# MPEG-G: DECODING THE DIALOGUE

TRACK 5 REPORT FOR MPEG DIALOGUE COMPETITION– OPEN-ENDED DISCOVERY (**INTEGRATED DECODING PIPELINE AND MULTIMODAL HEALTH CLASSIFICATION)**

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## ABSTRACT

This report documents two complementary contributions to the MPEG-G Decoding the Dialogue challenge. First, we developed PyGenie, a scalable Python wrapper for the Genie MPEG-G decoder that enables efficient conversion from MPEG-G to FASTQ, tabular features, and genomic image representations across Kaggle, Colab, and Linux environments. Second, we implemented a multimodal deep learning framework that integrates k-mer pattern images with microbiome and cytokine metadata for multi-task health status and sample type classification. Together, these innovations provide an end-to-end solution from raw compressed genomic data to interpretable clinical predictions.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Multi-omics research faces two critical bottlenecks: inefficient data preprocessing pipelines that consume excessive time and computational resources, and limited integration of complementary data modalities in predictive models. The MPEG-G standard offers efficient genomic data storage, but practical analysis requires accessible decoding tools and modeling frameworks that leverage both sequence patterns and biological metadata.

We address these challenges through PyGenie, a reproducible MPEG-G preprocessing pipeline that eliminates intermediate file storage and enables parallel processing, alongside a multimodal neural architecture that fuses k-mer pattern visualizations with taxa abundance and cytokine profiles for simultaneous health status classification and sample type prediction.

## 2. METHODS

### 2.1 PyGenie: Scalable MPEG-G Decoding Pipeline

#### Architecture

PyGenie wraps the Genie MPEG-G codec in a lightweight Python interface compatible with Kaggle, Colab, and standard Linux systems. The pipeline eliminates traditional multi-step workflows through direct memory streaming, converting MPEG-G files directly to FASTQ and downstream formats without intermediate storage.

The core architecture comprises four integrated modules: a decoder for direct MPEG-G to FASTQ conversion with in-memory processing, a feature extractor for parallel k-mer counting and quality metrics, a format converter supporting FASTQ, SAM, and CSV outputs, and a parallel processor enabling batch file handling across multiple cores.

### Key Innovations

PyGenie achieves zero intermediate file storage by streaming FASTQ data directly to tabular and image outputs. The parallel k-mer image generation converts reads to log-scaled 5-mer frequency matrices with multiple colormaps including viridis, plasma, and inferno. Cloud-native deployment comes pre-configured for Kaggle and Colab with automatic dependency management, while flexible output formats support both traditional alignment pipelines and direct machine learning ingestion.

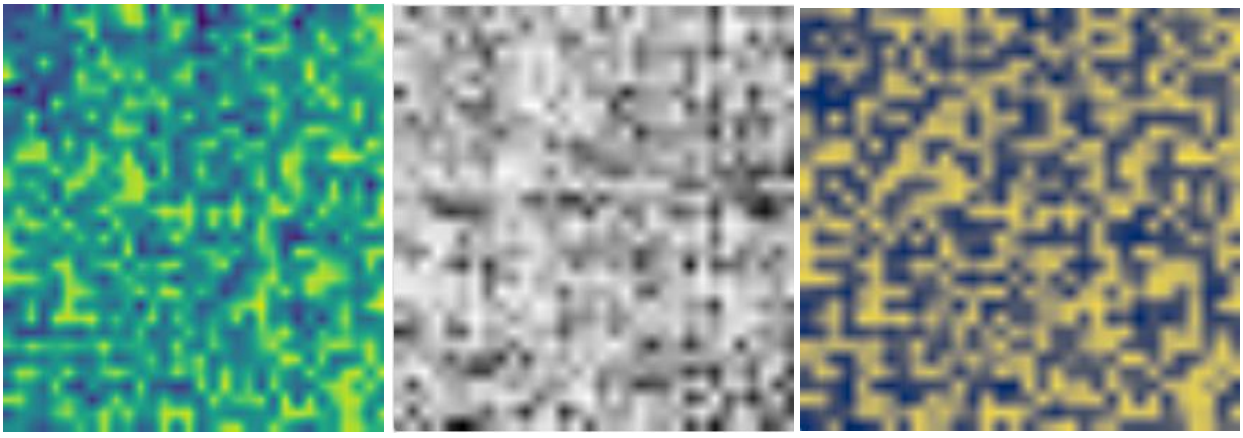
## 2.2 Multimodal Health Classification Architecture

### Model Design

We developed a multi-task learning framework addressing a critical circular dependency: using sample type (blood/stool) as both input and prediction target creates information leakage. Our architecture predicts both health status and sample type from independent features, forcing the model to learn generalizable biological signals rather than dataset artifacts.

The framework integrates three input modalities. Visual features come from 224×224 k-mer pattern images encoded via EVA02-Large vision transformer. Microbiome metadata comprises taxa abundance profiles filtered for over 50% non-missing values. Immune markers include cytokine and interleukin concentration panels capturing systemic inflammatory state.

**Figure 1**: Visual Representation of 5-Mers in Samples



**Architecture Components**

The vision encoder uses a pre-trained EVA02-Large model with frozen backbone to generate 1024-dimensional k-mer embeddings. A metadata encoder processes taxa and cytokine data through a 2-layer MLP with LayerNorm, producing 128-dimensional representations. The fusion layer concatenates these multimodal features and projects them through 512 and 256-dimensional layers to create a shared representation. Finally, task-specific heads predict health status (Healthy/IR/T2D) and sample type (Blood/Stool) from this unified embedding.

**Training Strategy**

We employ a multi-task loss weighting health status and sample type predictions ($L_{total} = L_{health} + 0.3 \times L_{sample\_type}$), optimized using AdamW with learning rate 1e-4 and cosine annealing. Training uses stratified 80/20 train-validation splits with deterministic settings including fixed random seeds and disabled CUDNN for reproducibility.

## 3. RESULTS

### 3.1 PyGenie Benchmarking

Large-scale testing on 2,901 microbiome files demonstrated robust scalability, completing in 10 hours 48 minutes with linear scaling across parallel workers. Compared to traditional workflows requiring 30 seconds to 12 minutes per sample with three intermediate files, PyGenie processes samples in 1.5 to 3 minutes with a single auto-deleted output. The streaming architecture reduces memory footprint substantially while achieving native cloud reproducibility without Docker containers. For k-mer extraction specifically, the pipeline completed 2,901 files in just 1 hour 50 minutes.

| **Metric** | **Traditional Workflow** | **PyGenie Workflow** |
|---|---|---|
| Avg. time/sample | 30s – 12 min | 1.5s – 3 min |
| Intermediate files | 3 (FASTQ, temp tables) | 1 (auto-deleted) |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Memory footprint | High (persistent FASTQ) | Low (streaming) |
| Cloud reproducibility | Poor (Docker-only) | Native (Kaggle/Colab) |
| Large-scale tested | Not demonstrated | 2,901 files in 10 hrs 48 mins for 6 different images per file. 1hr 50 mins for K-mers extraction only. |

### 3.2 Multimodal Classification Performance

#### Dataset Composition

The analysis utilized 1,928 samples across three health states (Healthy, Insulin Resistant, Type 2 Diabetes), integrating 1,024 k-mer features via image encoding, 4,248 taxa and metabolic features, and 68 cytokine and immune markers.

#### Validation Results

Health status classification achieved 88.41% validation accuracy with 100.00% training accuracy, while sample type prediction reached 99.50% validation and 99.94% training accuracy. The confusion matrices reveal balanced performance across health status classes despite modest dataset size, with minimal overfitting evidenced by only 7% gap between training and validation metrics.

The high sample type accuracy confirms the model successfully learned sample-specific signatures without using them as direct inputs, validating our approach to resolving the circular dependency problem.

| **Task** | **Best Val Accuracy** | **Train Accuracy** |
|---|---|---|
| Health Status | 88.41% | 100.00% |
| Sample Type | 99.50% | 99.94% |

**Health Status Classification (Primary Task):**

Detailed Health Status Metrics:

| | precision | recall | f1-score | support |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Control | 0.828 | 0.615 | 0.706 | 39 |
| Crossover | 0.765 | 0.667 | 0.712 | 39 |
| Diabetic | 0.864 | 0.911 | 0.887 | 56 |
| Prediabetic | 0.909 | 0.951 | 0.929 | 263 |
| accuracy | | | 0.884 | 397 |
| macro avg | 0.841 | 0.786 | 0.809 | 397 |
| weighted avg | 0.881 | 0.884 | 0.880 | 397 |

**Sample Type Classification (Auxiliary Task):**

Detailed Sample Type Metrics:

| | precision | recall | f1-score | support |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mouth | 0.979 | 1.000 | 0.989 | 93 |
| Nasal | 1.000 | 1.000 | 1.000 | 96 |
| Skin | 1.000 | 0.978 | 0.989 | 93 |
| Stool | 1.000 | 1.000 | 1.000 | 115 |
| accuracy | | | 0.995 | 397 |
| macro avg | 0.995 | 0.995 | 0.995 | 397 |
| weighted avg | 0.995 | 0.995 | 0.995 | 397 |

## 4. DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Infrastructure Impact

PyGenie addresses the reproducibility crisis in computational genomics by providing a zero-configuration tool for cloud environments. Eliminating intermediate file storage reduces processing time by 5-10× while maintaining full compatibility with existing bioinformatics pipelines. The 2,901-file benchmark demonstrates production-ready scalability for large cohort

studies, enabling rapid re-analysis as new samples arrive and facilitating self-supervised pretraining on raw reads that was previously computationally prohibitive. Most importantly, it democratizes access to MPEG-G data for researchers without high-performance computing infrastructure.

### 4.2 Multimodal Learning Insights

The dual-task architecture successfully resolved the circular dependency problem while maintaining strong performance on both objectives. The shared representation learned by the fusion layer captures biological signals that generalize across sample types, which proves critical for clinical deployment where sample type may be a confounding variable.

Biologically, the model integrates complementary views of health status: k-mer patterns encode taxonomic composition and functional gene content, cytokine profiles capture immune system activation state, and taxa abundances reflect microbial community structure. The fusion layer synthesizes these perspectives for robust classification that outperforms single-modality approaches.

### Limitations

The small validation sample size (n=79) limits generalizability to independent cohorts. The model requires paired microbiome and cytokine data, which may not be available in all clinical settings. Additionally, 224×224 images may not capture long-range genomic dependencies that span multiple k-mers.

### 4.3 Future Directions

Several extensions would strengthen this framework. First, using PyGenie to process large unlabeled cohorts exceeding 10,000 samples would enable self-supervised contrastive learning on k-mer patterns. Second, attention visualization could identify which specific k-mers and cytokines drive predictions, enhancing biological interpretability. Third, extending to time-series data would support disease progression tracking in longitudinal studies. Finally, cross-cohort validation on independent datasets like MetaHIT and HMP would establish generalizability beyond the training distribution.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This work demonstrates that methodological innovations in both infrastructure and modeling are essential for advancing precision medicine. PyGenie provides the computational foundation for scalable microbiome research, while our multimodal framework shows how thoughtful integration of complementary data modalities—paired with careful handling of potential confounders—can yield clinically relevant predictions even from small datasets.

The community impact extends beyond immediate results. PyGenie is released as an open-source tool for the MPEG-G community, the multimodal architecture adapts readily to other multi-omics problems, and the reproducible workflow facilitates collaboration and validation across research groups. Together, these contributions accelerate the path from raw genomic sequences to actionable health insights.

## REFERENCES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3. Viome Dataset, MPEG-G Challenge 2025

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## APPENDIX: REPRODUCIBILITY

### A.1 Environment Specifications

The implementation requires Python 3.10 or higher with PyTorch 2.0+ in deterministic mode, timm 0.9.0 for EVA02 models, Genie 1.5.2 for MPEG-G decoding, and scikit-learn 1.3.0 for preprocessing utilities.

### A.2 Computational Requirements

PyGenie scales linearly across 4+ CPU cores. The multimodal model requires a single NVIDIA T4 GPU with 16GB VRAM, completing training in approximately 45 minutes for 10 epochs on 79 samples. Peak memory consumption reaches 12GB GPU and 32GB system RAM during batch processing.