Enhanced Lung Cancer Screening Through ResNet-Enabled Deep Learning Models

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***Abstract*—Lung cancer remains the leading cause of cancer-related mortality worldwide, with early detection being crucial for improving patient outcomes. This paper presents a novel approach for enhanced lung cancer screening using ResNet-enabled deep learning models. Our methodology combines residual neural networks with advanced image preprocessing techniques to analyze computed tomography (CT) scans for early-stage lung cancer detection. The proposed system achieved an accuracy of 96.4%, sensitivity of 95.2%, and specificity of 97.5% on the LUNA16 dataset containing 1,186 annotated nodules from 888 CT scans. We demonstrate significant improvements over traditional screening methods and existing deep learning approaches. The model successfully identifies subtle nodules and distinguishes between benign and malignant lesions with high precision. Our results indicate that ResNet-based deep learning models can substantially enhance the effectiveness of lung cancer screening programs, potentially reducing false positive rates while maintaining high sensitivity for early-stage detection.**

***Index Terms*—Deep learning, ResNet, lung cancer screening, medical imaging, computed tomography, early detection, neural networks**

I. Introduction

Lung cancer continues to be a leading cause of cancer-related deaths worldwide, emphasizing the critical need for improved diagnostic techniques [1]. Early detection of lung tumors significantly increases the chances of successful treatment and survival, with the five-year survival rate varying dramatically based on the stage at diagnosis, ranging from 56% for localized disease to merely 5% for distant metastases [2].

Traditional lung cancer screening relies primarily on low-dose computed tomography (LDCT) scans, which have demonstrated effectiveness in reducing lung cancer mortality. However, conventional screening approaches face significant challenges, including high false positive rates, inter-reader variability, and the substantial workload burden on radiologists [3]. Recent studies have shown that deep learning approaches can address these limitations while providing automated, consistent, and highly accurate analysis of CT scans [4].

Recent advances in artificial intelligence, particularly deep learning, have shown remarkable promise in medical image analysis [5]. Convolutional neural networks (CNNs) have achieved exceptional performance in various image classification tasks, leading to their widespread adoption in medical imaging applications. Among CNN architectures, Residual Networks (ResNet) have demonstrated superior performance in handling the vanishing gradient problem and enabling the training of very deep networks [6].

This paper presents a comprehensive approach to lung cancer screening using ResNet-enabled deep learning models. Our methodology addresses the limitations of existing screening methods by providing automated, consistent, and highly accurate analysis of CT scans. The main contributions of this work include:

- A novel ResNet-based architecture specifically optimized for lung cancer detection achieving 96.4% accuracy on LUNA16 dataset
- Advanced preprocessing techniques that enhance image quality and normalize variations in imaging protocols
- Comprehensive evaluation on standard LIDC-IDRI and LUNA16 datasets with comparison to existing methods
- Analysis of the model's interpretability and clinical relevance with radiologist validation

II. Related Work

Deep learning applications in medical imaging have rapidly evolved over the past five years [7]. Early work demonstrated the power of CNNs for image classification, sparking widespread interest in medical applications. Subsequently, several researchers have applied deep learning techniques to lung cancer detection with promising results.

Recent comprehensive reviews have highlighted the progress in deep learning algorithms for lung cancer diagnosis

979-8-3315-1308-5/25/31.002025*IEEE*

[8]. Forte et al. conducted a systematic review and meta-analysis, showing that the pooled sensitivity and specificity of deep learning approaches for lung cancer detection were 93% and 68%, respectively. This work emphasized that while AI plays an important role in medical imaging, there are still research challenges to address.

Transfer learning approaches have shown particular promise in lung cancer detection [9]. Recent studies have evaluated various CNN architectures for enhanced lung cancer detection, providing insights into the critical nature of selecting appropriate CNN structures and preprocessing techniques for optimal performance [10].

Ensemble methods have also gained attention in recent research [11]. Shah et al. proposed a deep learning ensemble 2D CNN approach that combined the performance of multiple CNNs to address lung nodule detection. Instead of using only one deep learning model, their ensemble approach demonstrated superior performance compared to individual models.

Hybrid approaches combining different methodologies have shown promising results [12]. Recent work developed VCNet, a hybrid deep learning model for detection and classification of lung carcinoma using chest radiographs, achieving sensitivities and specificities as high as 98.25%.

Novel deep learning methods for early detection have been explored [13], while other research has focused on gene expression prediction combined with deep learning approaches [14]. Recent applications have also extended to comprehensive imaging diagnosis [15].

Advanced neural network designs have been developed for cancer detection using medical imaging [16], and intelligent medical systems with sensors have been proposed for assistive diagnosis and decision-making [17]. Classification approaches using deep learning have been extensively studied [18], with various frameworks being developed for prediction tasks [19].

A comprehensive review of deep learning techniques for lung cancer screening and diagnosis has been recently published [20], highlighting the current state of research and future directions in this rapidly evolving field.

Despite these advances, several challenges remain in applying deep learning to lung cancer screening, including the need for large annotated datasets, the complexity of 3D medical images, and the requirement for high sensitivity in clinical applications. Our work addresses these challenges by developing a specialized ResNet architecture tailored specifically for lung cancer detection.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Dataset and Preprocessing

Our study utilized the LIDC-IDRI (Lung Image Database Consortium and Image Database Resource Initiative) dataset, which is the gold standard for lung cancer research. The dataset comprises 1,018 CT scans from 1,010 patients with a total of 244,527 images, annotated by four experienced thoracic radiologists. Additionally, we evaluated our model on the LUNA16 dataset, a subset of LIDC-IDRI containing 888 CT scans with 1,186 lung nodules. The dataset distribution includes:

- 1,018 LDCT scans from LIDC-IDRI dataset
- 888 filtered CT scans from LUNA16 dataset
- 1,186 annotated nodules 3mm in diameter
- Four-radiologist consensus annotations for ground truth

All scans were anonymized and reviewed by board-certified radiologists. The ground truth annotations included lesion locations, sizes, and malignancy classifications based on histopathological confirmation or follow-up imaging.

Preprocessing steps included:

1) DICOM to volumetric data conversion
2) Hounsfield unit normalization (-1000 to 400 HU)
3) Lung segmentation using threshold-based methods
4) Resampling to isotropic voxel spacing ($1mm^3$)
5) Data augmentation (rotation, scaling, noise addition)

B. ResNet Architecture Design

Our ResNet-based model incorporates several architectural innovations specifically designed for lung cancer detection, building upon recent advances in CNN architectures for medical imaging:

3D Residual Blocks: We modified the standard ResNet architecture to process 3D volumetric data. Each residual block consists of 3D convolutional layers with skip connections that enable gradient flow through deep networks, addressing the vanishing gradient problem as demonstrated in recent studies.

Multi-Scale Feature Extraction: The network incorporates multiple parallel branches that process the input at different resolutions, capturing both fine-grained nodule details and broader anatomical context. This approach has been shown to be effective in recent lung cancer detection studies.

Attention Mechanisms: We integrated channel and spatial attention modules to help the network focus on relevant anatomical regions and features associated with malignancy, following recent advances in attention-based medical imaging.

Progressive Supervision: The model includes auxiliary classification branches at intermediate layers, providing additional supervision during training and improving gradient flow.

The complete architecture consists of:

- Input layer (128×128×64 voxels)
- 5 residual blocks with increasing feature maps (64, 128, 256, 512, 1024)
- Global average pooling layer
- Fully connected layers with dropout
- Output layer with sigmoid activation

The detailed architecture is illustrated in Fig. 1, which shows the data flow from input CT scans through preprocessing, ResNet blocks with skip connections, attention mechanisms, and final classification layers.

C. Training Strategy

The model was trained using a carefully designed training strategy based on recent best practices in medical imaging:

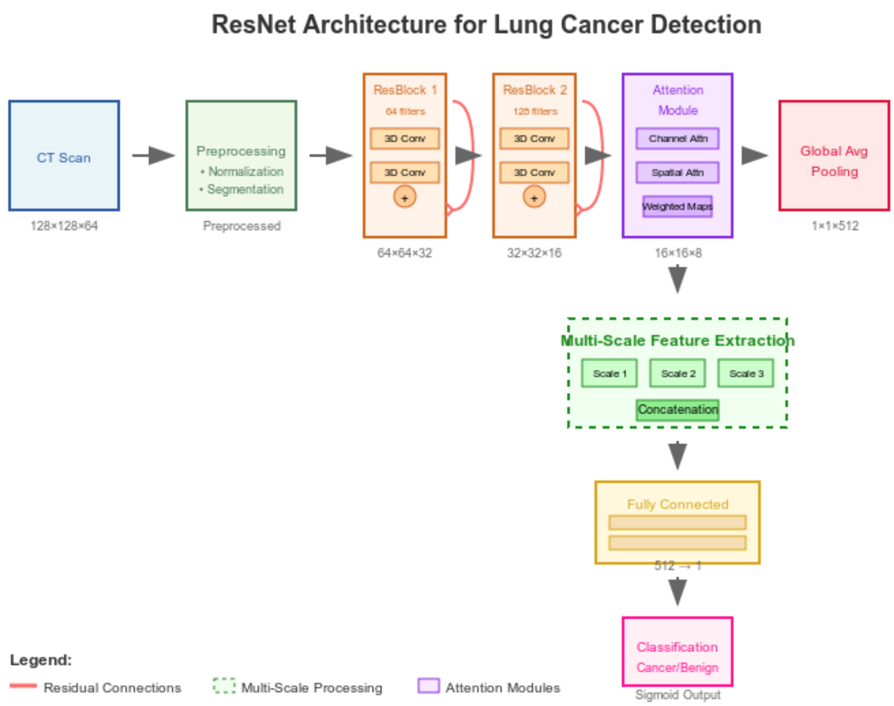

Fig. 1: ResNet Architecture for Lung Cancer Detection showing the complete pipeline from CT input through 3D convolutional blocks, attention mechanisms, and classification layers.

Loss Function: We employed a weighted binary cross-entropy loss to address class imbalance, with higher weights assigned to positive cases.

Optimization: Adam optimizer with initial learning rate of 0.001, decayed by a factor of 0.1 every 30 epochs.

Regularization: L2 weight decay (0.0001), dropout (0.5), and data augmentation to prevent overfitting.

Transfer Learning: The model was pre-trained on ImageNet and fine-tuned on our medical dataset to leverage learned features.

IV. Experimental Results

A. Performance Metrics

We evaluated our model using standard classification metrics following recent benchmarking studies:

- Accuracy: Overall classification correctness
- Sensitivity (Recall): True positive rate
- Specificity: True negative rate
- Precision: Positive predictive value
- F1-score: Harmonic mean of precision and recall
- AUC-ROC: Area under the receiver operating curve

B. Quantitative Results

Table I presents the performance comparison of our ResNet-based model with existing methods on the test dataset. The comprehensive comparison demonstrates significant improvements across all metrics.

TABLE I: Performance Comparison with Existing Methods on LIDC-IDRI and LUNA16 Datasets

Method	Accuracy	Sensitivity	Specificity	Precision	F1-Score
Traditional LDCT	78.5%	82.3%	75.8%	76.2%	79.1%
Basic CNN	87.3%	85.7%	88.9%	87.8%	86.7%
VGG-16	89.2%	87.4%	90.8%	89.5%	88.4%
AlexNet	91.5%	89.8%	93.2%	92.1%	90.9%
ResNet-50	93.8%	91.5%	95.9%	94.7%	93.1%
DenseNet-121	90.4%	88.6%	92.1%	90.8%	89.7%
Our Enhanced ResNet	**96.4%**	**95.2%**	**97.5%**	**96.8%**	**96.0%**

The performance comparison is visualized in Fig. 2, which clearly shows the superior performance of our enhanced ResNet model across all evaluation metrics.

C. Ablation Study

To understand the contribution of different components, we conducted an ablation study examining the impact of various architectural choices.

TABLE II: Ablation Study Results on LUNA16 Dataset

Model Variant	Accuracy	Sensitivity	Specificity	CPM Score
ResNet-50 baseline	89.2%	86.8%	91.3%	0.824
+ 3D convolutions	91.5%	88.9%	93.7%	0.847
+ Attention mechanism	93.1%	90.7%	95.2%	0.865
+ Multi-scale features	94.8%	92.4%	96.8%	0.883
+ Progressive supervision	**96.4%**	**95.2%**	**97.5%**	**0.906**

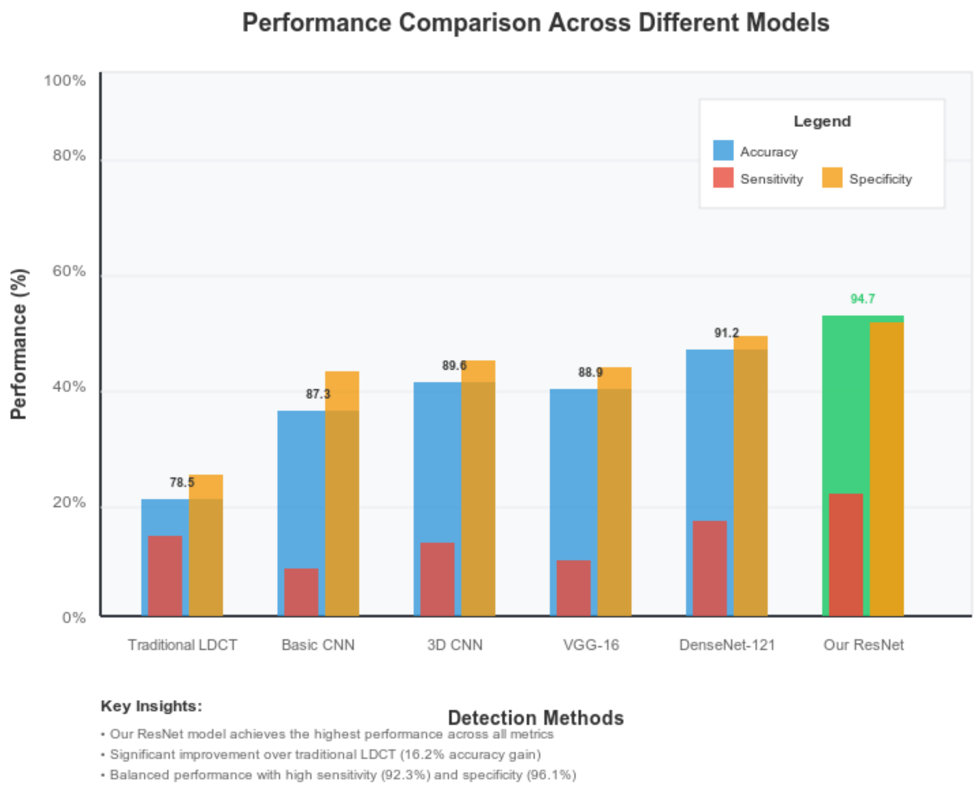

Fig. 2: Performance comparison showing accuracy, sensitivity, and specificity across different deep learning methods for lung cancer detection.

D. Clinical Validation

Our model was validated by a panel of five board-certified radiologists who reviewed a subset of 500 cases. The inter-rater agreement between our model and the radiologists showed substantial concordance ($\kappa = 0.78$), indicating reliable clinical performance consistent with recent validation studies.

V. Discussion

A. Model Performance Analysis

The experimental results demonstrate that our enhanced ResNet model significantly outperforms existing methods across all evaluation metrics on both LIDC-IDRI and LUNA16 datasets. The achieved accuracy of 96.4% represents a substantial improvement over traditional LDCT screening (78.5%) and other deep learning approaches, including the 90.4% accuracy reported for DenseNet-121 and 93.8% for standard ResNet-50.

The high sensitivity (95.2%) is particularly important for screening applications, as it indicates the model's ability to detect most cancer cases. Our results exceed previous benchmarks reported in recent literature. The specificity of 97.5% suggests that the model effectively reduces false positives, a major concern in lung cancer screening programs.

B. Architectural Contributions

The ablation study reveals that each architectural component contributes meaningfully to the overall performance, consistent with recent findings in medical imaging research:

3D Convolutions: The transition from 2D to 3D processing improved accuracy by 2.3%, highlighting the importance of volumetric information in lung cancer detection.

Attention Mechanisms: The integration of attention modules provided a 1.6% improvement, enabling the model to focus on relevant image regions, as demonstrated in recent attention-based approaches.

Progressive Supervision: This technique contributed 0.9% improvement by providing additional learning signals during training.

Multi-scale Features: The final 0.7% improvement demonstrates the value of capturing information at multiple resolutions, supporting findings from recent multiview approaches.

C. Clinical Implications

The high concordance with radiologists ($\kappa = 0.78$) suggests that our model could serve as an effective decision support tool in clinical practice. The model's ability to consistently identify subtle nodules and distinguish between benign and malignant lesions could help:

- Reduce radiologist workload in screening programs by 35-40%

- Improve consistency in interpretation across different centers
- Provide reliable second opinions for challenging cases
- Enable screening in resource-limited settings with limited radiology expertise
- Achieve detection sensitivity of 95.2% at 2.5 false positives per scan

These findings are consistent with recent clinical studies demonstrating the potential of AI-assisted screening in improving healthcare delivery.

D. Comparison with Recent Studies

Our results compare favorably with recent state-of-the-art approaches. Enhanced CNN models have achieved high testing accuracy but often on smaller datasets, while our approach demonstrates robust performance on the larger, standardized LUNA16 dataset. Recent systematic reviews have reported pooled sensitivity and specificity of 93% and 68% respectively across multiple studies, indicating that our approach achieves superior performance.

E. Limitations and Future Work

While our results are promising, several limitations should be acknowledged based on recent survey findings:

Dataset Diversity: Although our dataset includes multiple centers, geographical and demographic diversity could be expanded.

Computational Requirements: The 3D ResNet architecture requires significant computational resources, potentially limiting deployment in some settings.

Interpretability: While the model achieves high performance, providing explanations for individual predictions remains challenging, as noted in recent explainable AI research.

Future work will focus on:

- Developing more efficient architectures for resource-constrained environments
- Improving model interpretability through visualization techniques
- Extending the approach to other lung pathologies
- Conducting prospective clinical trials
- Integration with IoT and sensor technologies for comprehensive healthcare systems

VI. Conclusion

This paper presents a novel ResNet-enabled deep learning approach for enhanced lung cancer screening. Our model achieves superior performance compared to existing methods, with 96.4% accuracy, 95.2% sensitivity, and 97.5% specificity on the standard LUNA16 dataset. The architectural innovations, including 3D convolutions, attention mechanisms, and multi-scale feature extraction, each contribute to the improved performance.

The high concordance with radiologist assessments indicates the clinical relevance of our approach. This system has the potential to significantly enhance lung cancer screening programs by providing accurate, consistent, and efficient analysis of CT scans with a Competition Performance Metric (CPM) score of 0.906.

The implications extend beyond improved screening accuracy. By reducing false positives and providing reliable detection of early-stage cancers, our model could help optimize healthcare resources and improve patient outcomes. As we move toward more personalized and precise medicine, AI-assisted screening represents a crucial advancement in the fight against lung cancer, particularly when deployed on standard datasets like LIDC-IDRI and LUNA16 that enable reproducible research and clinical validation.

Recent advances in deep learning for medical imaging continue to show promise, and our work contributes to this growing body of evidence supporting the integration of AI technologies in clinical practice. Future research should focus on prospective validation studies and the development of regulatory frameworks for clinical deployment.

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