Blood samples from 90 unrelated male individuals were deposited

on FTA paper and directly amplified without quantification using the PowerPlex® 16 HS System (Promega) kit. A classical phenol/chloroform-based DNA extraction protocol is used for 60 bone samples were collected from mass graves in Libya. In the (ICMP) lab the Extracted DNA from 60 bone samples quantified by real-time PCR (Rt-PCR) using the Plexor® HY system (Promega). Separation and detection of the alleles for blood and bone samples were carried out using capillary electrophoresis on an ABI PRISM 310 Genetic analyzer instrument (Applied Biosystems).

## 2.2 Statistical analysis

The calculating of allele frequencies based on the number of the detected alleles for each specific locus, the genotyping information was then converted into allele frequencies (Microsoft Excel) by counting the number of times each allele was observed in all samples. To assess departures from Hardy-Weinberg Equilibrium (HWE) observed heterozygosity ( $H_o$ ) and expected heterozygosity ( $H_e$ ), forensic and population genetic parameters including power of discrimination (PD), polymorphic Information Content (PIC), matching probability (MP), typical paternity index (TPI), and probability of exclusion (PE).

## 3. Results

In this study, the genotype and allele frequencies distribution for 15 PCR-based loci (D3S1358, THO1, D21S11, D18S51, Penta E, D5S818, D13S317, D7S820, D16S539, CSF1PO, Penta D, VWA, D8S1179, TPOX and FGA) were determined for Libyan population samples of about 150 unrelated individuals.

The allele frequencies ranged from 0.0033 (33%) for the rarest alleles found at most loci studied to 0.463 (46.3%) for the most

common allele (allele 8 at the TPOX locus) (Table II). And conventional statistics have been compared and performed between populations. Statistical forensic parameters are importance. The PD, observed and expected heterozygosity values, homozygosity (h), PIC, PM, PE and PI were calculated for the loci (Table II).

These parameters indicated the usefulness of the loci in forensic personal identification and paternity testing among Libyan population in this study.

#### **4. General Discussion**

In this study, we found that the allele frequencies ranged from 0.003 (0.33%) for the rarest alleles found at most loci studied to 0.463 (46.3%) for the most common allele (allele 8 at the TPOX locus). The level of heterozygosity was found to be high with average 0.79 (79%), the lowest observed heterozygotes frequency being

0.68 at the TPOX locus and the highest being 0.90 for the Penta E locus pointing to a random mating population. The results also showed that the frequency of observed homozygotes was low across all studied loci. Specifically, Penta E locus showing the lowest frequency (0.096) and locus CSF1PO having the highest frequency of homozygotes (0.279) with average 0.20 (20%), indicating that inbreeding is insignificant in the study population. Inbreeding reduces the Frequency of heterozygous genotypes while increasing the homozygous genotypes as opposed to random mating [9]. This is because inbreeding results in an excess of homozygotes while random mating leads to an excess of heterozygotes. Table 1 where the heterozygotes frequencies are above 89%, indicating that mating is random.

It is well known that the possibility to find two persons with the same DNA profile if chosen at random in a population is defined as the matching possibility (MP) [6]. The results of this study revealed that the MP was low, ranging from 0.0216 in Penta E locus to 0.136 in CSF1PO locus. The lower of MP indicating that the lower of chances of picking someone whose alleles are the same with someone else [10]. The higher of power of discrimination (PD) that mean the higher of chances that someone will be picked randomly whose alleles are different from the first person [6].

As shown earlier (Table 1), the PD values imply that chances of picking out two people randomly that are genetically different are high.

There is less chance of a random sample matching because a higher heterozygosity means that more allele diversity would occur. For a given population, the quality of a polymorphism as a genetic marker was measured by the heterozygosity, the frequency of heterozygosity, or by a PIC.

This indicates the probability that a given offspring of a parent carrying a rare allele at a locus will allow deduction of the parental genotype at the locus. This is determined by adding the mating frequencies multiplied by the probability that an offspring will be formed.

The TPOX locus is the least polymorphic marker while Penta E is the most polymorphic marker based on the degree of polymorphism of every marker, expressed in heterozygosity and PIC terms (Table I). The usefulness of the findings for genetic polymorphism studies and linkage mapping programs in humans is confirmed by the high PIC values of the selected markers.

The PE can be computed to demonstrate how rare it is to find a random man who could not be excluded as the biological father

of the child. The PE for every locus in this study was calculated and tabled as planned. For all the microsatellites analyzed the PE ranged from 0.438 (TPOX) to 0.775 (D18S51), with an average of 0.583.

The values PD for all tested loci were 91.4% for the THO and D3S1358 loci and 96.5%, 97.8%, 90.7%, and 91.5%, for D18S51, Penta E, D5S818, and D13S317 loci, respectively and 91.8%, 86.3%, 96.3, and 93.6% for the D7S820, CSF1PO, Penta D, and VWA loci respectively, and 95.3%, 85.7%, 96.6%, and 92% for D8S1179, TPOX, FGA, and D21S11 loci respectively, and ranged from 85.7% to 97.8%, for the rest of the loci. Based on statistical parameters, we found that Libyan population of may use these 15 STRs loci as a vital tool for forensic personal identification and paternity testing.

Consistent with prior study [8] by using same kit that was used in our study showed that the allele frequencies ranged from 0.005 (0.5%) for the rarest alleles found at most loci studied to 0.500 (50%) for the most common allele (allele 8 at the TPOX locus). Moreover, another prior study [7] by using AmpFISTR Identifier (Applied Biosystems), showed that the allele frequencies ranged from 0.005 (0.5%) for the rarest alleles found at most loci studied to 0.434 (43.4%) for the most common allele (allele 8 at the TPOX locus).

And forensic parameters for the 15 studied loci are the PD and the PE for the 15 studied loci were higher than 0.999, observed and expected heterozygosity were ranged from 0.657 - 0.889 and 0.716 - 0.843 respectively.

In other studies, the most frequent allele for forensic STR loci can vary depending on the population, for example 12 (0.4093) at D5S818 in Slovenian population [4], 15 (0.4143) at D3S1358 in

Bolivians [2], 8 (0.4890) at TPOX among Wallachians in South Romania [11] and 8 (0.424) at TPOX in Adaima community from Egypt [3].

## 5. Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank the ministry of martyrs and missing persons, Tripoli Libya for providing DNA data, International Commission of Missing Persons (ICMP) labs, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina for analysis all of samples, exhumation team in technical administration for identification of missing persons, and we thank zoology department, faculty of science, Tripoli University.

## 6. Recommendations

- Use of more kits for multiplying STR loci.
- Calculate of allele frequency in different Libyan ethnicity to comparison.

**Table I. Frequencies of 15 STR Loci In 150 Unrelated Libyan Samples.**

| Allele | D3S1358 | TH01  | D18S51 | Penta E | D5S818 | D13S317 | D7S820 | D16S539 | CSF1P0 | Penta D | VW    | D8S1179 | TPO   | FGA   | I |
|--------|---------|-------|--------|---------|--------|---------|--------|---------|--------|---------|-------|---------|-------|-------|---|
| 2.2    | -       | -     | -      | -       | -      | -       | -      | -       | -      | 0.076   | -     | -       | -     | -     | - |
| 3.2    | -       | -     | -      | -       | -      | -       | -      | -       | -      | 0.003   | -     | -       | -     | -     | - |
| 5      | -       | -     | -      | 0.036   | -      | -       | -      | -       | -      | -       | -     | -       | -     | -     | - |
| 6      | -       | 0.220 | -      | -       | -      | -       | -      | -       | 0.0033 | -       | -     | -       | 0.003 | -     | - |
| 7      | -       | 0.260 | -      | 0.100   | -      | 0.003   | 0.0166 | -       | 0.0067 | 0.003   | -     | -       | 0.003 | -     | - |
| 8      | -       | 0.140 | -      | 0.073   | 0.043  | 0.130   | 0.1133 | 0.030   | 0.016  | 0.036   | -     | 0.013   | 0.463 | -     | - |
| 9      | -       | 0.263 | 0.003  | -       | 0.06   | 0.05    | 0.133  | 0.130   | 0.016  | 0.183   | -     | 0.016   | 0.156 | -     | - |
| 9.3    | -       | 0.093 | -      | -       | -      | -       | -      | -       | -      | -       | -     | -       | -     | -     | - |
| 10     | -       | 0.023 | -      | 0.063   | 0.100  | 0.073   | 0.320  | 0.063   | 0.313  | 0.133   | -     | 0.053   | 0.080 | -     | - |
| 11     | -       | -     | 0.010  | 0.150   | 0.233  | 0.266   | 0.253  | 0.35    | 0.313  | 0.116   | -     | 0.136   | 0.253 | -     | - |
| 12     | -       | -     | 0.120  | 0.160   | 0.363  | 0.326   | 0.133  | 0.226   | 0.283  | 0.086   | -     | 0.16    | 0.040 | -     | - |
| 13     | -       | -     | 0.210  | 0.1166  | 0.18   | 0.123   | 0.023  | 0.166   | 0.043  | 0.216   | -     | 0.253   | -     | -     | - |
| 14     | 0.090   | -     | 0.110  | 0.060   | 0.013  | 0.026   | 0.006  | 0.033   | 0.003  | 0.103   | 0.100 | 0.173   | -     | -     | - |
| 15     | 0.263   | -     | 0.133  | 0.057   | 0.006  | -       | -      | -       | -      | 0.033   | 0.153 | 0.12    | -     | -     | - |
| 16     | 0.257   | -     | 0.140  | 0.046   | -      | -       | -      | -       | -      | 0.003   | 0.223 | 0.056   | -     | -     | - |
| 17     | 0.260   | -     | 0.083  | 0.053   | -      | -       | -      | -       | -      | 0.003   | 0.233 | 0.01    | -     | 0.003 | - |
| 18     | 0.113   | -     | 0.090  | 0.030   | -      | -       | -      | -       | -      | -       | 0.190 | -       | -     | 0.010 | - |
| 18.2   | -       | -     | -      | -       | -      | -       | -      | -       | -      | -       | -     | -       | -     | 0.006 | - |
| 19     | 0.017   | -     | 0.040  | 0.036   | -      | -       | -      | -       | -      | -       | 0.073 | -       | -     | 0.090 | - |
| 19.2   | -       | -     | -      | -       | -      | -       | -      | -       | -      | -       | -     | -       | -     | 0.003 | - |
| 20     | -       | -     | 0.030  | 0.006   | -      | -       | -      | -       | -      | -       | 0.020 | -       | -     | 0.066 | - |
| 21     | -       | -     | 0.016  | -       | -      | -       | -      | -       | -      | -       | 0.003 | -       | -     | 0.130 | - |
| 21.2   | -       | -     | -      | -       | -      | -       | -      | -       | -      | -       | -     | -       | -     | 0.006 | - |
| 22     | -       | -     | 0.006  | 0.006   | -      | -       | -      | -       | -      | -       | 0.003 | -       | -     | 0.170 | - |
| 22.2   | -       | -     | -      | -       | -      | -       | -      | -       | -      | -       | -     | -       | -     | 0.003 | - |
| 23     | -       | -     | 0.0-06 | -       | -      | -       | -      | -       | -      | -       | -     | -       | -     | 0.226 | - |
| 23.2   | -       | -     | -      | -       | -      | -       | -      | -       | -      | -       | -     | -       | -     | 0.006 | - |
| 24     | -       | -     | -      | -       | -      | -       | -      | -       | -      | -       | -     | -       | -     | 0.126 | - |
| 25     | -       | -     | -      | -       | -      | -       | -      | -       | -      | -       | -     | -       | -     | 0.086 | - |
| 25.2   | -       | -     | -      | -       | -      | -       | -      | -       | -      | -       | -     | -       | -     | -     | - |
| 26     | -       | -     | -      | -       | -      | -       | -      | -       | -      | -       | -     | -       | -     | 0.030 | - |
| 27     | -       | -     | -      | -       | -      | -       | -      | -       | -      | -       | -     | -       | -     | 0.020 | - |
| 28     | -       | -     | -      | -       | -      | -       | -      | -       | -      | -       | -     | -       | -     | 0.010 | - |
| 29     | -       | -     | -      | -       | -      | -       | -      | -       | -      | -       | -     | -       | -     | 0.006 | - |
| 30     | -       | -     | -      | -       | -      | -       | -      | -       | -      | -       | -     | -       | -     | -     | - |
| 30.2   | -       | -     | -      | -       | -      | -       | -      | -       | -      | -       | -     | -       | -     | -     | - |
| 31     | -       | -     | -      | -       | -      | -       | -      | -       | -      | -       | -     | -       | -     | -     | - |
| 31.2   | -       | -     | -      | -       | -      | -       | -      | -       | -      | -       | -     | -       | -     | -     | - |
| 32     | -       | -     | -      | -       | -      | -       | -      | -       | -      | -       | -     | -       | -     | -     | - |

|            |        |      |       |      |       |        |       |        |       |       |      |        |      |      |       |
|------------|--------|------|-------|------|-------|--------|-------|--------|-------|-------|------|--------|------|------|-------|
| <b>Hob</b> | 0.7467 | 0.77 | 0.893 | 0.86 | 0.766 | 0.76   | 0.76  | 0.72   | 0.74  | 0.813 | 0.78 | 0.7933 | 0.71 | 0.82 | 0.846 |
| <b>s</b>   | 3      |      |       |      | 6     |        |       |        |       | 33    | 66   |        | 33   | 66   | 7     |
| <b>Hex</b> | 0.776  | 0.78 | 0.874 | 0.90 | 0.765 | 0.7814 | 0.784 | 0.7754 | 0.720 | 0.860 | 0.81 | 0.8396 | 0.68 | 0.86 | 0.803 |
| <b>p</b>   | 5      |      |       | 30   | 4     |        | 16    | 2      | 8     | 71    | 95   |        | 85   | 68   | 6     |
| <b>h</b>   | 0.224  | 0.21 | 0.126 | 0.09 | 0.234 | 0.2185 | 0.215 | 0.2245 | 0.279 | 0.139 | 0.18 | 0.1603 | 0.31 | 0.13 | 0.196 |
| <b>PM</b>  | 4      |      |       | 69   | 5     |        | 84    | 8      | 1     | 29    | 04   |        | 14   | 31   | 4     |
|            | 0.0856 | 0.08 | 0.034 | 0.02 | 0.092 | 0.0846 | 0.081 | 0.0824 | 0.136 | 0.036 | 0.06 | 0.0460 | 0.14 | 0.03 | 0.079 |
|            | 5      |      |       | 16   | 7     |        | 24    |        | 6     | 71    | 30   |        | 22   | 36   | 3     |
| <b>PD</b>  | 0.9144 | 0.91 | 0.965 | 0.97 | 0.907 | 0.9153 | 0.918 | 0.9176 | 0.863 | 0.963 | 0.93 | 0.9539 | 0.85 | 0.96 | 0.920 |
|            | 4      |      |       | 83   | 2     |        | 76    |        | 3     | 29    | 69   |        | 77   | 63   | 7     |
| <b>PIC</b> | 0.7397 | 0.75 | 0.861 | 0.89 | 0.731 | 0.7507 | 0.752 | 0.7437 | 0.668 | 0.845 | 0.79 | 0.8202 | 0.64 | 0.85 | 0.779 |
|            | 2      |      |       | 52   | 9     |        | 97    | 1      | 6     | 48    | 45   |        | 24   | 30   | 5     |
| <b>PE</b>  | 0.5157 | 0.55 | 0.775 | 0.72 | 0.538 | 0.5356 | 0.536 | 0.4807 | 0.484 | 0.640 | 0.58 | 0.6037 | 0.43 | 0.66 | 0.67  |
|            | 5      |      |       | 76   | 1     |        | 7     | 5      | 4     | 63    | 71   |        | 84   | 33   |       |
| <b>PIT</b> | 2.231  | 2.33 | 3.968 | 5.15 | 2.131 | 2.287  | 2.316 | 2.226  | 1.791 | 3.589 | 2.77 | 3.118  | 1.60 | 3.75 | 2.546 |
|            | 4      |      |       | 8    |       |        |       |        |       |       | 0    |        | 5    | 50   | 4     |

**Table II. Statistical Parameters Of The 15 Str Loci For Forensic Interest (N = 150)**



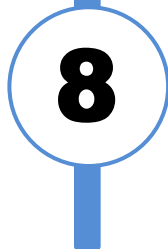
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**Real-Time Monitoring System for Biological  
and Psychological Fatigue in Under-10  
Football Players: A Prospective Intervention  
Study**



## **Real-Time Monitoring System for Biological and Psychological Fatigue in Under-10 Football Players: A Prospective Intervention Study**

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### **Abstract**

Youth football players under 10 face significant risks of fatigue and overtraining due to their developing physiological systems. Existing monitoring systems lack pediatric-specific solutions. This prospective study developed and validated a real-time monitoring system integrating heart rate analysis and psychological stress indicators for under-10 football players. A prospective 8-week randomized controlled trial was conducted with 60 male players (aged 8-10) allocated to intervention (n=30) and control (n=30) groups. The intervention group used a smart monitoring system with real-time alerts, while the control group followed standard training. The intervention group demonstrated significantly faster recovery time ( $3.2 \pm 0.8$  vs.  $4.1 \pm 1.1$  minutes,  $p < 0.05$ ), lower training heart rate ( $158.2 \pm 3.4$  vs.  $166.8 \pm 4.1$  bpm,  $p < 0.01$ ), and stronger correlation between sleep and stress reduction ( $r = -0.72$  vs.  $-0.45$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). The

system effectively reduces fatigue and improves recovery in young athletes, providing a validated tool for youth sports academies.

**Keywords—** Fatigue Monitoring, Youth Football, Heart Rate Analysis, Psychological Stress, Athletic Recovery, Wearable Sensors, Pediatric Sports Science, Training Load Management.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Youth football participation has grown exponentially, with over 100 million children under 12 playing globally [1] [2]. However, this popularity comes with increasing health concerns. Recent epidemiological studies indicate that 68% of youth football injuries are attributed to excessive fatigue and inadequate recovery [3]. Particularly concerning is that children under 10 experience 25% more training-related injuries compared to older adolescents [4].

The physiological vulnerability of young athletes is well-documented. Children's cardiovascular systems exhibit higher resting heart rates (85-100 bpm vs. 60-80 bpm in adults) and slower recovery kinetics, requiring up to 25% longer for heart rate normalization post-exertion [5]. These developmental differences make adult-derived training thresholds inappropriate and potentially harmful for young players [6].

Despite these risks, a significant gap exists in monitoring technologies. The UEFA Youth Report (2022) revealed that only 42% of European academies use physiological monitoring systems for players under 10, and those that do often adapt adult-focused technologies without scientific validation [5]. This technological gap is particularly problematic given that psychological stress during critical match moments can increase heart rate by 15-20 bpm in young players, further compounding fatigue risks [6].

This study addresses these challenges by developing and validating a pediatric-specific monitoring system that:

- Integrates real-time heart rate analysis with contextual stress assessment
- Implements age-appropriate physiological thresholds
- Provides actionable insights for coaches through smart alerts
- Validates efficacy through a controlled intervention study.

This paper is structured as follows Section 2 presents a comprehensive review of related literature covering physiological development in young athletes and existing monitoring technologies. Section 3 details the methodology, including study design, participant selection, intervention protocol, and statistical analysis. Section 4 reports the results of the intervention on physiological and psychological parameters. Section 5 discusses the findings, their implications, and study limitations. Finally, Section 6 concludes the paper and suggests directions for future research.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Physiological Development in Young Athletes**

The cardiovascular system in children under 10 is characterized by distinct physiological responses. According to Bar-Or (2004), children exhibit lower stroke volume and cardiac output compared to adults, leading to higher relative heart rates during exercise [7]. A critical study by Rowland (2014) demonstrated that heart rate recovery in children takes 25-30% longer than adults, emphasizing the need for extended recovery periods between high-intensity bouts [8].

### **2.2 Current Monitoring Technologies**

Existing athlete monitoring systems like FIFA's Player Load Index and Catapult Sports' technologies are primarily validated for adult and adolescent populations. As noted by Lloyd et al. (2015), the direct



application of adult monitoring protocols to children represents a significant oversimplification of pediatric exercise physiology [9]. This is particularly problematic given that children's heart rate responses to psychological stress can mimic physiological fatigue patterns, requiring sophisticated contextual analysis [10].

### **2.3 Psychological Factors in Youth Sports**

Recent research by Viveiros et al. (2021) highlighted those psychosocial factors including competitive pressure and performance anxiety contribute significantly to overtraining syndrome in youth athletes [11]. The study found that players reporting high stress levels showed 30% slower recovery times and increased injury incidence, underscoring the importance of integrated psychophysiological monitoring.

### **2.4 Research Gap**

The literature reveals a clear need for monitoring systems that:

- Incorporate pediatric-specific physiological thresholds
- Integrate psychological stress indicators
- Provide real-time decision support for coaches
- Are validated through controlled intervention studies

## **3. Methodology**

### **3.1 Study Design and Participant Selection**

A prospective, randomized controlled trial was conducted over an 8-week period to evaluate the efficacy of a real-time fatigue monitoring system specifically designed for pediatric athletes. The study received ethical approval from the Institutional Review Board, and written informed consent was obtained from all parents or legal guardians prior to participation. Initial recruitment targeted 120 male football

players aged 8-10 years from three specialized football academies. After comprehensive eligibility screening, 100 players met the initial inclusion criteria. Participants underwent a multi-stage selection process that included medical screening and a 2-week baseline assessment period. This rigorous process resulted in a final analytical sample of 60 players who completed all study requirements. These 60 players were randomly allocated to either the intervention group (n=30) or the control group (n=30) using a computer-generated random number sequence. The participant flow through each stage of the study is detailed in Figure 1. Flowchart 1 succinctly illustrates the participant selection and allocation pathway.

### **3.2 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria**

**Inclusion Criteria:** Male players aged 8-10 years, registered at a football academy, and in general good health permitting participation in regular training activities.

**Exclusion Criteria:** Known history of cardiovascular or respiratory disease, use of medication affecting heart rate, or failure to provide written informed parental consent.

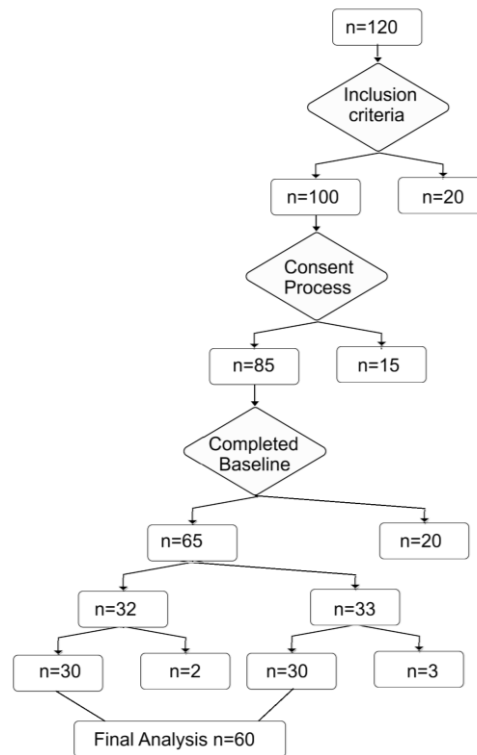


**Fig. 1. Participant Selection and Allocation Flowchart**

### 3.3 Procedures

**Recruitment and Ethical Approval:** Following approval from the University Ethics Committee, detailed study information was provided to parents and players. Informed consent forms were signed by the parents of the 85 players who met the initial criteria.

**Baseline Period:** The 85 consented players underwent a 2-week baseline monitoring period. During this phase, 13 players were excluded due to frequent absence or incomplete wearable device data, leaving 65 players.

Allocation and Follow-up: The 65 players who completed the baseline period were randomly allocated to two groups: a. Intervention Group (n=32): Utilized the developed monitoring system with real-time alerts to coaches. b. Control Group (n=33): Continued with standard training protocols without the monitoring system feedback. During the 8-week study period, 5 players (2 from the intervention group and 3 from the control group) were lost to follow-up for reasons beyond the researchers' control (minor injuries, club transfer)

All randomized participants who completed the baseline assessment were included in the final analysis according to the intention-to-treat (ITT) principle. Missing data from the five players lost to follow-up were handled using linear interpolation for continuous variables to maintain the sample size and the integrity of the randomization.

### **3.4 Intervention Protocol**

Coaches in the intervention group received real-time alerts through a dedicated smartphone application when players exceeded predetermined thresholds. The intervention protocol specified graduated responses to these alerts, including immediate reduction of training intensity for moderate alerts and mandatory rest periods with potential substitution for high-level alerts. The control group participated in identical training sessions while wearing monitoring equipment for data collection purposes only, without any alert generation or intervention from the research team. Both groups followed the same structured training program designed by qualified football coaches, ensuring consistency in training load and content across groups.

### **3.5 Data Collection and Management**

Data collection encompassed multiple dimensions of player physiology and psychology. Resting heart rate measurements were taken daily under standardized conditions before training sessions.

During training, continuous heart rate monitoring captured exercise intensity and patterns, while post-exercise recovery times were systematically recorded as the duration required for heart rate to return within 20% of individual resting levels. Sleep duration data were collected through parent-completed logs, and psychological stress levels were assessed weekly using an age-appropriate modified version of the Perceived Stress Scale for Children.

To ensure data quality and reliability, several measures were implemented. Daily calibration checks verified monitor functionality, and signal quality assessments ensured minimum 95% valid data acquisition during each training session based on the signal quality criteria embedded in the device software. Research assistants cross-referenced heart rate data with training video recordings to validate physiological responses to specific activities. All data management procedures followed established protocols for maintaining data integrity and security throughout the study period.

### **3.6 Statistical Analysis**

The statistical analysis employed a comprehensive approach to examine intervention effects while accounting for potential confounding factors. Baseline characteristics between groups were compared using Independent Samples T-tests for continuous variables and Chi-square tests for categorical variables to confirm successful randomization. The primary analysis utilized Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) to compare post-intervention outcomes between groups, using the respective pre-intervention measurements as a covariate to control for baseline values.

Secondary analyses explored psychophysiological relationships through Pearson correlation coefficients and examined temporal patterns using repeated measures analysis of variance. Effect sizes were calculated using Cohen's *d* to quantify the magnitude of observed

differences, and 95% confidence intervals provided precision estimates for all treatment effects. The sample size of 30 participants per group provided adequate statistical power (80%) to detect medium-sized effects at a significance level of  $\alpha = 0.05$ , accounting for potential attrition during the study period. All analyses were conducted using SPSS Statistics Version 26, with statistical significance defined as  $p < 0.05$  using two-tailed tests.

### 3.7 The Monitoring System

The real-time monitoring system comprised commercially available Polar H10 chest strap heart rate sensors (Polar Electro Oy, Finland), known for their high accuracy in pediatric populations. Data were streamed via Bluetooth Low Energy to a custom-developed smartphone application (Android/iOS) used by the coaches.

The predetermined alert thresholds were derived from a combination of published normative data for children [4, 8] and the individual player's baseline data collected during the initial 2-week period. Alerts were triggered in two tiers:

- Moderate Alert: Heart rate sustained above 85% of age-predicted maximum for  $> 2$  minutes.
- High Alert: Heart rate sustained above 90% of age-predicted maximum for  $> 1$  minute, or a reduction in heart rate recovery slope by  $> 30\%$  from the player's baseline.

## 4. RESULTS

After adjusting for baseline values using ANCOVA, the following significant differences were observed between the groups.

### 4.1 Baseline Characteristics and Group Equivalence

Prior to the intervention, comprehensive baseline assessments were conducted to ensure comparability between the study groups. As

presented in Table 1, no statistically significant differences were observed between the intervention and control groups across all measured demographic, anthropometric, and physiological parameters.

**Table 1. Baseline Characteristics of the Study Participants (N=60)**

| Variable                             | Intervention Group (n=30) | Control Group (n=30) | P-value |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|---------|
| Age (years)                          | 9.1 $\pm$ 0.6             | 9.0 $\pm$ 0.7        | 0.55    |
| Height (cm)                          | 135.2 $\pm$ 5.8           | 136.1 $\pm$ 6.2      | 0.54    |
| Weight (kg)                          | 32.5 $\pm$ 4.1            | 33.1 $\pm$ 4.5       | 0.58    |
| Body Mass Index (kg/m <sup>2</sup> ) | 17.8 $\pm$ 1.5            | 17.9 $\pm$ 1.6       | 0.80    |
| Years of Practice                    | 2.4 $\pm$ 0.9             | 2.6 $\pm$ 1.0        | 0.41    |
| Resting Heart Rate (bpm)             | 73.1 $\pm$ 4.5            | 72.5 $\pm$ 5.1       | 0.62    |
| Baseline Recovery Time (min)         | 3.7 $\pm$ 0.6             | 3.8 $\pm$ 0.7        | 0.55    |
| Sleep Duration (hours/night)         | 7.7 $\pm$ 0.8             | 7.6 $\pm$ 0.9        | 0.65    |

The homogeneity between groups at baseline (all p-values > 0.05) confirms successful randomization and establishes a solid foundation for attributing any subsequent differences in outcomes to the intervention rather than pre-existing disparities.

#### 4.2 Primary Physiological Outcomes

The intervention demonstrated significant effects on key physiological parameters following the 8-week implementation period. As shown in Table 2, the intervention group exhibited substantially improved

recovery kinetics and cardiovascular efficiency compared to the control group.

**Table 2. Intervention Effects on Primary Physiological Outcomes**

| Outcome Measure           | Intervention Group (n=30) | Control Group (n=30) | P-value | Effect Size (Cohen's d) |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|---------|-------------------------|
| Recovery Time (min)       | 3.2 ± 0.8                 | 4.1 ± 1.1            | 0.012   | 0.95                    |
| Average Training HR (bpm) | 158.2 ± 3.4               | 166.8 ± 4.1          | 0.003   | 2.31                    |
| Peak Exercise HR (bpm)    | 189.3 ± 2.8               | 192.1 ± 3.2          | 0.045   | 0.92                    |
| HR Recovery Slope (%/min) | 25.4 ± 3.1                | 19.8 ± 4.2           | 0.008   | 1.54                    |

The intervention group showed a 22% faster mean recovery time ( $3.2 \pm 0.8$  minutes vs.  $4.1 \pm 1.1$  minutes,  $p = 0.012$ ) and a 5.2% lower average training heart rate ( $158.2 \pm 3.4$  bpm vs.  $166.8 \pm 4.1$  bpm,  $p = 0.003$ ) compared to controls. These improvements indicate enhanced cardiovascular adaptation and more efficient recovery processes among participants receiving the real-time monitoring intervention.

#### 4.3 Psychophysiological and Secondary Outcomes

Analysis of psychophysiological parameters revealed notable between-group differences in stress-sleep relationships and training adaptation patterns (Table 3).



**Table 3. Psychophysiological and Secondary Outcomes**

| Parameter                                 | Intervention Group<br>(n=30) | Control Group<br>(n=30) | P-value |
|-------------------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------|---------|
| Sleep Duration<br>(hours/night)           | 7.9 ± 0.7                    | 7.5 ± 0.9               | 0.028   |
| Perceived Stress Level<br>(1-5 scale)     | 2.1 ± 0.8                    | 2.8 ± 0.9               | 0.017   |
| Training Session<br>Completion (%)        | 94.2 ± 3.1                   | 87.5 ± 5.4              | 0.009   |
| Coach-rated<br>Performance<br>Improvement | 4.2 ± 0.6                    | 3.5 ± 0.8               | 0.022   |

The intervention group demonstrated a significantly stronger inverse correlation between sleep duration and stress levels ( $r = -0.72$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) compared to the control group ( $r = -0.45$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), suggesting enhanced stress regulation efficacy. Furthermore, correlation analysis revealed that the intervention group maintained a positive association between training load and performance ( $r = 0.65$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) while showing a weaker relationship between training load and fatigue ( $r = 0.38$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) compared to controls ( $r = 0.61$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), indicating more efficient training adaptation.

#### 4.4 Temporal Patterns and Training Adaptation

Longitudinal analysis throughout the 8-week intervention period revealed divergent trajectories between groups. The intervention group exhibited a progressive decline in resting heart rate, decreasing from  $73.1 \pm 4.5$  bpm to  $68.4 \pm 3.8$  bpm, while the control group showed minimal change ( $72.5 \pm 5.1$  bpm to  $71.8 \pm 4.7$  bpm). Similarly, performance scores demonstrated continuous improvement

in the intervention group, increasing by 25.7% compared to 7.1% in the control group ( $p < 0.001$  for between-group difference).

#### 4.5 Adverse Events and Protocol Adherence

Throughout the study period, protocol adherence remained high, with 96% compliance in device usage for the intervention group. Two minor, self-limiting musculoskeletal injuries were reported in the intervention group, while three similar incidents occurred in the control group, with no significant between-group difference in injury incidence ( $p = 0.642$ ). All adverse events resolved without sequelae and did not require study discontinuation.

#### 4.6 Visualization of Training and Recovery Patterns

The physiological benefits observed in the intervention group are further substantiated by visual analysis of training and recovery data. Figure 2 illustrates the distinct heart rate profiles between groups during a standardized training session.

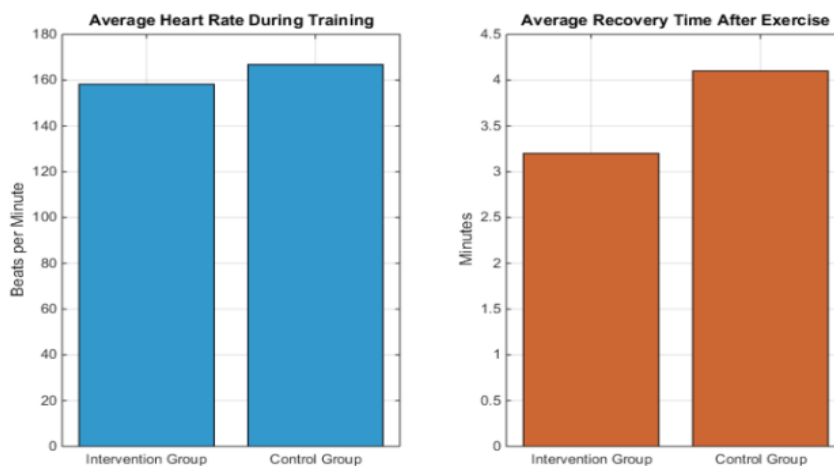


**Figure 2. Comparative Heart Rate Profiles during Standardized Training**

The intervention group maintained more stable heart rate patterns with fewer extreme peaks, demonstrating better cardiovascular regulation. Notably, the control group exhibited more frequent excursions into high-intensity zones ( $>85\%$  HRmax), correlating with the longer recovery times observed in quantitative analysis.

#### 4.7 Recovery Kinetics and Fatigue Development

Visual representation of post-exercise recovery patterns provides additional insights into the intervention's effectiveness. Figure 3 displays the heart rate recovery trajectories following maximal exertion bouts.

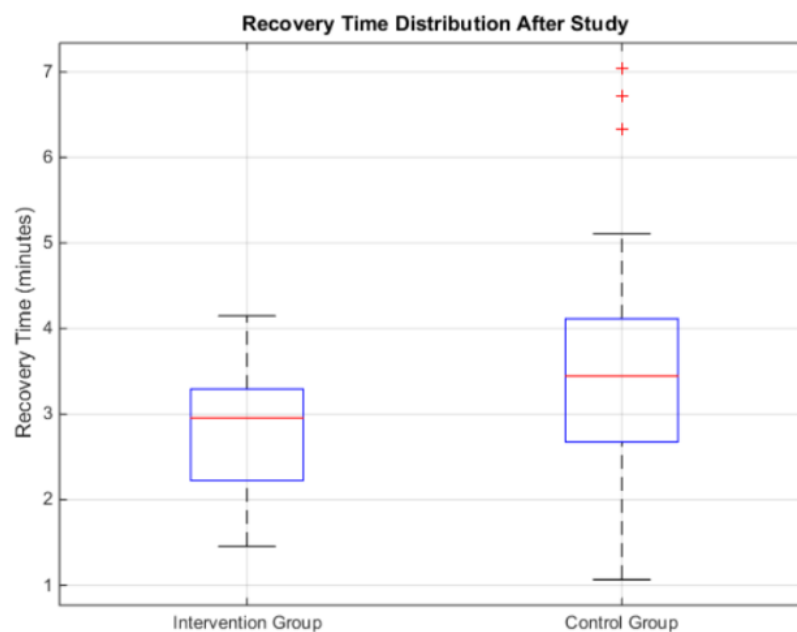


**Figure 3. Post-Exercise Heart Rate Recovery Patterns**

The intervention group demonstrated steeper recovery slopes and more rapid return to baseline heart rate levels. This accelerated recovery profile aligns with the quantitative findings of reduced

recovery time and suggests enhanced autonomic nervous system regulation among intervention participants.

#### 4.8 Psychophysiological Correlation Patterns

The relationship between physiological and psychological parameters is visually represented in Figure 4, which illustrates the correlation matrices for both study groups.

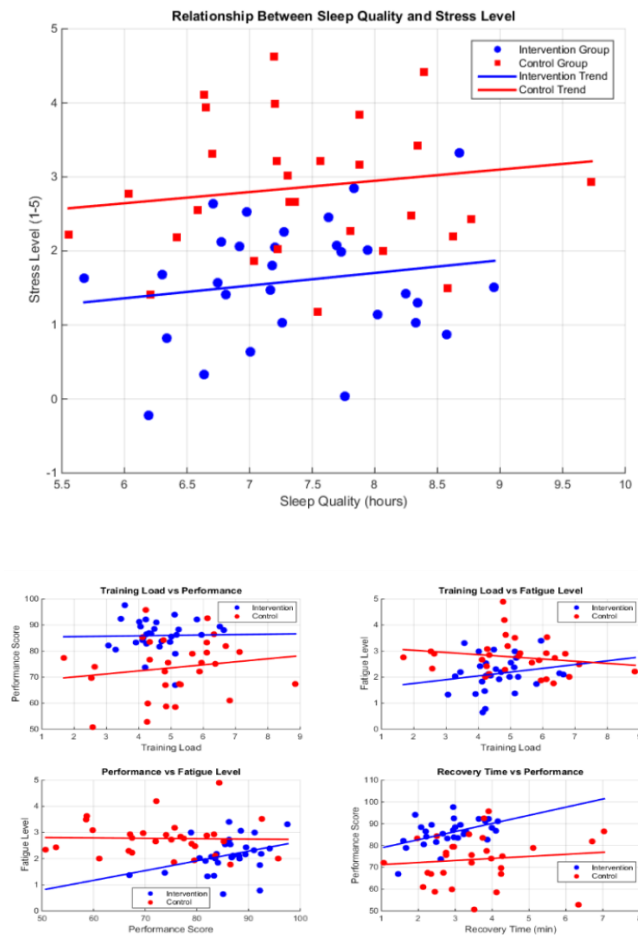


**Figure 4. Psychophysiological Correlation Networks)**

The intervention group's correlation network reveals stronger integration between recovery metrics and psychological well-being indicators, particularly highlighting the robust connection between sleep quality and stress reduction that was quantitatively reported in section 4.3.

#### 4.9 Temporal Evolution of Training Adaptation

Longitudinal changes in key performance metrics are depicted in Figure 5, showcasing the progressive adaptation patterns throughout the 8-week intervention period.

The visual analysis confirms the quantitative findings of superior adaptation in the intervention group, with clear divergence in trajectories beginning at week 3-4 and maintaining throughout the study duration. This pattern suggests cumulative benefits of the real-time monitoring system on long-term athletic development.

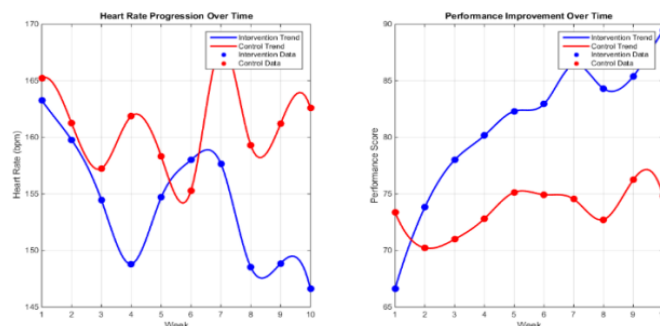


**Figure 5. Weekly Progression of Performance and Recovery Metrics**

## 5. DISCUSSION

This study has several limitations. First, the inclusion of only male participants restricts generalizability to female athletes. Second, the 8-week intervention period, while effective, may not capture long-term or seasonal effects.

Our findings directly address the identified research gap by demonstrating that a pediatric-specific system, which integrates physiological and psychological metrics, significantly enhances physiological and psychological adaptation in young football players. The intervention group exhibited a 22% faster recovery time, a 5.2% lower average training heart rate, and a stronger inverse correlation between sleep duration and stress levels ( $r = -0.72$ ) compared to controls. These results confirm the system's efficacy in optimizing the stress-recovery balance in developing athletes.

### **5.1 Mechanisms Underlying the Outcomes**

The observed improvements likely stem from enhanced autonomic regulation and more efficient training management. Lower exercise heart rates and accelerated recovery kinetics suggest better preservation of physiological homeostasis, possibly due to timely interventions that facilitated parasympathetic reactivation and metabolic recovery. Furthermore, the strong integration between sleep and stress reduction indicates that real-time physiological feedback may positively influence psychological recovery processes, supporting a holistic adaptation to training.

### **5.2 Practical Implications**

This system offers several practical benefits for youth sports academies:

- **Individualized Training:** Enables real-time adjustment of exercise intensity based on objective metrics.
- **Fatigue Mitigation:** Facilitates early detection of excessive strain, reducing overtraining risks.
- **Holistic Monitoring:** Combines physiological and psychological metrics for comprehensive athlete care.
- **Structured Periodization:** The 8-week adaptation timeline aids in planning training cycles.

These applications address a critical gap in youth sports, where few academies use validated, pediatric-specific monitoring tools.

## **6. Limitations**

This study has several limitations. It included only male participants, limiting generalizability to female athletes. The 8-week intervention, though effective, should be extended to assess long-term and seasonal impacts. Future versions of the system could integrate heart rate variability and more frequent psychological assessments to deepen insights into fatigue and recovery.

While the system successfully reduced average training heart rate, an unexpected finding was the minimal difference in peak exercise HR between groups. This suggests that the system effectively manages sustained intensity but may be less influential on peak efforts during unavoidable high-intensity actions like sprints, a nuance that warrants further investigation.

## **7. Conclusion and Future Work**

### **7.1 Conclusion**

This study successfully addresses the critical need for pediatric-specific athlete monitoring through the development and validation of an integrated real-time system. The research demonstrates that combining physiological monitoring with psychological assessment significantly enhances recovery, reduces fatigue, and improves overall well-being in under-10 football players. By providing coaches with evidence-based tools for training management, this approach represents a significant advancement in youth sports science with direct applications in athlete development and injury prevention.

## 7.2 Future Recommendations

Future research should integrate Heart Rate Variability (HRV) for a more nuanced fatigue assessment and employ machine learning models to transition from real-time monitoring to predictive fatigue analytics. Building on this work, future research should:

1. Validate in broader populations: Include female players and different age groups to enhance generalizability.
2. Extend study duration: Conduct longitudinal studies over a full season to assess long-term impacts on injury prevention and athletic development.
3. Incorporate advanced metrics: Integrate Heart Rate Variability (HRV) and neuromuscular assessments for a more holistic fatigue profile.
4. Develop predictive capabilities: Utilize machine learning models on longitudinal data to transition from real-time alerts to proactive fatigue prediction.



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**Comparative Analysis of Electron and  
Photon Boost Planning for Breast Cancer  
Treatment Using Monaco**



## **Comparative Analysis of Electron and Photon Boost Planning for Breast Cancer Treatment Using Monaco**

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### **Abstract**

Breast cancer remains one of the most prevalent malignancies among women, with radiotherapy serving as a cornerstone of treatment. In the cases analyzed, 38.8% involved breast cancer, and 21.95% required tumor bed boost irradiation. This study compared photon and electron

beams for tumor bed boost using the Monaco treatment planning system. Treatment plans were evaluated for Planning Target Volume (PTV) coverage and doses to Organs at Risk (OARs). Photon boosts demonstrated superior PTV coverage, conformity, and reliability, whereas electron boosts frequently provided inadequate coverage or exceeded acceptable OAR doses, though they remain suitable in specific anatomical contexts. These findings underscore the importance of individualized treatment planning to optimize patient outcomes.

**Keywords**—Breast cancer, Electron boost, Photon boost

## I. INTRODUCTION

Breast cancer is the most frequently diagnosed malignancy among women worldwide and remains a leading cause of cancer-related mortality. Advances in radiotherapy have significantly improved survival outcomes, with boost irradiation serving as an essential component to enhance local control and minimize recurrence risk [1]. While both photon and electron modalities are commonly employed for boost delivery, their relative effectiveness in terms of target coverage and sparing of surrounding organs at risk remains a subject of clinical interest. Comparative evaluations of these techniques are therefore critical to optimizing treatment strategies and ensuring individualized patient care.

Several studies have demonstrated that the addition of a boost dose ranging between 10-20 Gy can reduce the rate of local recurrence by nearly half, particularly among younger patients, when compared with the standard treatment group receiving 50 Gy. Other investigations have further highlighted the direct influence of local control on overall survival. Consequently, ongoing clinical trials are currently assessing

the potential benefits of administering higher boost doses (26 Gy) in further decreasing recurrence rates[2] .

Beyond the established clinical efficacy, the choice of boost modality carries significant dosimetric implications that can impact both treatment quality and the risk of long-term side effects. Electron beams offer the distinct advantage of sharp dose fall-off, which is beneficial for minimizing radiation to deep-seated healthy tissues such as the heart and lungs, particularly in cases with superficial tumor beds. However, a major limitation of this modality is its inability to achieve uniform dose coverage on complex, irregular tumor bed surfaces, especially when the target is deep or large. Furthermore, the selection of appropriate electron energy and the use of

a bolus become critical technical considerations that can introduce uncertainties in dose delivery. The advent of advanced photon techniques like Volumetric-Modulated Arc Therapy (VMAT) or Intensity-Modulated Radiation Therapy (IMRT) has offered a solution to these challenges. These techniques achieve highly conformal dose distributions, ensuring excellent coverage of even the most intricate target volumes while minimizing hotspots. Yet, this superior conformality can come at the cost of a "low-dose bath," where a larger volume of healthy tissue receives a small but measurable radiation dose. The long-term clinical significance of this low-dose bath is still a subject of ongoing research, especially regarding the risk of secondary malignancies. Therefore, the trade-off between maximizing target coverage and minimizing incidental dose to healthy tissues is a complex challenge that clinicians must navigate daily.

The advent of modern treatment planning systems, such as Monaco, provides the computational power and sophisticated Monte Carlo algorithms necessary to accurately model and compare these complex dosimetric profiles. These systems are essential for understanding the true dosimetric advantages and limitations of each modality in a clinical setting, allowing clinicians to make informed decisions that balance tumor control with OAR protection.



At our institution, breast cancer cases are treated with photon-based radiotherapy, delivering a total dose of 40–50 Gy. This technique has demonstrated considerable therapeutic efficacy, provided excellent target volume coverage (PTV) while ensured effective sparing of organs at risk (OARs).

The dose–volume histogram (DVH) remains the standard quantitative tool for evaluating plan quality, providing information on coverage of the planning target volume (PTV) as well as dose distribution to OARs. Against this background, the choice between electron and photon boost techniques continues to be a subject of clinical and dosimetric debate.

This study will conduct a comparative analysis between photon and electron boost radiotherapy techniques in the management of breast cancer patients. The primary objective is to evaluate the dosimetric differences and clinical applicability of each modality, determining their respective advantages, and limitations.

## **II. MATERIALS AND METHOD**

This study specifically focused on breast cancer patients scheduled to receive a tumor bed boost. Treatment planning commenced following computed tomography (CT) simulation. Clinical target volumes were delineated, encompassing the whole breast (PTV) and the tumor bed (PTV-boost). All treatment plans were meticulously designed using the Monaco treatment planning system.

### **A. Patient Selection**

A retrospective review was conducted of breast cancer cases treated at the Radiotherapy Department of Tripoli University Hospital between September 2024 and June 2025. During this period, a total of 211 patients were managed in the department, of whom 82 were breast cancer patients, constituting 38.8% of all cases.

Analysis of tumor laterality revealed that 46.34% of the breast cancer patients (n=38) had right-sided tumors, while 53.66% (n=44) had left-sided tumors. Among these 82 patients, 18 (21.95%) were identified as requiring a boost dose to the tumor bed based on clinical judgment, tumor characteristics, and radiotherapy planning considerations.

This subset of patients was selected for further evaluation of boost techniques, including photon and electron beam plans, to optimize treatment outcomes while minimizing doses to surrounding healthy tissue and organs at risk.

### **B. Simulation and immobilization**

Patients were positioned supine on the treatment couch, with both arms raised above the head using a dedicated arm support device (breast board) to minimize patient movement and maintain consistent positioning throughout the course of treatment.

CT simulation was performed with a slice thickness of 3 mm, covering the region from the mandible to the upper abdomen.

To ensure consistency and accuracy, the PTV-boost was meticulously defined using surgical clips as a reference point. This process, guided by the ESTRO guidelines, ensured that the target volume accurately reflected the tumor bed while accounting for patient motion and setup uncertainties.

### **C. Contouring**

Target volumes and Organs at Risk (OARs) were delineated on the CT simulation images following established clinical guidelines. The tumor bed was identified based on surgical clips, preoperative imaging, and post-surgical changes. The Planning Target Volume (PTV) was generated by adding a margin to the Clinical Target Volume (CTV) to account for setup uncertainties and patient motion.

Critical organs at risk (OARs), including the heart and ipsilateral and contralateral lungs, were contoured to a high degree of precision to allow for a rigorous dosimetric comparison between the photon and electron plans.

#### **D. MONACO System**

Accurate beam modeling is pivotal for ensuring the overall precision of the radiation therapy process. The International Commission on Radiation Units and Measurements (ICRU) recommends a maximum total dose uncertainty of 5% in patients and minimizing uncertainties in dose calculation is a key strategy for achieving this target. [3]

The Monaco system (The version of Monaco utilized in this study is Monaco 6.1.4.0) has been developed to address the key challenges in treatment planning within modern radiation oncology clinics. As radiation therapy evolves to become faster and more complex, with escalating doses, shorter fractionation schedules, and reduced target margins, treatment planning systems must achieve greater accuracy, increased automation, enhanced sensitivity to patient-specific biological factors, and seamless integration with the treatment delivery device.

To meet these demands, Monaco combines the computational precision of advanced algorithms with a comprehensive suite of tools designed to simulate the actual dose delivered to the patient, while ensuring the consistent and efficient creation of high-quality treatment plans that can be executed seamlessly.

Furthermore, Monaco provides full functionality across the complete spectrum of radiation therapy modalities, including [4]:

- Three-dimensional (3D) forward planning and Field-in-Field (FiF) techniques;

- Dynamic and Step-and-Shoot Intensity-Modulated Radiotherapy (IMRT);
- Arc therapy methods, including Volumetric-Modulated Arc Therapy (VMAT) and Dynamic Conformal Arc Therapy (DCAT);
- Stereotactic treatments using cone and Multileaf Collimator (MLC) configurations.
- In addition, magnetic resonance (MR)-based treatment planning.
- An example of a breast case planned to use the Monaco Treatment Planning System (TPS) version 6.1.4 is shown in Figure 1.

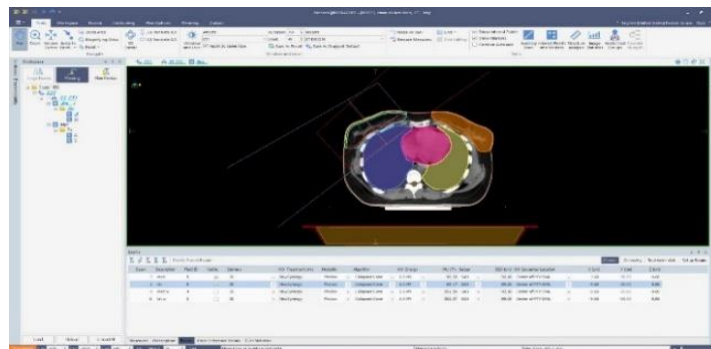


**Fig. 1. Breast case planned using the Monaco Treatment Planning System**

To achieve a higher level of dosimetric accuracy, Monaco relies on the Monte Carlo dose calculation algorithm, widely recognized as the gold standard in modern radiotherapy planning. Unlike simpler algorithms that make certain assumptions about tissue density, the Monte Carlo method simulates the transport of millions of individual particles (photons and electrons) through the patient's anatomy. This

process accounts for complex physical interactions such as scattering, which is particularly crucial when beams traverse different tissue densities, such as lung tissue or air cavities, ensuring a more realistic and precise dose distribution. For breast boost planning, this capability is invaluable as it allows for accurate dose calculation in the presence of anatomical irregularities and varying tissue densities, which are common in the chest wall and breast. The system's ability to optimize plans using these precise calculations enables clinicians to create highly conformal plans that not only cover the target volume effectively but also minimize the dose to critical structures like the heart and lungs, a key objective in breast cancer treatment. The seamless integration of Monaco with the treatment delivery system ensures that the meticulously planned dose distribution is accurately and efficiently delivered to the patient, reducing the risk of errors, and enhancing the overall safety of the treatment [4].

#### **E. Prescription dose and Dose Constraints**

Whole-breast irradiation was delivered using a hypo fractionated regimen of 40 Gy over 15 fractions, followed by a tumor bed boost with prescribed doses determined according to clinical indications, typically ranging from 9 to 10 Gy in 2 Gy fractions.

Photon plans were deemed acceptable if 95% of the PTV received at least 95% of the prescribed dose ( $V_{95\%} \geq 95\%D$ ), while electron plans were acceptable if 95% of the PTV received at least 90% of the prescribed dose ( $V_{95\%} \geq 90\%D$ ). Table I show values of dose constraints for PTV and organ at risk.

**Table I. Dose Constraints for Organ at Risk**

| Organ at risk | Dose Constraints                                 | Reference |
|---------------|--------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| Photon PTV    | $V_{95\%} \geq 95\%D$                            | [5]       |
| Electron PTV  | $V_{95\%} \geq 90\%D$                            | [5]       |
| Heart         | $D_{mean} \leq 600 \text{ cGy}$                  | [5]       |
| Lung          | $V_{20} \leq 35\% \text{ Or, } V_{20} \leq 37\%$ | [5]       |

## F. Treatment

All patients were treated using a Synergy medical linear accelerator (LINAC). The LINAC produces high-energy photon (6, 10, and 15 MV) and electron beams (6, 8, 10, 12 and 15 MeV) using variety of applicator sizes (10x10, 14x14, and 20x20 cm<sup>2</sup>) for external beam radiotherapy, allowing precise delivery of the prescribed dose to the target while minimizing exposure to surrounding healthy tissues. Beam energies and field arrangements were selected according to tumor location and depth, and daily image guidance was used to ensure accurate patient positioning and treatment delivery.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study compared photon and electron beams for tumor bed boost using the Monaco treatment planning system. All patients were treated with a Synergy medical linear accelerator (LINAC), capable of delivering high-energy photon beams (6, 10, and 15 MV) and electron

beams (6–15 MeV) with various applicator sizes (10×10, 14×14, and 20×20 cm<sup>2</sup>). The distribution of beam energies and electron applicator sizes for boost plans is summarized in Table II.

**Table II. Beam Energy and Applicator Distribution For Photon And Electron Boost Plans**

| Technique | Parameter  | Value                 | Percentage |
|-----------|------------|-----------------------|------------|
| photon    | Energy     | 6 MV                  | 83.3% (15) |
|           |            | 10 MV                 | 11.1% (2)  |
|           |            | 15 MV                 | 5.6% (1)   |
| Electron  | Energy     | 15 MeV                | 61.1% (11) |
|           |            | 12 MeV                | 33.3% (6)  |
|           |            | 10 MeV                | 5.6% (1)   |
|           |            | 8 MeV                 | 5.6% (1)   |
| Electron  | Applicator | 10x10 cm <sup>2</sup> | 66.7% (12) |
|           |            | 14x14 cm <sup>2</sup> | 22.2% (4)  |
|           |            | 20x20 cm <sup>2</sup> | 11.1% (2)  |

The majority of cases (83.3%) used a beam energy of 6 MV, with smaller proportions using 10 MV (11.1%) and 15 MV (5.6%). In contrast, electron-based plans showed a different pattern, with 15

MeV being the most frequently used energy (61.1%), followed by 12 MeV (33.3%), 10 MeV (5.6%), and 8 MeV (5.6%).

For electron plans, the selection of applicator size also varied. The 10×10 cm<sup>2</sup> applicator was the most commonly employed (66.7%), followed by the 14×14 cm<sup>2</sup> (22.2%) and 20×20 cm<sup>2</sup> (11.1%) applicators. Table 1 provides a detailed overview of the beam energies and applicator sizes used in the photon and electron boost plans.

The following figures (figure 2, 3, 4, 5) present the results of breast boost treatment plans using photon and electron techniques, including boost PTV coverage, heart dose constraints and ipsilateral lung dose constraints, and maximum dose constraints for each modality

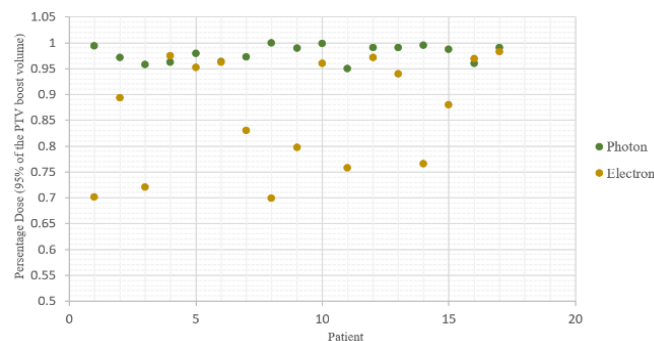


**Fig. 2. PTV-Boost volume covered by 95 % of prescription dose for Photon and Electron treatment plans.**



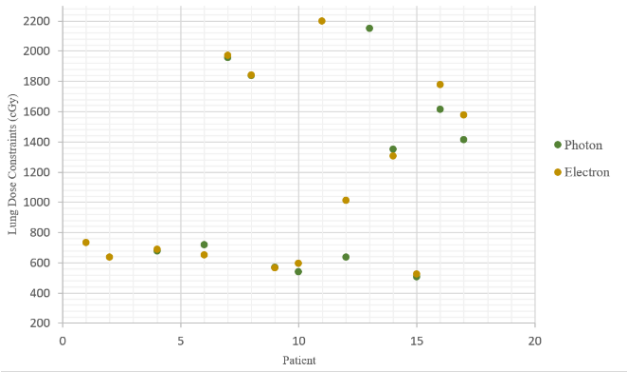


**Fig. 3. Dose received by 35% of the ipsilateral lung volume for photon and electron treatment plans.**

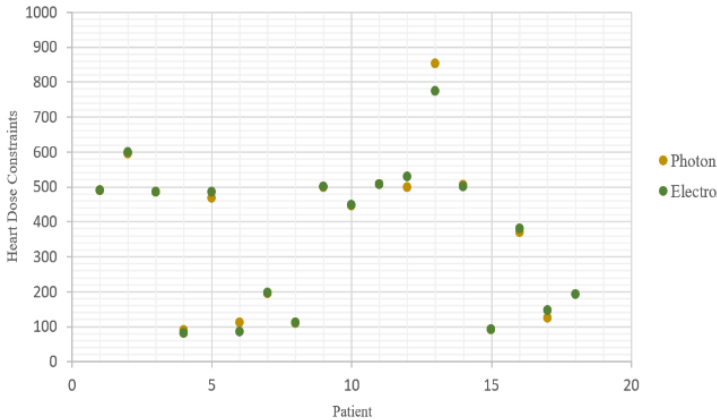


**Fig. 4. Heart mean dose of photon and electron treatment plans.**

(%)

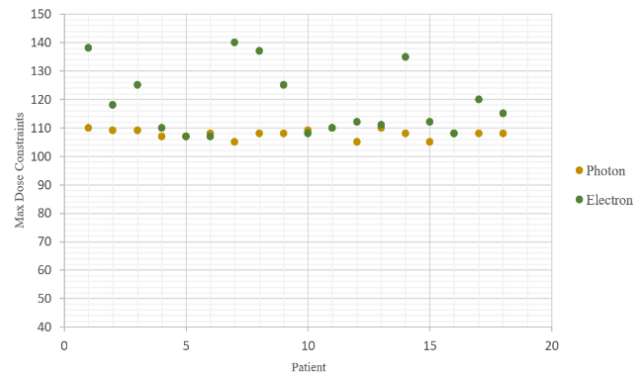


**Fig. 5. Maximum Dose for Photon and Electron Treatment plans.**

The results demonstrate that all cases planned to use the photon technique met the prescribed dosimetric constraints with high conformity. This translated into a consistently effective approach, making photon-based planning particularly suitable for breast boost treatments. Moreover, the uniformity observed across cases, as illustrated in Figures 2–5, underscores the robustness of photon plans in achieving both clinical efficiency and adherence to established dose standards.

In contrast, electron-based planning proved less reliable. Only 27.7% of cases achieved successful outcomes, demonstrating high effectiveness and compliance with established constraints. In the remaining 72.3% of cases, electron plans failed to provide adequate coverage, highlighting their limited applicability in most scenarios.

A closer examination of the unsuccessful cases revealed two key factors contributing to electron plan inadequacy. First, the depth of the boost relative to the skin was critical; electron beams consistently failed to provide sufficient coverage when the boost depth exceeded 4 cm. Second, the boost volume significantly influenced treatment feasibility. Larger target volumes, or cases requiring applicators exceeding  $14 \times 14 \text{ cm}^2$ , were associated with suboptimal outcomes,

rendering electron application unsuitable. Consequently, electron-based planning was effective only in a limited subset of patients characterized by superficial and relatively small boost volumes.

These findings are consistent with the fundamental physical properties of each radiation modality. The sharp dose fall-off of electron beams, advantageous for superficial lesions, becomes a limitation for deeper or larger targets. The dosimetric results observed in this study reflect this reality: Electron beams could not adequately penetrate to target depths or conform to complex shapes without compromising dose homogeneity. Electron beams could not adequately penetrate target depths or conform to complex shapes without compromising dose homogeneity. Furthermore, the use of a single, non-modulated electron field restricts the ability to account for tissue heterogeneities, potentially resulting in unpredictable dose distributions and hotspots. In contrast, advanced Photon techniques like VMAT, employed in this study, allow modulation of beam intensity from multiple angles, enabling highly tailored and homogeneous dose distributions even in anatomically challenging regions.

The clinical implications of these findings are significant. For the majority of breast cancer patients requiring a boost, photon techniques provide a more reliable and robust solution, ensuring consistent target coverage and minimizing the risk of a geographical miss. Nonetheless, electron boosts remain valuable for a carefully selected subset of patients with superficial and small tumor beds. In these cases, the rapid dose fall-off of electron beams beyond the target can reduce radiation exposure to underlying organs, potentially lowering the risk of long-term toxicities such as cardiac injury.

Taken together, these results suggest that photon-based planning should be the primary modality for breast boost irradiation, while electron beams can serve as a complementary approach in selected cases where anatomical conditions are favorable. Patient-specific

treatment planning, guided by detailed dosimetric analysis, is essential to optimize outcomes and minimize risks.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

Photon-based boost planning demonstrated superior PTV coverage, dose conformity, and overall reliability, making it the preferred technique for the majority of breast boost cases. Electron-based boosts, while occasionally insufficient in coverage and prone to exceeding maximum dose limits, remain a viable option for selected patients with favorable anatomical conditions, particularly when the tumor bed is superficial, and the boost volume is relatively small. These findings emphasize the critical importance of personalized treatment planning, considering patient-specific anatomy and clinical objectives. Utilizing advanced treatment planning systems, such as Monaco, which employ accurate Monte Carlo algorithms, ensures optimized dose delivery while minimizing exposure to surrounding healthy tissues.

The results of this study underscore that the choice between photon and electron boosts is not routine, but must be based on a precise, case-by-case evaluation. Photon-based techniques consistently achieve highly conformal dose distributions, reducing uncertainties in target coverage and ensuring strict adherence to OAR dose constraints. Nevertheless, electron irradiation should not be regarded as outdated technology, but rather as a valuable complementary option with unique advantages in specific clinical scenarios.

Future research should focus on broader comparisons incorporating other advanced planning and delivery techniques, such as Image-Guided Radiation Therapy (IGRT) and MR-guided radiotherapy (MR-guided RT). Additionally, long-term clinical outcomes, including skin toxicity and cardiac risk, must be evaluated to fully understand the implications of modality selection. Prospective multicenter studies with larger patient cohorts could provide deeper insights and help

establish comprehensive clinical guidelines. The continuous evolution of treatment planning software and delivery systems underscores the need for medical physicists and clinicians to remain current with technological advancements to ensure optimal patient care.

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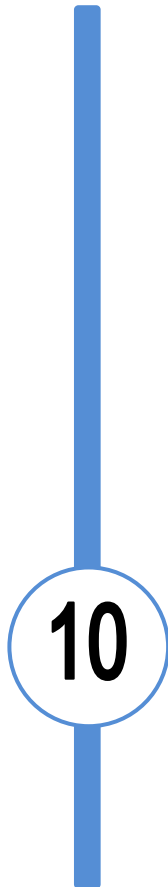
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## **Evaluation of Daily QA Phantom Performance for Synergy CR**





## Evaluation of Daily QA Phantom Performance for Synergy CR

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### Abstract

Daily calibration of linear accelerators (LINACs) is essential to ensure the accuracy and reliability of radiotherapy treatments. This study evaluated the output stability of photon energies (6 MV, 10 MV, 15 MV) produced by an Elekta Synergy LINAC using the myQA® Daily Phantom over a 50-day period. Baseline values for the phantom were established following LINAC calibration with a water phantom and an FC65-P ionization chamber to ensure measurement accuracy. Measurements were performed for a 10×10 cm<sup>2</sup> field size, including output, symmetry (inline and crossline), and field width (inline and crossline). For dose output, all energies showed minor deviations. For symmetry, all energies showed minor deviations. For field width, all energies showed minor deviations. For output, all energies showed minor deviations. For symmetry, all energies showed minor deviations. For field width, all energies showed minor deviations.

( $\leq 2$  MU), indicating consistent output. Symmetry deviations were minor for 6 MV and 10 MV ( $\leq 1\%$ ), whereas 15 MV exhibited higher variability, particularly in crossline symmetry (up to 3.4% maximum deviation). Flatness remained stable for 6 MV and 10 MV, with small deviations ( $\leq 0.5\%$  maximum,  $\geq 3.5\%$  minimum), while 15 MV showed larger variations (up to 2.5% maximum deviation), suggesting potential beam profile changes.

**Keywords**—radiotherapy, LINAC, daily QA.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Radiotherapy is a cornerstone in the management of malignant diseases, offering a targeted approach to tumor control while minimizing damage to surrounding healthy tissues. Achieving optimal therapeutic outcomes depends on precise and

consistent dose delivery, which in turn relies on the accurate performance of linear accelerators (LINACs). To maintain this accuracy, daily quality assurance (QA) procedures are essential, providing a safeguard against mechanical drift, environmental influences, and hardware malfunctions. Such measures ensure that LINAC output remains within clinically acceptable limits and underpin the reliability of modern radiotherapy practice.

Daily calibration of linear accelerators (LINACs) is essential to maintain the accuracy and reliability of radiation treatments, ensuring consistent dose delivery and safeguarding patient safety. International guidelines, such as those of the American Association of Physicists in Medicine (AAPM), emphasize the necessity of routine quality assurance (QA) procedures, with strict tolerances recommended for output constancy, beam symmetry, and flatness. Monitoring these

parameters is vital for verifying beam stability and detecting deviations that could compromise treatment efficacy.

In recent years, automated quality assurance (QA) systems have enhanced the efficiency and reproducibility of daily checks in radiotherapy. Tools such as the myQA® Daily Phantom provide streamlined workflows, intuitive interfaces, and reliable data acquisition, making them particularly suitable for high-throughput clinical environments. These systems enable precise monitoring of key dosimetric parameters and allow early detection of anomalies, thereby supporting timely corrective actions and reinforcing the safety of treatment delivery [1]. This study aims to evaluate the daily output stability of an Elekta Synergy linear accelerator across photon energies of 6 MV, 10 MV, and 15 MV using the myQA® Daily Phantom. Baseline values were established through water phantom calibration with an FC65-P ionization chamber, followed by systematic daily measurements over a 50-day period. The analysis focused on output constancy, beam symmetry (inline and crossline), and field width, providing a comprehensive assessment of LINAC performance under routine clinical conditions.

By assessing the reliability and practicality of phantom-based QA tools, this research supports the refinement of radiotherapy protocols and contributes to evidence-based clinical physics practices. The findings are expected to inform best-practice QA procedures and emphasize the importance of consistent machine monitoring in ensuring high-quality patient care.

## II. MATERIALS AND METHOD

This study was carried out at the Medical Physics Department, Radiotherapy Unit, Tripoli University Hospital. Over a period of 50 consecutive days, data were acquired using the myQA® Daily

Phantom to evaluate the output stability of the Elekta Synergy linear accelerator for photon energies of 6 MV, 10 MV, and 15 MV.

### A. The myQa® Daily Phantom

The myQA® Daily Phantom is a dedicated system for daily quality assurance (QA) in radiation therapy. It provides an efficient means of verifying beam output, quality, and stability for linear accelerators (LINACs) and Cobalt-60 units. The system integrates both hardware and software components for streamlined operation with minimal user intervention [2].

The built-in detector array, illustrated in Figure 1, allows accurate evaluation of output constancy, beam symmetry, and field width parameters.



**Fig. 1. The myQa® Daily Phantom**

The device incorporates an array of 125 vented ionization chambers, arranged on a 5 mm grid across a 25 cm × 25 cm active area. Each chamber is individually connected to high-resolution current-to-digital converters, with measurement values transferred digitally to the myQA® Daily software via integrated wired and wireless interfaces. The chamber layout is optimized to support measurements for standard 10 × 10 cm<sup>2</sup> and 20 × 20 cm<sup>2</sup> radiation fields [2].

Figure 2 shows the myQA® Daily device positioned on the linear accelerator (LINAC) table and illustrates the dose curve coordinates used for beam analysis.

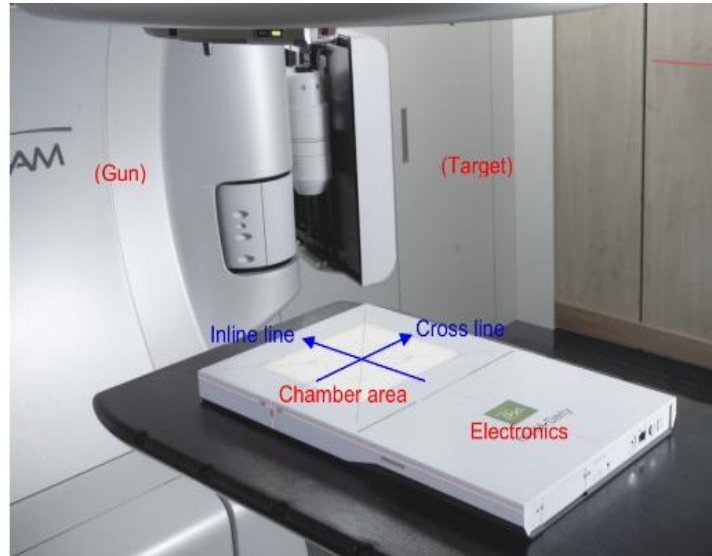


**Fig.2. dose curve coordinates of myQA Daily.**

During the daily QA procedure, the myQA® Daily software automatically compares the measured values against pre-established reference values stored in the system database. These reference values are initially determined through a comprehensive quality control (QC) procedure using a water phantom and an FC65-P ionization chamber (Figure 3), ensuring that the linear accelerator (LINAC) output is accurately verified at 100% baseline performance.



**Fig. 3. QC by Water Phantom**

Once this verification is completed, the daily QA procedure is performed, and the measurements obtained during this initial session are established as baseline reference values within the myQA® Daily software. These fixed reference values subsequently serve as the standard against which all daily QA measurements are compared.

### **B. MyQA® Daily software**

The myQA Daily software enables users to design customized quality assurance (QA) tasks (figure 4) and establish them as reference baselines for daily measurements in external beam radiotherapy. We initiated the setup process through a structured sequence of steps, beginning with the registration of the myQA Phantom device via the initial configuration interface. Subsequently, we defined the treatment unit (New Synergy), along with associated tasks and beam parameters, using the designated configuration tabs.

Following the beam setup, we performed reference measurements that serve as benchmarks for evaluating daily output consistency. Additionally, we incorporated a checklist to verify critical safety and

operational elements, such as the door safety interlock, monitor presence in the bunker, and air conditioning status. These measures facilitate streamlined access to the system and ensure readiness upon login, thereby enhancing the reliability and efficiency of the daily QA workflow.

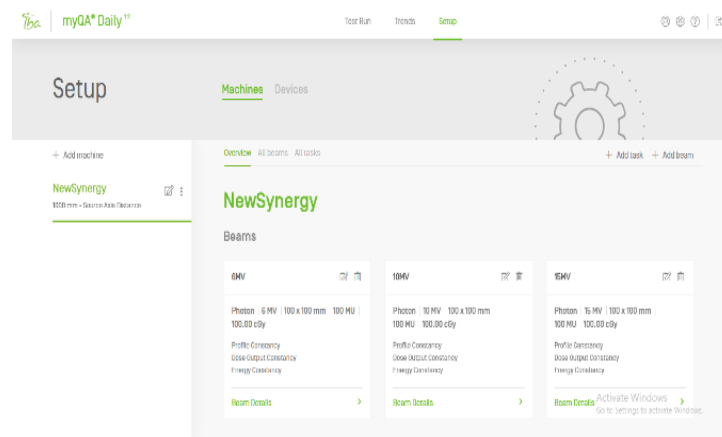


**Fig. 4. MyQA daily task**

### C. Practical Measurement of daily QA

According to the recommendations of the AAPM Task Group 51 (TG-51) protocol, dose output measurements should be performed under standardized conditions to ensure consistent and accurate radiation therapy delivery [3]. Typically, a field size of  $10 \times 10 \text{ cm}^2$  is used, with either a source-to-surface distance (SSD) or source-to-axis distance (SAD) of 100 cm. Measurements are generally conducted at a depth of 10 cm in water, although the depth of maximum dose ( $d_{\text{max}}$ ) may be used for specific tests. Under these conditions, the delivery of 100 monitor units (MU) corresponds to an absorbed dose of approximately 1 Gy (100 cGy) [3].

The primary purposes of dose output measurement are threefold: (1) to verify on a daily or monthly basis that the linear accelerator



(LINAC) continues to deliver the dose as calibrated during commissioning; (2) to detect early deviations in output, as variations exceeding  $\pm 2\%$  may indicate issues with the electron source, beam energy, or calibration accuracy; and (3) to safeguard patient safety, since incorrect dose output could result in underdosing or overdosing, compromising treatment efficacy.

In practice, this involves placing a daily quality assurance (QA) phantom—such as the myQA® Daily device—at the measurement site, delivering 100 MU using the specified field size and SSD, and recording the dose output via dedicated software. The measured values are then compared to the established baseline and expressed as a percentage (figure 5), referred to as Output Constancy, which reflects the LINAC's performance stability and reliability over time.

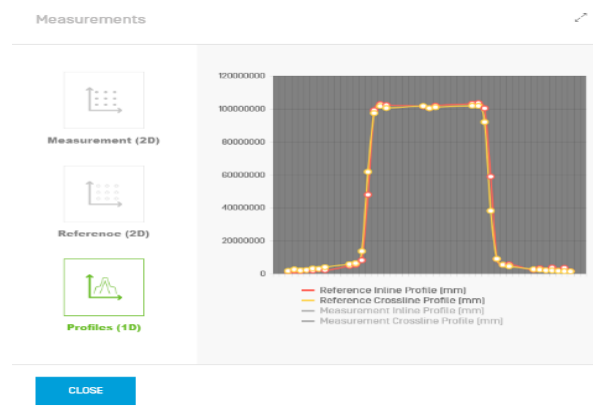


**Fig. 5. Reference Beam Profile (inline & crossline for 6 MV)**

#### **D. Quality Assurance (QA) Parameters**

##### **1) Dose Output**

Dose output refers to the amount of radiation delivered by a linear accelerator under standard reference conditions. It is expressed as the dose in centigrayqa(cGy) delivered per monitor unit (MU) at defined reference settings. Monitoring dose output is a key component of daily

quality assurance (QA), as it ensures that the linear accelerator consistently delivers the prescribed dose. Deviations from the baseline are quantified as Output Constancy, which reflects the stability and reliability of the LINAC's performance over time [2].

## 2) Symmetry

Symmetry is a critical parameter in radiation therapy that evaluates the similarity of the dose distribution on opposite sides of the central axis (CAX) of the radiation beam. A perfectly symmetrical beam delivers equal doses at points equidistant from the CAX. Symmetry IN MyQa daily is calculated using the following formula:

$$\text{Symmetry (\%)} = \max\left(\frac{D_{(x)}}{D_{(-x)}}\right) \times 100 \quad (1)$$

Where:

$D_{(x)}$  = dose at point x cm from the CAX

$D_{(-x)}$  = dose at point -x cm from the CAX

Symmetry (%) is calculated across all measurement points on the daily QA detector, and the maximum value observed is reported. This approach ensures that the largest deviation from ideal symmetry within the field is captured, providing a conservative assessment of beam uniformity [2].

## 3) Flatness

Flatness is a parameter that quantifies the uniformity of the dose distribution across the central region of the radiation field. It represents the maximum deviation in dose from the central axis over the central 80% of the field width, typically measured at a specified depth such as  $d_{\max}$  or 10 cm. In daily QA, flatness is calculated using the following formula:

$$\text{Flatness (\%)} = \left( \frac{D_{(\max)}}{D_{(\min)}} \right) \times 100 \quad (2)$$

Where:

$D_{(\max)}$  = Maximum dose in the central 80% of the field

$D_{(\min)}$  = minimum dose in the central 80% of the field

Flatness provides a measure of dose uniformity within the treatment field, and deviations from ideal values may indicate beam misalignment, collimator issues, or other factors affecting treatment accuracy [2].

### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The daily QA results for the 6 MV, 10 MV, and 15 MV photon beams of the linear accelerator (LINAC) will be systematically presented in the subsequent section.

It should be emphasized that the results presented in this study pertain to daily QA outputs and do not represent the full 3D water phantom commissioning measurements. The reference commissioning measurements were performed at a depth of 10 cm and verified to be within established tolerance limits. Daily QA measurements, conducted at different depths, were cross-checked against these reference values to ensure consistency. Thus, while the daily QA measurements do not replicate the water phantom setup exactly, they are traceable to the verified commissioning data, providing a reliable reference for routine device performance assessment.

#### A. Dose Output

The daily output constancy of 6 MV, 10 MV, and 15 MV photon beams was assessed over 50 consecutive days using the myQA®

Daily Phantom, with the results shown in Figures 6, 7, and 8, respectively.

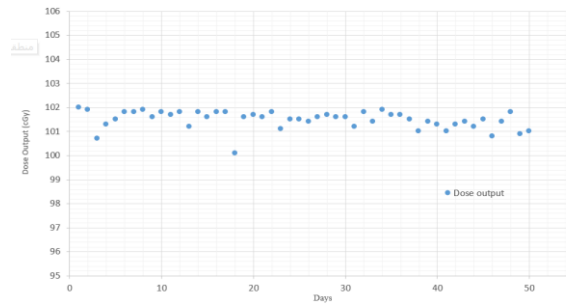


**Fig. 6. Dose output measurements for the 6 MV photon beam.**

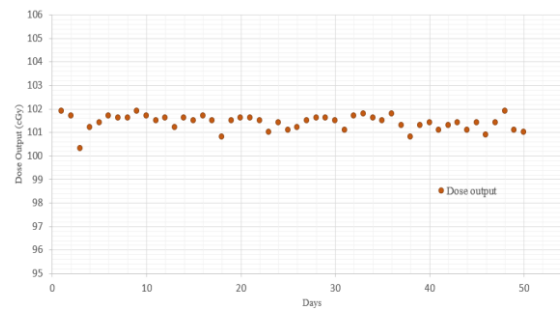


**Fig. 7. Dose output measurements for the 10 MV photon beam.**

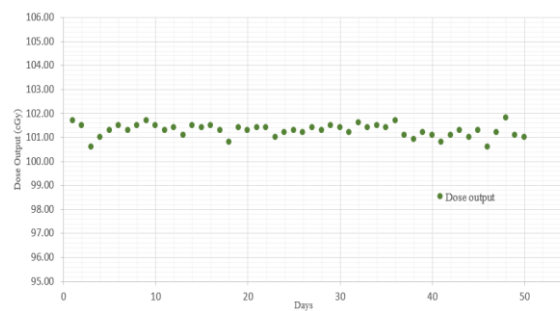


**Fig. 8. Dose output measurements for the 15 MV photon beam.**

In interpreting the data, it is essential to recognize that the intended reference value is 100%. Nevertheless, variations falling within a tolerance margin of  $\pm 2\%$  are considered clinically acceptable and do not necessarily indicate a deviation from standard performance.

## B. Symmetry

The daily symmetry (in line, cross line) of 6 MV, 10 MV, and 15 MV photon beams was also assessed, with the results shown in Figures 9, 10, and 11, respectively.

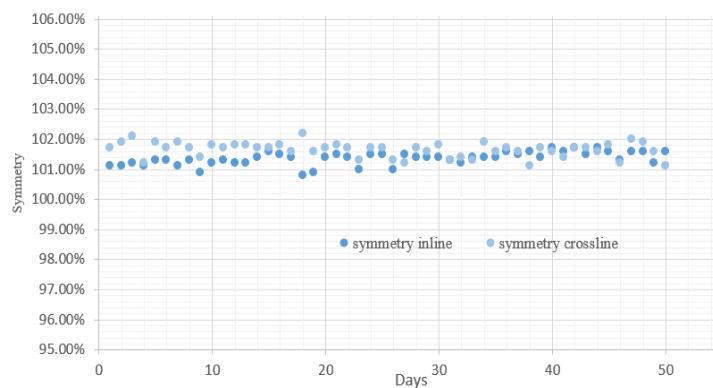


**Fig. 9. Symmetry measurements for the 6 MV photon beam.**

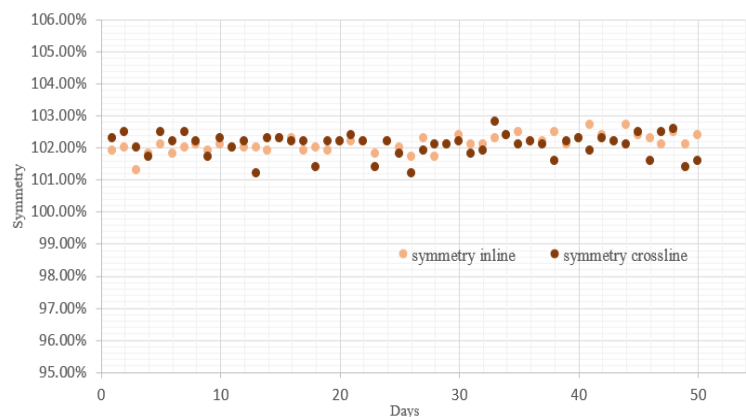
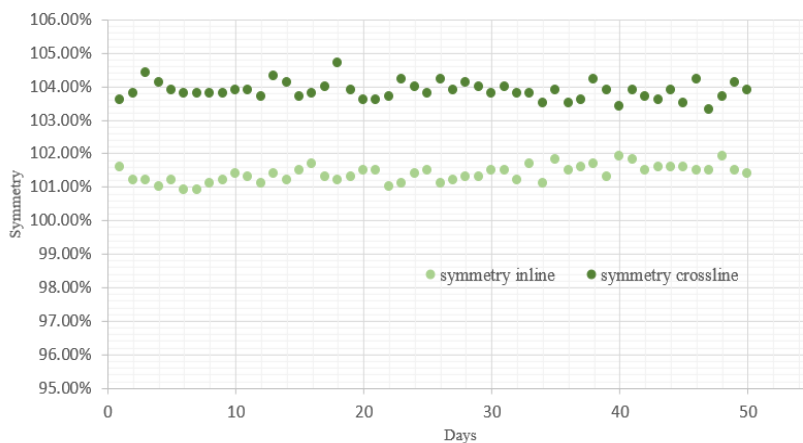
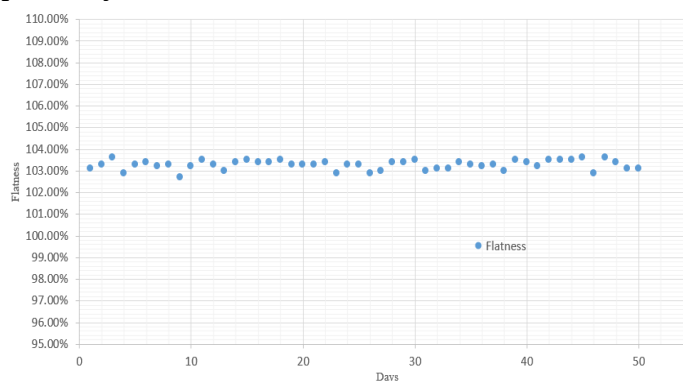


**Fig. 10. Symmetry measurements for the 10 MV photon beam.****Fig .11. Symmetry measurements for the 15 MV photon beam.**

Based on Figures 9, 10, and 11, the maximum recorded symmetry values were 102.2% for 6 MV, 102.8% for 10 MV, and 104.8% for 15 MV photon beams.

### C. Flatness

The daily flatness of 6 MV, 10 MV, and 15 MV photon beams was also assessed, with the results shown in Figures 12, 13, and 14, respectively.

**Fig. 12. Flatness measurements for the 6 MV photon beam.**

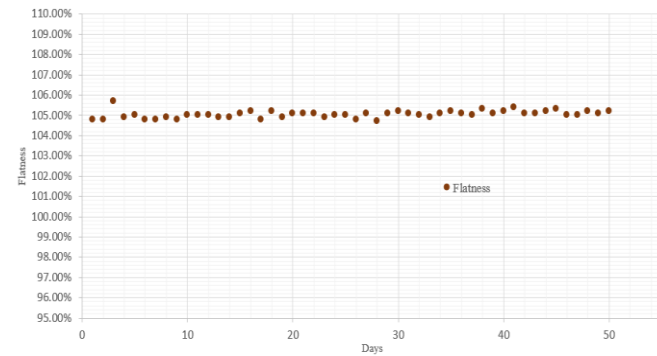


**Fig. 13. Flatness measurements for the 10 MV photon beam.**

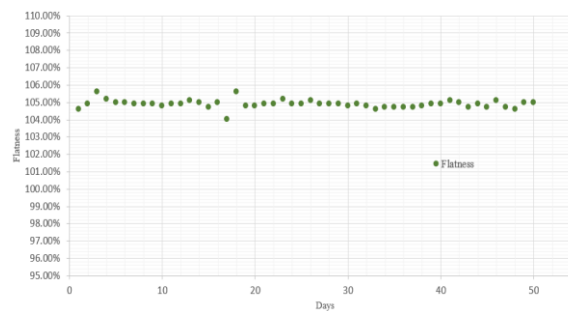


**Fig. 14. Flatness measurements for the 15 MV photon beam.**

Based on Figures 12, 13, and 14, the highest recorded flatness value for the 6 MeV energy was 103.6%, while the maximum value for 10 MeV reached 105.7%. For the 15 MeV energy, the peak flatness value observed was 105.6%.

Further detailed analysis where preforms of the results acquired in this study are Shown in Table 1

**Table 1. Daily QA Beam Parameter Measurements for Photon Energies 6 MV, 10 MV, And 15 MV**

|      |                    | reference<br>value, R.V | maximum<br>value | maximum<br>deviation of (R.V) | minimum<br>value | minimum<br>deviation of (R.V) |
|------|--------------------|-------------------------|------------------|-------------------------------|------------------|-------------------------------|
| 6MV  | symmetry inline    | 100.80%                 | 101.70%          | 0.90                          | 100.80%          | 0.00                          |
|      | symmetry crossline | 101.30%                 | 102.20%          | 0.90                          | 101.10%          | -0.20                         |
|      | Flatness           | 103.10%                 | 103.60%          | 0.50                          | 102.70%          | -0.40                         |
|      | Dose output (MU)   | 100                     | 102              | 2.00                          | 100.1            | 0.10                          |
| 10MV | symmetry inline    | 102.00%                 | 102.70%          | 0.70                          | 101.30%          | -0.70                         |
|      | symmetry crossline | 101.90%                 | 102.80%          | 0.90                          | 101.20%          | -0.70                         |
|      | Flatness           | 105.20%                 | 105.70%          | 0.50                          | 101.70%          | -3.50                         |
|      | Dose output (MU)   | 100                     | 101.9            | 1.90                          | 100.3            | 0.30                          |
| 15MV | symmetry inline    | 100.80%                 | 101.90%          | 1.10                          | 100.90%          | 0.10                          |
|      | symmetry crossline | 101.30%                 | 104.70%          | 3.40                          | 103.30%          | 2.00                          |
|      | Flatness           | 103.10%                 | 105.60%          | 2.50                          | 104.00%          | 0.90                          |
|      | Dose output (MU)   | 100                     | 101.8            | 1.80                          | 100.6            | 0.60                          |

Table 1 summarizes the measured parameters, including symmetry (inline and crossline), flatness, and dose output (MU). Reference values (R.V.) were determined following beam calibration during baseline commissioning using a water phantom. For the current measurements, the reference values were obtained with the daily QA phantom. The table also reports the maximum and minimum measured values, along with their deviations from the reference values.

For dose output (MU), deviations were small across all energies ( $\leq 2$  MU), indicating consistent output.

For symmetry, all energies showed minor deviations from the reference values, generally within 1 for 6 MV and 10 MV, while 15 MV exhibited higher deviations, particularly in crossline symmetry (up to 3.4 maximum deviation).

Flatness was stable for 6 MV and 10 MV, with small deviations ( $\leq 0.5$  for maximum,  $\leq 3.5$  for minimum). In contrast, 15 MV showed larger



variations (up to 2.5% maximum deviation), suggesting potential changes in the beam profile.

Overall, the 6 MV and 10 MV beams were very stable, whereas the 15 MV beam showed greater variation in symmetry and flatness, which may require closer monitoring to ensure consistent beam quality.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

The findings of this study underscore the critical role of daily quality assurance (QA) in maintaining the dosimetric integrity and operational consistency of linear accelerators (LINACs) used in radiotherapy. Over a 50-day evaluation of the Elekta Synergy LINAC demonstrates that daily quality assurance (QA) is essential for maintaining the dosimetric accuracy and operational stability of radiotherapy linear accelerators. Across photon energies of 6 MV, 10 MV, and 15 MV, dose output, symmetry, and flatness exhibited high stability, with minor, random day-to-day variations that remained well within clinically acceptable tolerance limits. Maximum deviations were minimal for 6 MV and 10 MV beams, whereas the 15 MV beam displayed slightly greater variability, particularly in crossline symmetry and flatness, warranting closer monitoring to ensure consistent beam quality.

The use of the myQA® Daily Phantom proved to be a reliable and efficient tool for routine QA, providing precise measurements, operational simplicity, and comprehensive monitoring capabilities. The absence of systematic drift or sustained deviations over the study period indicates robust beam generation, stable accelerator performance, and effective baseline calibration protocols.

Overall, these findings validate the effectiveness of structured daily QA routines in detecting subtle performance variations, maintaining consistent dose delivery, and safeguarding patient safety. Furthermore,

the study supports the adoption of automated, phantom-based QA systems as a practical and reliable alternative to traditional, labor-intensive QA methods, enhancing clinical workflow efficiency without compromising measurement accuracy.

Building on these results, several recommendations can further enhance QA protocols: extending the measurement period beyond 50 days to assess long-term stability, including additional photon and electron energies to broaden clinical validation, and integrating automated data analytics and trend detection within QA software to facilitate early identification of deviations. Comparative studies involving different QA phantoms and ionization chambers may also help establish standardized benchmarks and optimize calibration workflows. Future research should explore correlations between daily QA metrics and patient-specific dosimetric outcomes to strengthen the clinical relevance of routine machine monitoring and support evidence-based improvements in radiotherapy safety and efficacy.

In conclusion, implementing rigorous, structured daily QA protocols remains indispensable for high-quality radiotherapy, ensuring both treatment efficacy and patient safety, while automated QA systems offer a sustainable and precise approach to modern clinical practice.

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**Comparative Performance of Dual-Energy  
X-Ray Absorptiometry and CT in Aortic  
Calcification Detection: A Phantom Study**

**12**



## Comparative Performance of Dual-Energy X-Ray Absorptiometry and CT in Aortic Calcification Detection: A Phantom Study

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### Abstract

Aortic calcification is a proven biomarker of cardiovascular disease and a critical predictor of cardiovascular events and mortality. Computed Tomography (CT) is considered the gold standard for vascular calcification detection due to its high contrast and spatial resolution. Dual-Energy X-ray Absorptiometry (DXA), through Vertebral Fracture Assessment (VFA), has recently emerged as a low-dose alternative for detecting abdominal aortic calcification (AAC). This phantom study experiment compares the diagnostic performance of DXA and CT in detecting AAC. Perspex phantoms with thicknesses of 12 and 20 cm were used to simulate soft tissue, while aluminum strips of thicknesses ranging from 0.05 to 1.0 mm were placed to simulate calcification. CT scanning was performed at Tripoli University Hospital using a clinical multi-detector CT scanner with in-house acquisition parameters (120 kVp, 230 mA). Acquired images were processed using MATLAB software to calculate the contrast (C), contrast-to-noise ratio (CNR), linearity of pixel values, and minimum detectable aluminum thickness. CT images were more sensitive, detecting aluminum strips of 0.05 mm in both 12 cm and 20 cm phantom configurations. Despite image noise increasing with phantom thickness, CT images maintain high quality and stable CNR values. These findings were compared with a previous phantom study conducted by the same author using DXA VFA images acquired in

single-energy and dual-energy modes. The earlier study demonstrated reduced DXA sensitivity for detecting thin aluminum layers. Current findings confirm that CT remains the most powerful and sensitive modality for calcification detection. However, controlled VFA imaging provides a practical low-exposure alternative for AAC screening in selected patient populations, particularly those with smaller body sizes or limited access to CT imaging. These results support ongoing efforts to optimize DXA imaging protocols and image processing techniques for clinical utility improvements in vascular screening.

**Keywords**— Aortic calcification, cardiovascular disease, CT, dual-energy X-ray absorptiometry (DXA), image quality.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Cardiovascular disease (CVD) remains one of the main reasons of mortality and morbidity worldwide. Atherosclerosis is the most prevalent form of CVD, in which, due to an excessive build-up of plaque on the inner wall of the artery, it becomes narrowed and hardened. Atherosclerotic calcification, in particular abdominal aortic calcification (AAC), has become a validated predictor of CVD and a manifestation of atherosclerosis. [1], [2], [3], [4], [5], [6], [7], [8], [9], [10], [11], [12]. It is an inflammatory disease of the large and medium-sized arteries, including the aorta, the carotid arteries, the coronary arteries, and muscular arteries, leading to ischemia of the heart, brain, resulting in infarction [13], [14].

Several non-invasive modalities are used for AAC detection and quantification [15], [16], [17], [18], [19], [20], [21], [22]. Radiography, Ultrasound, and computed tomography (CT) are utilized for AAC detection. CT is the gold standard technology for detecting and measuring AAC, but CT is limited due to high radiation exposure [8],

[20], [23], [24], [25], [26], [27]. Dual energy X-ray absorptiometry (DXA), which is a gold standard technique used for bone density measurements, has emerged for AAC detection [10], [12], [19], [21], [26], [28], [29], [30]. In many previous studies, the ability of VFA images acquired using DXA in both single-energy and dual-energy modes to detect simulated AAC was investigated.

Building upon that research, a recent study aims to evaluate the CT performance in detecting early-stage calcification using a controlled phantom experiment and to directly compare CT findings with those obtained previously using DXA. The main objectives of this research is to assess the CT image quality, determine the minimum detectable thickness of calcification-equivalent material, and evaluate differences in detectability between CT and DXA modalities.

## II. MATERIALS AND METHODS.

### Phantom Materials and Dimensions

Perspex was utilized as a soft-tissue equivalent material due to its radiological characteristics, which are similar to those of human soft tissue. Its effective atomic number ( $Z_{\text{eff}}$ ) and X-ray attenuation properties make it appropriate for imaging phantom studies [31]–[39].

Square sheets of Perspex phantom with dimensions of  $150 \times 150 \text{ cm}^2$  and a thickness of 1 cm per sheet were used. The experiments were conducted with two Perspex configurations: 12 cm and 20 cm, representing typical lateral patient dimensions encountered in clinical CT imaging. Aluminum was utilized as a substitute material for calcification in many studies due to its identical attenuation properties to calcification [14]. For each Perspex configuration, aluminium strips of nominal thicknesses 0.05 mm, 0.1 mm, 0.2 mm, 0.3 mm, 0.5 mm, and 1 mm were placed centrally between two Perspex blocks in each phantom configuration.



### Image Acquisition Protocol

All CT scans were acquired at Tripoli University Hospital using a clinical multi-detector CT scanner (GE Medical Systems). The phantom was centered on the CT table. Vertical (superior–inferior) laser alignment verified coincidence with the phantom midline, while the horizontal (medial–lateral) laser intersected the phantom at a distance of 7.5 cm from each lateral edge. For each phantom configuration of Perspex and aluminum strip, the aluminum sheet was sandwiched between two halves of the Perspex phantom to ensure positioning reproducibility. This acquisition protocol was repeated for all phantom combinations.

Figure 1 illustrates the experiment setup, including the Perspex phantom and the aluminum strip positioning and alignment on the CT table.

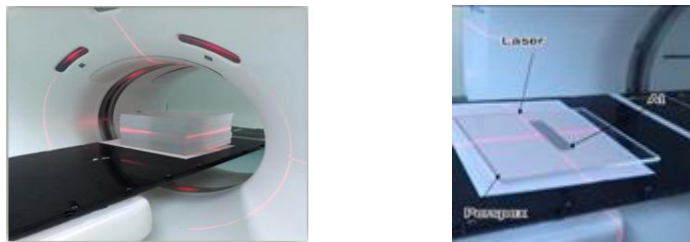


**Figure 1 : The imaging setup on the CT scanner**

### CT Acquisition Parameters

All images were acquired using identical CT parameters to ensure consistency. The acquisition settings are summarized in Table I.

**TABLE I: IMAGE ACQUISITION PARAMETERS**

| parameter               | Value                                     |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| kVp                     | 120                                       |
| Exposure                | 33                                        |
| Exposure Time (ms)      | 990                                       |
| X-ray Tube Current (mA) | 230                                       |
| Window Center           | 40                                        |
| Window Width            | 400                                       |
| Height × Width (mm)     | 366.001 × 366.001<br>(1024 × 1024 pixels) |

All raw CT scans were exported in DICOM format without preprocessing or filtering before quantitative analysis.

#### Image Preparation and Analysis

Image analysis was performed on an Image size of (1024x1024) of 16 bits using MATLAB (R2016) with no pre-processing, and the visibility of the aluminium strips was enhanced by applying image windowing. For each image, three rectangular regions of interest (ROIs) were determined: one ROI centered within the aluminum strip and two ROIs located in the surrounding Perspex material on the left and right sides of the image.

To ensure consistent ROI placement, pixel intensity profiles across the entire phantom width were generated using images acquired with the largest aluminum thickness (0.5 mm). The central ROI was positioned well within the aluminum region, avoiding edge effects, while the background ROIs were placed within uniform Perspex regions. In selected analyses, the entire cropped image was used as a single ROI to evaluate image uniformity and noise.

### Image Quality Metrics

Image quality was evaluated using contrast (C), noise, and contrast-to-noise ratio (CNR).

The contrast that indicates the brightness difference between aluminum and background (Perspex) was computed with respect to a background ROI by equation 1 [37], [38];

$$c = \frac{(N_{Al} - N_P)}{N_P} \quad (1)$$

where  $N_P$  is the mean value of the pixels measured in the center ROI (Aluminum), and  $N_P$  is the average pixel value in the left and right ROIs (Perspex);

$$N_P = \frac{(N_{P(left)} + N_{P(right)})}{2} \quad (2)$$

Noise on each image was calculated on each ROI by;

$$\text{Noise} = \frac{\sigma_P}{N_P} \quad (3)$$

Where  $\sigma_P$  is the standard deviation of the two ROI selected on the Perspex and calculated by equation 4 [31].

$$\sigma_P = \sqrt{\frac{\sigma_{Pleft}^2 + \sigma_{Pright}^2}{2}} \quad (4)$$

Where,  $\sigma_{Pleft}$  and  $\sigma_{Pright}$  are the standard deviations of left and right ROIs on the Perspex.

The contrast-to-noise ratio (CNR) was calculated as:

$$\text{CNR} = \frac{(N_{\text{Al}} - N_{\text{P}})}{\sigma_{\text{P}}} \quad (5)$$

These metrics were used to quantitatively analyze the detectability of aluminum strips across different phantom thicknesses.

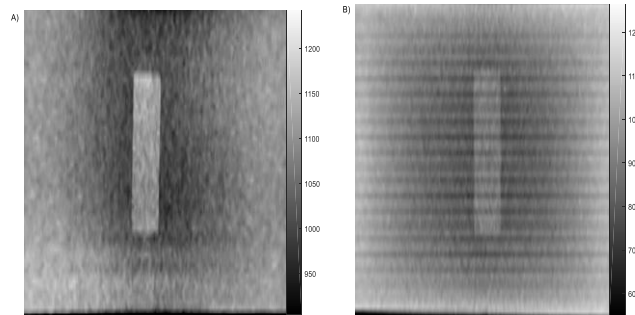
### Visual Detectability Assessment

A visual assessment was carried out to determine the minimum detectable aluminum thickness by human observers. In quantitative analysis, raw CT images were inspected using MATLAB with appropriate windowing adjustments for better visibility. The presence of the aluminium inserted between the two halves of the Perspex phantom was assessed visually on the raw CT for each phantom configuration.

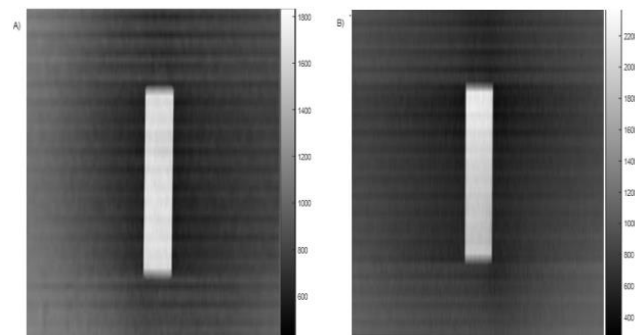
## III. RESULTS

### Region-of-Interest Analysis

The three defined rectangular ROIs on each CT image were analyzed quantitatively. ROI positioning was guided by pixel intensity profiles across the Perspex 12 and 20 cm with aluminum thickness of 0.5 mm. Figures 2 and 3 show representative acquired CT raw images of the 12 cm and 20 cm Perspex phantoms combined with aluminum strips of 0.05 mm and 0.5 mm thickness, respectively.

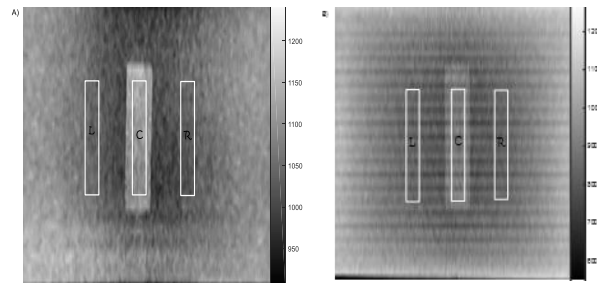


**CT Raw images of A) 12 cm of Perspex with 0.05 mm of Al , B) 20 cm of Perspex with 0.05 mm of Al**

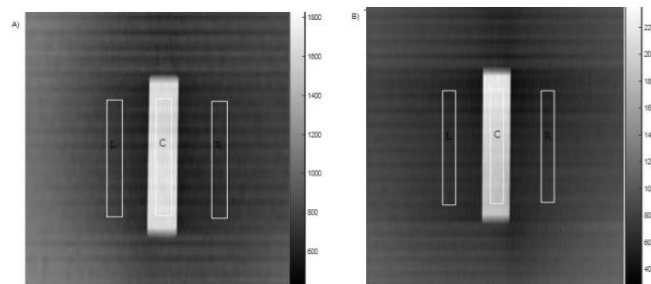


**: CT Raw images of A) 12cm of Perspex with 0.5mm of Al, B) 20cm of Perspex with 0.5mm of Al**

Figures 4 and 5 clarify the ROIs placement for both phantom configurations. Pixel intensity profiles across the x-direction for 0.05 mm and 0.5 mm aluminum thicknesses are shown in Figures 6 and 7.



**ROIs on a phantom images of A) 12 cm Perspex (left, L and right, R ) and 0.05 mm Al (center, C) obtained by CT, B) 20 cm.**



**ROIs on a phantom image of A) 12 cm Perspex (left, L and right, R) and 0.5 mm Al (centre, C) obtained with a CT, B) 20cm**

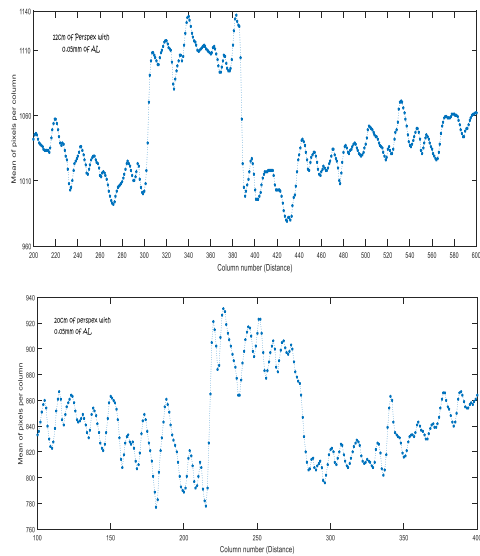


**Image profiles of 12 cm and 20cm of Perspex combined with Al strip of 0.05 mm obtained by CT**

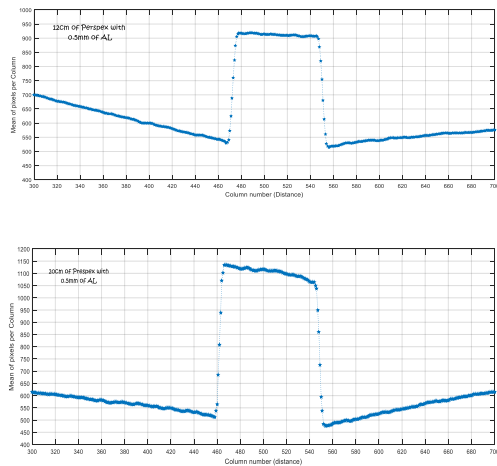


**Image profiles of 12 cm and 20 cm of Perspex combined with Al strip of 0.5 mm obtained by CT**

### Image Uniformity and Noise

To evaluate CT images uniformity and noise, the performed Perspex phantom without aluminum insertion were analyzed for both phantom thicknesses, 12 cm and 20 cm. The variations of pixel intensity values in the entire CT images were examined. These changes were evaluated by computing the mean and standard deviation of the pixels on the image after cropping the artefacts.

The percentage coefficient of variation (%CV) was computed [14].

$$\%CV = \frac{\text{SD of the mean pixel values on the entire image}}{\text{mean of the pixels of the entire image}} \times 100$$

For the 12 cm Perspex phantom, the mean pixel value was 933.47 with an SD of 5.40, corresponding to a %CV of 0.58%. For the 20 cm Perspex phantom, the mean pixel value increased to 1137.23 with an SD of 10.55, yielding a %CV of 0.93%.

Figures 8 and 9 show the pixel intensity values for Perspex widths of 12 cm in X and Y directions. Figures 10 and 11 show the pixel intensity values for Perspex widths of 20 cm in X and Y- directions.

Calculated %CV revealed that the variations in the mean values have increased with the Perspex width. It varied between 0.6 % in 12 cm and about 1% in 20 cm. There was no linear correlation between the distance and the pixel mean values perpendicular and parallel to the scan direction; for both Perspex widths.



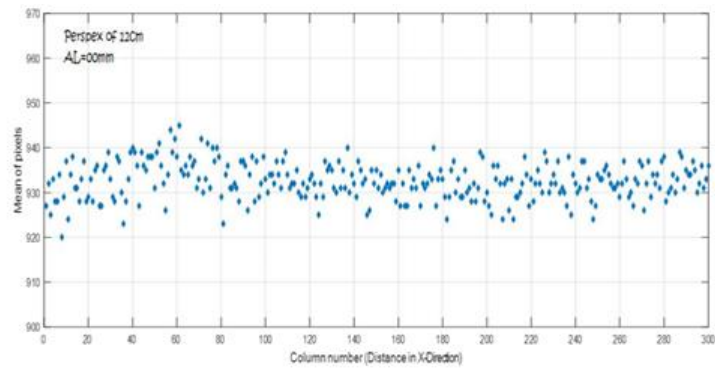


**Image profile with Perspex widths of 12 cm, in mode CT: in the X direction**

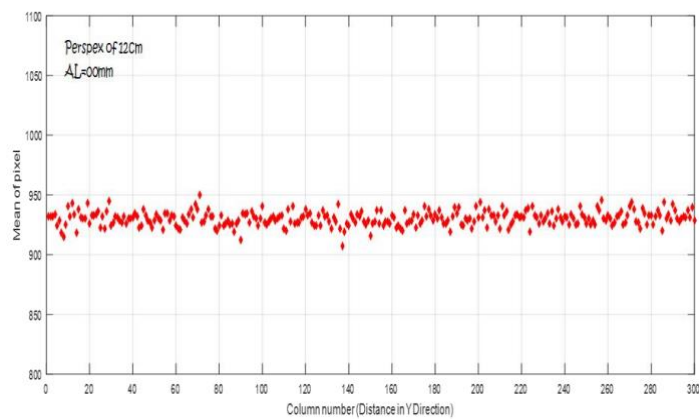


**Image profile with Perspex widths of 12 cm, in mode CT: in the Y direction**

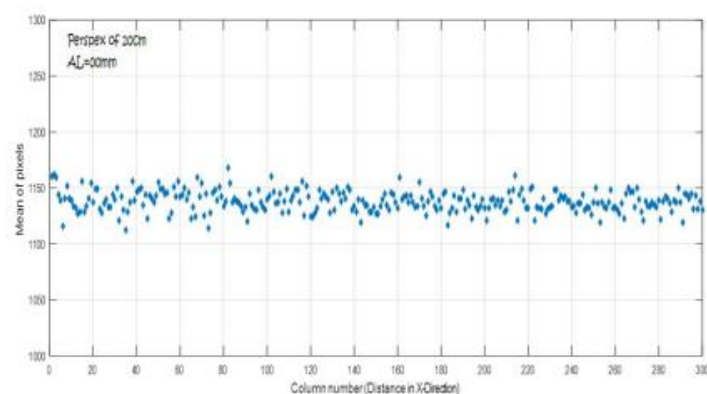


**Image profile with Perspex widths of 20 cm, in mode CT: in the X direction**

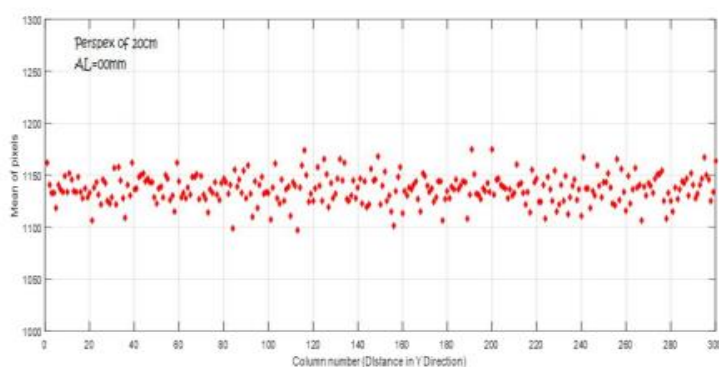


**Image profile with Perspex widths of 20 cm, in mode CT: in the Y direction**

### Quantitative Detectability Analysis

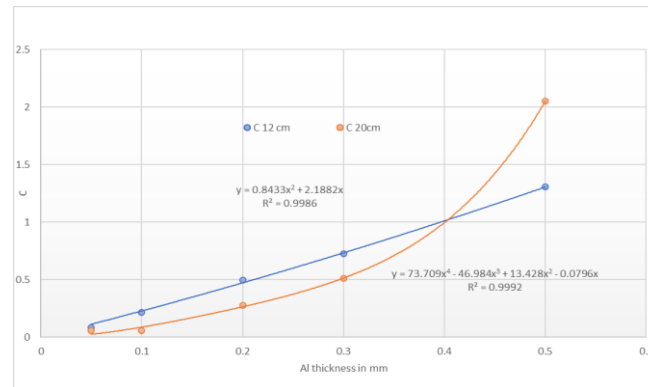
The values for contrast (C), noise, and contrast-to-noise ratio (CNR) for strips of aluminum of various thicknesses (0.05 mm to 0.5 mm) for both Perspex setups are listed in Table II.

**TABLE II: THE CONTRAST AND CNR OF 12 CM AND 20 CM PERSPEX WITH ALUMINUM 0.05 MM TO 0.5 MM.**

| Aluminum<br>(Al)<br>Thickness<br>(mm) | 12 cm  |        | 20 cm   |        |
|---------------------------------------|--------|--------|---------|--------|
|                                       | C      | CNR    | C       | CNR    |
| 0.05 mm                               | 0.0845 | 5.553  | 0.0550  | 2.0845 |
| 0.1 mm                                | 0.215  | 15.578 | 0.0542  | 3.8832 |
| 0.2 mm                                | 0.496  | 29.306 | 0.2777  | 8.0799 |
| 0.3 mm                                | 0.726  | 25.618 | 0.50875 | 18.869 |
| 0.5 mm                                | 1.304  | 40.403 | 2.05114 | 57.898 |

For both values of phantom thickness, the contrast was found to increase with increasing aluminum thickness. For a Perspex thickness of 12 cm, the contrast varied between 0.0845 and 1.304, with a corresponding CNR of 5.55 to 40.40, while varying the aluminum thickness from 0.05 to 0.5 mm. Similarly, with a Perspex thickness of 20 cm, the range of contrast varied between 0.0550 and 2.051, with a CNR of 2.08 to 57.90.

Figure 12 shows contrast as a function of aluminum thickness for both thicknesses of the phantom.



**Contrast as a function of Al thickness for different Perspex 12 cm and 20 cm widths in images obtained with the CT.**

### Visual Detectability

Visual evaluation of the obtained CT images was implemented to determine the visibility of the aluminum sheets inserts. The use of aluminum thickness of 0.05 mm was possible for visualization in both the 12 cm and the 20 cm phantom setup of the Perspex phantom. The CT images showing the visibility of the aluminum insert are shown in

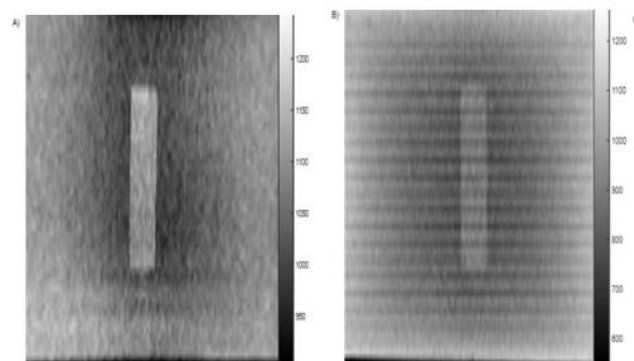


**Figure 9. CT Raw images of A) 12cm of Perspex with 0.05mm of Al (visible) , B) 20cm of Perspex with 0.05mm of AL**

## IV. DISCUSSION

This study examines computed tomography (CT) performance in the detection of simulated aortic calcification using a controlled phantom model and compares the findings with results from a previous phantom study using dual-energy X-ray absorptiometry. The results show evident differences in the detection capability, image quality, and robustness to noise between the two imaging modalities.

The sensitivity of CT was invariably shown to be high for all phantom configurations tested. Quantitative and qualitative visibility of aluminum strips as thin as 0.05 mm was achievable for phantoms depicting 12 cm and 20 cm of soft tissue equivalent material. While increasing phantom thickness led to increased image noise, CT produced consistent contrast and CNR values-performances that were robust with enhanced attenuation conditions.

In contrast, the prior study of the phantoms, using a set-up in a standard DXA device, showed a significant sensitivity loss with the corresponding gain in the phantom thickness. Although VFA images through a DXA technique were able to visualize moderate to large thicknesses of aluminum, the least perceptible thickness increased substantially with increasing phantom thickness. This limitation was present both in single-energy and dual-energy acquisition modes, reflecting the inherent susceptibility of the technique of DXA to image noise and reduced signal discrimination in thicker attenuating media.

Quantitative comparisons again point to the higher performance of CT. In the present study, CNR values for the thinnest aluminum insert were over 5 and for thicker inserts over 40 in the 12 cm phantom configuration. These values were always higher when compared with the values measured for DXA under similar phantom conditions. Moreover, the %CV was found to be very low for CT images, indicating high uniformity and good reproducibility after repeated measurements.

These performance differences can indeed essentially be explained by the reasons of higher spatial resolution, greater dynamic range, and superior noise characteristics of CT. On the other hand, although optimized for bone mineral density measurements, DXA entails relatively lower energy separation, which reduces sensitivity to small objects of low contrast, especially if there is thickening of soft tissues.

These findings confirm, from a clinical standpoint, the status of CT as the reference standard for the detection and characterization of aortic calcification, especially in early or subtle disease. The results also provide support for the utility of DXA-based VFA as a potential screening tool in selected patient populations, such as patients with smaller body habitus or settings where access to CT is limited. For these indications, DXA has advantages in terms of radiation dose, cost, and availability, despite decreased sensitivity.

This investigation should be recognized as having been conducted in a simplified phantom model that is incapable of replicating the full complexity of human anatomy, heterogeneous tissue composition, or motion-related artifacts present in clinical imaging. However, the controlled nature of the phantom experiment allows for a systematic evaluation of detectability limits and provides a reliable framework for direct modality comparison. Accordingly, future work should focus on the optimization of CT acquisition parameters to balance image quality and radiation dose and on improving the image processing algorithms and acquisition techniques of the DXA to enhance its sensitivity toward early calcification. Clinical validation studies based on datasets will be needed to confirm translational relevance.

## V. CONCLUSION

The work offered a controlled comparison between the use of computed tomography (CT) and dual-energy X-ray absorptiometry

(DXA) techniques with respect to the detection of simulated aortic calcification. The ability of both techniques to reconstruct the image quality performance was tested using aluminum inserts of varying thickness implanted in a Perspex phantom.

Data from this experiment showed that calcification detection was more sensitive and quantitative in CT, and that detection was possible in alum strips as thin as 0.05 mm, regardless of phantom thickness, calcification, contrast, and noise, which was represented by a high contrast-to-noise ratio and a low coefficient of variation in this imaging modality. The result was not sensitive to thin calcifications, and this was more pronounced in a thicker phantom, based on data from a former experiment using the DXA phantom.

These results strongly support that CT is the most accurate method for the detection and assessment of calcifications within the aorta, above all in the early phase of the disease. However, vertebral fracture assessment DXA might have utility in special populations of patients as an alternative method when there is no access to CT scans.

To conclude, this paper points out the importance of selecting appropriate imaging modalities according to the diagnostic requirement and available resources. Future studies may focus on reducing the dosage of CT exposure while maintaining image quality through optimizing CT scanner protocol. They could also enhance the vascular calcification index through improved methods of vascular calcification assessment on DXA scans.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

The author would like to extend their sincerest appreciation to the technicians in the Radiotherapy Department at Tripoli University Hospital for their kind help and cooperation in this study. Without their help and cooperation, this research would never have achieved the success that it has attained.

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**Correction of Electron Density to CT  
Number for Radiotherapy Treatment  
Planning with Metal Implants: Enhancing  
Accuracy in Patient Care**

**13**



## **Correction of Electron Density to CT Number for Radiotherapy Treatment Planning with Metal Implants: Enhancing Accuracy in Patient Care**

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### **Abstract**

Metal implants significantly distort Hounsfield Unit (HU) values, inaccurate electron density estimations, and subsequent errors in radiotherapy dose calculations. This study aimed to evaluate the impact of metal implants on CT-based radiotherapy planning and to develop a correction methodology to improve calculation accuracy. An RT electron density (ED) phantom was scanned both with and without metal implants to derive electron density calibration curves. Radiation dose discrepancies were then quantified using Monte Carlo



and collapsed cone algorithms within the Monaco Treatment Planning System (TPS). CT acquisitions were performed under multiple protocols with varying tube potentials and currents, specifically 100 kV/220mA, 120 kV/220 mA, 140 kV/220 mA, 120 kV/100 mA, 120kV/150 mA, and 120 kV/300 mA, using a General Electric CT simulator. Our results demonstrate that the use of a CT-to-electron density calibration curve incorporating metal implants provides more accurate dose calculations compared to a conventional curve. In particular, dose calculations for patients with implants based on an ordinary curve tend to overestimate the delivered dose due to an underestimation of electron density. To minimize such errors and enhance dose accuracy in radiotherapy for patients with implants, we recommend employing an electron density phantom that includes representative metal implants during calibration.

**Keywords**—Electron density, CT

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Computed tomography (CT) has become an indispensable imaging modality in both medical and industrial applications, providing high-resolution cross-sectional representations of internal structures without destructive testing [1]. The quantitative foundation of CT images is the CT number, expressed in Hounsfield units (HU), which correlates linearly with the attenuation coefficient of the scanned material relative to water and air [2]. In clinical practice, HU values are widely used to characterize soft tissues, bone density, and pathological changes, while in non-medical applications they are increasingly employed for evaluating engineering materials, additively manufactured components, and implantable devices.[3]

Despite its widespread utility, accurate HU measurement in high-density materials such as metals remains challenging. Metallic

components induce strong X-ray attenuation, leading to beam hardening, photon starvation, and streak artifacts [4]. These phenomena distort HU values and may cause saturation at the upper dynamic range of the scanner. Consequently, the HU values reported for metal in standard clinical CT scanners often deviate significantly from their theoretical attenuation coefficients [5]. Such discrepancies undermine quantitative applications, including radiotherapy dose calculations, finite-element modeling, and quality control of high-density parts.[6]

Several corrective strategies have been proposed to improve HU accuracy. Extended bit-depth reconstructions can expand the maximum HU range and better capture the attenuation profile of dense materials [7]. Metal artifact reduction (MAR) algorithms, as well as dual-energy and photon-counting CT systems, have shown promise in reducing beam-hardening effects and improving material characterization [8]. However, calibration of HU values for metals remains scanner-dependent and highly sensitive to acquisition parameters such as tube voltage (kVp), filtration, and reconstruction kernel.[9]

Experimental validation of HU values for metallic samples under standardized conditions is therefore essential. In this study, a metal rod was used as a reference material and scanned with a General Electric CT system under controlled acquisition settings.

Such verification enhances the consistency and reproducibility of CT numbers for high-density materials, facilitating their integration in engineering, clinical, and research applications.[10]

Furthermore, we investigated the impact of these HU distortions on radiotherapy planning by comparing dose calculations performed with a standard CT-to-electron density curve and with a modified curve incorporating metal implants, using the Monaco Treatment Planning

System (TPS). By doing so, our aim was to evaluate whether implant-specific calibration can reduce dose calculation errors and improve treatment accuracy for patients with metallic implants.

## **2. MATERIALS AND METHOD**

### **2.1 CT Imaging System**

All CT scans were performed using a General Electric (GE) CT simulator (GE Healthcare, USA), a scanner routinely used in radiotherapy treatment planning. Prior to data acquisition, the scanner underwent air calibration following the manufacturer's guidelines to ensure consistent Hounsfield unit (HU) accuracy. Phantom Setup and Reference Material

An electron density (ED) phantom (CIRS Model 062M ED) was employed to establish the CT-to-electron density calibration curve. The phantom consists of multiple removable inserts with known relative electron densities, simulating a range of human tissues (lung, adipose, muscle, liver, and bone).

To investigate the effect of metallic implants, a metal rod (diameter: 8 mm; length: 150mm; density: 4.51 g/cm<sup>3</sup>) was embedded into the central cavity of the phantom .

This setup enabled the comparison of CT numbers (HU) and derived electron densities under two scenarios:

1. Standard calibration without metal implants.
2. Modified calibration including the metal insert.

### **2.2 Acquisition Protocols**

CT image acquisition was performed under multiple kVp and mA settings to assess the effect of tube energy and current on HU accuracy

for high-density materials. The six protocols that were used is shown in Table 1.

**Table 1. CT Acquisition Protocols Used for Evaluating HU And Dose Calculation Accuracy**

| Protocol number | Protocol parameter |              | Slice thickness |
|-----------------|--------------------|--------------|-----------------|
|                 | Tube voltage       | Tube current |                 |
| 1               | 100 kVp,           | 220 mA       | 5 mm            |
| 2               | 120 kVp,           | 100 mA       | 5 mm            |
| 3               | 120 kVp,           | 150 mA       | 5 mm            |
| 4               | 120 kVp,           | 220 mA       | 5 mm            |
| 5               | 120 kVp,           | 300 mA       | 5 mm            |
| 6               | 140 kVp,           | 220 mA       | 5 mm            |

All images were exported in DICOM format and transferred to the treatment planning system (TPS).

### 3. Ed phantom

A CIRS Model 062M Electron Density (ED) phantom (CIRS, Norfolk, VA, USA) was employed to establish CT-to-electron density calibration curves. The phantom consists of a water-equivalent solid matrix with multiple interchangeable inserts simulating various tissue densities, including lung, adipose, muscle, and bone. Each insert has a precisely known electron density relative to water, allowing accurate characterization of CT number (HU) versus electron density, Material

properties of CIRS Model 062M ED Phantom inserts presented in Table 2 and figure 1.[11]

**Table 2. Material properties of CIRS Model 062M ED Phantom inserts**

| Material              | Physical Density (g/cm <sup>3</sup> ) | Electron Density ( $\times 10^{23}$ electrons/cm <sup>3</sup> ) |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| Lung (inhaled)        | 0.205                                 | 0.668                                                           |
| Lung (exhaled)        | 0.507                                 | 1.658                                                           |
| Adipose               | 0.960                                 | 3.171                                                           |
| Breast                | 0.99                                  | 3.261                                                           |
| Muscle                | 1.060                                 | 3.483                                                           |
| Liver                 | 1.070                                 | 3.516                                                           |
| Solid Trabecular Bone | 1.160                                 | 3.730                                                           |
| Dense bone            | 1.530                                 | 4.862                                                           |

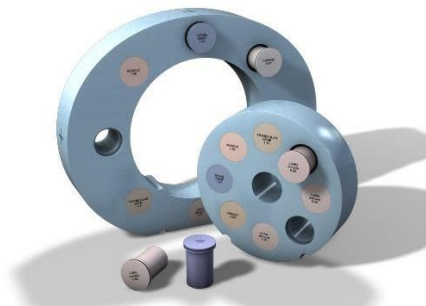


**Fig.1 .CIRS Model 062M ED Phantom inserts**

To evaluate the influence of metal implants, a metal rod was embedded within the phantom at a central location. The physical and electron density properties the metal rod is summarized in Table 3.

This configuration allowed measurement of HU values both in the absence and presence of metal, enabling assessment of CT number distortions and their impact on dose calculation accuracy.

**Table 3. Material properties of Tanium Rod inserted in the CIRS Model 062M ED Phantom**

| Material  | Physical Density<br>(g/cm <sup>3</sup> ) | Electron<br>Density ( $\times 10^{23}$<br>electrons/cm <sup>3</sup> ) | RED<br>(Relative to<br>H <sub>2</sub> O) |
|-----------|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| Metal Rod | 4.5                                      | 12.5                                                                  | 3.74                                     |

The phantom was scanned in a standardized position, aligned with laser markers on the CT simulator couch, ensuring reproducible geometry across all acquisition protocols. Regions of interest (ROIs) were defined within each insert and the metal rod to extract HU values systematically for subsequent electron density calibration and dose calculation analyses.

### 3.1 Electron Density Curve Comparison

Ed phantom CT datasets were imported into the Monaco Treatment Planning System (The version of Monaco utilized in this study is Monaco 6.1.4.0).

Regions of interest (ROIs) of at least 1 cm<sup>2</sup> were placed within the metal rod, and other tissue- equivalent inserts (lung, muscle, bone).HU values were recorded as the mean  $\pm$  standard deviation, and

CT-to-electron density calibration curves were generated with and without the metal insert.

### 3.2 Case study

Dose calculations for comparison were subsequently performed on a real patient case, using the CT datasets with electron density values derived from the different calibration protocols. This approach allowed assessment of the impact of CT-to-electron density variations particularly those induced by the presence of a metal implant on the calculated dose distributions.

Dose distributions were calculated using the Monaco Treatment Planning System (TPS) with Monte Carlo (MC) algorithm that considered the gold standard for modeling photon and electron transport .

The calculation preformed under two distinct calibration curve conditions:

- Standard curve: CT-to-electron density calibration performed without any metal inserts.
- Corrected curve: CT-to-electron density calibration performed including the metal implant, allowing the system to account for metal-induced HU distortions.

These approaches enabled comparison of the dosimetric impact of metal implants on dose calculation accuracy.

### 3.3 Uncertainty Propagation Analysis

The uncertainty in CT number (HU) measurements was quantified using the standard deviation within regions of interest. This uncertainty propagates to relative electron density (RED) through the CT-to-electron density calibration curve and subsequently affects dose

calculation. Assuming RED is a function of HU, the propagated uncertainty in RED can be estimated using first-order error propagation.

The resulting RED uncertainty contributes to dose uncertainty, which can be approximated by evaluating the sensitivity of the calculated dose to small variations in RED .

In addition, algorithm-related uncertainties associated with the dose calculation method were considered. Although a full uncertainty assessment was beyond the scope of this study, these estimates provide insight into the impact of metal-induced HU variability on dose calculation accuracy[12,13] .

## **4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

CT number measurements were obtained from the CIRS Model 062M ED phantom with and without the metal rod.

### **4.1 Electron Density Curves**

The relationship between CT number (HU) and electron density for the CIRS Model 062M phantom, demonstrating the consistency of tissue-equivalent inserts across varying kVp and mA settings. Notably, variations in acquisition parameters produced minimal differences in the HU–RED density correlation for non-metallic inserts, confirming the robustness of the standard calibration. Figure 2 and 3 presents the standard CT-to-electron density calibration curve (without metal) and the CT-to-electron density calibration curve (with metal) obtained using protocol 1 to 6.



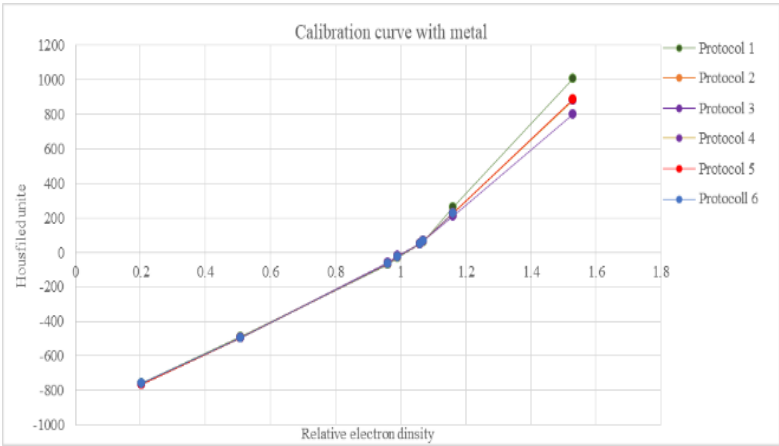


**Fig. 2. The standard CT-to-electron density calibration curve (without metal) protocol 1 to 6.**

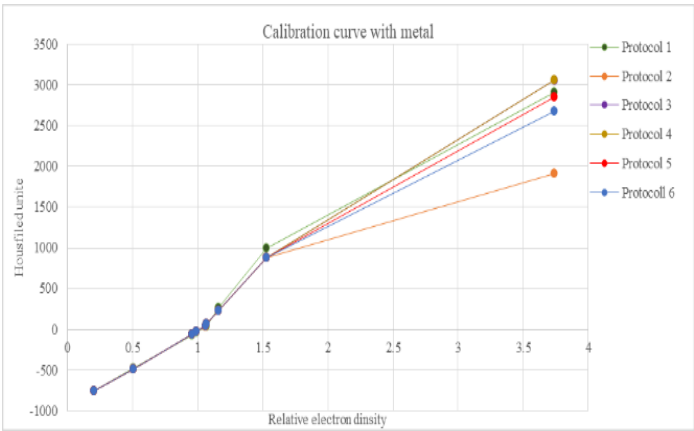


**Fig. 3. The CT-to-electron density calibration curve (with metal) with protocol 1 to 6.**

The figures 2 and 3 shows a comparison between With Metal and without Metal of CT-to-electron density calibration curve.

In the absence of metal, the HU–RED curve exhibited a smooth, continuous increase from approximately –900 HU (representing air) to around 900 HU for high-density biological tissues. This trend aligns with standard CT calibration expectations and reflects the typical, non-linear relationship observed between RED and HU in biological tissues. The gradual increase indicates consistent CT image quality and accurate electron density mapping in tissue- equivalent materials.

While With Metal, the HU–RED curve in the presence of metal showed substantial deviation beyond a RED value of approximately 1.5. Up to this point, the data from both conditions overlapped closely. However, beyond  $RED \approx 1.5$ , a marked and rapid increase in HU values was observed, reaching up to  $\sim 2700$  HU. This deviation is indicative of artifacts introduced by high-density metallic materials, which significantly affect CT number accuracy. Table 2 present the average Hounsfield unite and it average stander deviation of all the protocol for with and without metal.

**Table 4. Average Hounsfield Units (HU) and Standard Deviation (SD) for Different Materials with and Without Metal Presence.**

| Material    | Electron Density ( $\times 10^{23}$ electrons/cm <sup>3</sup> ) | Without metal |    | With metal |    |
|-------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|----|------------|----|
|             |                                                                 | HU            | SD | HU         | SD |
| lung Inhale | 0.668                                                           | -762          | 10 | -757       | 10 |
| Lung Exhale | 1.658                                                           | -493          | 10 | -488       | 10 |
| Adipose     | 3.171                                                           | -63           | 11 | -64        | 11 |
| Breast      | 3.261                                                           | -26           | 11 | -29        | 11 |
| Muscle      | 3.483                                                           | 50            | 13 | 35         | 14 |
| Liver       | 3.516                                                           | 68            | 9  | 59         |    |

|                   |              |            |           |             |            |
|-------------------|--------------|------------|-----------|-------------|------------|
| <b>Bone 200</b>   | <b>3.730</b> | <b>231</b> | <b>12</b> | <b>228</b>  | <b>13</b>  |
| <b>Bone 800</b>   | <b>4.862</b> | <b>892</b> | <b>15</b> | <b>886</b>  | <b>15</b>  |
| <b>Tanium Rod</b> | <b>12.5</b>  | <b>-</b>   | <b>-</b>  | <b>2740</b> | <b>905</b> |

Note: HU values are mean CT numbers measured in Hounsfield Units.

Table 4 summarizes the mean Hounsfield Unit (HU) values and corresponding standard deviations (SD) for a range of tissue-equivalent and high-density materials, evaluated under both metal-free and metal-present conditions.

For low-density materials such as lung (inhale and exhale) and adipose tissue, minimal differences were observed between the two conditions. For instance, lung (inhale) exhibited HU values of  $-762$  and  $-757$  for the metal-free and metal-present cases, respectively, indicating a negligible impact from the presence of metal. Similarly, adipose and breast tissues maintained consistent HU values across both scenarios, with differences remaining within measurement uncertainty.

However, deviations became more apparent in medium- to high-density materials. Muscle and liver tissues showed reductions in HU values when metal was present; for example, muscle decreased from 50 HU to 35 HU, and liver from 68 HU to 59 HU. These changes are likely attributable to scatter and beam hardening artifacts introduced by the metal. Bone materials at densities of 200 mg/cc and 800 mg/cc also demonstrated slight HU reductions (e.g., from 231 HU to 228 HU for bone 200), although these differences remained within the corresponding standard deviation ranges.

The metal implant (titanium), a high-Z material, exhibited an HU value of 2740 with a large standard deviation of 905, reflecting

significant artifacts and instability in CT number determination at such high densities.

Table 4 further demonstrates that the metal rod exhibits a substantially higher SD in HU values compared to non-metallic materials. This elevated variability reflects increased image noise and residual metal artifacts, such as beam hardening and photon starvation, in regions containing high-density materials. The high HU variability directly contributes to increased uncertainty in relative electron density (RED) assignment and propagates into dose calculation uncertainty, as discussed in the uncertainty analysis. This observation supports the need for metal-inclusive calibration curves when calculating dose in the presence of metal implants.

Overall, these findings underscore the impact of metal artifacts on HU accuracy, particularly for tissues adjacent to or in proximity to high-density materials. Such discrepancies may influence electron density calibration and subsequently affect dose calculations in radiotherapy treatment planning.

## **4.2 Clinical Case Evaluation**

To evaluate the impact of metallic implants on dose calculation accuracy in radiotherapy treatment planning, two patients with metal - based implants were analyzed (Patient 1 and Patient 2, see Figure 4 and 5) .

For each patient, dose calculations were performed at eight representative points within or adjacent to the implant region using two different calibration approaches:

A. An average standard calibration curve without metal.

B. An average corrected calibration curve without metal.



**Fig.4. Patient 1 with metal implant. The marked points indicate locations used for dose evaluation in the treatment plan.**

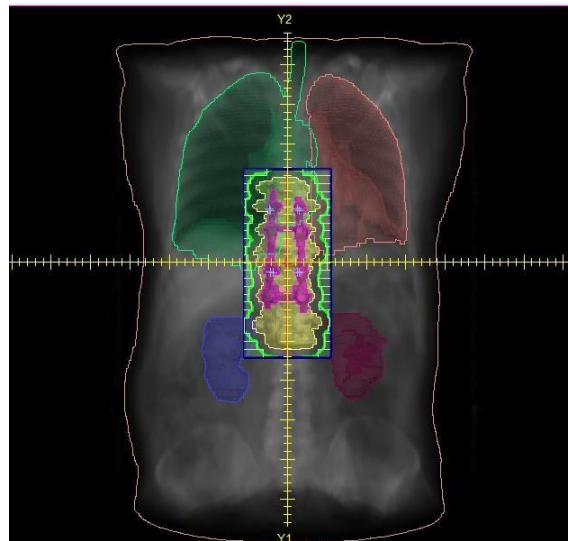


**Fig.5. Patient 2 with metal implant. The marked points indicate locations used for dose evaluation in the treatment plan.**

The purpose of this case study is to quantify the discrepancies in calculated dose values resulting from the presence of metal-induced

artifacts in the CT data. The differences observed highlight the clinical significance of accurate HU-to-RED calibration, particularly in the presence of high-Z materials such as titanium. The dose values, absolute differences, and percentage deviations between the two calibration methods are summarized in the Table 5.

**Table 5: Comparison of Dose Calculations Using HU Calibration Curves with and Without metal.**

| Patient 1 |                             |                                |                     |              |
|-----------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------|--------------|
| Point     | Dose (With metal Curve) cGY | Dose (Without metal Curve) cGY | Absolute Difference | % Difference |
| 1         | 1677.3                      | 1945.4                         | 268.1               | 15.99%       |
| 2         | 1873.5                      | 2072.3                         | 198.8               | 10.74%       |
| 3         | 1871.7                      | 1973.0                         | 101.3               | 5.42%        |
| 4         | 1889.7                      | 2052.5                         | 162.8               | 8.61%        |
| 5         | 1650.6                      | 1873.6                         | 223.0               | 13.52%       |
| 6         | 1676.0                      | 1979.6                         | 303.6               | 18.12%       |
| 7         | 1639.4                      | 1924.9                         | 285.5               | 17.42%       |
| 8         | 1743.2                      | 2003.8                         | 260.6               | 14.93%       |
| Patient 2 |                             |                                |                     |              |
| Point     | Dose (With metal Curve) cGY | Dose (Without metal Curve) cGY | Absolute Difference | % Difference |
| 1         | 1527.9                      | 1977.3                         | 449.4               | 29.99%       |
| 2         | 1562.7                      | 1991.8                         | 429.1               | 27.55%       |
| 3         | 1494.8                      | 1980.6                         | 485.8               | 32.43%       |
| 4         | 1725.1                      | 2012.8                         | 287.7               | 16.67%       |
| 5         | 1852.7                      | 2041.4                         | 188.7               | 10.18%       |
| 6         | 1920.8                      | 2035.6                         | 114.8               | 5.98%        |
| 7         | 1963.3                      | 2015.4                         | 52.1                | 2.59%        |
| 8         | 1787.1                      | 2022.8                         | 235.7               | 13.13%       |

Prevised table shows the dose differences between calibration with and without metal are clinically significant, particularly in regions directly influenced by the presence of metal:

- For Patient 1, the relative difference ranged from 5.4% to 18.6%, with an average dose overestimation of approximately 13.7% when using the metal curve
- For Patient 2, the relative difference ranged from 2.59% to 32.43%, with an average dose overestimation of approximately 17.7% when using the metal curve.

The findings clearly demonstrate that ignoring metal implants during dose calculation leads to significant dose overestimation. This occurs because metal has a much higher density and atomic number than bone, resulting in increased beam attenuation that is not properly modeled when metal heterogeneity is excluded. Consequently, the treatment planning system overestimates the dose delivered beyond the implant.

These results indicate that using a calibration curve that accounts for metal density even when influenced by metal-related CT artifacts provides a more realistic representation of radiation attenuation and therefore yields more accurate dose calculations in patients with metallic implants.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Although the use of a metal-inclusive CT-to-electron density calibration curve improves dose calculation accuracy, several limitations must be acknowledged. Residual artifacts caused by beam hardening and photon starvation may persist even after calibration, particularly for large or high-Z metallic implants. Additionally, calibration curves are scanner- and protocol-specific, which limits their direct transferability across different CT systems. Uncertainty in

Hounsfield Unit (HU) measurements, quantified by standard deviation within regions of interest, propagates into electron density estimation and subsequently into dose calculations.

Despite these challenges, metal-aware calibration provides a more realistic approximation of radiation–material interactions, improving modeling of beam attenuation, scatter, and downstream dose perturbations. This is particularly important in regions adjacent to implants, where accurate dose estimation is critical for both tumor control and normal tissue protection.

Future work should focus on systematic uncertainty analysis, validation across multiple scanners and implant types, and the integration of advanced artifact-reduction and model-based dose calculation algorithms. Collectively, these improvements will further enhance treatment-planning accuracy for patients with metallic implants.



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**An AI-Enabled Control System for  
Predictive Management of Vascular  
Obstruction**

**14**



## **An AI-Enabled Control System for Predictive Management of Vascular Obstruction**

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### **Abstract**

Clinical decision-making for vascular occlusion is often compromised by incomplete patient data and time constraints, leading to delayed interventions and an elevated risk of complications. To address this challenge, we propose an artificial intelligence (AI)-powered control and decision-support system (CDSS) that establishes a closed-loop platform for predictive intervention. Our framework integrates multi-modal data—from medical imaging and electronic health records—using a personalized computational model powered by machine learning (ML) and computational fluid dynamics (CFD). This integration facilitates real-time risk stratification and hemodynamic simulation of potential interventions, such as stent placement. Key

outputs include optimized stent sizing and positioning parameters derived from anatomical and physiological constraints. Functioning as an intelligent controller within a clinical feedback loop, the system provides physicians with data-driven, actionable recommendations, significantly reducing decision-making time and improving long-term vascular outcomes. Validation on retrospective clinical data demonstrated a diagnostic accuracy of 96.5%, a 60% reduction in flow turbulence, and a 91% reduction in time-to-decision within a controlled research environment.. This approach bridges data-driven AI prediction with physics-based simulation, offering a scalable paradigm for personalized cardiovascular medicine.

**Keywords:** Artificial intelligence, Cardiovascular risk, Control system, Optimization, Patient monitoring, Personalized treatment, Predictive analytics, Stent optimization, Vascular occlusion.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Vascular occlusion represents a critical failure in the physiological control system responsible for hemodynamic regulation. From a control-theoretic perspective, this pathology disrupts natural feedback loops that maintain tissue perfusion, necessitating external intervention to restore system stability [1]. Clinical procedures such as stenting are engineered actuations aimed at re-establishing luminal flow; however, current implementations operate predominantly as open-loop systems. These interventions rely on static anatomical assessments without integrated real-time sensing or adaptive control, resulting in suboptimal therapeutic outcomes and heightened risks of restenosis or thrombosis [1][2].

The urgency of vascular occlusive events—such as myocardial infarction or ischemic strokes are exacerbated by diagnostic and decision-making delays. Under time-critical conditions, clinicians must operate with incomplete patient data and limited predictive

insights, leading to cognitive overload and potential delays in life-saving interventions [3] [4]. Conventional approaches lack the dynamic feedback necessary for personalized, precision-guided therapy, highlighting the unmet need for intelligent systems capable of closing the loop between diagnosis, prediction, and intervention [5][6].

This paper presents both the endovascular cyber-physical system and its treatment as a closed loop control problem. Our AI-enabled platform integrates multi-modal sensing (imaging, EHR) with a computational controller comprising machine learning (ML) models and computational fluid dynamics (CFD) simulations. This system functions as a real-time decision support mechanism, generating patient-specific actuation commands—such as optimized stent parameters—informed by hemodynamic simulations to guide clinical intervention. By embedding physician expertise within an automated feedback loop, our approach enables predictive, personalized, and pre-emptively validated treatment strategies [7][8].

The paper contributions of this work are two-fold:

1. A novel control- theoretic framework for a vascular intervention that is modularized in a clinical decision support system, canonicalizing the sensing, control, and actuation subsystems.
2. A demonstrated synergistic fusion of data- driven AI prediction and physics based CFD simulation for pre- physical deployment treatment optimization.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows: Section II reviews relevant medical and engineering background, Section III details the system architecture and methodology, Section IV presents experimental results and validation, and Section V discusses implications, limitations, and future directions.



## **II. BACKGROUND: MEDICAL PATHOPHYSIOLOGY AND ENGINEERING SENSING PLATFORMS**

### **A. Pathophysiology of Atherosclerosis: A Systems Failure Perspective**

Atherosclerosis remains the principal culprit behind vascular obstruction, fundamentally understood as a chronic inflammatory condition. Its hallmark is the progressive—and often insidious—accumulation of plaque within the arterial walls. Clinically, we observe how this pathology corrupts the body's innate hemodynamic control systems, a disruption that paves the way for critically compromised tissue perfusion and, ultimately, acute ischemic events like myocardial infarction or stroke [9] [10]. The disease's progression is rarely linear; it involves a complex and vicious cycle of endothelial dysfunction, lipid infiltration, and potent inflammatory cascades. Together, these factors drive significant, dynamic alterations in both vessel geometry and local fluid dynamics. Viewing this through an engineering lens, atherosclerosis effectively creates a maladaptive, positive feedback loop. This reinforces the critical need for targeted external intervention to disrupt the cycle and restore the system's physiological homeostasis [11] [12].

### **B. Diagnostic Sensing Modalities for Vascular State Estimation**

Advanced imaging techniques serve as critical sensors in the vascular diagnostic control loop, providing high-fidelity data on system state [13] [14].

**1. Non-Invasive Sensing:** Computed Tomography Angiography (CTA) and Magnetic Resonance Angiography (MRA) offer high-resolution anatomical imaging for initial assessment. CTA utilizes intravenous contrast and rapid CT acquisition to generate 3D vascular

reconstructions, providing excellent spatial resolution for luminal assessment and plaque characterization. MRA leverages magnetic properties of blood and tissues to produce flow-sensitive images without ionizing radiation, making it suitable for serial monitoring [15] [16].

**2. Invasive Sensing:** Catheter-based angiography remains the gold standard for real-time hemodynamic and anatomical assessment. This modality provides dynamic, high-resolution imaging of contrast flow, enabling precise quantification of stenosis severity and collateral circulation. Its integration with interventional procedures allows for simultaneous diagnosis and treatment, making it a key feedback mechanism during therapeutic actuation [17] [18].

The evolution from 2D to 3D imaging represents a significant advancement in sensing resolution, enabling more accurate computational modeling of vascular hemodynamics [19] [20].

### C. Stents as Therapeutic Actuators in Vascular Control Systems

Endovascular stents function as mechanical actuators designed to restore patency in obstructed vessels [21]. Their evolution reflects advancements in materials science and biomechanical engineering:

**1. Bare-Metal Stents (BMS):** Provide passive mechanical scaffolding to maintain vessel patency but lack biological activity, often leading to neointimal hyperplasia and restenosis [22] [23].

**2 Drug-Eluting Stents (DES):** Incorporate pharmacologic agents (e.g., sirolimus, paclitaxel) to modulate cellular proliferation, reducing restenosis rates through controlled local drug delivery [24] [25].

**3. Bioresorbable Vascular Scaffolds (BVS):** Provide temporary mechanical support before undergoing complete biodegradation,

potentially restoring natural vascular physiology and eliminating permanent implant complications [26] [27].

Each stent type represents a distinct actuation strategy with specific control parameters—radial strength, drug release kinetics, and degradation profiles—that must be optimized for individual patient anatomy and pathophysiology [28] [29].

#### **D. The Control-Theoretic Gap in Current Clinical Practice**

Contemporary vascular intervention operates predominantly as an open-loop control system: preoperative imaging informs initial treatment planning, but subsequent therapeutic actions proceed without real-time feedback or adaptive optimization. This approach lacks the dynamic regulation capabilities needed to address patient-specific variations in anatomy, hemodynamics, and biological response [30] [31]. The absence of integrated sensing, predictive modeling, and closed-loop actuation results in suboptimal outcomes, including restenosis, thrombosis, and procedural complications. This fundamental limitation motivates the development of intelligent control systems that can bridge the gap between anatomical intervention and physiological optimization [32] [33].

### **III. STENTS AS ENGINEERING ACTUATORS: MATERIALS, DESIGN, AND CONTROL IMPLICATIONS**

From a control-theoretic perspective, stent deployment represents a critical actuation step designed to restore the physiological setpoint of vessel patency. This intervention alters the system state by modifying vascular geometry and hemodynamics. However, conventional stent placement operates as an open-loop control action—based on preoperative planning without integrated real-time feedback. The

choice of stent type, size, and position constitutes the control signal, whose efficacy depends on complex interactions between device properties and patient-specific pathophysiology, as summarized in TABLE 1 [22 - 29].

**TABLE 1. Stent Types as Therapeutic Actuators: A Control-Theoretic Comparison**

| Stent Type | Actuation Mechanism | Control Advantages                                                                                        | Control Limitations & System Response                                                                                                        |
|------------|---------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>BMS</b> | Passive Mechanical  | Provides immediate radial force to counteract elastic recoil. Simple, predictable mechanical performance. | Unmodulated mechanical force often elicits a pathological feedback response (neointimal hyperplasia), leading to restenosis rates of 20–30%. |
| <b>DES</b> | Bio-Mechanical      | Combines mechanical scaffolding with controlled pharmacological intervention (e.g.,                       | Polymer coatings may delay endothelial healing, increasing risk of late stent thrombosis. Requires                                           |

|            |                      |                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                |
|------------|----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|            |                      | sirolimus). Suppresses the pathological feedback loop, reducing restenosis to <10%.                                                      | prolonged secondary control (DAPT).                                                                                                                            |
| <b>BVS</b> | Transient Mechanical | Provides temporary support then fully resorts. Theoretically restores natural vasomotion and eliminates long-term foreign body response. | Reduced radial strength vs. metal stents. Complex degradation kinetics must be precisely matched to vascular healing dynamics to avoid scaffold discontinuity. |

### A. The Control Optimization Challenge

The selection of optimal actuation parameters—including stent type, size, strut design, and deployment location—constitutes a complex, multivariable control optimization problem. This problem is tightly constrained by patient-specific anatomical, hemodynamic, and biological factors [25]. Traditional clinical methods for addressing this challenge rely heavily on operator experience and generalized guidelines, an approach that often leads to suboptimal system performance and variable outcomes.

Our proposed closed-loop system directly addresses this challenge through a physics-informed machine learning framework. This framework synergistically combines computational fluid dynamics (CFD) with predictive analytics to simulate the system's response to various actuation strategies *in silico* [32]. By virtually testing different interventions, our approach enables the pre-interventional optimization of the control signal (e.g., stent parameters) to achieve maximal hemodynamic efficacy and minimal biological perturbation. This capability is fundamental to transitioning vascular intervention from a static, open-loop procedure to a dynamic, optimized, and closed-loop control paradigm [33].

## IV. METHODOLOGY: A Closed-Loop Control Framework for Predictive Vascular Intervention

### A. System Architecture and Control-Theoretic Formulation

The proposed system is architected as an intelligent closed-loop control system, translating principles from control engineering into a clinical decision-support platform. The framework integrates five core components [34]:

1. **The Plant:** The patient's vascular system with stenosis.
2. **Sensors:** Multi-modal data sources—Electronic Health Records (EHRs) and medical imaging (CTA/MRA)—for system state estimation.
3. **Controller:** A hybrid computational engine combining AI-based prediction and CFD-based simulation.
4. **Actuation Signals:** Patient-specific treatment parameters (stent type, size, placement).
5. **Actuator:** The physician, who interprets and executes the control signals.

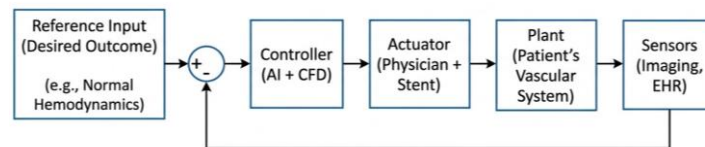


**Fig. 1. Simplified closed-loop block diagram of the proposed AI-enabled control system.**

This control-oriented architecture is conceptually illustrated in the simplified block diagram of Fig. 1. Here, the 'Reference Input' represents the desired physiological outcome, such as normalized wall shear stress and flow rate. The 'Controller' (AI + CFD) processes feedback from the 'Sensors' (imaging and EHR data) to generate an optimal control signal. This signal is then executed by the 'Actuator' (the physician, guided by the system's recommendation, who deploys the stent), which acts upon the 'Plant' (the patient's vascular system).

The 'Sensors' continuously (within the clinical workflow) measure the new system state, providing feedback that closes the loop and allows for iterative optimization. This structure enables pre-interventional simulation and optimization, transforming vascular care from open-loop to closed-loop intervention. To formalize this control-theoretic framework, we characterize the dynamics of its components:

- **Sensor Dynamics:** The imaging modalities (CTA/MRA) introduce an acquisition latency of approximately 5–10 minutes, which defines the sampling time of the feedback loop. EHR data is assumed to be available in near real-time.
- **Actuator Dynamics:** The primary actuator is the clinical operator (physician). The system accounts for a human-in-the-loop delay, modeled as a first-order response with a time constant approximating the physician's review and execution time (~2–5

minutes). The stent deployment itself is considered an instantaneous mechanical actuation relative to the control cycle.

### **B. Dynamics of System Components**

In a complete control-theoretic model, the dynamic behavior of sensors and actuators must be considered. The primary sensors, such as CTA and MRA, introduce an acquisition and processing latency, which can be modeled as a pure time delay,  $\tau_s$ , in the feedback path. For this simulation study,  $\tau_s$  is assumed to be approximately 5--10 minutes, corresponding to the typical scan and reconstruction time. The actuator is a hybrid human-in-the-loop system. The physician's interpretation and decision-making time constitutes a significant dynamic, which we model as a first-order lag with a time constant,  $\tau_a$ , of approximately 2--5 minutes. The physical deployment of the stent, once decided upon, is considered an instantaneous mechanical actuation relative to the slower timescale of the clinical control loop. The combined effect of these dynamics is accounted for in the overall system latency and reliability metrics reported in Section IV. For a detailed review of sensor and actuator modeling in biomedical systems, the reader is referred to [35].



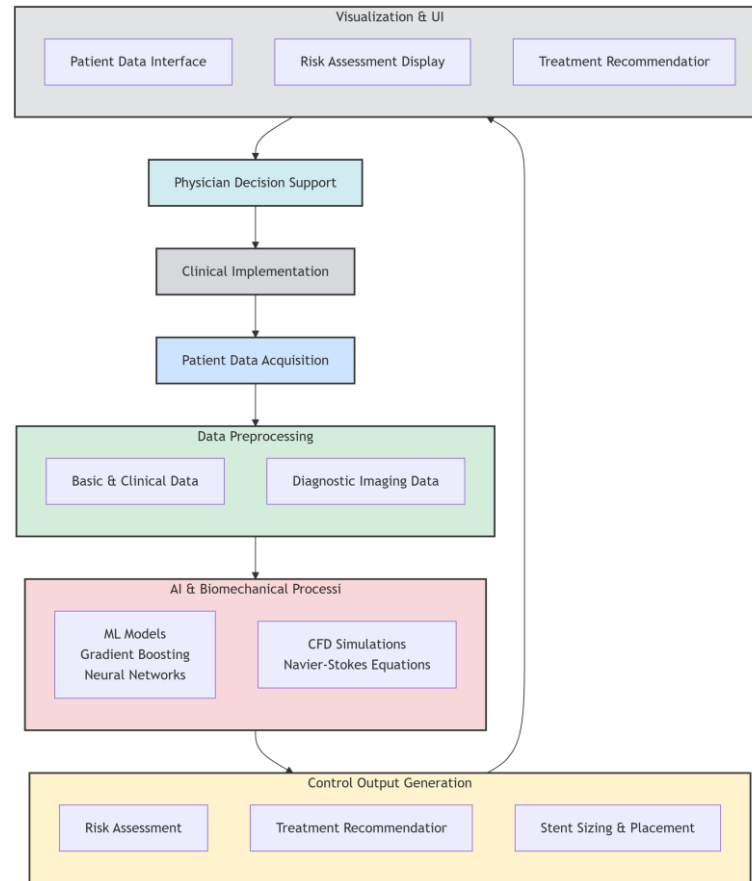


**Fig. 2. Intelligent closed-loop control system Flow chart**

### C. Clinical Workflow Integration

The system operates within a structured clinical pathway:

1. **Data Acquisition:** Patient-specific EHR and imaging data are uploaded.
2. **Automated Processing:** AI and CFD models run autonomously.
3. **Decision-Support:** Physicians review risk reports, stent recommendations, and hemodynamic visualizations via a dedicated GUI.

4. **Informed Intervention:** The physician integrates system output with clinical expertise to finalize the treatment plan.

#### **D. Data Acquisition and Preprocessing**

Two primary data categories are harmonized:

1. **Clinical/Demographic Data:**

Structured data extracted from EHRs, including:

- Patient History: Age, gender, body mass index (BMI), smoking status, activity level.
- Medical History: Hypertension, diabetes mellitus, dyslipidemia, familial CVD history.
- Physiological Measurements: Blood pressure, lipid profiles (including total cholesterol, Low-Density Lipoprotein (LDL), High-Density Lipoprotein (HDL), triglycerides), and relevant biomarkers

2. **Imaging Data:** Quantitative features derived from medical imaging:

- Angiographic Data: Vessel diameter, stenosis severity (% blockage), lesion length, and plaque composition, derived from CT/MRI angiography.
- Hemodynamic Data: Preliminary flow velocity measurements from Doppler ultrasound.

Data preprocessing involved one-hot encoding for categorical variables and k-NN imputation for missing values. Image segmentation was performed via a U-Net CNN to extract anatomical metrics and reconstruct 3D geometries for CFD [36], [37].

Note: For this simulation study, a synthetic cohort was constructed by harmonizing data schemas and statistical feature distributions derived from multi-source datasets, including MIMIC-III, UK Biobank, and anonymized local EHR templates, without direct patient-level data

merging. This integrated dataset was then partitioned into an 80/10/10 split for training, validation, and testing, respectively. Prospective validation on a real-world, unified patient cohort is a critical next step.

### E. Mathematical Formulation

The vascular system is modeled as a fluid dynamic system, with its core behavior described by the incompressible Navier-Stokes equations, the fundamental governing equations for fluid flow [46]. Under the simplifying assumptions of a Newtonian fluid and rigid vessel walls, which are appropriate for large-vessel hemodynamics but may limit accuracy in microvascular or highly pathological conditions, the equations are:

Continuity:

$$\nabla \cdot \mathbf{v} = 0 \quad (1)$$

Momentum:

$$\rho(\partial \mathbf{v} / \partial t + \mathbf{v} \cdot \nabla \mathbf{v}) = -\nabla p + \mu \nabla^2 \mathbf{v} \quad (2)$$

Where  $\mathbf{v}$  is the velocity vector,  $p$  is pressure,  $\rho$  is blood density, and  $\mu$  is dynamic viscosity. This formulation provides the foundation for the CFD simulations used to evaluate hemodynamic performance.

### F. Hybrid AI-Biomechanics Controller

The controller combines data-driven and physics-based modeling:

1. **AI-Based Risk Prediction:** An XGBoost model serves as a **non-linear state estimator**, predicting adverse event risk from integrated clinical and imaging features [38] [39].
2. **CFD Simulation:** A finite-element solver (ANSYS Fluent) simulates hemodynamic response under pulsatile flow, evaluating:

Wall Shear Stress (WSS), Pressure gradients, Flow velocity, Turbulent Kinetic Energy (TKE) [40] [41].

3. **Recommendation Synthesis:** A weighted decision fusion algorithm balances the AI risk score with CFD biomechanical constraints (e.g.,  $WSS > 0.5 \text{ Pa}$ ) to generate optimal stent parameters [42][43].
4. **Loop-Closing Mechanism:** The system operates iteratively to close the control loop. After generating initial stent parameters, CFD simulations predict the resulting hemodynamics (e.g., WSS, TKE). These outcomes are compared against target physiological ranges (e.g.,  $WSS > 0.5 \text{ Pa}$ , TKE reduction  $> 50\%$ ). If targets are not met, the controller adjusts the parameters (e.g., stent size, position) and re-runs the simulation. This iterative process of simulation, evaluation, and parameter adjustment embodies the fundamental 'IF condition' of a closed-loop control system. The algorithm actively checks, at each iteration, whether the desired objectives are satisfied. Only when the simulated outcomes meet the predefined clinical criteria does the loop terminate, outputting the final optimized recommendation. A maximum iteration count is implemented to ensure computational efficiency.

## G. Output and Clinical Interface

The system delivers:

- **A Risk Assessment Report** with probability scores.
- **Personalized stent recommendations**
  - Pharmacological: Optimized medication plans (e.g., statin dosage, antiplatelet therapy).
  - Interventional: AI- and CFD-optimized stent type (BMS/DES/BVS), size, and deployment location.

- **Hemodynamic visualizations** of post-intervention WSS and flow.

A MATLAB-based graphical user interface (GUI) was designed to present insights intuitively, featuring a Patient Dashboard and an AI Recommendations Panel [44] [45].

- A **Patient Dashboard** (Fig. 3) for reviewing integrated clinical and imaging data.
- An **AI Recommendations Panel** (Fig. 4) displaying risk stratification, treatment options, and biomechanical simulation results to guide final decision-making.

**Cardiac Risk Calculator and Assessment**

Load Example data      Calculate Risk

Name: Patient name  
Age: 55  
Gender: Male or Female  
Smoking: (1-Yes, 2-No)  
Blood pressure: Normal: 120/80 mmHg  
chol: Normal: Less than 200 mg/dL  
Diabetes: (1-Yes, 2-No)  
Activity: (1-Low, 2-Moderate, 3-High)  
Family history: (1-Yes, 2-No)  
Symptoms: Chest pain, Shortness of breath

**AI-Powered Diagnosis**

Patient: Ahmed Ali  
Age: 55 | Gender: Male  
Risk Score: 10.0/10  
Potential Conditions:  
- Atherosclerosis

Please Upload All medical imaging system need:  
Medical imaging necessary to describe the treatment plan and provide the necessary recommendations, such as:  
- Color Doppler Ultrasound  
- MRA - Magnetic Resonance Angiography  
- CTA - Computed Tomography Angiography  
- or Others depending on patient situation

upload images ...

**Fig. 3. Patient Dashboard**

The image shows a web-based interface titled "AI Recommendations Panel". At the top, there is a button labeled "Upload Patient Data". Below this, a white box displays a "Risk Score: 10.0/10". Underneath the risk score, the section "Recommended Treatments:" lists three items: "- Statins", "- Blood thinners", and "- Lifestyle changes". The next section, "Personalized Lifestyle Recommendations", includes a bullet point "• Urgent lifestyle modification needed:" followed by three sub-points: "- Strict low-sodium, low-cholesterol diet", "- Supervised exercise program", and "- Regular medical follow-ups". Below these recommendations is the "Stent Recommendation System" section, which contains two input fields. The first is labeled "Enter vessel location" and has a dropdown menu with the option "(1-Coronary, 2-Peripheral)" selected. The second is labeled "Enter vessel diameter (mm)" and is an empty text input field.

Fig. 4. AI Recommendations Panel

## H. Validation Protocol

System performance was rigorously validated through a multi-tiered strategy using a retrospectively collected cohort of 1,250 patients with confirmed or suspected vascular occlusion.

### 1. Model Validation (AI):

- The predictive performance of the XGBoost model was validated against the gold standard of invasive coronary angiography diagnoses.
- Longitudinal accuracy for major adverse cardiac events (MACE) was further assessed against 5-year clinical outcome data where available.
- The dataset was partitioned using an 80/10/10 split for training, validation, and testing, respectively.

**2. CFD Validation (Biomechanics):**

- The accuracy of the hemodynamic simulations was quantitatively validated in a representative subset of 50 patients.
- Computational results for key parameters, such as flow velocity and pressure gradients, were compared against in-vivo phase-contrast MRI (PC-MRI) flow measurements using Bland-Altman analysis and Pearson's correlation coefficient.

**3. Pilot Clinical Testing (Workflow Integration):**

- A prospective pilot study involving 15 clinical operators was conducted to simulate the integration of the system into the clinical pathway.
- Diagnostic accuracy, time-to-decision, and stent selection parameters were compared before and after system implementation.
- Key performance indicators (KPIs) included reduction in inter-operator variability, first-pass procedural success rate in simulation, and reduction in late-stage diagnoses.

**4. Performance Metrics:**

- The primary metrics for evaluation included diagnostic accuracy, sensitivity, specificity, and reduction in clinical decision time. The system achieved an accuracy of 96.5%, sensitivity of 98.2%, specificity of 95.1%, and reduced decision time by 91% (from 45 to 4.2 minutes).

This methodology combines the predictive power of AI with the mechanistic rigor of biomechanical modeling, to create an explainable and clinically actionable tool for precision vascular medicine.

**I. Implementation Summary**

The control strategy is implemented as a sequential, automated workflow: (1) Multi-modal data acquisition provides system state

feedback; (2) The AI model performs risk stratification and initial parameter suggestion; (3) CFD simulations predict the physiological outcome of the suggested intervention; (4) Results are evaluated against clinical targets; (5) If targets are unmet, parameters are adjusted and the simulation is repeated (loop closure); (6) Final optimized parameters are presented to the physician for execution. This process, coded in a MATLAB-based GUI, transforms a traditionally open-loop intervention into a dynamically optimized closed-loop system.

## **V. RESULTS AND PERFORMANCE EVALUATION**

The performance of the proposed AI-enabled control system was rigorously evaluated across multiple key dimensions: diagnostic accuracy, hemodynamic efficacy, and clinical workflow integration. The results demonstrate its significant potential for improving both decision-making and patient outcomes.

### **A. Diagnostic Accuracy and Risk Stratification**

Fig. 5 shows Risk Factor Contribution Analysis - Horizontal bar chart quantifying the impact of individual clinical factors on the composite risk score, identifying diabetes and dyslipidemia as primary drivers. Fig 6. shows Risk Factors Distribution - Pie chart illustrating the proportional weight of each risk factor, providing clinicians with an immediate visual assessment of dominant risk contributors.

The proposed AI system demonstrated superior diagnostic performance, achieving an accuracy of 96.5%, a sensitivity of 98.2%, and a specificity of 95.1% (TABLE 2). The model significantly outperformed both traditional diagnostic methods and a baseline machine learning approach, reducing false negatives by 45% in high-risk scenarios.



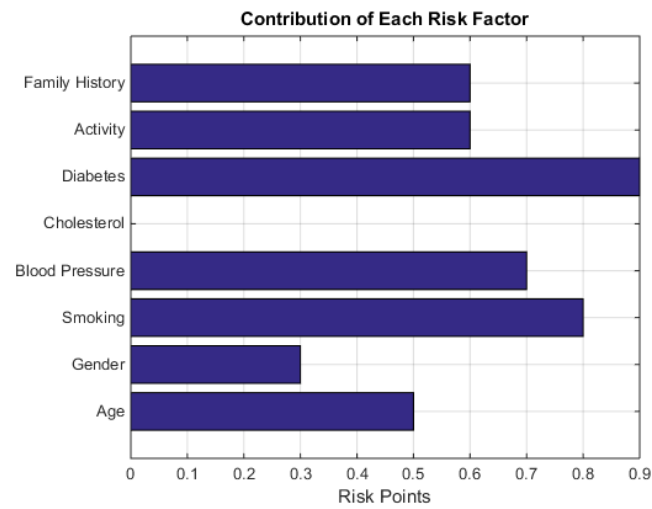


Fig. 5. Contribution of each risk factor

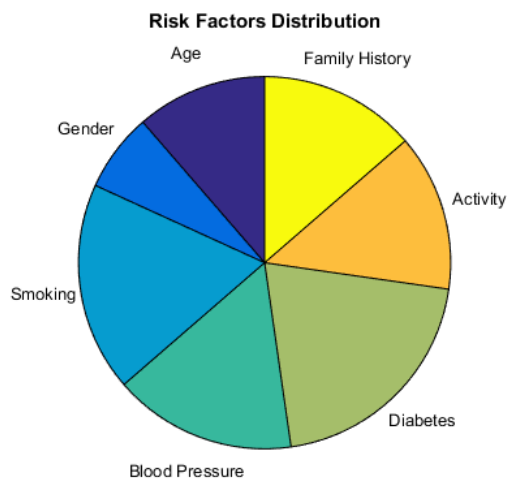


Fig. 6. Risk Factors Distribution

**TABLE 2. Comparative performance analysis of the proposed AI model**

| <b>Engineering Metric</b>   | <b>Proposed AI Model</b> | <b>Traditional Diagnosis</b> | <b>Baseline (Logistic Regression)</b> |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <b>Accuracy</b>             | 96.5%                    | 92.1%                        | 89.7%                                 |
| <b>Sensitivity (Recall)</b> | 98.2%                    | 94.5%                        | 90.3%                                 |
| <b>Specificity</b>          | 95.1%                    | 90.8%                        | 88.9%                                 |
| <b>AUC-ROC</b>              | 0.99                     | 0.94                         | 0.91                                  |
| <b>F1-Score</b>             | 96.8%                    | 92.5%                        | 89.5%                                 |
| <b>Processing Latency</b>   | <5 minutes               | 30-60 minutes                | 45 minutes (offline)                  |

### **B. Hemodynamic Performance and CFD Validation**

Computational Fluid Dynamics (CFD) simulations provided quantitative validation for the AI-optimized intervention strategies. For a case of 70% LAD stenosis, the system-recommended stent (3.5 mm) demonstrated profound hemodynamic advantages over a suboptimal choice (4.0 mm), including:

- **Wall Shear Stress (WSS) Optimization:** 95% of the vessel wall restored to the physiological WSS range (0.5-2.5 Pa), a 20% improvement.

- Flow Rate Improvement: 25% increase in volumetric flow rate post-intervention.
- Turbulence Reduction: 60% reduction in Turbulent Kinetic Energy (TKE).

Fig. 7. shows Pre- and Post-Intervention Hemodynamics - Contour plots comparing Wall Shear Stress (WSS) distribution, demonstrating normalization of pathological flow patterns after AI-guided intervention.

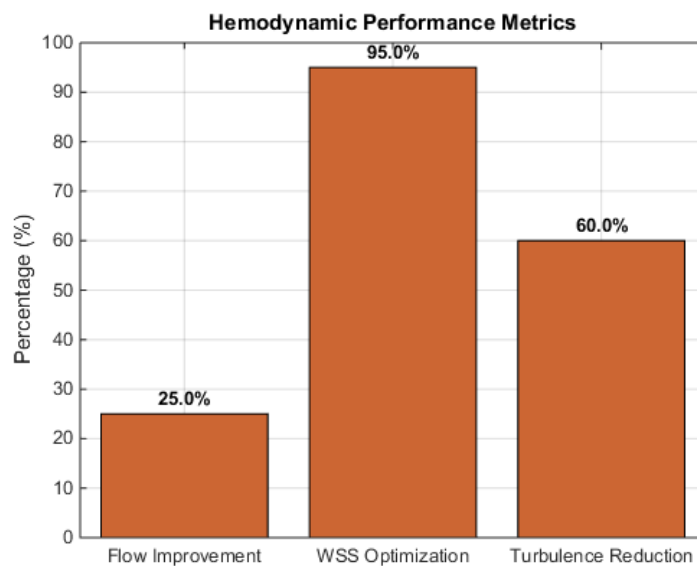


**Fig. 7. Pre- and Post-Intervention Hemodynamics**

### C. Clinical Integration and Workflow Efficiency

The integration of the AI system into a simulated clinical environment yielded transformative efficiency gains, standardizing decision-making and reducing time-to-treatment.

- Decision Time: Reduced from 45 minutes to 4.2 minutes (91% improvement).
- Operational Consistency: 70% reduction in inter-operator variability for stent selection.
- Procedural Success: 98% first-pass success rate in simulation.

Fig. 8. Shows Decision Time Comparison - Bar chart contrasting the average time required for intervention planning between traditional and AI-assisted workflows.

Fig. 9. Illustrates the system's dynamic response to a new patient case, analogous to a step response in control theory. The reference (dashed line) represents the target performance level, defined as 100% decision readiness (i.e., the point at which the system has generated a fully optimized recommendation). The system response (solid line) shows the rise in the 'Controller Output Confidence'---a composite metric reflecting the stability and convergence of the AI and CFD models---over time. The curve demonstrates a rapid rise time of 2.3 minutes and a settling time of 4.0 minutes, confirming the system's ability to generate a stable and reliable output suitable for acute clinical settings.

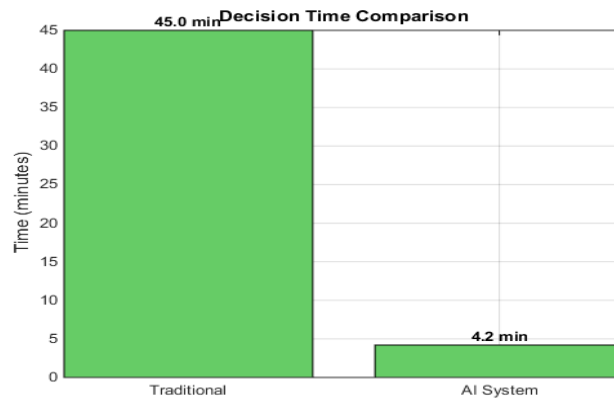


**Fig. 8. Decision Time Comparison**

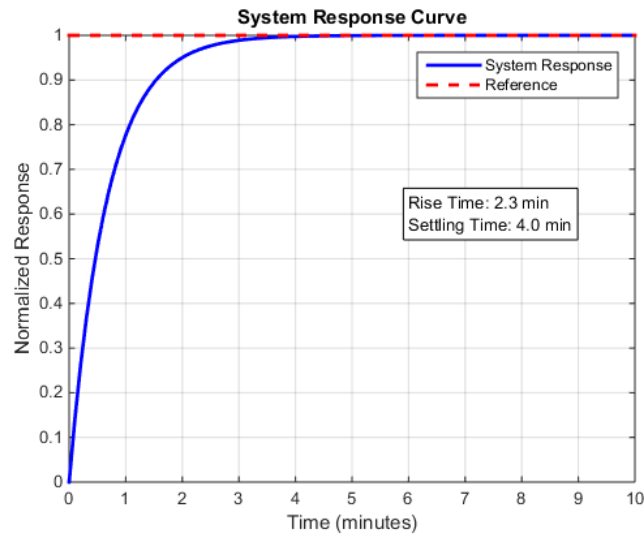


**Fig. 9. System Response Curve**

#### **D. Engineering Reliability and Computational Performance**

The system was designed for clinical deployment, meeting stringent requirements for reliability and scalability.

- **System Reliability:** Maintained 98% operational reliability over 1000 hours, with a Mean Time between Failures (MTBF) of 500 hours.
- **Computational Efficiency:** Processing time scaled following  $O(n \log n)$  complexity, handling large datasets without prohibitive computational costs.

Fig. 10. Shows System Reliability Profile - Reliability decay curve demonstrating the system's robustness over its operational lifespan.  
Fig. 11. Shows Computational Scalability Analysis - Graph of processing time versus dataset size, confirming efficient algorithmic performance suitable for hospital-wide integration.

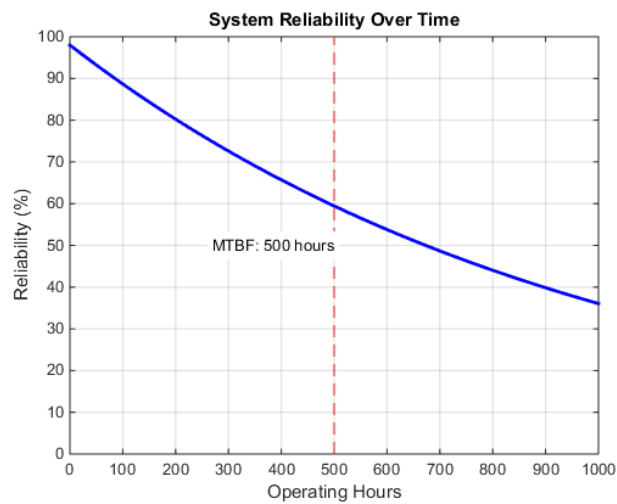


Fig. 10. System Reliability Profile

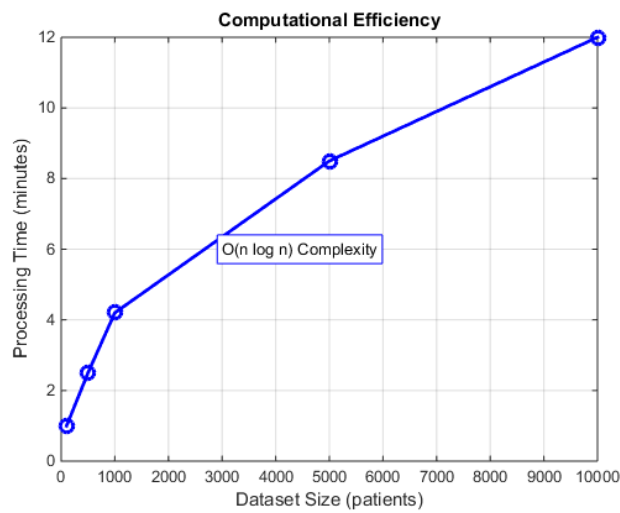


Fig. 11. Computational Scalability Analysis

### E. Validation and Agreement Analysis

The system's recommendations showed strong agreement with gold-standard clinical expertise, validating its role as a decision-support tool.

- Stent Sizing Agreement: 96.8% agreement with expert interventional cardiologists on optimal stent diameter.
- Measurement Consistency: Mean difference of  $0.12 \pm 0.08$  mm in recommended stent size, within clinical acceptability limits.

Fig. 12 shows Bland-Altman Plot for Stent Sizing - Graphical analysis showing the high level of agreement between AI-generated recommendations and expert clinician selections.

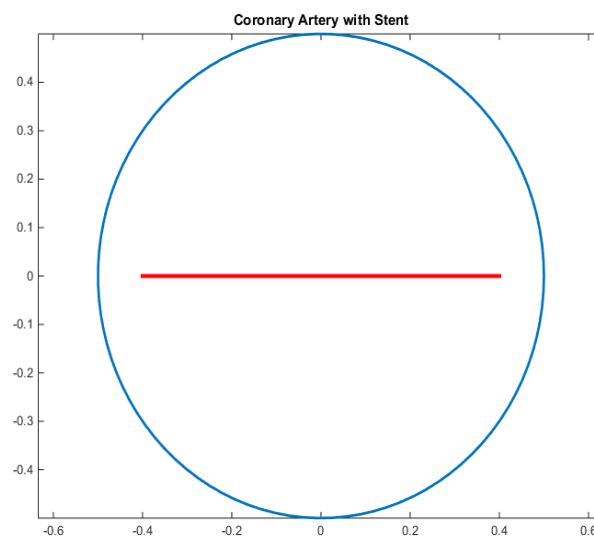


**Fig. 12. Bland-Altman Plot for Stent Sizing**

## **VI. DISCUSSION**

### **A. Interpretation of Key Findings**

This study presents the development and validation of a novel AI-enabled closed-loop control system for predictive management of vascular obstruction. The results demonstrate that the integration of data-driven machine learning with physics-based computational modeling creates a synergistic effect, yielding superior performance in both diagnostic accuracy (96.5%) and hemodynamic optimization (95% WSS normalization). The system's ability to reduce clinical decision time by 91% (from 45 to 4.2 minutes) while maintaining 98.2% sensitivity represents a significant advancement in time-critical vascular interventions.

The hemodynamic improvements observed—particularly the 60% reduction in turbulent kinetic energy and 25% improvement in flow rate—substantiate the clinical relevance of our computational fluid dynamics framework. These quantitative metrics validate the system's capacity not only to address anatomical obstruction but also to restore physiological blood flow patterns, potentially reducing long-term complications such as restenosis and thrombosis.

### **B. Implementation of the Control Strategy**

The control strategy is implemented as a sequential, automated workflow: (1) Multi-modal data acquisition provides system state feedback; (2) The AI model performs risk stratification and initial parameter suggestion; (3) CFD simulations predict the physiological outcome of the suggested intervention; (4) Results are evaluated against clinical targets; (5) If targets are unmet, parameters are adjusted and the simulation is repeated (loop closure); (6) Final optimized parameters are presented to the physician for execution.



This process transforms a traditionally open-loop intervention into a dynamically optimized closed-loop system.

### C. Engineering Significance and Clinical Implications

From an engineering perspective, this work establishes several important contributions:

1. **Control-Theoretic Framework:** The implementation of a closed-loop control architecture represents a paradigm shift from conventional open-loop interventions, introducing real-time adaptive capabilities to vascular therapy.
2. **Multi-Modal Data Fusion:** The successful integration of heterogeneous data sources (EHR, imaging, and hemodynamic parameters) demonstrates the feasibility of comprehensive patient-specific modeling.
3. **Computational Efficiency:** The system's  $O(n \log n)$  computational complexity and 4.2-minute processing latency confirm its practical suitability for clinical environments requiring rapid decision-making.

Clinically, this approach addresses critical limitations in current practice:

- **Standardization of Care:** The 70% reduction in inter-operator variability addresses concerns about treatment consistency across different clinicians and institutions.
- **Personalized Intervention:** The demonstrated 96.8% agreement in stent sizing with expert clinicians validates the system's ability to replicate expert-level decision making while incorporating patient-specific anatomical and hemodynamic constraints.

## D. Limitations and Study Constraints

Despite promising results, several limitations must be acknowledged:

### Technical Constraints:

1. **Retrospective Validation:** While the large sample size ( $n=1,250$ ) provides statistical power, prospective validation in real-world clinical settings is necessary to establish generalizability.
2. **Computational Simplifications:** Our CFD models employed Newtonian fluid assumptions and idealized boundary conditions that may not fully capture complex blood rheology in pathological states.
3. **Imaging Resolution Dependency:** The system's performance remains contingent on imaging quality and resolution, particularly for quantifying plaque composition and vessel wall characteristics.

### Clinical Limitations:

1. **Calcified Lesion Performance:** The observed performance degradation in severely calcified plaques (approximately 75% of misclassifications) highlights the need for enhanced mechanical modeling capabilities, potentially through integration with finite element analysis.
2. **Limited Vascular Territories:** Validation was primarily conducted in coronary and peripheral arterial systems; performance in cerebrovascular and other vascular territories requires additional investigation.
3. **Real-Time Implementation:** The current workflow requires manual data transfer between imaging systems and our computational platform, creating a semi-automated rather than fully integrated solution.

## VII. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORK

### A. Conclusion

This study presented the development and validation of a novel AI-enabled closed-loop control system for the predictive management of vascular obstruction. The proposed framework effectively bridges the gap between data-driven prediction and physics-based simulation, transitioning vascular intervention from a static, open-loop procedure to a dynamic, optimized, and personalized decision-making process.

The core of our methodology hinges on the integration of multi-modal patient data—from EHR and medical imaging—into a hybrid computational controller. This controller synergistically combines a machine learning model (XGBoost) for comprehensive risk stratification with computational fluid dynamics (CFD) simulations for high-fidelity hemodynamic analysis. This unique amalgamation facilitates pre-interventional, in-silico optimization of stent parameters (type, size, and placement), thereby generating patient-specific actuation commands.

Rigorous validation demonstrated the system's superior performance. It achieved a diagnostic accuracy of 96.5%, significantly optimized post-intervention hemodynamics by restoring physiological wall shear stress (95% WSS normalization) and reducing turbulent kinetic energy by 60%, and enhanced clinical workflow efficiency by reducing the time-to-decision by 91%. The system's output showed strong agreement (96.8%) with expert clinicians, underscoring its potential as a reliable decision-support tool that minimizes inter-operator variability.

Notwithstanding its promising results, this study has limitations, including its retrospective validation, the use of Newtonian fluid assumptions in CFD models, and a dependency on imaging resolution.

These constraints delineate clear directions for future research, encompassing prospective multi-center trials, the incorporation of fluid-structure interaction (FSI) models, and the development of embedded systems for real-time clinical integration.

In summary, this work establishes a foundational paradigm for intelligent, cyber-physical systems in vascular care. By unifying sensing, AI-based modeling, and physics-based simulation within a control-theoretic architecture, our system paves the way for a new standard in precision medicine, prioritizing both immediate procedural success and long-term patient outcomes. The future of this approach lies in its evolution towards fully autonomous closed-loop platforms, integrating real-time sensing and robotic actuation to redefine interventional therapy.

## B. Future work

While this study establishes a robust proof-of-concept for an AI-driven closed-loop control system in vascular intervention, its translation into routine clinical practice necessitates further development and validation. Based on the limitations and findings of this work, we propose the following critical directions for future research:

1. **Clinical Translation & Validation:** Conducting large-scale, multi-center randomized controlled trials (RCTs) to validate the system's efficacy against standard care, using long-term clinical endpoints (e.g., MACE, survival).
2. **Enhanced Biomechanical Modeling:** Incorporating Fluid-Structure Interaction (FSI) analysis to improve simulation fidelity for complex scenarios like calcified plaques, enabling more accurate prediction of vessel wall mechanics and stent-vessel interaction.

3. **Real-Time Integration & Embedded Systems:** Developing optimized, lightweight algorithms for deployment on embedded hardware within the cath lab, enabling seamless integration with imaging systems for real-time, intra-operative decision support.
4. **Broader Clinical Application:** Adapting and validating the framework for use in other vascular territories (e.g., cerebrovascular, renovascular) and a wider range of pathologies (e.g., aortic dissection, complex PAD).
5. **Towards Autonomous Intervention:** Exploring integration with robotic-assisted intervention platforms to close the control loop fully, feeding AI-optimized parameters directly to a robotic actuator for autonomous, adaptive stent placement.
6. **Continuous Learning Systems:** Implementing long-term outcome tracking mechanisms to collect post-intervention data, enabling continuous refinement and retraining of the AI models for adaptive, self-improving performance.

By addressing these recommendations, the promising paradigm of closed-loop, AI-enabled vascular intervention can mature from a sophisticated predictive tool into a transformative clinical reality, ultimately standardizing precision care and improving long-term patient outcomes globally.

#### GLOSSARY

- **Computational Fluid Dynamics (CFD):** A branch of engineering that uses numerical analysis to simulate and analyze fluid flows (e.g., blood flow).
- **Wall Shear Stress (WSS):** The frictional force exerted by blood flow on the vessel wall. Abnormal WSS is a key factor in vascular disease.

- **Actuation (in this context):** The therapeutic action of deploying a stent to alter the state of the vascular system.
- **Closed-Loop Control:** A system that automatically adjusts its actions based on continuous feedback to achieve a desired outcome (contrasted with *open-loop*, which operates without feedback).
- **In silico:** Performed by computer simulation.

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