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Smart-sensors-based Medicine Identification System

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Medication errors have long accounted for the majority of medical errors. The most significant cause of medication errors is human factors. Medical staff may give the wrong medicine during the medicine distribution process. In this paper, we discuss a medicine identification system to replace medical personnel dispensing medicine. In the medicine identification system, we classify and identify medicine on the basis of shape, color, and imprint data sets. In addition, we transplanted the medicine recognition hardware mechanism to the mobile nursing work vehicle so that medical staff can save time in distributing medicines at designated locations. The medicine identification results showed that the identification rate of various medicine types is markably high, and the probability of medicine identification errors is reduced to 34%.

1. Introduction

Medication errors are one of the leading causes of patient harm in healthcare systems worldwide.⁽¹⁾ The main reason is that medical treatment requires many steps between the doctor writing a prescription and the patient taking the medicine, such as the doctor writing the prescription, the pharmacist dispensing and giving the medicine to the patient, and the patient taking the medicine according to the instructions. (2)

Medical staff deliver medicine to patients in a hospital. According to the hospital's standard medicine delivery process, medical staff must first check the types and quantities of medicines before delivery. After confirming they are correct, the medical staff must deliver them to the patients and confirm in person that they are taking them. The process of medical staff counting medicine is very cumbersome and time-consuming. Although each medicine has already been confirmed after the pharmacist dispenses it, the

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medical staff still must recheck it. The inspection items include the color, appearance, and whether the front and back of the drug match the prescription. The characteristics of the medicines are recorded in the system, and finally, the medical staff distribute the drugs to the ward for the patients to take. If an error occurs in one of these steps, the patient may be seriously injured or even die. In addition, medical staff are required to identify the medicine under heavy workload and may give the wrong medicine owing to environmental and human factors. Therefore, it is essential to introduce an automatic medicine recognition mechanism, establish a safe medical environment, and reduce the error rate of medicine use.

The information system MedGuard is used to solve the problem of medication errors.(3) The system automatically summarizes erroneous data. MedGuard provides two modes. The first one is to detect a problem immediately when the doctor delivers the prescription. Once the prescription has a problem, it can immediately send back the most appropriate diagnosis and medication combination recommendations. The other is an offline regular medication safety analysis and tracking report, which provides a multi-dimensional analysis of major medicine safety events, most commonly prescribed wrong medicines, costs, and medication error analysis in each department. This application is aimed at doctors' preventive measures when writing prescriptions to prevent doctors from using the wrong medicines for treatment and to implement the method of prescribing the right medication. However, the previous precautionary steps are ineffective if the pharmacist dispenses the wrong medicine even though the correct medication has been prescribed.

The medicine dispensing system solves the problem of the human resources required for upstream drug procurement,⁽⁴⁾ midstream medicine classification and storage, and downstream drug dispensing and delivery. This system stores one medication in a cabinet. If multiple medications are stored in one cabinet, it is easy to make a mistake when picking up the medication, so only one medication should be stored in each medicine cabinet. After the doctor writes the prescription, it is confirmed by the pharmacist's remote computer. The nurse only needs to scan the identification card and fingerprint, and the medicine cabinet can provide the medicines needed for the patient's treatment in order. The medicine cabinet will only open a medicine compartment to avoid getting the wrong medicine. However, pharmacists may make mistakes when preparing medications. This is because this application places one medicine in one medicine compartment, and medical staff skip dispensing and confirming the medications again.

Traditionally, pharmacists prescribe medications for patients according to the prescription, and then medical staff have to double-check the medications for errors before delivering them to the patients. This is time-consuming and error-prone. Moreover, most related artificial intelligence (AI) medication recognition system research nowadays uses a server as the model training environment, so the medical staff have to check whether the medications are correct before delivering them to the patients at the fixed point. Therefore, we use sensors such as Raspberry Pi 4 Model B, Jetson Nano, IMX219, and Raspberry Pi display to build the AI medication recognition mechanism. In addition, we have integrated the AI medication recognition mechanism into the mobile nursing work vehicle, so that medical staff do not have to confirm the medications at the fixed point. Instead, the mobile nursing work vehicle can identify the medication while it is moving, which reduces the time medical staff spend checking whether the medication is incorrect. In addition, our medicine data format adopts Fast Health Interoperability Resources (FHIR), which can significantly enhance the interoperability of medical data related to medical institutions, medical records, hospitalization, and referral records.

2. Related Work

Heo *et al.* proposed a set of novel coordinate encoding techniques in 2023.⁽⁵⁾ They imported a language model to identify medicines through imprint detection, feature recognition, and imprint correction to identify the database's medicine features and similarity scores. The results showed that the accuracy of the identification of the medicine reached 85.6%.

In 2020, Ou *et al.* proposed an enhanced feature pyramid network for medicine positioning and identification among 612 drugs, and its recognition rate among the top 5 was as high as 94.7%.(6)

In addition, regarding medicine imprint recognition, Yu *et al.* increased the notch width and added loopy belief propagation to solve the problem of discontinuous notch strokes. Among the 2500 categories, the imprint recognition rate is as high as 97.1% .^{(7)}

Chang *et al.* proposed the ST-Med-Box system,^{(8)} which helps patients take multiple medications correctly and prevents patients from taking the wrong medications. The ST-Med-Box system can be executed on mobile devices with an Android system and is equipped with a back-end deep learning server. Currently, the ST-Med-Box system can identify eight types of medicine, with an identification accuracy of 96.6%.

In 2020, Ting *et al.* used the you only look once (YOLO) deep learning framework to identify blister-packaged medicine.⁽⁹⁾ They used the F1 score as the model performance evaluation to detect and compare images of blister-packaged medicines' front and back sides. The results showed that the positive recognition rate of blister-packaged medicines is 93.7% and the reverse recognition rate of blister-packaged medicines is 95.7%.

The AI detection models commonly used in medicine identification are RetinaNet, single shot multi-box detector (SSD), and YOLOv3. Therefore, Tan *et al.* used these three models to analyze the same medicine. YOLOv3 is much faster at detecting medicines than RetinaNet and SSD, so it is very suitable for application in hospitals. The performance of YOLOv3 in mean Average Precision (mAP) is even better than RetinaNet and SSD.⁽¹⁰⁾

In addition, some studies focus on identifying the text on the outer packaging of a medicine to determine whether the medicine is legal to use. Drug label identification through the image and text embedding model combines the connectionist text proposal network and the tesseract optical character recognition engine to evaluate the text sentence level similarity recognition of the medicine outer packaging.⁽¹¹⁾ The recognition results are improved in terms of recall and precision. The 34% improvement effect further proves that the recognition rate of medicine can be considerably improved through text recognition on the medicine's outer packaging without opening the packaging.

Using smartphones for drug identification, Zeng *et al.* proposed the MobileDeepPill system in 2017 to identify medicines.⁽¹²⁾ With the deep learning compression framework based on knowledge distillation, the size of the convolutional neural network model can be significantly reduced without reducing the recognition performance. Therefore, users only need to use their smartphone to take a photo of the medicine, and the medicine information will be displayed.

Chang *et al.* proposed the MedGlasses system.⁽¹³⁾ This system combines smart glasses with an AI medicine recognition box to help the visually impaired improve the safety of the medication. When the visually impaired take medication, the medicine can be immediately recognized, and the sound of the medicine name and medication instructions will be played. The medicine identification rate of the MedGlasses system is as high as 95.1%.

Kwon *et al.* improved the accuracy of medicine identification with limited training set $data.⁽¹⁴⁾$ They used various shapes and colors of drugs as training targets and added 3D amplification technology to give medicine photos a stereoscopic effect. The results were in 40 categories. The recognition rate among medicines is 94%.

3. Methods

3.1 Medicine identification system

The medicine identification system uses YOLOv8 as an object detection model for medicine identification.⁽¹⁵⁾ The medicine identification model uses one-stage identification, so it has high identification accuracy and identification speed.

We conducted medicine data set preprocessing for 319 types of medicine. We took a total of 2896 photos. Each photo was marked with a feature value. The principle of feature value marking is that there is only one principal object in a picture, and the medicine area must exceed half of the overall image area.

After the labeling is completed, the photos are divided into training, verification, and test sets, totaling three medicine data sets. Since medicines with the same efficacies will differ in appearance depending on the age of the patient taking the medicine, medical staff will first identify the patient's age when dispensing the medicine and then classify the medicine after determining the patient's age. To reduce the time medical staff spend dispensing medicine, we classify the medicine data sets during medicine preprocessing. They are divided into shape, color, and imprint data sets. The number of photos in each data set is shown in Table 1.

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Data set	Category (types)	Training set (pictures)	Validation set (pictures)	Test set (pictures)
Total medicine data set	319	1600	806	484
Shape data set				49
Color data set		120		23
Imprint data set		458	134	58

Table 1 Category and quantity of data sets.

We use different feature processing methods for medicine data sets. We use auto-orient technology to adjust the image direction automatically to avoid being unable to label features when medicine photos are reversed. Each medicine photo uses a resolution of 960 by 960. Each picture is cropped into 15–20% of the blank area, and Gaussian blur is used to give the feature values of each photo with different weights to each point.^{(16)} The closer the pixels are to the center of the photo, the higher the weight. Finally, on the basis of the weights, the center point of the photo is calculated as a weighted average.

The shape data set also uses auto-orient technology to adjust the image direction automatically. Each photo is converted into a grayscale mode, processed in grayscale, and adjusted to a resolution of 560 by 560. It is divided into a capsule, an oval tablet, a polygon, a square tablet, a tablet, and a triangle.

The color data set has high requirements for ambient light in identifying medicines. Whether the light is sufficient will affect medicine color identification. When the light is insufficient, the color of the medicine will appear less clear. In addition, if the angle of the light illuminating the medicine is not adjusted correctly, it will cause the medicine to reflect light. When the medicine reflects light, the color of the medicine will turn white, which will affect the identification of the medicine. Therefore, we use an LED in the structural design of medicine identification to illuminate the medicine evenly while reducing the shadow area and avoiding reflections caused by specific angles. The color data set uses auto-orient technology to adjust the image orientation automatically, and each photo uses a resolution of 560 by 560.

The imprint data set is divided into graphics, line, nothing, word, word-graphics, and wordline. Since the medicine imprint is not noticeable, a resolution of 640 by 640 must be used. The scratch data set uses auto-orient technology to adjust the image direction automatically.

We adopt intersection over union (IOU) for the medicine identification method, as shown in Eq. (1). Since the IOU algorithm is intersection divided by the union and the result is greater than 0.5, it is judged that the object has been successfully identified. The probability of using IOU as an object identification algorithm in the worst case is 0.49. In other words, we assume that in 100 medicine identifications, 49 identification errors may occur.

IOU =(*area of overlap*)/(*area of overlap*) =

predicted bounding box ∩ *ground – truth bounding box*

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( predicted bounding box + ground – truth bounding box ) – ( predicted bounding box \cap ground – truth bounding box ) (1)
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Therefore, we first assume that the ground-truth bounding box is *P*(*A*) and the predicted bounding box is $P(B)$. We then assume the following:

- The coordinates of the upper left corner of the predicted bounding box are (*x*1*b*, *y*1*b*) and those of the lower right corner are (*x*2*b*, *y*2*b*).
- The coordinates of the upper left corner of the ground-truth bounding box are (*x*1*a*, *y*1*a*) and those of the lower right corner are $(x2a, y2a)$.

To realize that the area of the predicted bounding box must be a subset of the ground-truth bounding box, the following conditions must be guaranteed: $x \cdot 1a \leq x \cdot 1b$, $y \cdot 1a \leq y \cdot 1b$, $x \cdot 2a \geq x \cdot 2b$, and $y2a \geq y2b$.

We find $P(A) = 1$ (which indicates that the probability of event A occurring is 1, that is, rectangle A contains rectangle B) and $P(B) \le 1$ (which indicates that the probability of event B occurring is less than or equal to 1, that is, rectangle B is contained by or equal to rectangle A). Therefore, we determined that under this formula, the area of the predicted bounding box must be within that of the ground-truth bounding box.

Since the medicine area is very small, the result of the IOU algorithm only needs to be greater than 0.5, meaning that the object identification judgment is correct. Therefore, to improve the worst case of the IOU algorithm, we set the following formula:

Area of predicted bounding box
$$
> 2/3
$$
 (Area of ground-truth bounding box). (2)

In other words, $P(B) > 2/3$ $P(A)$; therefore, $P(A \cup B) = P(A) = 1$, $P(A \cap B) = P(B)$. This algorithm allows us to determine that the area of intersection can be maximized, reducing the probability of the worst-case occurrence to 0.34.

3.2 Medicine data format design based on FHIR

To comply with health level 7 (HL7) regulations and ensure the interoperability of medicine data, the medicine database architecture of our medicine identification system is based on the FHIR medicine architecture, as shown in Fig. $1^{(17)}$

We design the resource composition of the medicine. On the basis of the resource definition of FHIR, we customize the expanded version and expand the new fields, as shown in Fig. 2. The resource includes the prescription number, medicine order code, medicine file name, current product name, scientific name of medicine, application area, pharmaceutical dosage form, pregnancy grade, medicine manufacturers, medicine color, medicine shape, medicine characteristics, and medicine imprint.

Because FHIR uses RESTful API as a data indirection method, it can be used in more web applications. In addition, when users need to query medicine data, they can directly access medicine data through HTTP, and users do not need to learn database SQL syntax to operate.

After the medicine identification system completes the identification, it will connect the medicine data to the back-end medicine database. At this time, the medical staff can open the medicine database system. The system interface is shown in Fig. 3. The medical staff can query each medicine information. In addition, when the medical staff click on the description of each medicine (blue font), the system will display the detailed medicine information, as shown in Fig. 4.

3.3 Mechanism design of medicine identification system

The medicine identification mechanism is shown in Fig. 5. The length, width, and height of the mechanism are 30, 20, and 30 cm, respectively. The mechanism material is acrylic. The internal components of the mechanism include the CPU (Raspberry Pi4) and GPU (Jetson Nano) of the medicine identification system, coupled with the wide-angle camera (IMX219) for

Fig. 1. (Color online) Medicine system format.

Fig. 2. (Color online) Format of medicine information field.

DRUG PICTURES	DRUG NAME	DOSAGE	WAY	FREOUENCY	TIME
Alinamin-F	Alinamin-F tab	1(description)	PO	TID	08:00
	Effect: Side Effect: Warning:	vitamin preparations		End Time	Prepare medicine \mathbf{V}
cm.					
Keppra sooms	Keppra 500mg tab	1(description)	PO	BID	12:00
	Effect:	spasmodic disorder, epilepsy		End Time	Prepare medicine
GRAT SUB	Side Effect:	Weakness, confusion or narcolepsy, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting			$_{\rm V}$
TELEVISION em.	Warning:				
APAPS00mmtnb	APAP 500mg tab (Fucole Paran)	1(description)	PO	OID	16:00
	Effect:	Reduce fever, relieve pain		End Time	Prepare medicine
	Side Effect:	Nausea, vomiting, loss of appetite, dizziness			\mathbf{v}
	Warning:	Do not take it with alcohol			

Fig. 3. (Color online) Medicine query system interface.

Fig. 5. (Color online) Medicine identification mechanism.

photographing drugs. To avoid insufficient lighting, we use LEDs to illuminate the medicine to prevent the system from being unable to identify the medicine. The communication between the CPU (Raspberry Pi4) and GPU (Jetson Nano) uses the driver module (IRF520). The detailed component specifications are shown in Table 2.

When a medical staff member needs to identify the medicine, after he/she puts the medicine into the drawer, the system automatically identifies it, and the identification result is shown on the display (Raspberry Pi display).

In addition, to reduce medical staff fatigue, we integrated the medicine identification system mechanism into the mobile nursing work vehicle. Figure 6 shows the work platform of the mobile nursing work vehicle. Its length is 59 cm and its width is 42 cm. The length and width of the medicine identification mechanism are 30 and 20 cm, respectively. Therefore, medical staff using a mobile nursing work vehicle can identify medicines at the same time. With this design, medical staff can save time distributing medicines at fixed points.

4. Medicine Identification Results

Each of the 319 types of medicine is different, as shown in Fig. 7. We use various colors as the basis of classifying the shapes of the medicines, and in the experimental data, we use the medicine color, shape, and imprint as the basis of identification.

Fig. 6. (Color online) Work platform.

First, we analyze the medicine's color. Figure 8 shows the original image before the system identified the color of the medicine.

When the system performs medicine identification, the identification results are as shown in Fig. 9. The system indicates each medicine's accuracy and corresponding color.

Second, we analyze the medicine's shape. Figure 10 shows the original image before the system identified the shape of the medicine.

	tablet	oval tablet	square tablet	triangle	polygon
orange	Clonazepam	Betmiga 25 PR	Mirtapine OD	Salazine	Harvoni F.C
yellow	Aldomet tablets	Betmiga 50 PR	Nicorette	Bethanechol chlorode	Forxiga
green	Stogamet	BE 52 Fucou	Haldol	Hodrin	Sinemet
blue	Ativan	129 Ditropan	Haldol	GILEAD Viread	Viagra
pink	Bromazepam	Sedenton tablets	Chlorzoxazone tablets	□ 地 Cofarin	Ventolin

Fig. 7. (Color online) Various medicines.

Fig. 8. (Color online) Colors of medicines.

Fig. 9. (Color online) Identification of medicine colors.

When the system performs medicine identification, the identification results are as shown in Fig. 11. The system indicates each medicine's accuracy and corresponding shape.

In addition, we analyze the medicine's imprint. Figure 12 shows the original image before the system identified the imprint of the medicine.

When the system performs medicine identification, the identification results are as shown in Fig. 13. The system indicates each medicine's accuracy and corresponding imprint.

We identify medicine color, shape, and imprint. The results of this color identification are shown in Table 3. We can see from Table 3 that the color recognition rate of various medicines is above 0.995, which indicates that our method of grayscale processing for each photo can produce remarkable results.

Table 4 shows the various shape recognition results of medicines. We can see that the shape recognition rate of different medicines is above 0.986. Our method of Gaussian blur processing for each photo can produce remarkable results.

The identification results of various imprints on medicines are shown in Table 5. We can see from Table 5 that the various imprint recognition rates of medicines are above 0.831.

Fig. 10. (Color online) Shapes of medicines.

Fig. 11. (Color online) Identification of medicine shapes.

Fig. 12. (Color online) Medicine imprint.

Fig. 13. (Color online) Identification of medicine imprint.

Table 4

Table 3 Color recognition results of medicines.

	color	mAP50
1	black-red	0.995
$\overline{2}$	blue	0.995
3	blue-green	0.995
$\overline{4}$	blue-orange	0.995
5	blue-pink	0.995
6	brown	0.995
$\overline{7}$	brown-orange	0.995
8	brown-pink	0.995
9	gray-green	0.995
10	green	0.995
11	green-pink	0.995
12	green-white	0.995
13	green-yellow	0.995
14	orange	0.995
15	orange-brown	0.995
16	orange-white	0.995
17	orange-yellow	0.995
18	pink	0.962
19	red	0.995
20	red-purple	0.995
21	red-white	0.995
22	red-yellow	0.995
23	white	0.995
24	white-yellow	0.995
25	yellow	0.995
26	vellow-white	0.995

Shape recognition results of medicines.			
	shape	mAP50	
1	capsule	0.955	
\mathfrak{D}	oval tablet	0.955	
3	polygon	0.955	
4	square tablet	0.955	
5	tablet	0.986	
	triangle	0.955	

Table 5

5. Conclusions

We introduce a medicine identification system through AI to reduce the burden of medical staff in distributing medicines and reduce the error rate of medical staff in dispensing medication. We classified the medicine by shape, color, and imprint among the 319 commonly used medicines. We conducted model training in the shape, color, and imprint data sets. The recognition accuracy of the shape data set was higher than 0.986 and that of the color data set was higher than 0.995. The recognition accuracy of the imprint data set is above 0.831. In addition, we designed the medicine identification mechanism to be directly integrated into the mobile nursing work vehicle to meet the needs of saving time and cost. Medical staff do not need to distribute medicines at fixed points. They can use the medicine identification system while operating the mobile nursing work vehicle. We modified the IOU formula to ensure that the system can mark the predicted bounding box within the ground-truth bounding box during medicine identification. In the worst-case scenario, we reduced the probability to 34%. Our medicine identification system uses the FHIR format as the design guideline to share all medicine information among different medical systems.

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