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Artificial Intelligence in Healthcare: A Review of Recent Trends, Applications, Challenges, and Future Directions

Nasheeda T M [1]

[1] *Department of Computer Science, Ansar Women's College Perumpilavu, Thrissur,Kerala,India*

* **Corresponding author:** nasheedatm@ansarwomenscollege.ac.in • ORCID: 0000-0000-0000-0000 (optional)

Abstract

Artificial intelligence (AI) is becoming an important technology in modern healthcare because of its ability to analyze large volumes of clinical, biomedical, and patient-generated data. AI-based systems are being applied in disease diagnosis, medical imaging, drug discovery, personalized medicine, clinical decision support, remote monitoring, and healthcare administration. This review examines recent trends in the use of AI in healthcare by analyzing six influential studies published between 2017 and 2024. The reviewed literature indicates that machine learning, deep learning, explainable AI, and human–AI collaboration can improve diagnostic accuracy, efficiency, and patient-centered care. However, challenges related to data privacy, algorithmic bias, explainability, cybersecurity, clinical validation, regulation, and unequal access continue to restrict large-scale implementation. The review concludes that AI should be implemented as a supportive tool under appropriate clinical supervision, ethical standards, and regulatory frameworks.

Keywords: Artificial intelligence, machine learning, deep learning, medical imaging, explainable AI, precision medicine

1. Introduction

Artificial intelligence refers to computational methods that enable machines to perform tasks commonly associated with human intelligence, including learning, reasoning, prediction, and decision-making. In healthcare, AI systems can process medical images, electronic health records, genomic information, clinical notes, and data from wearable devices.

The increasing availability of healthcare data and improvements in computational power have accelerated the development of AI applications. Current research focuses on automated diagnosis, clinical decision support, precision medicine, drug development, remote patient monitoring, and generative AI for medical documentation. Recent work also emphasizes the importance of external validation, fairness, explainability, and safe integration into clinical workflows.

This paper reviews recent research on AI in healthcare, identifies major application areas, discusses implementation challenges, and highlights future research directions.

2. Literature Review

2.1. General Applications of AI

Jiang *et al.*, in their paper titled **"Artificial Intelligence in Healthcare: Past, Present and Future,"** published in **2017**, reviewed the development and application of artificial intelligence in healthcare. The authors—Fei

Jiang, Yong Jiang, Hui Zhi, Yi Dong, Hao Li, Sufeng Ma, Yilong Wang, Qiang Dong, Haipeng Shen, and Yongjun Wang—discussed the use of AI in early disease detection, diagnosis, treatment planning, outcome prediction, and prognosis evaluation. The study identified machine learning, deep learning, and natural language processing as important technologies for analyzing complex healthcare data. The authors concluded that AI could improve the accuracy and efficiency of medical decision-making, although issues involving data quality, privacy, and clinical validation remained important challenges.

Bajwa *et al*. published **"Artificial Intelligence in Healthcare: Transforming the Practice of Medicine"** in **2021**. The authors—Junaid Bajwa, Usman Munir, Aditya Nori, and Bryan Williams—reviewed the use of AI in medical imaging, drug discovery, precision medicine, virtual consultation, disease diagnosis, prognosis, medication management, and remote patient monitoring. Their study suggested that AI can reduce repetitive administrative work, support clinical decision-making, improve early diagnosis, and contribute to personalized treatment. However, the authors also emphasized that AI systems must be reliable, safe, transparent, and integrated into existing healthcare workflows. They concluded that AI should augment the work of healthcare professionals rather than completely replace human clinical judgment.

2.2. Deep Learning and Medical Diagnosis

Esteva et al. published "A Guide to Deep Learning in Healthcare" in 2019. The authors—Andre Esteva, Alexandre Robicquet, Bharath Ramsundar, Volodymyr Kuleshov, Mark DePristo, Katherine Chou, Claire Cui, Greg Corrado, Sebastian Thrun, and Jeff Dean—examined the use of deep-learning methods in medical imaging, electronic health records, clinical decision support, and natural language processing. The study explained that deep-learning algorithms can identify complex patterns in medical images and clinical datasets. However, the authors emphasized that effective healthcare applications require large, reliable, diverse, and clinically representative datasets. They also noted that deep-learning systems must be carefully validated before being used in real-world clinical environments.

Topol, in the paper "High-Performance Medicine: The Convergence of Human and Artificial Intelligence," published in 2019, analyzed the relationship between healthcare professionals and AI systems. Eric J. Topol argued that AI should not be viewed only as a replacement for doctors, but as a tool that can support clinical expertise. According to the study, AI is capable of processing large amounts of data, recognizing patterns, and assisting with diagnosis, while healthcare professionals provide empathy, communication, contextual understanding, and ethical judgment. The paper concluded that the combination of human intelligence and artificial intelligence could improve patient care and create more efficient healthcare systems.

2.3. Clinical Implementation Challenges

Kelly *et al*. presented the paper **"Key Challenges for Delivering Clinical Impact with Artificial Intelligence"** in **2019**. The authors—Christopher J. Kelly, Alan Karthikesalingam, Mustafa Suleyman, Greg Corrado, and Dominic King—examined why many AI systems fail to move from research laboratories into routine clinical practice. The study identified several barriers, including poor-quality data, inadequate external validation, lack of interoperability, regulatory uncertainty, workflow disruption, and limited trust among healthcare professionals. The authors explained that high performance on a laboratory dataset does not necessarily guarantee successful performance in hospitals. They therefore recommended that AI systems should be evaluated in real clinical settings and designed according to the needs of patients and healthcare professionals.

2.4. Explainable Artificial Intelligence

Bharati, Mondal, and Podder examined the issue of transparency in their paper titled **"A Review on Explainable Artificial Intelligence for Healthcare: Why, How, and When?"**, published in **2024**. The authors—

Subrato Bharati, M. Rubaiyat Hossain Mondal, and Prajoy Podder—reviewed explainable artificial intelligence methods designed to make AI predictions understandable to clinicians and patients. The paper explained that many advanced AI models function as black boxes, making it difficult to understand the reasons behind their decisions. This lack of transparency can reduce trust and make it difficult to determine responsibility when an AI-supported decision is incorrect. The authors concluded that explainable AI is essential for improving trust, accountability, transparency, and safe clinical adoption.

Recent research has also expanded beyond traditional machine-learning systems to include generative AI, large language models, and privacy-preserving technologies. The IEEE paper **"AI-Powered Transformation in Healthcare: Innovations, Implementation Challenges, and Future Perspectives,"** published in **2025**, discusses GPT-based medical documentation, federated learning, and other emerging technologies. These developments may improve clinical documentation, information retrieval, and collaboration between healthcare institutions, but they also create new concerns related to inaccurate outputs, privacy, security, bias, and regulatory oversight.

Overall, the reviewed literature demonstrates that artificial intelligence has significant potential in diagnosis, medical imaging, precision medicine, drug discovery, remote monitoring, and clinical documentation. The studies also show that successful implementation depends on more than algorithmic accuracy. Data privacy, explainability, fairness, interoperability, clinical validation, professional acceptance, and human oversight are equally important. Therefore, future research should focus on developing trustworthy, transparent, secure, and clinically validated AI systems that support healthcare professionals and improve patient outcomes.

3. Recent Trends in AI-Based Healthcare

Important recent trends include:

1. **Generative AI and large language models:** These systems are being explored for clinical documentation, patient communication, medical education, and information retrieval. IEEE research has also examined GPT-based medical documentation and related implementation challenges.
2. **Explainable AI:** Explainability methods help healthcare professionals understand how an AI model produces a prediction.
3. **Federated learning:** This approach allows models to be trained across multiple institutions without directly centralizing all patient data, supporting privacy-preserving collaboration.
4. **AI in medical imaging:** Deep-learning systems are increasingly used for image classification, segmentation, detection, and clinical decision support.
5. **Precision medicine:** AI can combine clinical, genomic, lifestyle, and wearable-device data to support individualized treatment.
6. **Remote monitoring:** AI can analyze data from wearable devices and connected medical equipment to identify changes in a patient's condition.

4. Challenges and Ethical Issues

Despite its potential, AI implementation in healthcare involves several risks:

- **Privacy**: Healthcare data contains sensitive personal information and must be securely stored and processed.

- **Bias**: An AI model trained on an unrepresentative dataset may produce less accurate results for some populations.
- **Explainability**: Clinicians may hesitate to use systems whose decisions cannot be interpreted.
- **Cybersecurity**: AI systems and connected medical devices may be targeted by cyberattacks.
- **Accountability**: Clear responsibility is needed when an AI-supported decision causes harm.
- **Clinical validation**: AI tools require testing in real healthcare environments rather than only in laboratory datasets.
- **Human oversight**: AI should assist healthcare professionals, not remove appropriate clinical supervision.

5. Future Directions

Future research should focus on trustworthy, explainable, privacy-preserving, and clinically validated AI systems. Researchers should also examine the performance of AI across different countries, hospitals, age groups, ethnicities, and socioeconomic populations.

The future of healthcare AI is likely to involve collaboration between clinicians and intelligent systems. Instead of replacing healthcare workers, AI is more likely to automate repetitive tasks, identify clinically relevant patterns, support diagnosis, and allow professionals to spend more time on patient care.

6. Conclusion

Artificial intelligence is influencing healthcare through applications in diagnosis, medical imaging, drug discovery, precision medicine, remote monitoring, and clinical documentation. The six reviewed studies demonstrate that AI can improve healthcare quality and efficiency, but its adoption is limited by concerns related to privacy, bias, explainability, regulation, cybersecurity, and clinical integration. Therefore, future AI development should prioritize patient safety, human oversight, fairness, transparency, and evidence-based validation.

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