

Classification of Leukaemic Cancer Cells from Normal Cells Using a Convolutional Neural Network

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Abstract—Acute Lymphoblastic Leukaemia (ALL) is a type of malignant cancer of the lymphoid line of blood cells. ALL most commonly occurs in children and it has generally good prognosis. It is vital that ALL be detected early and treated promptly. Therefore, a system capable of diagnosing potential patients by analysing images of their blood smear may facilitate in earlier diagnosis. In this report, it is proposed that a Convolutional Neural Network (CNN) be used to classify malignant cells (B-ALL) from normal cells. The method presented in this paper yields mediocre results; the accuracy of the model in question does not exceed 68%.

I. INTRODUCTION

Acute Lymphoblastic Leukaemia (ALL) is a malignancy of blood cells. It is characterised by uncontrollable hyperplasia of lymphoblasts in the bone marrow with little to no cell differentiation. Lymphoblasts then migrate to other organs of the body, through the bloodstream, causing tissue death.

ALL is the most common type of leukaemia in children; comprising 80% of total leukaemia cases. Children with Down syndrome or other genetic disorders are more likely to develop ALL. Adults over the age of 60 may also develop ALL due to chromosomal and molecular disorders.

There are many variants of ALL. All of which have one common characteristic, namely the presence of lymphoblasts in the bone marrow and blood. There are three ALL groups, specifically:

- B-lymphoblastic leukemia/lymphoma without specific genetic characteristics,
- B-lymphoblastic leukemia/lymphoma with specific genetic disorders and
- T-lymphoblastic leukemia/lymphoma.

[1]

Symptoms of ALL are mainly caused by cytopenias (anaemia, thrombocytopenia, leukopenia and/or neutropenia). Some of these include, but not limited to:

- fever (60%),
- pallor (40%),
- excessive bleeding (50%) due to thrombocytopenia,
- ostealgia (bone pain) (25%),
- lymphadenopathy (50%) and
- hepatosplenomegaly (70%) among others.

[2]

II. RELATED WORK

Researchers have employed a wide variety of machine learning techniques to approach this problem [3], [4], [5], [6]. A common pattern observed in many studies is the use of image processing techniques to enhance important features of input images. In particular, cell segmentation has a vital role in the appropriate classification of input images [4]. Other techniques, such as normalisation, contrast enhancement and noise removal have been used to improve the overall quality of input images. As for the classification algorithm, K-means clustering has been used widely to classify blood cells, showing a significant accuracy rate of 98% [3]. Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs) are increasingly getting more popular as a means of classifying images. Researchers have used models such as Mobilenet, ResNet, AlexNet, DenseNet and VGG16 with accuracy rates reaching up to 99.39% [4], [5].

III. PROPOSED METHOD

In this report, a CNN is used to extract features from the C-NMC dataset [7], [8], [9], [10], [11], [12] and perform classification. The dataset contains **15.135** images from **118** patients. There are two classes: normal and leukaemia blast. The images have already been processed by the authors of the dataset. The authors performed cell segmentation and noise reduction from the microscopic images using their “own in-house method of stain color normalisation” [7].

Further image processing is conducted to input data. While the initial images use the RGB colour profile, the processed images use the grayscale profile instead. Additionally, the images are resized to 128 by 128 pixels. By reducing the amount of data needed to be processed, the model becomes more performant. This is crucial as the hardware resources used to perform the experiments were limited. Next, histogram equalisation is used to increase the contrast of the images in order to enhance its features. Finally, the image is converted into an array and then normalised to further reduce numeric complexity.

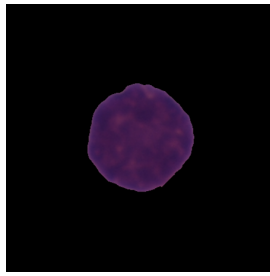


Fig. 1: Dataset image: UID_H12_24_5_hem.bmp

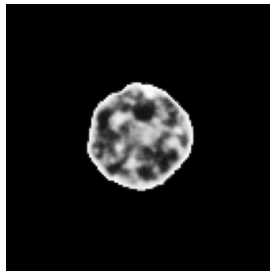


Fig. 2: Processed image used by model

Only a part of the dataset is used in this project. Specifically,

- 4.800 images are used for training the model
- 1.200 images are used as validation set and
- 1.200 images are used for testing the model.

The images in all three sets are arbitrarily chosen. The images used for testing are located in the testing subdirectory. The images used for validating and testing are located in the validation subdirectory. Even though the dataset does have a set of images for the purpose of testing, the class labels are not available publicly [7]. For this reason, the author decided to pull additional images from the validation subdirectory to populate the testing set.

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