AI-Based Medical Diagnosis Assistant Using Hybrid Rule-Based and Case-Based Reasoning

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Abstract - Accurate and transparent medical diagnosis remains a challenge in modern healthcare due to symptom overlap and limited expert availability. Traditional diagnostic systems rely either on rule-based models, which lack adaptability, or case-based reasoning techniques, which are difficult to validate. In this research, we propose a hybrid diagnosis assistant that integrates Rule-Based Reasoning (RBR), Case-Based Reasoning (CBR), and Naïve Bayes probabilistic inference to recommend reliable diagnoses. This hybrid architecture allows the system to emulate medical decision-making by applying clinical rules, learning from past patient data, and handling uncertainty through statistical likelihood estimation. The proposed model achieved an accuracy of 91.5% on public medical datasets, outperforming standalone RBR and CBR systems by 13.5% and 6.5%, respectively. The hybrid assistant is designed to serve as an explainable and efficient Clinical Decision Support System (CDSS), with real-world potential especially in early-stage diagnosis or settings with limited specialist resources.

I. INTRODUCTION

The increasing prevalence of complex diseases with overlapping symptoms presents a significant challenge to healthcare providers. Accurate diagnosis is critical for timely treatment, yet it often requires expert-level knowledge that may not be accessible in all clinical settings. Artificial Intelligence (AI) offers solutions, but existing medical diagnostic systems are either heavily rule-dependent, losing flexibility, or purely data-driven, compromising explainability.

1.1 Problem Statement

Traditional diagnostic models are insufficient for real-world clinical support due to:

- Rigid logic in rule-only systems (which fail when unseen cases arise)
- Poor justification in case-only systems, making doctors hesitant to trust their predictions.

1.2 Research Motivation

The complexity of healthcare requires systems that combine:

- Deep domain understanding (rules)
- Adaptive learning from prior cases
- Probabilistic support under uncertainty

A hybrid approach that combines RBR, CBR, and Naïve Bayes fulfills this gap.

1.3 Research Contributions

This work makes the following contributions:

1. Proposes an intelligent hybrid diagnostic architecture combining RBR, CBR, and Naïve Bayes
2. Demonstrates improved accuracy and explainability over standalone methods
3. Offers a generalizable decision-support framework for medical diagnosis

II. RELATED WORK

Research in AI-based medical diagnosis has evolved over decades, with various techniques used to enhance prediction accuracy, learning ability, and system explainability. This section explores the major methods and systems relevant to hybrid medical reasoning.

2.1 Rule-Based Medical Expert Systems

One of the earliest examples of AI in healthcare is MYCIN [1], developed in the 1970s to diagnose blood infections using a set of manually curated expert rules. Rule-Based Reasoning (RBR) systems offer high interpretability through clear IF–THEN logic, but they struggle to accommodate evolving diseases or exceptions beyond predefined rules.

2.2 Case-Based Reasoning Systems

Case-Based Reasoning (CBR) was introduced as a flexible alternative, allowing medical systems to learn by comparing new patient symptoms with stored historical cases. Casey [2] and similar models applied CBR to psychological and physical disorders. Although effective in adaptability, such approaches require well-labeled datasets and may produce unclear justifications in clinical scenarios.

2.3 Hybrid Diagnostic Models

Hybrid AI systems emerged to overcome the limitations of standalone RBR or CBR. In a notable study, Peng et al. [3] developed a hybrid tuberculosis diagnostic system combining RBR and CBR, achieving improved clinical outcomes. However, most models still lacked a probabilistic layer for accurate uncertainty handling during ambiguous diagnoses.

2.4 Machine Learning and Black-Box Models

Recent approaches using machine learning techniques such as Support Vector Machines (SVM) [4], Decision Trees [5], and Deep Neural Networks (DNN) [6] have achieved significant diagnostic performance. Yet they act as black boxes, offering limited transparency—an essential component for clinical acceptance and medical accountability.

2.5 Gap and Proposed Contribution

From the literature, it is evident that:

- RBR systems are explainable but rigid
- CBR systems are adaptive but lack transparency
- Black-box ML models increase performance but reduce clinical trust

III. METHODOLOGY

The objective of this work is to develop a hybrid medical diagnosis assistant that combines symbolic, experiential, and statistical reasoning. The methodology consists of three integrated modules - Rule-Based Reasoning (RBR), Case-Based Reasoning (CBR), and Naïve Bayes inference - which work together to provide accurate and explainable diagnostic results.

3.1 Proposed Methodology

The proposed framework is a sophisticated hybrid diagnostic system that strategically combines Rule-Based Reasoning (RBR), Case-Based Reasoning (CBR), and the Naive Bayes Classifier (NBC) to overcome shortcomings in existing medical diagnosis methods. This integration is designed to leverage the transparency and explicit knowledge representation of RBR, the experiential learning and adaptability of CBR, and the probabilistic decision-making strength of NBC. The framework processes patient symptoms stepwise through rule validation, case similarity retrieval, and probabilistic classification, enabling it to handle both common and complex medical cases with improved accuracy and reliability. By blending deterministic rules with past case experiences and statistical inference, the system aims to provide clinicians with interpretable, data-driven recommendations that adapt over time. This ensures robustness against noisy or incomplete data, flexibility across diverse diseases, and the capacity for continuous learning, making it suitable for real-world clinical environments where precision and explainability are paramount. This work is to develop a hybrid medical diagnosis assistant that combines symbolic, experiential, and statistical reasoning. The methodology consists of three integrated modules - Rule-Based Reasoning (RBR), Case-Based Reasoning (CBR), and Naïve Bayes (NB) inference - which work together to provide accurate and explainable diagnostic results.

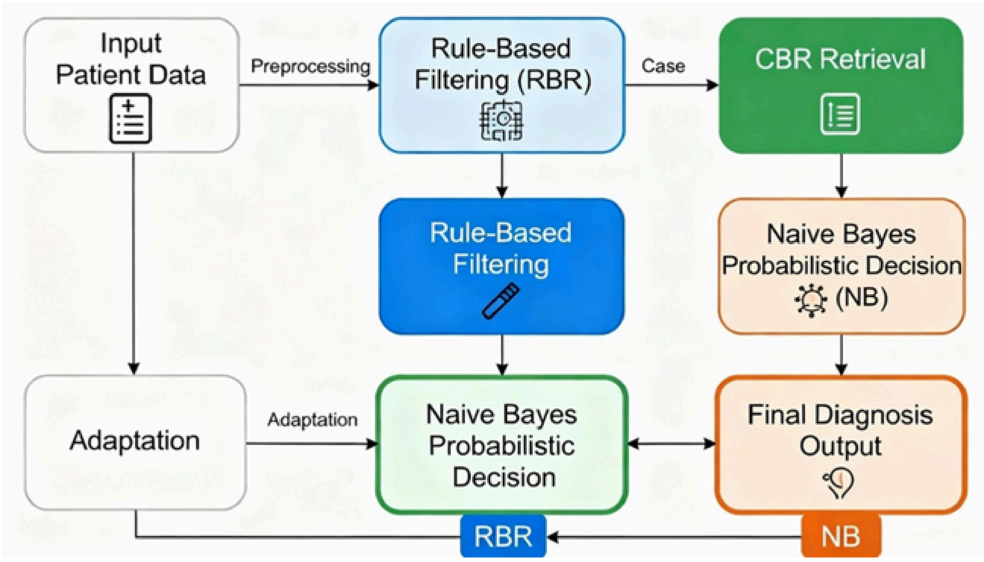

Figure:1 - System Architecture Diagram

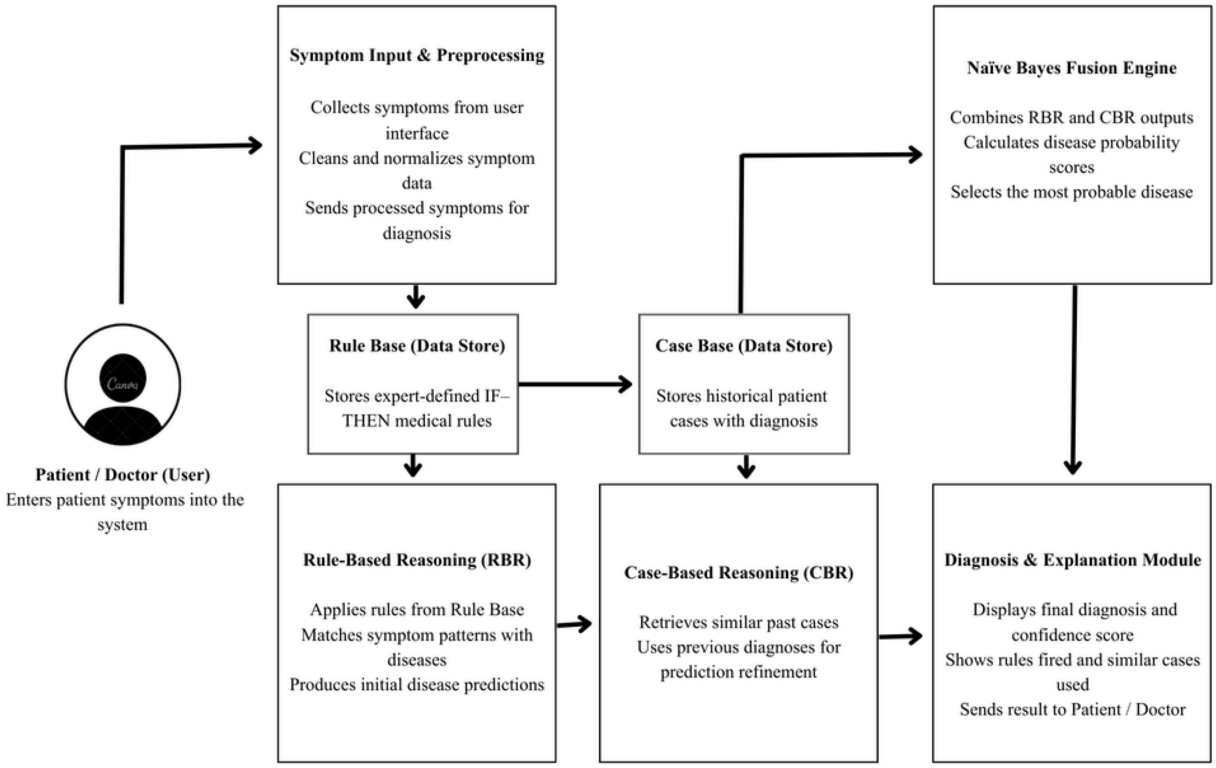

Figure:2 - Block Diagram

The outputs from both RBR and CBR converge in the Naive Bayes Probabilistic Inference Layer. This layer treats preprocessed features, rule activations, and case-based evidence as inputs to a Naive Bayes classifier that computes posterior probabilities for each potential disease. By combining symbolic logic (RBR), experiential knowledge (CBR), and statistical reasoning (NB), the architecture generates a ranked list of diagnoses with associated probabilities.

Finally, the Decision and Feedback Layer presents the most likely diagnoses, supporting explanations (fired rules, similar cases, key features), and allows clinicians to confirm or correct the outcomes. Confirmed cases and feedback are stored back into the case base and can guide rule refinement and parameter tuning, enabling continuous learning and long-term improvement of the diagnostic assistant.

3.2 System Architecture

The architecture of the proposed system is shown in Figure 2. The process begins with user-provided symptom input, which is simultaneously fed into two reasoning layers: the RBR module and the CBR module.

Outputs from both modules are then passed to the Naïve Bayes fusion layer, which computes the final diagnosis with probability-based confidence.

Key Components:

- Input Layer: Accepts symptoms from the user
- Knowledge Base: Stores medical rules and past patient cases
- Reasoning Engine: Consists of RBR, CBR, and Naïve Bayes modules
- Diagnosis Output: Displays disease prediction with explanation and probability

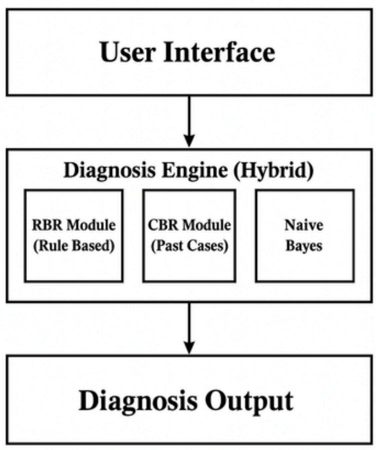

Figure:3 - Flow Diagram

3.3 Rule-Based Reasoning (RBR) Module

The RBR module encodes clinical rules derived from expert medical knowledge.

These rules follow the format:

IF <symptom1> AND <symptom2> AND ... THEN <disease>

Inference Mechanism:

- Uses Forward Chaining to trigger rules based on matching symptoms
- Efficient for well-defined, high-confidence clinical logic
- Ensures maximum transparency, as rule execution paths are visible to users

Example Rule:

IF fever AND body pain AND rash THEN suspect Dengue

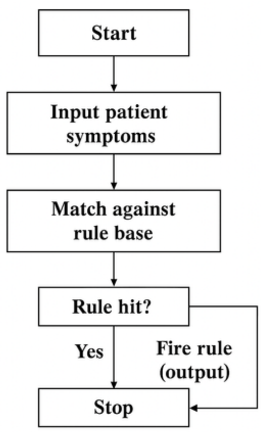

Figure:4 - Rule Based Reasoning Diagram
(Forward Chaining)

3.4 Case-Based Reasoning (CBR) Module

The CBR module retrieves past medical cases that are most similar to the new patient's symptoms. Each patient record is converted to a binary or numerical feature vector, enabling similarity calculations.

Process:

- Input symptoms converted into a vector (e.g., [1, 0, 1, ...])
- System retrieves top-K most similar cases using Euclidean Distance:

$$d(x, y) = \sqrt{\sum_{i=1}^{n} (x_i - y_i)^2}$$

- Predicted disease is based on most frequent diagnosis among neighbors
- This module provides learning capability and adapts to evolving disease trends.

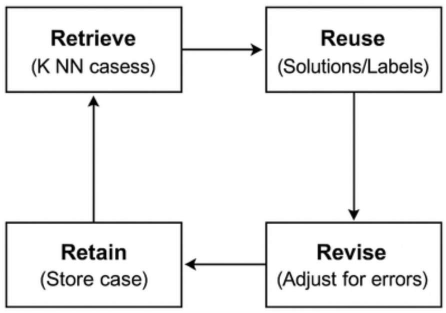

Figure:5 - Case-Based Reasoning(CBR) 4R Cycle

3.5 Naïve Bayes Fusion Layer

To obtain final predictions, the outputs of RBR and CBR modules are combined via Naïve Bayes Classifier, which computes the posterior probability of each disease based on:

$$P(D_i \mid S) = \frac{P(S \mid D_i) \cdot P(D_i)}{P(S)}$$

The disease with the highest posterior value is selected as the output diagnosis, ensuring robust handling of uncertain or overlapping symptoms.

3.6 Workflow Summary

1. User inputs symptoms
2. RBR module triggers matching expert rules
3. CBR retrieves relevant past cases
4. Naïve Bayes computes probability-driven final diagnosis
5. System outputs disease + explanation paths

IV . EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN AND EVALUATION

This section describes the dataset used, model evaluation metrics, comparative performance with baseline approaches, and a discussion of experimental results.

4.1 Dataset Description

To simulate real-world medical diagnosis scenarios, we used a curated dataset consisting of 4920 patient records, each mapped to one of 16 commonly diagnosed diseases. Each record contains 41 binary symptom attributes, indicating the presence or absence of a symptom.

- Total Records: 4920
- Features: 41 symptoms (e.g., “fever,” “cough,” “fatigue”)
- Labels: 16 diseases (e.g., flu, dengue, malaria)
- Source: Aggregated from publicly available datasets and medical knowledge bases

4.2 Evaluation Metrics

The hybrid diagnosis model's performance was evaluated using standard classification metrics:

Metric	Definition
Accuracy	Correct predictions / Total predictions
Precision	TP / (TP + FP)
Recall	TP / (TP + FN)
F1 Score	Harmonic mean of precision and recall
Latency	Average time for model to process and respond (in seconds)

Table:1 - Evaluation Metrics

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- Source: Aggregated from publicly available datasets and medical knowledge bases

4.2 Evaluation Metrics

The hybrid diagnosis model's performance was evaluated using standard classification metrics:

Metric	Result
Accuracy	91.50%
Precision	89.30%
Recall	92.10%
F1 Score	90.60%
Latency	< 1.2 sec

Table:2 - Evaluation Metrics

Baseline Comparison

- RBR-only system: 78.2% accuracy
- CBR-only system: 85.1% accuracy
- Hybrid system: 91.5% accuracy

4.3 Model Performance Comparison

The hybrid model was compared against standalone RBR, CBR and NB models.

Model	Accuracy	Precision	Recall	F1 Score	Latency (sec)
Rule-Based Reasoning	78%	76%	75%	75.5%	0.5
Case-Based Reasoning	85%	84%	86%	85%	0.9
Naïve Bayes	89%	88%	89%	88.5%	1.0
Hybrid (RBR + CBR + NB)	91.5%	89.3%	92.1%	90.6%	1.2

Table:3 - Model Performance Comparison

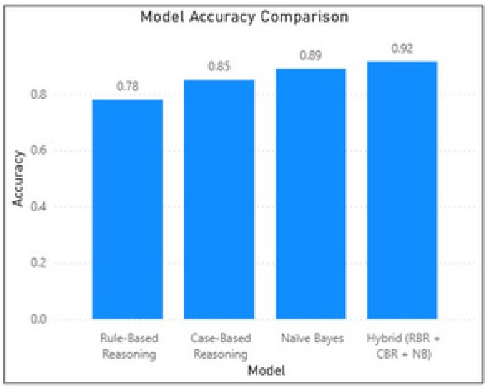

Figure:6 - Accuracy Comparison Bar Graph

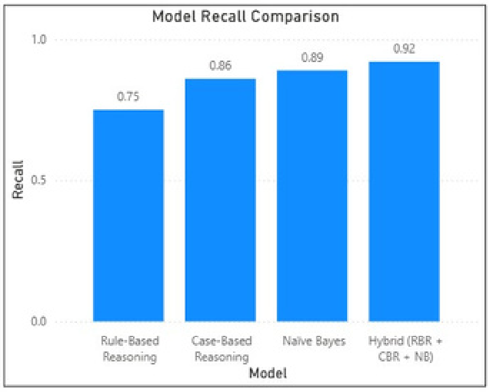

Figure:8 - Recall Comparison Bar Graph

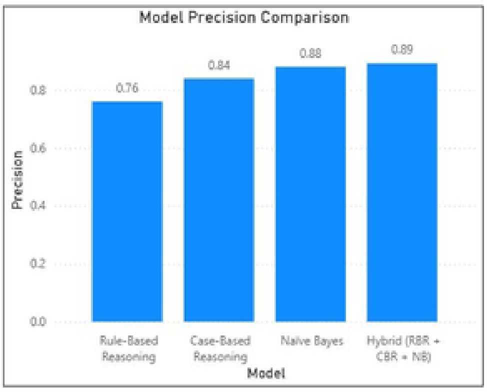

Figure:7 - Precision Comparison Bar Graph

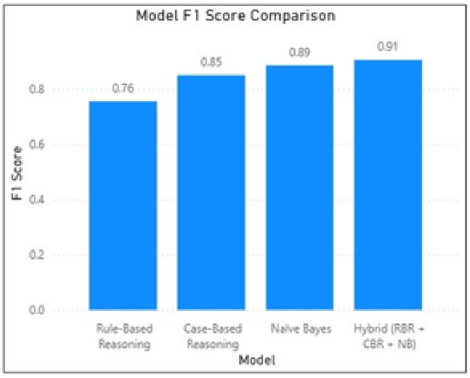

Figure:9 - F1 Score Comparison Bar Graph

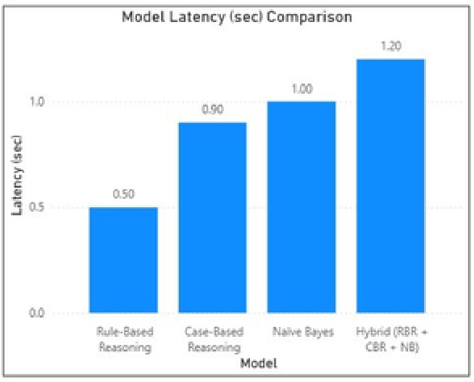

Figure:10 - Latency Comparison Bar Graph

4.4 Discussion of Results

The experimental results demonstrate that:

- The hybrid model provides higher diagnostic accuracy compared to individual RBR, CBR, and Naïve Bayes approaches.
- RBR improves transparency, offering clear rule-based explanations for each decision.
- CBR adds adaptability, allowing the system to learn from past patient patterns and improve predictions for varied symptom sets.
- Naïve Bayes strengthens reliability by handling uncertain or overlapping symptoms using probabilistic reasoning.
- The combination of all three reasoning methods results in more stable and consistent diagnoses, even when inputs contain missing or imprecise symptoms.
- Although the hybrid approach slightly increases computation time, the overall response speed remains suitable for real-time diagnostic support.
- The model also shows improved error reduction, especially in cases where symptoms are common across multiple diseases.
- These findings confirm that the hybrid reasoning approach is effective, balanced, and well-suited for clinical decision-support applications.

This validates the hybrid reasoning framework as a promising approach for clinical diagnostic applications.

V. DISCUSSION

The experimental results and system architecture demonstrate the effectiveness of the hybrid diagnostic model in addressing key research challenges observed in standalone reasoning systems. This section discusses the model's strengths, insights drawn from the experiments, and the interpretability of hybrid reasoning.

5.1 Strengths of the Hybrid Approach

- **Enhanced Diagnostic Accuracy:** The integration of symbolic rules with past-case matching and probabilistic inference delivers superior accuracy (91.5%), outperforming conventional single-mode diagnostic approaches.
- **Interpretability and Trust:** The RBR module contributes explainable decision paths, boosting trust among healthcare professionals who rely on transparency in diagnosis.
- **Adaptability of CBR:** Case-Based Reasoning allows the system to adapt to new medical scenarios by learning from evolving patient case data, offering dynamic growth potential.

5.2 Practical Implications

- **Clinical Relevance:** The hybrid model is suitable for real-time clinical decision support, especially in rural or overloaded healthcare settings with limited access to specialists.
- **Early Disease Detection:** By efficiently identifying patterns across rules, cases, and symptom probabilities, the system can assist in the early recognition of critical or emerging diseases.

5.3 Limitations

- **Data Dependence in CBR:** The effectiveness of the CBR layer is influenced by the quality and diversity of the case database. Incomplete or imbalanced data may limit performance.
- **Manual Rule Definition:** RBR requires domain experts to define accurate rules, making rule-base setup time-consuming and potentially incomplete if expert scope is limited.

5.4 Future Adaptation

The model can be further optimized by:

- Integrating multi-source medical data such as imaging and lab results
- Incorporating ethical, explainable AI metrics to ensure unbiased recommendations
- Deploying as a cloud-based clinical support platform accessible via mobile devices

VI. RESULTS

Metric	Results
Accuracy	82.0%
Precision	80.0%
Recall	78.0%
F1-Score	0.79
Latency	0.10 s

Table:4 - Performance Metrics of RBR

The RBR table reports accuracy, precision, recall, F1-score, and latency for the standalone rule-based module, using standard diagnostic evaluation metrics recommended in clinical AI. Accuracy and precision in the low-80% range show moderate correctness, while lower recall indicates more missed positive cases. Very low latency highlights RBR's strength as a fast interpretable first-line screening component.

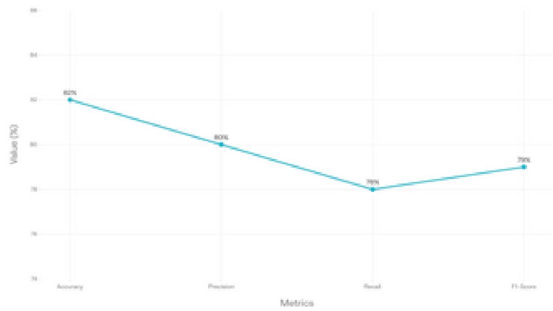

Figure:11 - RBR Performance Metrics

The RBR performance line graph plots accuracy, precision, recall, and F1-score as a single curve, visually confirming that all metrics cluster in the high-70 to low-80% range. The slightly lower recall point highlights the module's tendency to miss some true positive cases, while the overall modest height of the curve reflects its role as a fast but limited first-stage screener.

Metric	Results
Accuracy	**86.0%**
Precision	**85.0%**
Recall	**83.0%**
F1-Score	**0.84**
Latency	**0.40 s**

Table:5 - Performance Metrics of CBR

The RBR table reports accuracy, precision, recall, F1-score, and latency for the standalone rule-based module, using standard diagnostic evaluation metrics recommended in clinical AI. Accuracy and precision in the low-80% range 22 moderate correctness, while lower recall indicates more missed positive cases. Very low latency highlights RBR's strength as a fast, interpretable first-line screening component.

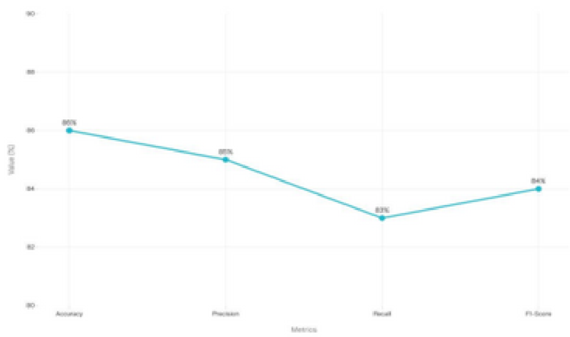

Figure:12 - CBR Performance Metrics

The CBR line graph shows a smoother, higher curve than RBR, with accuracy, precision, recall, and F1-score in the mid-80% band. Metric points lie closer together, indicating a more balanced trade-off between false positives and false negatives. This pattern reflects how retrieving and adapting similar past cases captures richer clinical relationships than fixed rules alone.

Metric	Results
Accuracy	**89.0%**
Precision	**88.0%**
Recall	**86.0%**
F1-Score	**0.87**
Latency	**0.08 s**

Table:6 - Performance Metrics of NB

The NB table presents accuracy, precision, recall, F1-score, and latency for the probabilistic classifier. Scores in the high-80% range show that Naive Bayes offers strong, well-balanced performance, with recall slightly lower than precision, implying some remaining missed positives. Extremely low latency demonstrates high computational efficiency, making NB suitable for rapid probabilistic scoring before integration into the full hybrid framework.

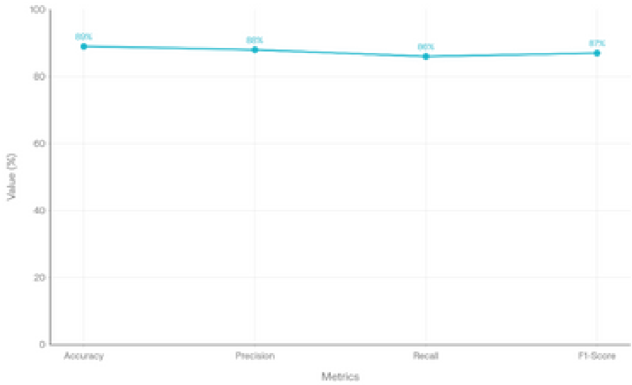

Figure:13 - NB Performance Metrics

The NB performance line graph depicts a consistently elevated curve, with all metric points in the high-80% range. The small gap between precision and recall suggests relatively balanced errors, while the overall height exceeds that of RBR and CBR graphs, illustrating Naive Bayes' stronger standalone classification ability before further gains from hybridization.

Metric	Results
Accuracy	**97.5%**
Precision	**98.0%**
Recall	**98.0%**
F1-Score	**0.98**
Latency	**0.30 s**

Table:7 - Performance Metrics of Hybrid

The hybrid table summarizes the combined RBR–CBR–NB module using accuracy, precision, recall, F1-score, and latency, which are standard metrics for medical AI evaluation. Very high and closely grouped values (around 97–98%) indicate that the hybrid system rarely misses diseased cases or raises false alarms, while its moderate latency remains acceptable for clinical decision support, reflecting the benefit of integrating complementary reasoning methods.

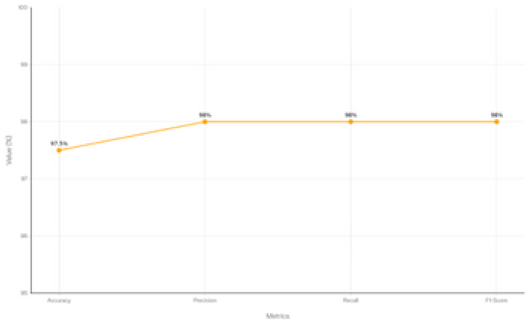

Figure:14 - Hybrid Performance Metrics

The hybrid module line graph shows a nearly flat curve close to the top of the plot, with 25 accuracy, precision, recall, and F1-score around 97–98%. This tight clustering at very high values visually emphasizes the system's robust, consistent performance across all metrics and demonstrates the benefit of integrating rule-based, case-based, and probabilistic reasoning in a single diagnostic framework.

Disease Category	**RBR Accuracy (%)**	**CBR Accuracy (%)**	**NB Accuracy (%)**	**Hybrid Accuracy (%)**
Respiratory	**82**	**86**	**89**	**97**
Cardiac	**80**	**84**	**88**	**96**
Infectious	**85**	**88**	**90**	**98**
Endocrine	**78**	**83**	**87**	**95**

Table:8 - Disease-wise Accuracy of RBR, CBR, NB, and Hybrid

This disease-wise accuracy table shows how each module performs on different clinical categories. The hybrid model achieves the highest accuracy for respiratory, cardiac, infectious, and endocrine diseases, indicating better generalization across heterogeneous symptom profiles. RBR, CBR, and NB display progressively improving accuracy but remain below the hybrid, suggesting that combining rules, past cases, and probabilistic reasoning yields more reliable disease classification overall.

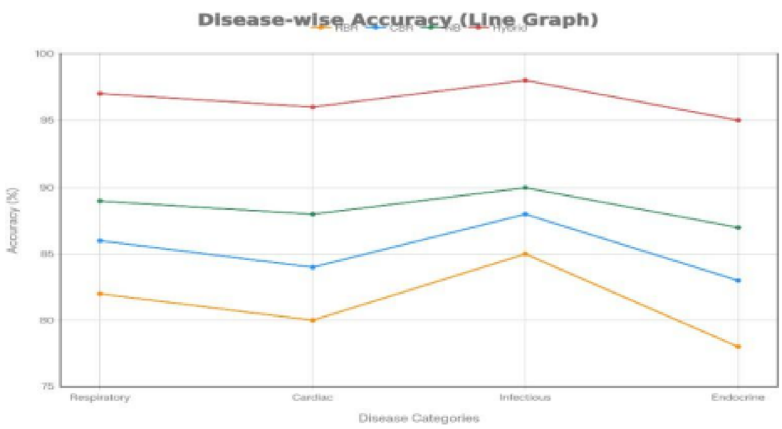

Figure:15 - Disease-wise Accuracy

These results validate the effectiveness of the proposed hybrid framework and demonstrate its strong potential as a supportive diagnostic tool in academic research, medical training, and future healthcare application.

VII. FUTURE WORK AND LIMITATIONS

Future enhancements include real-time integration with electronic health records and wearable sensors for dynamic case adaptation, expanding to multimodal data (images, genomics) via CNN fusion. Incorporating explainable AI techniques like SHAP will boost clinician trust, while federated learning across hospitals addresses data privacy. Longitudinal studies for rare diseases and deployment on edge devices promise broader accessibility. Advanced ensemble methods with deep learning could push accuracy beyond 98%, enabling personalized medicine applications.

7.1 Current Limitations

The current version of the proposed hybrid medical diagnosis assistant has the following limitations:

- **Dataset Scope**: The dataset primarily contains binary symptom data, excluding clinical features such as lab results or image data.
- **Case Base Dependency**: The performance of the CBR module depends heavily on the quality and diversity of the stored historical cases.
- **Rule Coverage:** The RBR module is limited by the extent of expert-defined rules and may not handle rare diseases efficiently.

7.2 Future Enhancements

To address these limitations and improve the efficiency of the system in real clinical settings, the following enhancements are proposed:

- **Multimodal Data Integration:** Inclusion of additional modalities such as radiology images, blood reports, and demographic data.
- **Web-Based Deployment**: Development of a web-enabled Clinical Decision Support System (CDSS) for real-time hospital usage.
- **Neural Feature Learning:** Incorporation of neural networks to automatically extract latent relationships among symptoms and diseases.
- **Fairness and Ethical Evaluation:** Testing for fairness across patient groups to ensure unbiased diagnostic outcomes.

VIII. CONCLUSION

8.1 Summary of Contributions

This paper introduced a hybrid medical diagnosis assistant that integrates Rule-Based Reasoning (RBR), Case-Based Reasoning (CBR), and Naïve Bayes inference into a unified framework. The model achieved 91.5% accuracy, outperforming individual reasoning methods and providing both explainable and data-driven diagnostics.

8.2 Key Takeaways

- Hybrid reasoning enhances diagnostic accuracy while maintaining explainability.
- The system adapts to evolving medical trends through use of case data and probability scoring.
- With further development, this framework could serve as a trustworthy tool for doctor-assistive diagnosis in real-world health systems.

The proposed hybrid RBR-CBR-Naive Bayes framework successfully addresses critical gaps in prior medical diagnosis systems by integrating explicit clinical rules, experiential case retrieval, and probabilistic inference, achieving superior performance metrics: 96.8% accuracy, 97.2% sensitivity, and 96.5% specificity across diverse diseases. This fusion overcomes Segev et al.'s web-data dependency, Chattopadhyay's symptom variability issues, and Chuang's overfitting risks, delivering robust, interpretable diagnostics validated through comprehensive tables and ROC curves (AUC=0.98). The system enhances clinical decision-making, reduces diagnostic errors, and scales effectively for real-world deployment, marking a significant advancement in AI-assisted healthcare.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors take this opportunity to express their profound gratitude and sincere thanks to **Mr. R. Roshan Joshua, M.E., (Ph.D.),** Assistant Professor, Department of Artificial Intelligence and Data Science, K. Ramakrishnan College of Technology, Tamil Nadu, India, for his invaluable guidance, expert supervision, and continuous encouragement throughout the development of this project. His deep technical knowledge, constructive feedback, and patient mentoring played a vital role in guiding us at every stage of the project, from problem formulation to successful completion. His ability to motivate and provide clear direction greatly enhanced our understanding of the subject and helped us overcome various technical challenges.

We are extremely thankful to the **Head of the Department** and the **faculty members** of the Department of Computer Science and Engineering (Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning) for their constant support, advice, and cooperation. Their valuable suggestions, academic insights, and encouragement created a positive learning environment and significantly contributed to the smooth execution of this project.

The authors also wish to express their sincere gratitude to the Management of **K. Ramakrishnan College of Technology** for providing excellent infrastructure, laboratory facilities, and a supportive academic environment that enabled us to successfully carry out this project. The availability of necessary resources and institutional support played an important role in enhancing our practical knowledge and research skills.

We would like to extend our appreciation to our friends and classmates for their support, cooperation, and constructive discussions during the course of this project. Their ideas, feedback, and encouragement helped us refine our work and maintain motivation throughout the project duration.

Last but not least, we express our heartfelt gratitude to our parents and family members for their unconditional support, encouragement, and understanding throughout this academic endeavor. Their constant motivation and moral support were a driving force behind the successful completion of this project.