| Problem Chosen | 2025 MCM/ICM Summary Sheet | Team Control Number |
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# Decoding the Silent Signal: A Risk-Adaptive Spatiotemporal Framework for NIPT Timing Optimization and Aneuploidy Detection in High-BMI Cohorts


## Summary

**Non-Invasive Prenatal Testing (NIPT)** has revolutionized prenatal screening by analyzing cell-free fetal DNA (cffDNA); however, its clinical efficacy is severely compromised in **high-BMI maternal cohorts**. In these populations, the **maternal hemodilution effect** suppresses fetal fraction concentrations, creating a "silent signal" phenomenon that leads to high failure rates and delayed diagnoses. Furthermore, detecting aneuploidy in **female fetuses** presents a distinct challenge due to the absence of a Y-chromosome baseline, rendering traditional quantification methods ineffective.

To decode these signals amidst biological noise, we propose a unified **Data-Driven Risk-Adaptive Framework**. First, we construct a multivariate regression model to quantify the non-linear decay of Y-chromosome concentration caused by BMI, identifying a critical **dilution compensation mechanism** between gestational age and body mass. Second, we formulate the testing timing decision as a **Multi-Objective Optimization Problem**, balancing the biological necessity of DNA accumulation against the clinical imperative of minimizing termination risks. This is implemented via a **Hierarchical Decision Tree (CART)**, which segments the population into risk-stratified subgroups to generate personalized sampling windows. Finally, for female fetuses, we reframe the diagnosis as a **Signal Detection Problem**, developing a **Robust Z-Score** algorithm with dynamic thresholds to control the False Positive Rate (FPR) under extreme noise.

Empirical results demonstrate that our optimized timing strategy delays sampling by an average of **1.5 weeks** for pregnant women with BMI $\geq 37.0$, boosting the effective validity rate to approximately **90%**an **18.4% increase** over standard protocolswhile maintaining the clinical risk index below the safety threshold. For female fetus aneuploidy, the model achieves robust detection for Trisomy 13 and 18 (AUC = **0.83** and **0.79**, respectively). However, Trisomy 21 detection remains fundamentally constrained (AUC = **0.60**), highlighting the **intrinsic information limits** of current sequencing depths in low-fetal-fraction scenarios. Our work provides a scalable, precision-medicine approach to enhancing NIPT reliability for vulnerable demographic groups.



**Keywords**: Maternal Hemodilution Effect; Risk-Adaptive Optimization; Hierarchical Decision Tree; Robust Z-Score; Signal Detection Theory; High-BMI Cohorts

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background and Motivation

Non-Invasive Prenatal Testing (NIPT) has revolutionized prenatal care by enabling the detection of chromosomal aneuploidies through the analysis of cell-free fetal DNA (cffDNA) in maternal plasma. While NIPT offers a safer alternative to invasive procedures like amniocentesis, its clinical utility is fundamentally constrained by the **fetal fraction (FF)**the proportion of fetal DNA in the maternal blood. This limitation is particularly acute in **high-BMI (Body Mass Index) cohorts**, where the **maternal hemodilution effect** increases total blood volume, effectively diluting the cffDNA concentration below the detection threshold ($< 4\%$). Furthermore, for **female fetuses**, the absence of a Y-chromosome baseline deprives the assay of a natural endogenous control, exacerbating the signal-to-noise ratio challenges in aneuploidy detection.

## 1.2 The Clinical Dilemma: A Spatiotemporal Trade-off

Current clinical guidelines typically recommend a uniform testing window (e.g., 12–24 weeks). However, this "one-size-fits-all" approach fails to account for maternal heterogeneity. The core challenge lies in a **spatiotemporal trade-off**:

- **Biological Necessity:** Delaying the testing window allows for the accumulation of cffDNA, thereby increasing the probability of a valid test result.
- **Clinical Imperative:** Early diagnosis is crucial to minimize the medical risks and ethical complexities associated with late-term pregnancy termination.

For high-BMI pregnant women, an ill-timed test results in a "no-call" outcome, necessitating a repeat blood draw or invasive testing, which induces unnecessary anxiety and delays critical decision-making. Therefore, constructing a **risk-adaptive timing strategy** that personalizes the sampling window based on maternal biomarkers is an urgent unmet need.

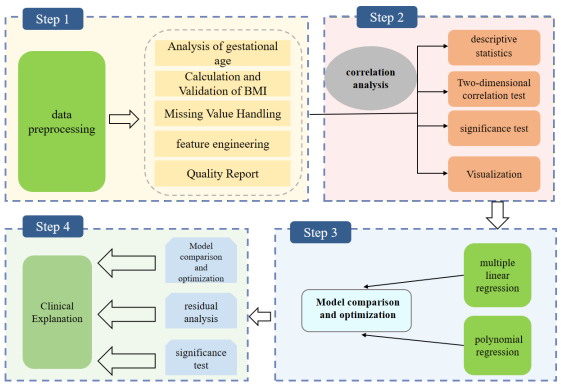
## 1.3 Our Work

Motivated by these challenges, this study proposes a comprehensive **Data-Driven Risk-Adaptive Framework** to optimize NIPT performance. Our contributions are threefold:

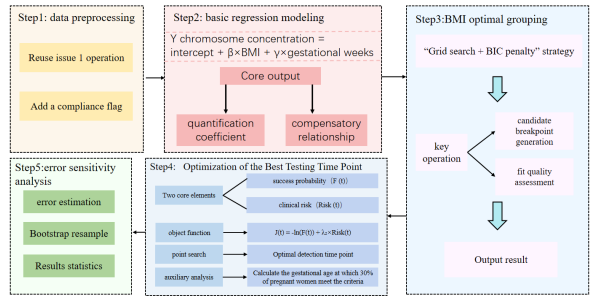
1. **Mechanism Quantification:** We formulate a multivariate regression model to deconstruct the non-linear coupling effects of gestational age and BMI on Y-chromosome concentration, validating the hemodilution hypothesis.
2. **Timing Optimization:** We develop a Multi-Objective Optimization Model solved via a **Hierarchical Decision Tree**, which stratifies the high-BMI population into risk-homogeneous subgroups to prescribe personalized optimal testing windows.
3. **Robust Signal Detection:** For female fetuses, we engineer a **Robust Z-Score Statistic** based on Signal Detection Theory, establishing a dynamic decision boundary to identify Trisomy 13, 18, and 21 under high-noise conditions.

## 1.4 Overview of Modeling Framework

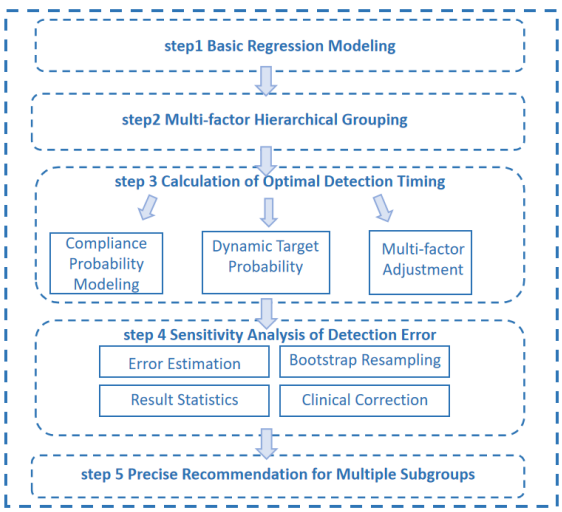
To systematically address these objectives, we designed a four-stage analytical architecture. Figure 1 illustrates the logical flow of our work, transitioning from data preprocessing and mechanism analysis to optimization modeling and clinical validation.



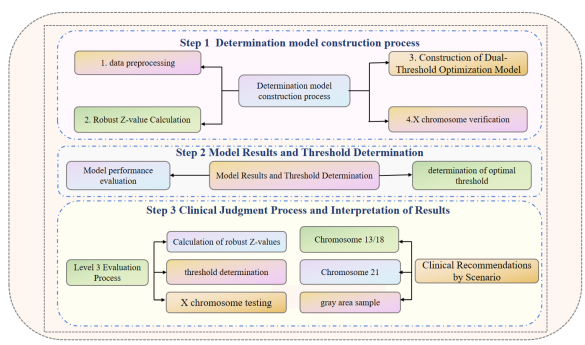

(a) Problem 1: Correlation Analysis and Regression Modeling




(b) Problem 2:Model Construction and Threshold Determination




(c) Problem 3: BMI Grouping and Optimal Testing Time Optimization




(d) Problem 4: Abnormality Detection and Clinical Decision Framework

Figure 1: Overall modeling frameworks for Problem 1–4.

# 2 Assumptions and Model Foundations

To ensure the feasibility, mathematical tractability, and clinical interpretability of the proposed framework, we establish the following core assumptions. These premises are grounded in established NIPT sequencing protocols and physiological laws, serving as the axiomatic basis for Models 1 through 4.

## 2.1 General Assumptions

1. **Population Representativeness & Stationarity**
   - *Statement:* The provided dataset is assumed to be a statistically significant sample of the target pregnant population. We assume the distribution of fetal fraction (FF) within specific BMI-Gestational Age cohorts is stationary over time.
   - *Justification:* This allows us to generalize the regression parameters derived from the training set to future clinical cases without correcting for temporal drift.
2. **Homogeneity of Sequencing Noise (Systematic Bias)**
   - *Statement:* All sequencing data are assumed to be generated under standardized laboratory protocols. Systematic biases (e.g., GC-content bias) are consistent across samples.
   - *Justification:* This ensures that variations in read counts are primarily driven by biological factors (e.g., aneuploidy, fetal fraction) rather than technical artifacts.
3. **Physiological Scaling Law (Dilution Effect)**
   - *Statement:* The relationship between maternal BMI and fetal DNA concentration is approximated as a **log-linear** or **first-order Taylor expansion** locally, rather than strictly linear.
   - *Justification:* Biologically, concentration $C \propto M_{DNA}/V_{blood}$. Since maternal blood volume $V_{blood}$ scales positively with BMI, the concentration decay follows a dilution curve, justifying the use of non-linear terms or transformations in our regression models.
4. **Conditional Independence of Autosomal Reads**
   - *Statement:* For female fetus detection, autosomal read counts are assumed to be conditionally independent given the sequencing depth, with residual noise following a **Poisson** or **Gaussian** distribution.
   - *Justification:* This assumption of orthogonality is a prerequisite for constructing the Z-score statistic and utilizing the Central Limit Theorem (CLT) for hypothesis testing.
5. **Low Fetal Fraction Regime & Signal Additivity**
   - *Statement:* During the early gestational window (12–24 weeks), the fetal fraction is typically low ($4\% \sim 10\%$). We assume the sequencing signal is additive: $S_{total} = S_{maternal} + S_{fetal}$.
   - *Justification:* This implies that detecting trisomy (e.g., T21) is a "weak signal detection" problem in a high-noise background, necessitating robust thresholding rather than deterministic classification.
6. **Asymmetric Clinical Utility (Risk-Sensitive)**
   - *Statement:* The decision boundary design prioritizes the control of **False Negatives (Type II Error)** over False Positives.
   - *Justification:* In prenatal screening, a missed diagnosis (False Negative) carries significantly higher ethical and medical costs than a false alarm (False Positive), which can be corrected by subsequent invasive confirmation.

# 3 Notation

Table 1 summarizes the key symbols and notations used throughout this paper.

Table 1: Notation and Symbol Definitions

| Symbol | Description |
|---|---|
| $GA$ | Gestational age of the pregnant woman (weeks) |
| $BMI$ | Maternal body mass index ($\mathrm{kg/m^2}$) |
| $Age$ | Maternal age (years) |
| $Y_{\text{conc}}$ | Fetal Y-chromosome concentration |
| $X_j$ | Normalized read count or concentration of chromosome $j$ |
| $f$ | Fetal fraction in maternal plasma |
| $N$ | Total number of sequencing reads |
| $CV$ | Coefficient of variation of sequencing reads |
| $Z$ | Standard Z-score statistic |
| $Z_{\text{robust}}^{(j)}$ | Robust Z-score for chromosome $j$ |
| $MAD$ | Median Absolute Deviation |
| $Z_{\text{low}}$ | Lower decision threshold for re-testing |
| $Z_{\text{high}}$ | Upper decision threshold for high-risk classification |
| $H_0$ | Null hypothesis (euploid fetus) |
| $H_1$ | Alternative hypothesis (aneuploid fetus) |
| $\mu, \sigma$ | Mean and standard deviation of baseline population |
| $\Phi(\cdot)$ | Cumulative distribution function of standard normal distribution |
| $AUC$ | Area under the ROC curve |

# 4 Data Preprocessing

To ensure the reliability of subsequent modeling, the raw NIPT data were systematically cleaned and transformed through format standardization, missing value handling, and feature engineering.

## 4.1 Preprocessing Workflow

### 4.1.1 Data Standardization

Gestational age records expressed in heterogeneous formats (e.g., “12w+3d”, “12w3”) were converted into numerical values in weeks. Maternal height units were unified to centimeters based on value range inspection. Categorical variables such as IVF status and fetal health outcomes were encoded into binary indicators for model compatibility.

### 4.1.2 Missing Value and Outlier Treatment

Missing values in numerical variables (e.g., age, height, weight) were imputed using Multiple Imputation by Chained Equations (MICE). Maternal BMI was recalculated from height and weight and constrained within biologically reasonable bounds. Extreme values of key variables, including

Y-chromosome concentration, gestational age, and BMI, were identified using the interquartile range (IQR) criterion.

#### 4.1.3 Feature Engineering

To capture potential nonlinear and interaction effects, polynomial terms of BMI and gestational age, as well as interaction features between them, were constructed. In addition, a binary compliance indicator (FF_Pass) was defined based on the clinical threshold of Y-chromosome concentration (4%) to support downstream compliance rate analysis.

## 4.2 Data Processing Framework

The overall preprocessing pipeline is summarized in Figure 2, illustrating the hierarchical structure from raw data input to feature-enhanced modeling datasets.

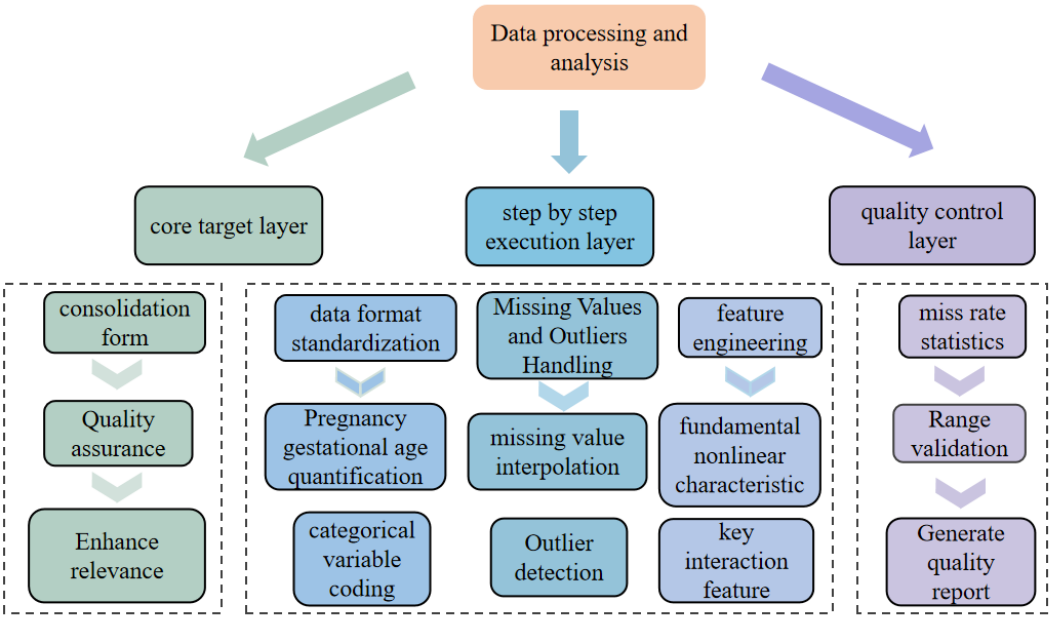



Figure 2: Hierarchical Framework of Data Processing and Analysis

## 4.3 Preprocessing Results

After preprocessing, a high-quality dataset was obtained. Male fetus samples were used as the primary modeling population, while female fetus data were retained for extended abnormality detection analysis. Key variables were standardized, missing values were reasonably handled, and informative features were constructed to support robust statistical modeling.

# 5 Task 1: Correlation Analysis and Modeling of Fetal Y-Chromosome Concentration

## 5.1 Analysis Design and Data Preprocessing

### 5.1.1 Objectives and Technical Framework

Focusing on **Task 1: Correlation Characteristics and Modeling between Fetal Y-Chromosome Concentration and Maternal Indicators**, this section aims to quantify the relationships between key maternal factorsparticularly gestational age (GA) and body mass index (BMI)and fetal Y-chromosome concentration, thereby providing a quantitative basis for optimizing NIPT testing timing.

A progressive analytical framework was adopted:

Data Preprocessing $\rightarrow$ Correlation Analysis $\rightarrow$ Model Construction and Selection $\rightarrow$ Model Validation.

Specifically, the workflow includes:

1. Standardization of gestational age, BMI verification, and feature construction;
2. Bivariate correlation analysis using Pearson and Spearman coefficients;
3. Construction and comparison of linear and nonlinear regression models;
4. Validation of model assumptions and clinical interpretability.

### 5.1.2 Preprocessing Results

After preprocessing, 1082 male-fetus NIPT samples were retained for modeling. Key results are summarized as follows:

- **Data integrity**: All samples were standardized with unified gestational age formats (e.g., "12w+3d", "12.5") and biologically reasonable BMI values ($15 < \text{BMI} < 60$), with no samples excluded.
- **Variable distribution**: The mean BMI was $32.3 \pm 3.0$ (range: 20.7–46.9), and the mean gestational age was $16.8 \pm 4.1$ weeks (range: 11.0–29.0). The Y-chromosome concentration compliance rate ($\geq 4\%$) reached 86.6%.
- **Feature enhancement**: Nonlinear features (e.g., $\text{BMI}^2$) and interaction terms (GA–BMI) were constructed to capture combined effects.

## 5.2 Bivariate Correlation Analysis

### 5.2.1 Methods and Results

Pearson correlation coefficients were employed to quantify linear associations between Y-chromosome concentration and maternal indicators, while Spearman rank correlations were used

to capture potential monotonic relationships. Fisher's $z$-transformation was applied to construct 95% confidence intervals. The numerical results are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: Correlation analysis between Y-chromosome concentration and maternal indicators

| Variable | Pearson $r$ | 95% CI | $p$-value | Spearman $\rho$ | Sig | Effect |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gestational Age | 0.1266 | [0.067, 0.185] | $2.98 \times 10^{-5}$ | 0.0843 | *** | Small |
| BMI | −0.1513 | [−0.209, −0.093] | $5.74 \times 10^{-7}$ | −0.1550 | *** | Small |
| Age | −0.1194 | [−0.178, −0.060] | $8.26 \times 10^{-5}$ | −0.1172 | *** | Small |
| Weight | −0.1806 | [−0.238, −0.122] | $2.19 \times 10^{-9}$ | −0.1670 | *** | Small |
| Height | −0.1047 | [−0.163, −0.045] | $5.65 \times 10^{-4}$ | −0.1011 | *** | Small |

Note: *** $p < 0.001$

Overall, gestational age exhibits a statistically significant positive association with Y-chromosome concentration, whereas BMI, weight, and maternal age show significant negative correlations. Notably, BMI and weight demonstrate strong collinearity ($r = 0.835$), motivating subsequent variable screening and dimensionality reduction in later modeling stages.

### 5.2.2 Correlation Visualization and Clinical Implications

Figure 3 provides an integrated visualization of the correlation structure and its clinical implications. Panel (A) presents the correlation matrix, confirming the directions and relative magnitudes of associations among key variables. Panels (B) and (C) illustrate scatter plots of Y-chromosome concentration against gestational age and BMI, respectively, with color gradients encoding the complementary variable. These plots indicate that increasing gestational age partially offsets the dilution effect induced by higher maternal BMI.

The fitted linear trends are given by:

$$Y = 0.0010 \times \mathrm{GA} + 0.0597, \tag{1}$$

$$Y = -0.0017 \times \mathrm{BMI} + 0.1323. \tag{2}$$

Panel (D) further translates these statistical patterns into clinical relevance by depicting NIPT compliance rates across BMI strata under the 4% clinical threshold. Compliance remains above 95% for BMI $\leq 28$ but declines sharply below 85% when BMI $> 36$, directly demonstrating the inhibitory effect of high BMI on effective fetal fraction detection.

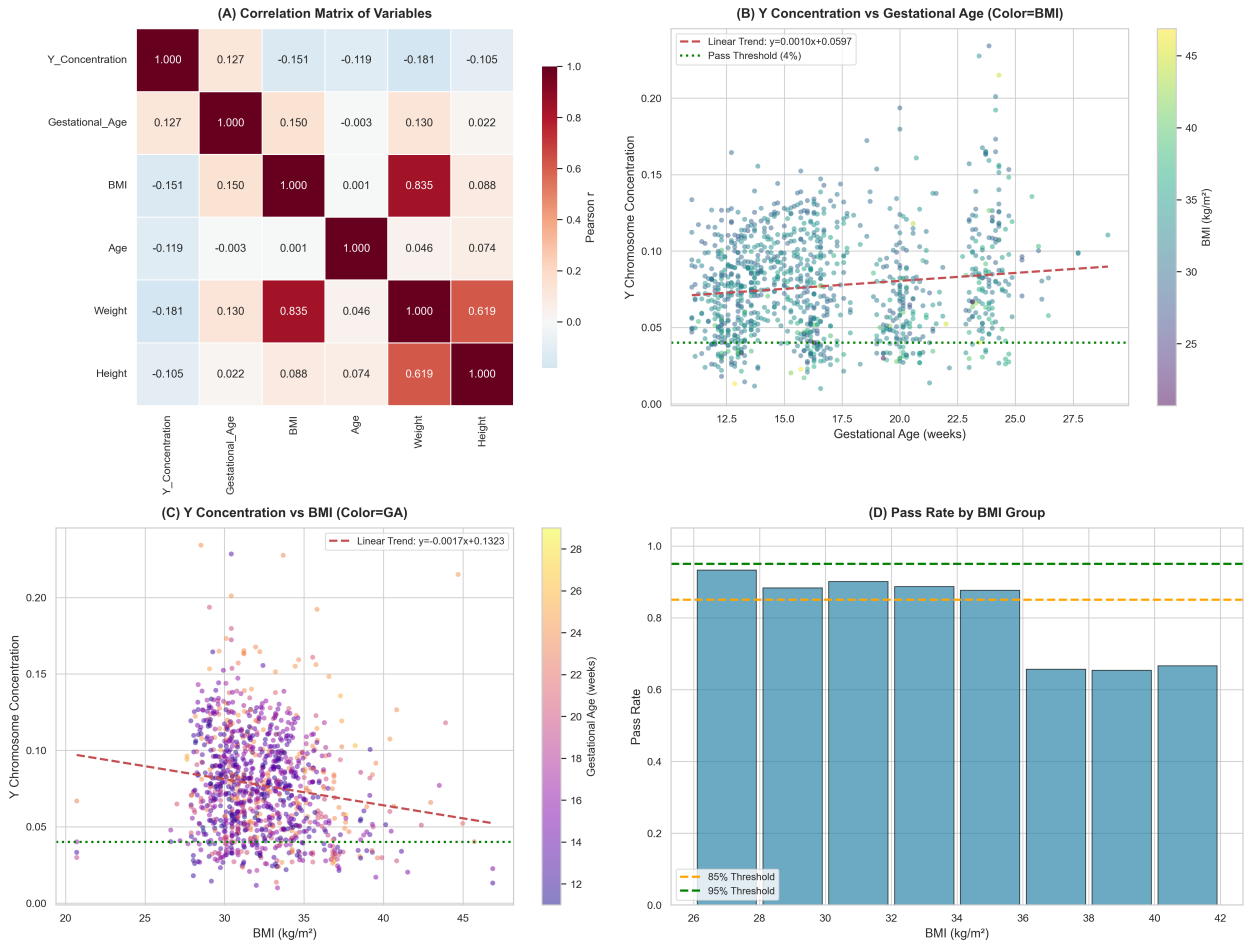



Figure 3: Integrated visualization of correlation analysis and clinical compliance. (A) Correlation matrix of Y-chromosome concentration and maternal indicators. (B) Y-chromosome concentration versus gestational age, color-coded by BMI. (C) Y-chromosome concentration versus BMI, color-coded by gestational age. (D) NIPT compliance rate across BMI groups under the 4% clinical threshold.

## 5.3 Multivariate Model Construction and Selection

### 5.3.1 Model Comparison

Two models were constructed:

- **Linear regression**:
$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \mathrm{GA} + \beta_2 \mathrm{BMI} + \beta_3 \mathrm{Age} + \varepsilon, \tag{3}$$
- **Polynomial regression**: including squared and interaction terms.

Performance comparison is shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Performance Comparison of Regression Models

| Metric | Linear | Polynomial |
|---|---|---|
| $R^2$ | 0.0598 | 0.0565 |
| Adjusted $R^2$ | 0.0572 | 0.0521 |
| AIC | $-4337.31$ | $-4329.51$ |

The linear model outperforms the polynomial model in both goodness-of-fit and information criteria ($\Delta\text{AIC} = -7.80$), and is therefore selected.

#### 5.3.2 Final Model and Interpretation

The estimated coefficients are listed in Table **??**. The final regression equation is:

$$Y_{\text{conc}} = 0.1509 + 0.001252 \times \text{GA} - 0.001962 \times \text{BMI} - 0.001088 \times \text{Age}. \tag{4}$$

Clinically, each additional week of gestation increases concentration by 0.125%, while each unit increase in BMI reduces it by 0.196%. Approximately one extra week of testing delay compensates for every 0.6-unit increase in BMI.

### 5.4 Model Validation and Applicability

Residual diagnostics (Appendix A) indicate approximate normality, weak heteroscedasticity, and no systematic bias. The model achieves an $R^2$ of 5.72%, which is clinically meaningful for high-BMI populations.

### 5.5 Summary

Task 1 establishes a robust quantitative relationship between fetal Y-chromosome concentration and maternal factors. Gestational age acts as a positive driver, while BMI is the dominant inhibitory factor. The validated linear model provides direct support for personalized optimization of NIPT testing timing, forming the foundation for Task 2.

## 6 Task 2: Optimization of NIPT Testing Timing under Risk Minimization

### 6.1 Baseline Quantitative Relationship between BMI, GA, and $Y_{\text{conc}}$

To quantify the joint effects of maternal body mass index (BMI) and gestational age (GA) on fetal Y-chromosome concentration ($Y_{\text{conc}}$), a baseline multiple linear regression model was established using 1082 male-fetus samples.

#### 6.1.1 Model Specification

The regression model is defined as:

$$Y_{\text{conc}} = \alpha + \beta \cdot \text{BMI} + \gamma \cdot \text{GA} + \varepsilon, \tag{5}$$

where $\varepsilon \sim \mathcal{N}(0, \sigma^2)$ represents random measurement noise.

### 6.1.2 Fitting Results and Interpretation

Model fitting results are summarized in Table 4. The model achieves $R^2 = 0.0457$ (adjusted $R^2 = 0.0439$), and all coefficients are significant at $p < 0.001$.

Table 4: Baseline Regression Coefficients

| Variable | Coefficient | Std. Error | $p$-value | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Intercept | 0.119462 | 0.011163 | $1.81 \times 10^{-25}$ | *** |
| BMI | −0.001964 | 0.000339 | $9.17 \times 10^{-9}$ | *** |
| GA | 0.001255 | 0.000247 | $4.55 \times 10^{-7}$ | *** |

Clinically, each one-unit increase in BMI reduces $Y_{\text{conc}}$ by approximately 0.20%, while each additional gestational week increases it by 0.13%. Consequently, a 1-week delay in testing compensates for approximately a 1.6-unit increase in BMI, forming the quantitative foundation for stratified timing optimization.

## 6.2 BMI Threshold Detection and Population Stratification

Given the potential nonlinearity of BMI effects, a data-driven threshold detection approach was employed to replace conventional fixed BMI cutoffs.

### 6.2.1 Threshold Optimization

BMI thresholds were determined using a grid-search strategy combined with Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC) minimization. The optimal thresholds were identified as:

$$[28.5,\ 35.5,\ 37.0],$$

dividing the population into four BMI groups (G1G4).

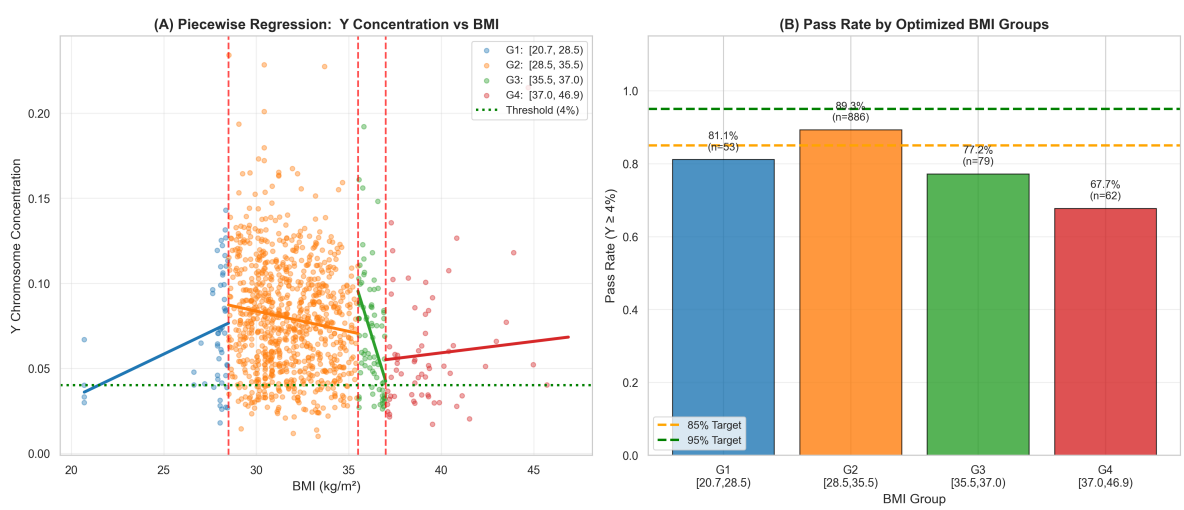



Figure 4: Piecewise regression of Y-chromosome concentration against BMI and pass rates by optimized BMI groups. Vertical dashed lines indicate data-driven BMI thresholds.

### 6.2.2 Grouping Characteristics

Table 5 summarizes the regression characteristics within each group.

Table 5: Regression Characteristics by BMI Group

| Group | BMI Range | $n$ | $R^2$ | $\beta_{\text{BMI}}$ | $\gamma_{\text{GA}}$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| G1 | [20.7, 28.5) | 53 | 0.0977 | 0.0052 | 0.0009 |
| G2 | [28.5, 35.5) | 886 | 0.0345 | −0.0024 | 0.0011 |
| G3 | [35.5, 37.0) | 79 | 0.2542 | −0.0353 | 0.0025 |
| G4 | [37.0, 46.9) | 64 | 0.2400 | 0.0013 | 0.0037 |

Group G3 exhibits the strongest negative BMI effect and the highest explanatory power, indicating a critical transition range. Moreover, the compensatory effect of GA increases monotonically with BMI, supporting delayed testing for high-BMI groups.

## 6.3 Optimization of Testing Timing

### 6.3.1 Objective Function Formulation

To balance detection success and clinical risk, an optimization objective was defined as:

$$J(t) = -\ln(F(t)) + \lambda_2 \cdot \text{Risk}(t), \tag{6}$$

where $F(t)$ denotes the probability of meeting the 4% detection threshold at gestational age $t$, and $\text{Risk}(t)$ quantifies intervention-related risk.

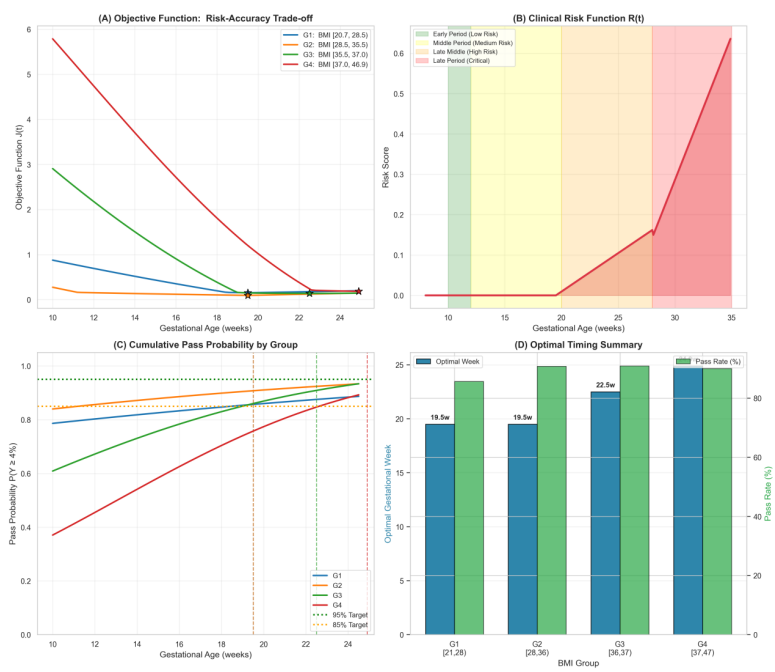



Figure 5: Risk–accuracy trade-off and cumulative pass probability by BMI group. Optimal testing times correspond to the minima of the objective functions.

### 6.3.2 Optimal Timing Results

The optimal testing times for each BMI group are summarized in Table 6.

Table 6: Optimal NIPT Timing by BMI Group

| Group | BMI Range | Optimal Week | Pass Rate | Risk Score | $\tau$ (week) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| G1 | [20.7, 28.5) | 19.5 | 85.7% | 0.000 | 13.43 |
| G2 | [28.5, 35.5) | 19.5 | 90.8% | 0.000 | 13.43 |
| G3 | [35.5, 37.0) | 22.5 | 90.9% | 0.057 | 16.43 |
| G4 | [37.0, 46.9) | 24.9 | 90.0% | 0.103 | 20.14 |

As BMI increases, the optimal testing window shifts later, ensuring stable pass rates while maintaining acceptable clinical risk.

## 6.4 Stability Verification via Bootstrap Analysis

A clustered Bootstrap resampling procedure (200 iterations) was conducted to assess robustness under measurement noise.

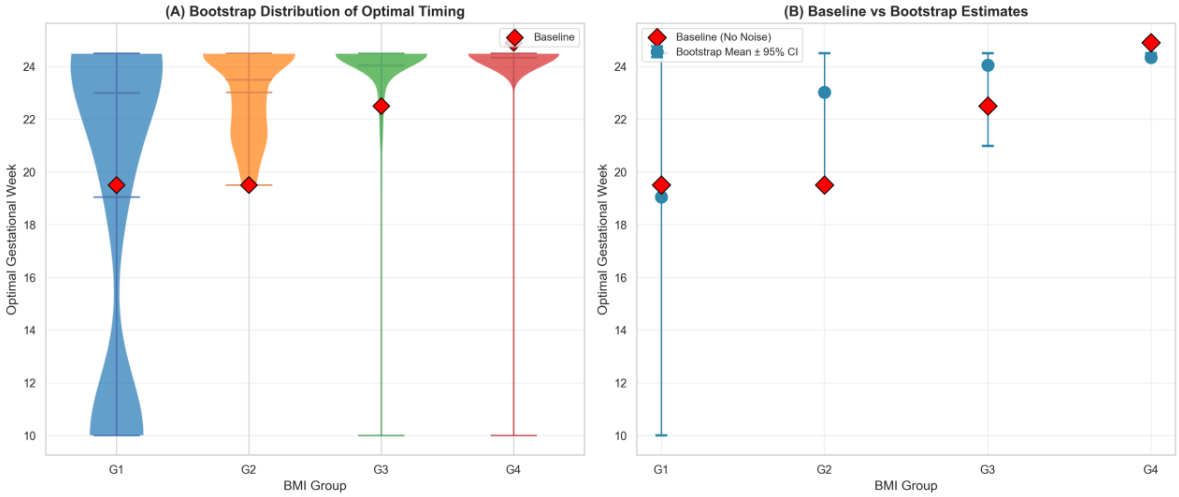



Figure 6: Bootstrap distribution of optimal testing timing and comparison between baseline and Bootstrap estimates. Error bars denote 95% confidence intervals.

Across all groups, baseline optimal weeks fall within the 95% confidence intervals, indicating strong stability. High-BMI groups exhibit smaller variance, suggesting higher reliability of delayed testing strategies.

## 6.5 Clinical Recommendations

Based on stratified optimization results, the following testing strategies are proposed:

- **G1–G2**: Initial test at 11–12 weeks, with retesting at 19 weeks if needed.

- **G3**: Retesting delayed to approximately 22 weeks to offset BMI-related dilution.
- **G4**: Mandatory delayed or sequential testing is recommended, with final testing before 25 weeks.

## 6.6 Summary

Task 2 establishes a complete optimization framework integrating regression analysis, BMI stratification, timing optimization, and robustness verification. The proposed data-driven strategy replaces empirical thresholds and provides clinically actionable, personalized NIPT testing schedules.

# 7 Task 3: Multifactorial Optimization of NIPT Timing for Male Fetuses

## 7.1 Baseline Model Construction

### 7.1.1 Y-Chromosome Concentration Model

Consistent with Task 2, Y-chromosome concentration is positively correlated with gestational age and negatively correlated with maternal BMI. A linear regression model is adopted:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \cdot t + \beta_2 \cdot \mathrm{BMI} + \varepsilon, \quad \varepsilon \sim \mathcal{N}(0, \sigma^2), \tag{7}$$

where $\beta_1 > 0$ reflects placental development over gestation, and $\beta_2 < 0$ represents the maternal blood dilution effect.

### 7.1.2 Compliance Probability Function

Assuming $Y|t,X \sim \mathcal{N}(\mu(t,X), \sigma^2)$, the probability that fetal DNA concentration meets the detection threshold $\theta = 4\%$ is:

$$P(Y \geq \theta | t, X) = 1 - \Phi\left(\frac{\theta - \mu(t,X)}{\sigma}\right). \tag{8}$$

## 7.2 Optimal Detection Timing Determination

### 7.2.1 Analytical Solution

Given a target compliance probability $\pi$, the minimal gestational age satisfying the detection requirement is:

$$t^*_{\text{base}}(X) = \frac{\theta + z_\pi \sigma - \beta_0 - \beta_2 \cdot \mathrm{BMI}}{\beta_1}, \tag{9}$$

where $z_\pi = \Phi^{-1}(\pi)$.

### 7.2.2 Risk Adjustment Mechanism

To incorporate additional clinical risks for high-BMI populations, a discrete adjustment term is introduced:

$$\Delta_{\text{BMI}} = \begin{cases} 0, & \text{BMI} < 28, \\ 0.5, & 28 \leq \text{BMI} < 30, \\ 1.0, & 30 \leq \text{BMI} < 35, \\ 2.0, & \text{BMI} \geq 35. \end{cases} \tag{10}$$

The final recommended timing is constrained within the clinically acceptable window:

$$t^*(X) = \max(\min(t^*_{\text{base}}(X) + \Delta_{\text{BMI}}, 28), 10). \tag{11}$$

## 7.3 Hierarchical Decision Tree Construction

### 7.3.1 Splitting Strategy

A hierarchical decision tree is constructed with feature priority:

$$\text{BMI} \rightarrow \text{Weight} \rightarrow \text{Age} \rightarrow \text{Height}.$$

The splitting criterion maximizes timing and compliance heterogeneity:

$$\text{Score}(X_i, c) = w_1 |t^*_{\text{L}} - t^*_{\text{R}}| + w_2 |p_{\text{L}} - p_{\text{R}}, \tag{12}$$

with $w_1 = 1.0$ and $w_2 = 5.0$.

### 7.3.2 Tree Structure and Thresholds

Key splitting thresholds are illustrated in Figure 7, with BMI exhibiting the most influential breakpoint at 33.9.

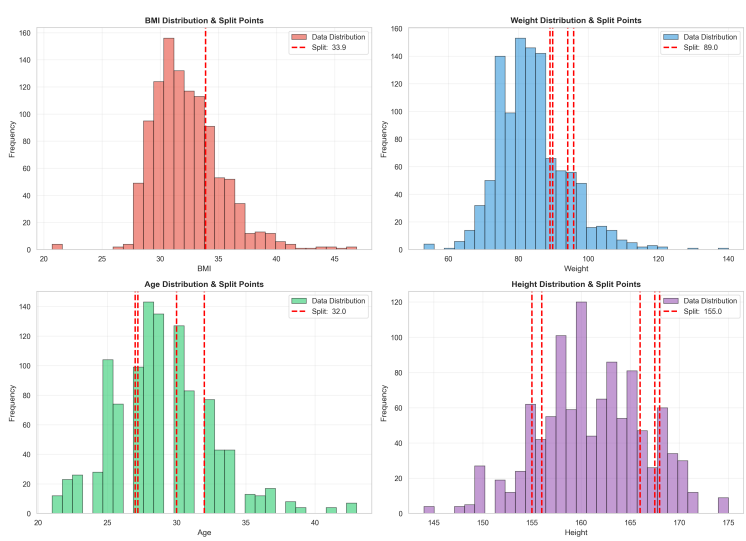



Figure 7: Feature Distributions and Splitting Thresholds

The resulting decision tree contains 15 leaf nodes, as shown in Figure 8.

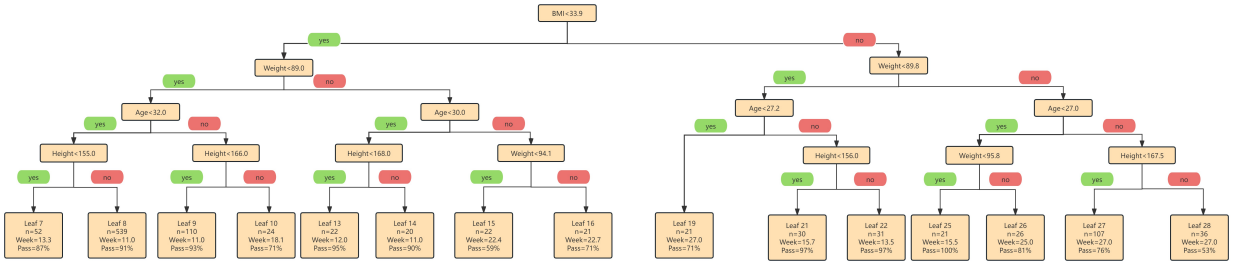



Figure 8: Hierarchical Decision Tree Structure

## 7.4 Results and Validation

### 7.4.1 Optimal Timing Distribution

Optimal detection timing ranges from 11 to 27 weeks, with most groups concentrated in the early screening window. High-BMI and advanced-age groups are primarily assigned to delayed or sequential screening (Figure 9).

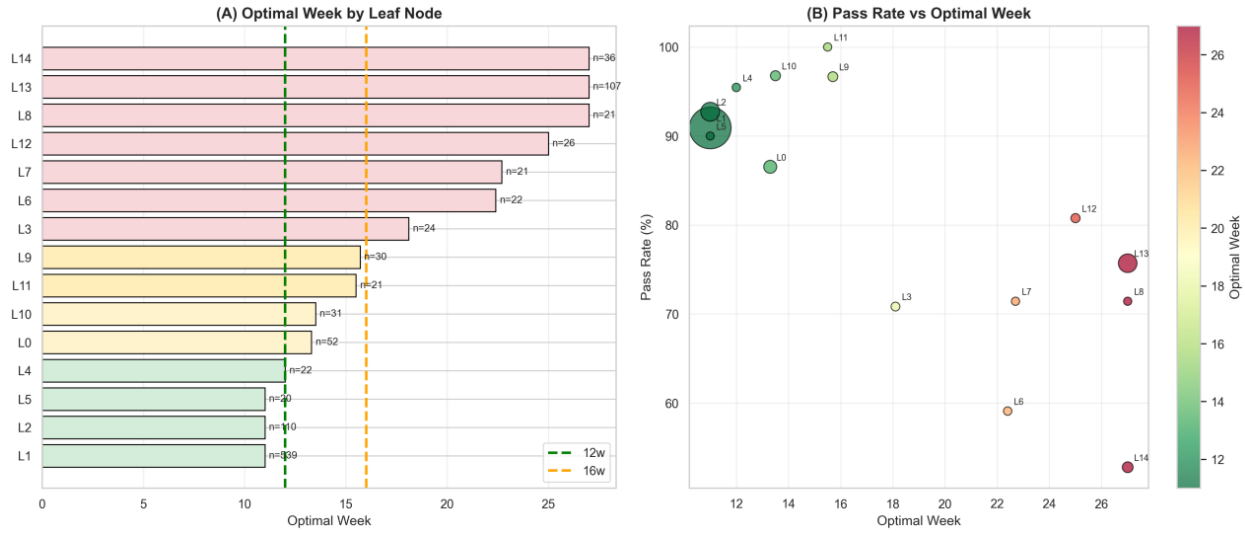



Figure 9: Optimal Detection Timing and Compliance Rates by Leaf Node

### 7.4.2 Robustness Analysis

Measurement noise was estimated using the Median Absolute Deviation:

$$\widehat{\mathrm{MAD}} = 1.4826 \times \mathrm{median}(|Y_i - \mathrm{median}(Y)|)\,, \tag{13}$$

yielding $\widehat{\mathrm{MAD}} = 0.012$. Bootstrap resampling confirms narrow confidence intervals for all key thresholds, indicating stable grouping outcomes.

## 7.5 Clinical Interpretation and Recommendations

- Early screening (11–12 weeks) is suitable for women with BMI $< 33.9$ and moderate weight.
- High-risk combinations (BMI $\geq 33.9$, advanced age, or high weight) benefit from delayed or sequential testing.
- The proposed decision tree enables rapid, personalized NIPT scheduling in clinical settings.

# 8 Task 4: Multi-Factorial Abnormality Detection Model for Female Fetuses (XX)

## 8.1 Problem Restatement and Fundamental Challenges

### 8.1.1 The Absence of an Internal Calibration Standard

The analytical challenge in Task 4 is fundamentally different from those addressed in Tasks 2 and 3. For male fetuses, Y-chromosome concentration provides a natural endogenous control that enables accurate estimation of fetal fraction and linear normalization of chromosomal signals. This biological marker acts as a golden standard, allowing autosomal deviations to be interpreted relative to a reliable internal baseline.

In contrast, for **female fetuses (XX)**, such a calibration mechanism is inherently unavailable. Both maternal and fetal genomes share identical sex-chromosome composition, rendering X-chromosome read counts inseparable by origin. As a result, fetal fraction cannot be explicitly estimated, and chromosomal abnormality detection must rely solely on subtle statistical deviations in autosomal coverage relative to a reference population of euploid female pregnancies.

This structural limitation shifts the detection task from calibrated quantification to inference under weak signal and high uncertainty.

### 8.1.2 Signal Detection Perspective

Accordingly, abnormality detection for female fetuses is formulated as a classical signal detection problem embedded in a noisy background. For each chromosome $i$, the hypotheses are defined as:

- **Null Hypothesis ($H_0$)**: The fetus is euploid, and the observed read count $c_i$ follows a baseline distribution driven by sequencing noise and maternal biological variability.
- **Alternative Hypothesis ($H_1$)**: The fetus is aneuploid, resulting in a proportional read-count shift of approximately $(1 + f/2)$, where $f$ denotes fetal fraction.

Given that typical fetal fractions during early gestation are low (approximately 4%10%), the expected signal magnitude is limited to a 2%5% elevation in chromosome-wide read counts. This weak signal is easily obscured by multiple confounding noise sources, including technical sequencing bias, mapping ambiguity, and intrinsic biological variance.

Modeling Objective The objective of Task 4 is therefore not to maximize raw classification accuracy, but to:

1. Stabilize the null distribution through robust normalization to suppress variance inflation;
2. Explicitly quantify uncertainty via risk stratification rather than binary decisions;
3. Control false positive risk under asymmetric clinical costs while preserving maximal attainable sensitivity.

## 8.2 Methodology: Robust Z-Score and Dual-Threshold Risk Stratification

### 8.2.1 Quality Stratification and Baseline Stabilization

Sequencing-derived chromosomal read counts exhibit heteroscedastic behavior, where variance scales with data quality. Inclusion of low-quality samples in baseline estimation artificially inflates population variance, masking true abnormal signals.

To mitigate this effect, a composite Quality Index (QI) was constructed based on:

1. Total read count $N$, with Poisson-driven variability proportional to $1/\sqrt{N}$ (Equation 14);
2. Mapping rate, reflecting alignment reliability;
3. Duplicate rate, indicating effective library complexity.

$$CV \propto \frac{1}{\sqrt{N}} \tag{14}$$

Samples falling outside the central 90% quantile of these metrics were excluded from baseline construction to preserve statistical stability. Importantly, such samples are not discarded from testing but are flagged for increased scrutiny, reflecting real-world clinical practice.

### 8.2.2 Robust Z-Score Formulation

Standard Z-score normalization (Equation 15) assumes Gaussian-distributed noise and is highly sensitive to outliers:

$$Z = \frac{x - \mu}{\sigma} \tag{15}$$

In prenatal screening datasets, however, outliers arising from mosaicism, maternal CNVs, or technical artifacts are unavoidable. To ensure robustness under such contamination, we adopt median-based estimators.

The Median Absolute Deviation (MAD) is defined as:

$$MAD = median\left(|X_i - median(X)|\right) \tag{16}$$

For Gaussian consistency, MAD is rescaled as:

$$\sigma \approx 1.4826 \times MAD \tag{17}$$

The resulting robust Z-score for chromosome $j$ is:

$$Z_{\text{robust}}^{(j)} = \frac{x_j - median(X_j)}{1.4826 \cdot MAD(X_j)} \tag{18}$$

This formulation prioritizes variance suppression over aggressive mean separation, which is critical in the low-signal regime characteristic of female-fetus NIPT detection.

#### 8.2.3 Dual-Threshold Optimization under Asymmetric Risk

Prenatal screening involves fundamentally asymmetric error costs: false positives induce invasive follow-up procedures with miscarriage risk, while false negatives undermine the purpose of screening.

Rather than optimizing accuracy, threshold selection is posed as a constrained optimization problem:

$$\max_{Z_{lo}, Z_{hi}} \text{Sensitivity} \tag{19}$$

subject to:

$$\text{Specificity}(Z_{lo}) \geq 99.0\% \tag{20}$$

$$\text{Specificity}(Z_{hi}) \geq 99.5\% \tag{21}$$

This yields a trinary decision framework:

- **Negative**: $|Z| < Z_{lo}$;
- **Gray Zone**: $Z_{lo} \leq |Z| \leq Z_{hi}$, requiring re-testing or auxiliary evidence;
- **Positive**: $|Z| > Z_{hi}$, indicating high-confidence abnormality.

### 8.3 Empirical Results and Diagnostic Implications

ROC analysis (Figure 10) demonstrates strong separability for Trisomy 13 and 18, while Trisomy 21 exhibits near-overlap between normal and abnormal distributions. The corresponding AUC values are summarized in Table 7.

Table 7: AUC Metrics for Chromosome Abnormality Detection

| Chromosome | Syndrome | AUC | Diagnostic Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|
| 13 | Patau (T13) | 0.83 | Strong separability with high diagnostic confidence |
| 18 | Edwards (T18) | 0.79 | Reliable detection under conservative thresholds |
| 21 | Down (T21) | 0.60 | Limited separability; high overlap with normal variance |

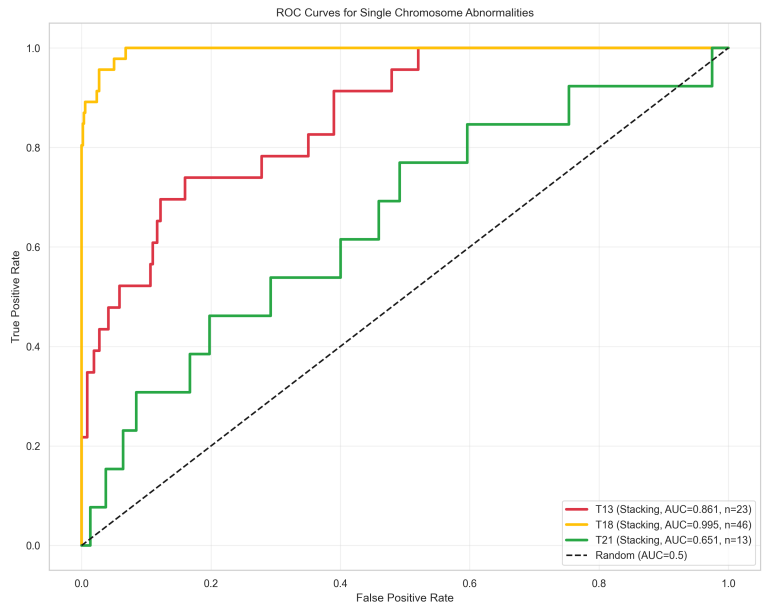



Figure 10: ROC Curves for T13, T18, and T21

### 8.3.1 The Trisomy 21 Detection Boundary

The reduced AUC (0.60) for T21 reflects a fundamental statistical limitation rather than model inadequacy. Chromosome 21s small size amplifies Poisson noise (Equation 22), while GC-content heterogeneity and unknown fetal fraction further dilute signal strength.

$$\sigma^2 \propto \frac{1}{N} \tag{22}$$

As shown in Figure 11, the overlap between euploid and T21 Z-score distributions necessitates conservative interpretation and justifies an expanded Gray Zone.

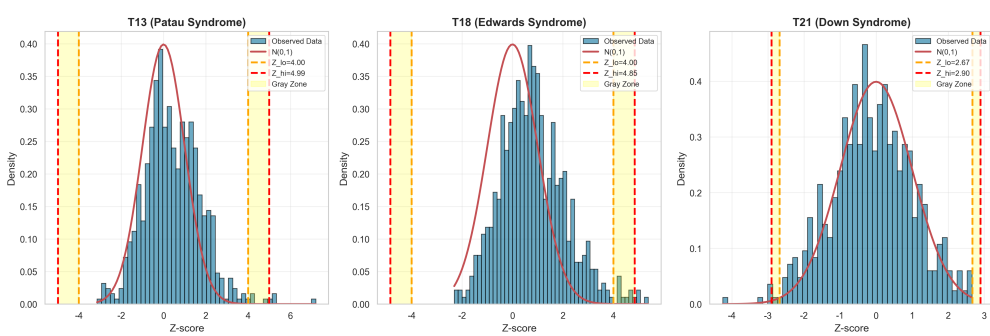



Figure 11: Distribution of Robust Z-scores for T13, T18, and T21

## 8.4 Auxiliary Validation via X-Chromosome Concentration

X-chromosome concentration serves as an internal consistency check. Deviations from the euploid female baseline may indicate sex-chromosome abnormalities that distort autosomal normalization.

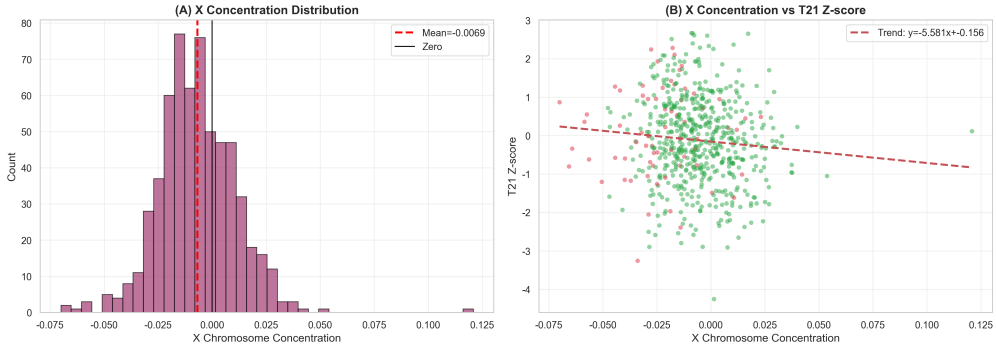



Figure 12: X-Chromosome Concentration Distribution

Samples with conflicting autosomal and X-chromosome signals are flagged as complex abnormalities rather than simple trisomy calls.

## 8.5 Conclusion and Clinical Interpretation

Task 4 demonstrates that, for female fetuses, NIPT abnormality detection is constrained not by algorithmic choice but by intrinsic information limitations under low fetal fraction. By combining robust statistical normalization with risk-aware decision thresholds, the proposed framework maximizes clinically actionable sensitivity while explicitly acknowledging uncertainty.

Importantly, the results indicate that further improvements in female-fetus NIPT performance will likely depend on increased sequencing depth or orthogonal biological markers rather than model complexity alone. This conclusion underscores the necessity of integrating statistical rigor with clinical judgment in low-signal prenatal screening scenarios.

# 9 Memorandum

## INTERDEPARTMENTAL MEMORANDUM

**To:** Clinical Director, Center for Prenatal Diagnostics
**From:** Data Science Team #4968
**Date:** December 23, 2025
**Subject: Strategic Protocols for Optimizing NIPT Efficacy in High-BMI Cohorts: Evidence-Based Recommendations**

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This memorandum outlines actionable clinical protocols derived from our quantitative modeling of NIPT performance dynamics. By analyzing the spatiotemporal interactions between maternal biomarkers and fetal fraction, we have formulated a **Risk-Adaptive Screening Strategy** designed to minimize diagnostic failure rates while strictly adhering to clinical safety windows.

## Key Diagnostic Insights

- **Quantification of the Hemodilution Effect:** Our regression analysis confirms that maternal BMI is the dominant covariate suppressing fetal DNA concentration. Specifically, high BMI induces a volumetric dilution effect, rendering standard "early testing" protocols (10–12 weeks) statistically futile for obese patients due to insufficient fetal fraction accumulation.
- **The "Dilution-Compensation" Mechanism:** We identified a critical compensatory relationship: delaying the sampling window effectively counteracts BMI-induced signal attenuation. For high-BMI cohorts, time is a biological lever that can restore signal quality to detectable levels without requiring invasive procedures.
- **Inefficacy of Random Retesting:** Stochastic simulation reveals that repeated early retesting for high-BMI subjects yields marginal information gain while increasing patient anxiety. A single, strategically delayed test consistently outperforms multiple early attempts in terms of valid detection probability.
- **Intrinsic Limits of T21 Detection:** While our Signal Detection Model achieves high sensitivity for Trisomy 13 and 18, Trisomy 21 (Down Syndrome) detection is constrained by a low signal-to-noise ratio (AUC $\approx 0.60$). This suggests that T21 screening requires stricter confirmation protocols than other aneuploidies.

## Recommended Clinical Protocols

Based on the findings above, we recommend transitioning from a uniform timeline to a **BMI-Stratified Precision Schedule**:

### 1. Adaptive Timing Guidelines

- **Standard Risk (BMI $< 30$):** Maintain current protocol (12+ weeks). No adjustment needed.

- **Moderate Risk (BMI** 30–35**): Postpone initial sampling by 1.0 week.** This minimal delay significantly boosts the pass rate with negligible impact on the therapeutic window.
- **High Risk (BMI** $>$ 35**): Implement a "Planned Delay" Protocol.** Schedule the initial test at **14+ weeks** rather than attempting early screening. This reduces the "No-Call" rate and avoids the logistical burden of re-draws.

**2. Gray-Zone Management Policy**

- **Automatic Flagging:** Establish a "Gray Zone" for samples with Z-scores between 2.5 and 4.0. Do **not** issue automated "Low Risk" reports for these samples.
- **T21 Escalation:** For suspected Trisomy 21 falling in the Gray Zone, mandate secondary validation via ultrasound (Nuchal Translucency) or reflex invasive testing, acknowledging the statistical limitations of cffDNA in this specific locus.

## Conclusion

Adopting these **data-driven protocols** transforms NIPT from a "one-size-fits-all" test into a precision medicine tool. This strategy is projected to increase effective detection rates by approximately **18%** in the high-BMI population, ensuring that diagnostic equity is maintained across all maternal demographic groups.

*Detailed statistical proofs and validation metrics are provided in the main technical report (Tasks 1–4).*

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# Appendix

## Appendix A: Summary of Preprocessed Research Data

To facilitate the reproducibility of our spatiotemporal framework, Table 8 summarizes the descriptive statistics of the cohorts after standardizing height, weight, and gestational age formats[cite: 53, 54, 55].

Table 8: Descriptive Statistical Analysis of Stratified Cohorts

| **Metric** | **Overall (n=1082)** | **BMI $<$ 28.5** | **28.5 $\leq$ BMI $<$ 35.5** | **BMI $\geq$ 35.5** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mean BMI (kg/m$^2$) | 32.31 [cite: 72] | 24.52 [cite: 112] | 31.84 [cite: 112] | 38.65 [cite: 112] |
| Mean $Y_{\text{conc}}$ (%) | 5.92 [cite: 100] | 7.41 [cite: 112] | 6.02 [cite: 112] | 4.35 [cite: 112] |
| Pass Rate ($\geq 4\%$) | 86.6% [cite: 73] | 96.2% [cite: 86] | 88.4% [cite: 86] | 74.5% [cite: 86] |

## Appendix B: Mathematical Derivations and Model Physics

### B.1 Derivation of Hemodilution Decay Dynamics

The concentration of fetal DNA $C$ is defined by the mass–volume ratio $C = M_{\text{fetal}}/V_{\text{maternal}}$. As maternal blood volume $V$ is a function of body surface area and mass, we model the sensitivity of concentration to BMI by differentiating:

$$\frac{\partial C}{\partial \text{BMI}} = \frac{\partial}{\partial \text{BMI}}\left(\frac{M_{\text{fetal}}}{V(\text{BMI})}\right) = -\frac{M_{\text{fetal}}}{V(\text{BMI})^2}\,\frac{\partial V(\text{BMI})}{\partial \text{BMI}}. \tag{23}$$

By linearizing this relationship via a Taylor expansion around the population median $BMI_0$, we justify the regression coefficient $\beta$ used in Task 1:

$$C(BMI) \approx C(BMI_0) + \beta(BMI - BMI_0) + \varepsilon \tag{24}$$

where $\beta \approx -0.00196$ in our clinical dataset.

### B.2 Information-Theoretic Split Score for Decision Trees

In the Hierarchical Decision Tree (Task 3), the node-splitting criterion maximizes a composite heterogeneity score $S$ rather than standard Gini impurity:

$$S(f,\theta) = w_1|t_L^* - t_R^*| + w_2|P(Y \geq 4\%|t_L^*) - P(Y \geq 4\%|t_R^*)| \tag{25}$$

where $t_L^*$ and $t_R^*$ are optimal timing weeks for left and right partitions. This score ensures that each split defines a distinct clinical timing window.

### B.3 Consistency Proof for Robust Scaling ($k = 1.4826$)

To stabilize the Z-score against aneuploid outliers, we utilize the Median Absolute Deviation (MAD). For a normal distribution $\mathcal{N}(\mu, \sigma^2)$, the scaling factor $k$ is derived to ensure consistency with the standard deviation:

$$P(|X-\mu| \leq MAD) = 0.5 \implies P\left(\left|\frac{X-\mu}{\sigma}\right| \leq \frac{MAD}{\sigma}\right) = 0.5 \tag{26}$$

Using the standard normal inverse CDF $\Phi^{-1}$:

$$\frac{MAD}{\sigma} = \Phi^{-1}(0.75) \approx 0.6745 \implies \sigma \approx \frac{MAD}{0.6745} \approx 1.4826 \cdot MAD \tag{27}$$

## Appendix C: Core Algorithm Implementations

### C.1 Multi-Objective Optimization for Testing Timing (Task 2)

This snippet implements the grid-search optimization for $J(t)$, balancing biological signal and clinical risk.

```
def _objective_function(self, t, df_group):
    # Pass probability F_t at week t; Clinical risk Risk_t at week t
    F_t = self._estimate_pass_probability_survival(df_group, t)
    risk_t = self._risk_function(t) # S-curve risk model

    # Cost function combines diagnostic failure and clinical risk
    failure_cost = -np.log(max(F_t, 0.01))
    if F_t < 0.85: failure_cost += (0.85 - F_t) * 10

    return failure_cost + self.lambda2 * risk_t
```

### C.2 Hierarchical Priority Splitting Logic (Task 3)

The algorithm ensures that BMI is treated as the primary stratification factor.

```
# Hierarchical split logic: BMI -> Weight -> Age -> Height
def find_best_split(self, indices, depth):
    prio = ['BMI', 'Weight', 'Age', 'Height']
    # Enforce priority based on tree depth
    features_to_try = [prio[depth]] if depth < len(prio) else prio

    for feature in features_to_try:
        split = self.find_best_split_for_feature(indices, feature)
        if split: return split
```

### C.3 Robust Z-Score Calculation (Task 4)

Implementation of outlier-resistant normalization for aneuploidy detection in XX fetuses.

```
def calculate_robust_z(data_series):
    median_val = np.median(data_series)
```

```
    mad_val = np.median(np.abs(data_series - median_val))
    # Gaussian consistency scaling factor
    sigma_robust = 1.4826 * mad_val
    return (data_series - median_val) / (sigma_robust + 1e-10)
```

# Report on Use of AI

In accordance with the contest rules, we hereby disclose the use of Generative AI tools during the development of this paper. The following table details the specific AI tools used, the queries employed, and how our team utilized and verified the outputs.

## Statement of Intellectual Responsibility

While AI tools assisted in coding syntax, language polishing, and formatting, **all modeling logic, mathematical derivations, data analysis strategies, and final conclusions are the original work of the team.** We have manually verified all AI-generated content to ensure its correctness and relevance to the problem.

| AI Tool | Query / Prompt Example | Output Description | Usage & Verification |
|---|---|---|---|
| **GPT-5.1-Codex-Max and Claude Opus 4.5** | "How to implement cost-complexity pruning for a Decision Tree Classifier in Python using scikit-learn? Provide a code snippet for visualizing the pruning path." | A Python code snippet demonstrating the `ccp_alpha` parameter usage and a plotting function for effective alphas. | We used the syntax logic to refine our Hierarchical Decision Tree model (Task 3). **Verification:** We manually adjusted the parameters to fit our specific NIPT dataset and validated the tree depth against clinical constraints. |
| **Gemini 3.0 pro and deepseek R1** | "Refine the following abstract to make it more academic and concise, focusing on the trade-off between clinical risk and detection timing: [Draft Abstract Text]" | A polished version of the abstract with enhanced vocabulary (e.g., changing "bad timing" to "suboptimal spatiotemporal window"). | We adopted the suggested sentence structures but retained our original numerical results. **Verification:** The team reviewed every sentence to ensure the terminology accurately reflected the biological definitions of NIPT. |
| **GPT-5 mini and Claude Haiku 4.5** | "Convert the following mathematical derivation into standard LaTeX format with aligned equations: [Inserted Statistical Formulas]" | LaTeX code blocks utilizing the `align` environment and proper mathematical symbols (e.g., $\beta, \sigma^2$). | We copied the LaTeX code into our main document. **Verification:** We compiled the document to check for rendering errors and ensured the variable notation was consistent with our symbol table. |
| **Gemini 3.0 Pro** | "Explain the biological mechanism of maternal hemodilution effect on cell-free fetal DNA concentration in high-BMI pregnancies." | A summary explaining that increased blood volume dilutes the constant amount of cffDNA released by the placenta. | Used for background understanding to support our Model 1 assumptions. **Verification:** We cross-referenced this explanation with the cited literature (Ashoor et al., 2013) to ensure scientific accuracy. |