

The Digital Heart: How Artificial Intelligence is Revolutionizing Cardiovascular Medicine in the 21st Century

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Abstract: Imagine a heart that not only beats but also learns, adapts, and predicts its own destiny—welcome to the age of the “Digital Heart”. In this era-defining review, unveil how Artificial Intelligence (AI) is rewriting the rules of cardiovascular care: lightning-fast algorithms now pore over thousands of ECG tracings in the blink of an eye to unmask hidden arrhythmias; deep neural networks scrutinize cardiac CT scans to spot microscopic plaque vulnerabilities before they strike; and telemonitoring platforms armed with predictive analytics forewarn of heart failure flare-ups days in advance. From AI-driven decision engines that tailor therapies to your unique genetic and lifestyle fingerprint, to self-supervising models that learn from millions of anonymized patient journeys while safeguarding privacy, these innovations promise to transform every heartbeat into a data point for personalized health. Yet, as we stand on this precipice of possibility, questions abound: Can we truly trust black-box predictions? Will federated learning bridge disparities or deepen them? How soon before algorithms replace our stethoscopes? Join us on this electrifying journey through AI’s frontier in cardiovascular medicine—where each discovery sparks the next leap toward a future in which machines not only mend hearts but foresee and forestall disease in real time.

Keywords: Digital Heart, Artificial Intelligence, Arrhythmias, Cardiovascular Medicine, Lifestyle Fingerprint.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Cardiovascular disease (CVD) refers to a group of disorders affecting the heart and blood vessels. It includes conditions such as coronary artery disease, cerebrovascular disease, rheumatic heart disease, and peripheral arterial disease. CVD is the leading cause of death globally, accounting for an estimated 17.9 million deaths annually, representing about 32% of all global deaths [1]. Major risk factors include hypertension, diabetes, smoking, physical inactivity, unhealthy diet, and excessive alcohol consumption. Early detection and lifestyle modification play a crucial role in preventing and managing CVD [2]. Treatment approaches often involve a combination of pharmacological therapies and lifestyle changes to control blood pressure, cholesterol levels, and blood sugar, as well as to reduce clotting risks and improve heart function. Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as a transformative tool in cardiovascular medicine, offering potential breakthroughs in early detection, risk prediction, personalized therapy, and disease management. This review encompasses recent advances, practical applications, challenges, and future directions for AI in CVD care [3].

AI tools are significantly transforming the rapidly evolving field of cardiology. Cardiovascular medicine services need to recognize and harness the full capabilities of this technology to optimize its use in the coming years. As the reliance on AI for addressing complex challenges increases, healthcare professionals must adapt accordingly [4]. The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into healthcare is poised to deliver groundbreaking advantages for patients, clinicians, healthcare systems, insurance companies, and policymakers worldwide. By harnessing its vast capabilities, AI can greatly support physicians in areas such as disease diagnosis, personalized treatment planning, drug development, and risk evaluation [5].

➤ Emerging Trends

Why AI Is Shaping Modern Cardiovascular Medicine
Artificial Intelligence (AI) is rapidly transforming the landscape of cardiovascular medicine, offering unprecedented capabilities in diagnosis, risk prediction, and personalized treatment.

With the integration of machine learning algorithms and deep learning models, clinicians can now analyse vast datasets—from imaging scans to electronic health records—

with remarkable speed and precision. As illustrated in Figure 1, artificial intelligence is revolutionizing every stage of cardiovascular imaging—from test selection to predictive

analysis—enabling faster diagnoses, optimized workflows, and improved patient outcomes.

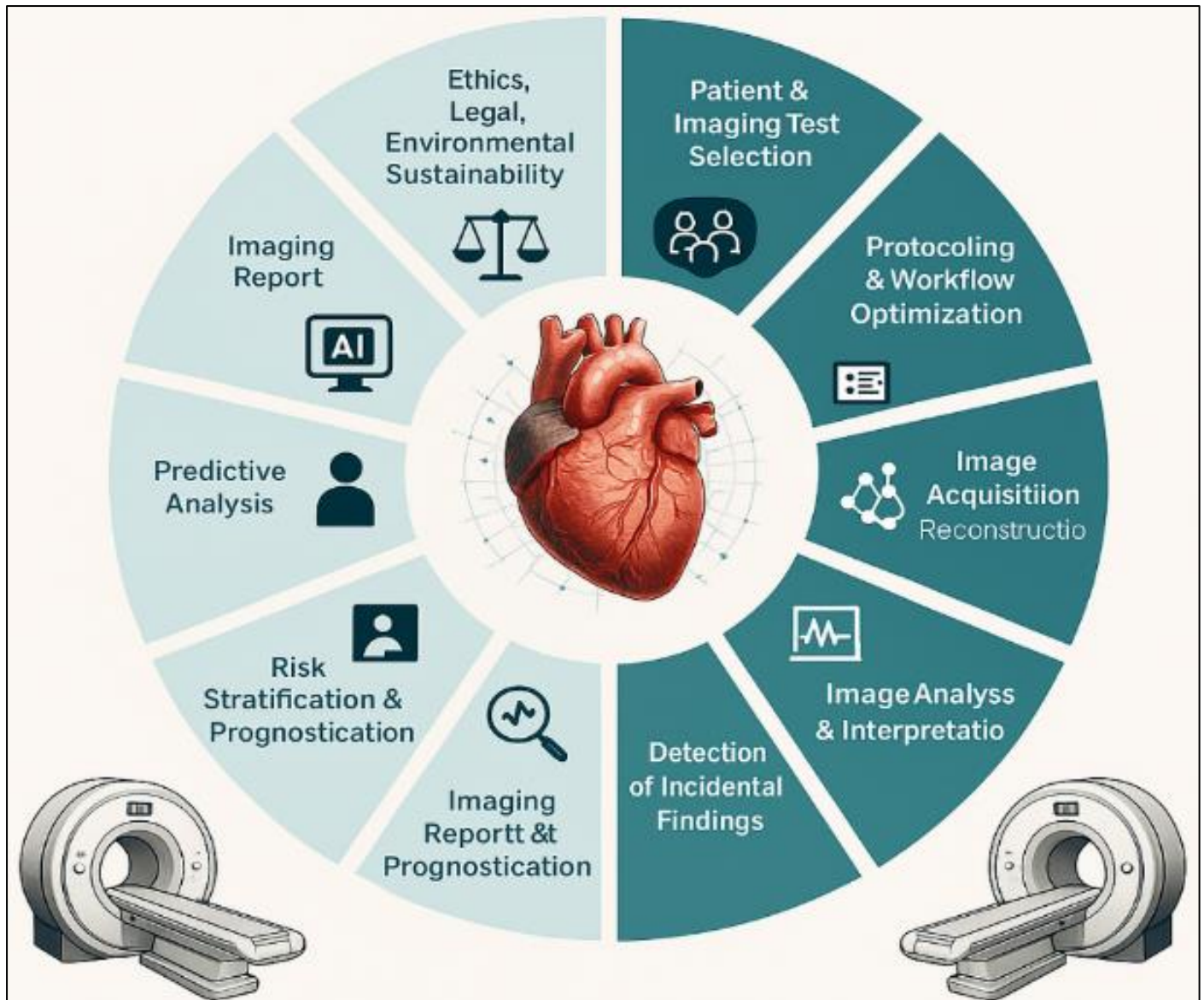


Fig 1 AI Integration across the Cardiovascular Imaging Workflow Enhances Precision, Efficiency, and Personalized Care.

➤ Artificial Intelligence

The term “artificial intelligence” (AI) has become quite prominent in the medical field, often carrying a sense of innovation and promise. Despite its popularity, there remains considerable confusion regarding its definitions and the underlying technologies it involves. Broadly speaking, AI refers to computational systems designed to replicate aspects of human intelligence, such as learning, reasoning, and problem-solving. This concept includes the idea of general AI—an advanced, hypothetical form that would operate

independently and demonstrate human-like cognitive abilities. However, such a form of AI has not yet been realized. Currently, the field is dominated by narrow or applied AI, which focuses on specific tasks and functions within defined domains [6]. As highlighted in the Figure 2, AI enhances diagnostic precision, optimizes clinical workflows, and drives innovation through predictive analytics and drug pathway development—making it an indispensable tool in modern medicine.

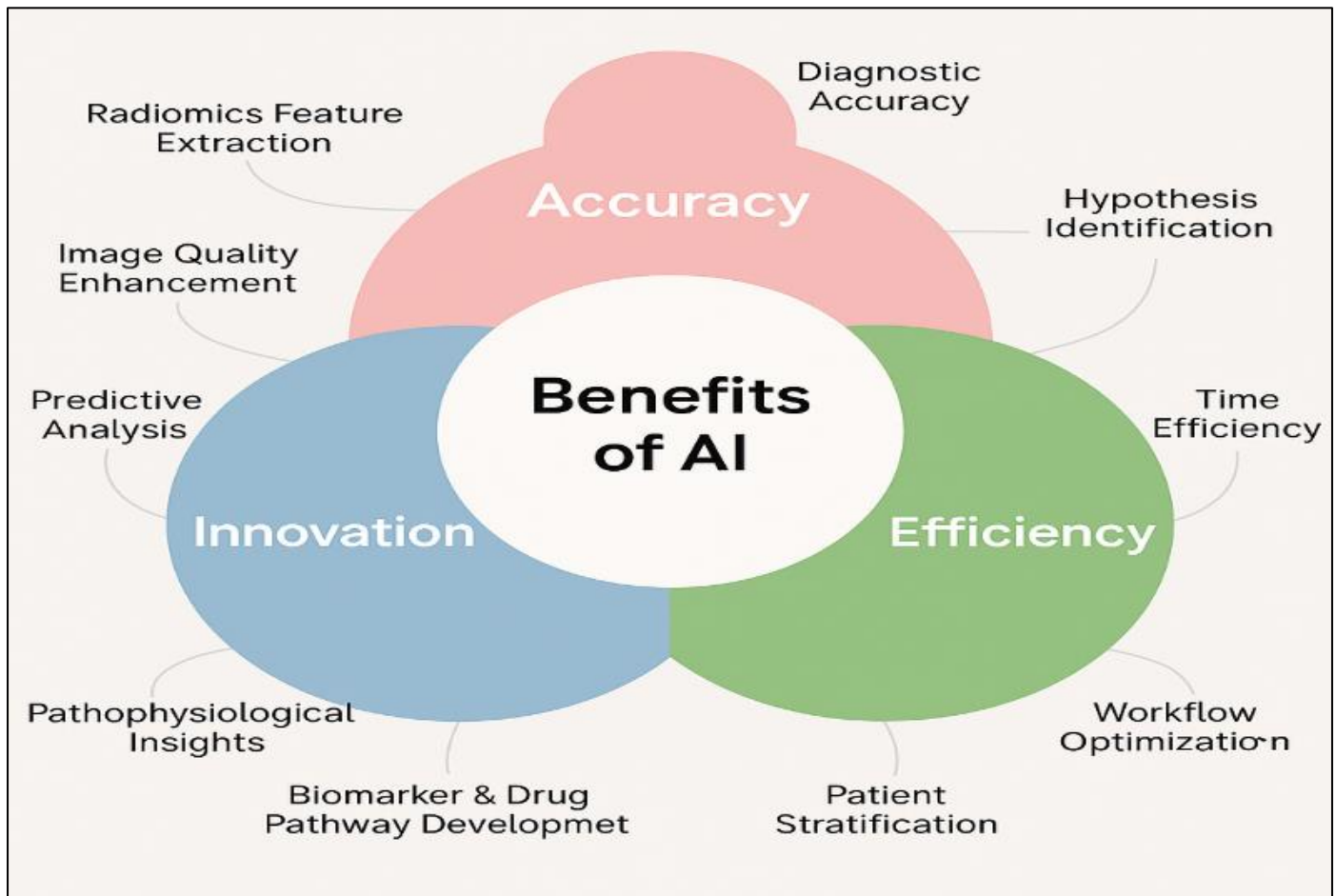


Fig 2 The Benefits of AI in Healthcare Span Accuracy, Efficiency, and Innovation, Transforming Clinical Outcomes and Decision-Making.

➤ *Machine Learning in Early Detection of Cardiovascular Disease*

Cardiovascular diseases (CVDs) are among the most prevalent health threats globally, contributing significantly to death rates and long-term illness. Identifying CVD at an early stage is vital for enhancing patient prognosis and decreasing the strain on healthcare systems. The advancement of machine learning (ML), a domain within artificial intelligence, has brought innovative methodologies capable of processing and interpreting vast and complex medical data. These tools facilitate the development of accurate models that can assist in the early identification and prediction of cardiovascular conditions [7].

➤ *How Machine Learning Enhances Early Detection of CVD*

Machine learning techniques have the power to transform healthcare by effectively analysing diverse datasets, such as electronic health records, lab results, genetic information, and demographic details. By integrating these varied sources, ML systems can uncover complex patterns and identify individuals who might be at increased risk for cardiovascular disease. In contrast to traditional statistical methods, ML models are exceptional at recognizing intricate, non-linear relationships among factors, significantly boosting predictive accuracy and ultimately improving patient outcomes [8].

• *Predictive Accuracy*

Research has shown that machine learning classification models, including enhanced multilayer perceptron's, support vector machines, random forests, and ensemble methods such as AdaBoost and Gradient Boosting, are highly effective in predicting cardiovascular disease. In many cases, these algorithms have achieved prediction accuracies above 90% when identifying individuals at increased risk [9]. One study demonstrated that an enhanced multilayer perceptron achieved a 92% accuracy rate, surpassing traditional methods in early detection performance. Similarly, advanced ensemble techniques like AdaBoost and Gradient Boosting recorded accuracies up to 96% when applied to refined datasets with optimized feature selection. Moreover, random forest models have exhibited improved sensitivity and higher area under the curve (AUC) values in comparison to conventional clinical risk assessment tools [10].

• *Real-World Applications*

Machine learning (ML) has increasingly become an integral part of practical cardiovascular disease (CVD) management due to its ability to provide accurate, timely, and scalable solutions. One key application lies in the early identification of undiagnosed conditions such as peripheral artery disease (PAD), where ML-based classification algorithms have demonstrated superior sensitivity compared to conventional diagnostic tools. These models can detect

subtle data patterns that may go unnoticed in manual evaluations, allowing for more effective disease screening and intervention [11].

ML also plays a significant role in automating cardiovascular risk stratification within electronic health record (EHR) systems. By continuously analysing patient data, ML algorithms support clinicians by rapidly categorizing individuals into different risk levels, reducing the need for resource-heavy manual assessments. This not only saves time but also ensures that healthcare providers can focus on patients most in need of attention. Machine learning is revolutionizing cardiovascular disease management by

enabling early diagnosis, automating risk assessment through EHR integration, and providing real-time clinical decision support via smart digital tools—enhancing both efficiency and accessibility in patient care as illustrated in Figure 3.

Furthermore, ML has enabled the development of smart, user-friendly mobile and web-based decision support applications. These tools integrate real-time patient data with evidence-based models to deliver immediate, individualized risk assessments. Such technologies support clinical decision-making even at the point of care and have the potential to increase access to diagnostic insights in both urban and remote healthcare settings [12].

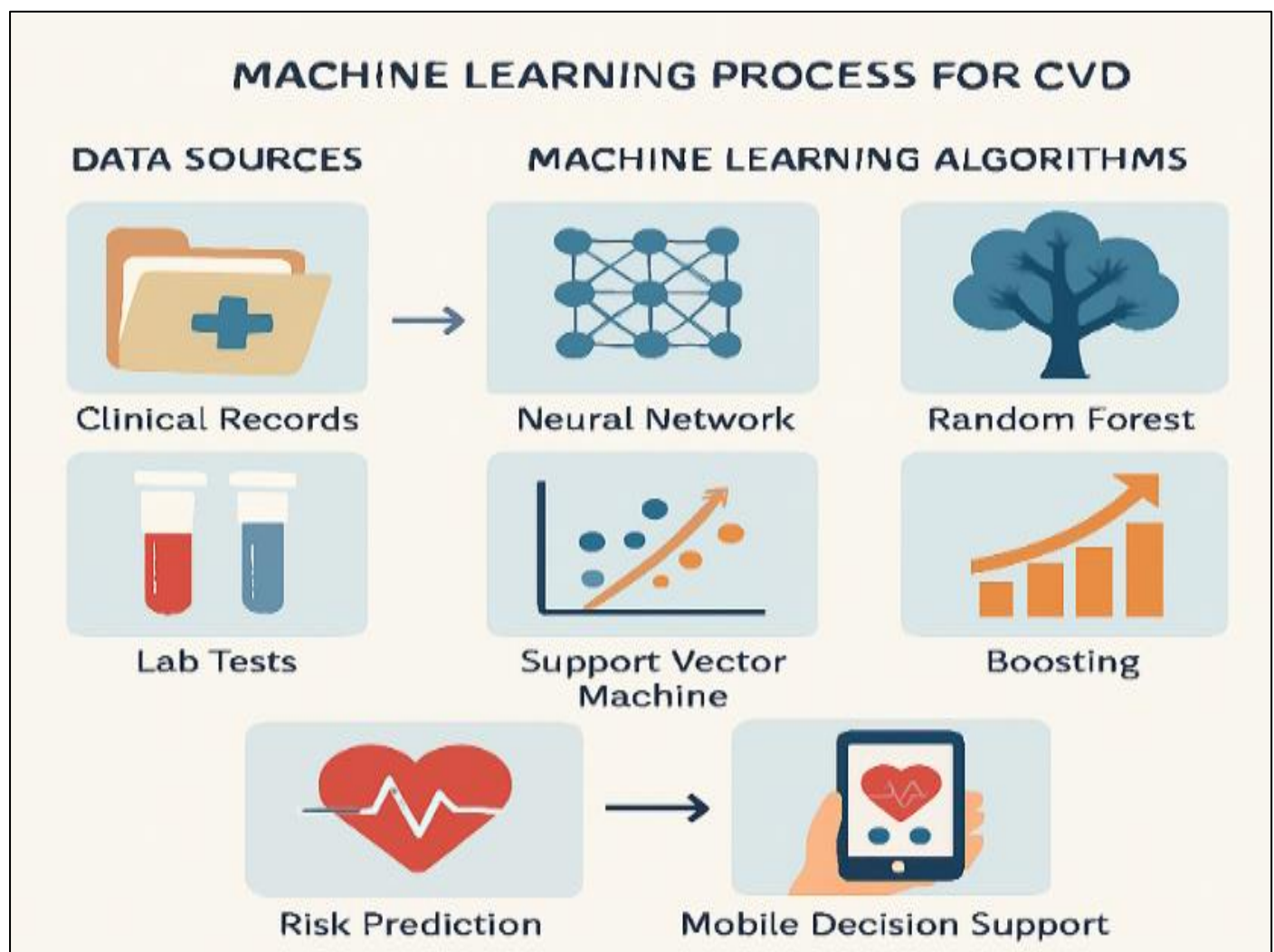


Fig 3 Machine Learning Empowers Early Detection, Risk Stratification, and Decision Support in Cardiovascular Care Through Intelligent Data Analysis.

- **Deep Learning**

Deep learning (DL) is a specialized area within machine learning that utilizes neural networks composed of multiple layers. These sophisticated models are designed to autonomously extract meaningful patterns and features from intricate data, enabling advanced analysis and recognition tasks [13]. Through a hierarchical structure, DL methods learn to represent raw information in increasingly abstract ways, uncovering complex relationships without extensive manual feature engineering. These neural architectures mimic

the hierarchical functioning of the human brain, allowing the models to learn abstract representations at various levels of data detail. After being trained on labelled datasets, DL algorithms can apply their learning to new, unseen data, which enhances their ability to adapt to predictive tasks. In DL, neural networks improve their accuracy by continuously modifying the weights between input and output layers, reducing prediction errors through various optimization methods. This ability to capture nonlinear relationships makes DL particularly useful in fields characterized by

complex data structures. In the field of clinical practice, doctors utilize their expertise, experience, and contextual understanding to make decisions [14]. DL systems can enhance this decision-making process by providing data-driven insights, which can be especially valuable for clinicians who may not specialize in certain areas. By revealing subtle patterns in medical data, DL supports more precise decisions and improves diagnostic accuracy. Outside of healthcare, DL is also integral to many widely used technologies, including facial recognition systems on social media, voice-activated assistants like Siri and Alexa, and advanced systems created by leading tech companies such as Google [15]. In the realm of healthcare, popular DL architectures consist of convolutional neural networks (CNNs) for analysing images, recurrent neural networks (RNNs) for processing sequential data, deep belief networks (DBNs) for unsupervised feature extraction, and deep neural networks (DNNs) for various modelling purposes.

• *AI in Echocardiography*

Artificial intelligence has played a significant role in the early development of echocardiography, particularly by enabling automated measurement of left ventricular volume and function. AI technologies can improve image quality, shorten scan durations, minimize radiation dose, and facilitate the segmentation, interpretation, and analysis of cardiac images. For instance, a 2015 research study by Knackstedt and colleagues used a vendor-neutral computer vision software, based on machine learning, to assess ejection fraction and longitudinal strain from biplane images of the left ventricle in a group of 255 patients. This approach demonstrated the capability of AI to standardize and streamline cardiac functional assessments [16].

➤ *Enhanced Ejection Fraction and Longitudinal Strain Measurements*

Recent technological developments have demonstrated exceptional success in automating traditional echocardiographic measurements with remarkable precision and efficiency. Advanced computational systems have achieved outstanding feasibility rates of 98% for automated ejection fraction (EF) and longitudinal strain (LS) assessments. These automated analyses require minimal processing time, averaging 8 ± 1 seconds per patient while maintaining an impressive accuracy of 92.1% when benchmarked against manually traced reference standards. The implementation of these automated measurement techniques represents a significant advancement in reducing variability and improving the consistency of cardiac function assessment [17].

➤ *Large-Scale Dataset Implementation*

A landmark investigation utilized an extensive dataset comprising 14,035 echocardiograms collected over a decade to develop and validate convolutional neural network (CNN) models for comprehensive cardiac assessment [789]. This ambitious project successfully created automated systems capable of performing multiple complex tasks, including automated identification of 23 distinct echocardiographic viewpoints, precise segmentation of cardiac chambers across

five standard views, and quantification of chamber volumes and left ventricular mass [18].

➤ *Automated Disease Detection Capabilities*

These sophisticated models extended beyond basic measurements to successfully detect multiple cardiac pathologies with remarkable precision. The system achieved C-statistics of 0.93 for hypertrophic cardiomyopathy detection, 0.87 for cardiac amyloidosis identification, and 0.85 for pulmonary arterial hypertension recognition. These performance metrics demonstrate the potential for comprehensive automated screening programs that could significantly improve early disease detection and patient outcomes [19].

➤ *Valvular Heart Disease Assessment Through AI*

• *Mitral Regurgitation Detection*

Advanced artificial intelligence models have shown exceptional promise in valvular heart disease assessment, particularly for mitral regurgitation evaluation. Research conducted on a cohort of 139 subjects demonstrated that Support Vector Machine (SVM) classifiers could achieve extraordinary diagnostic performance. The automated system recorded a sensitivity of 99.38% and a specificity of 99.63% for detecting severe mitral regurgitation. Furthermore, the accuracy rates for identifying various severities of mitral valve disease reached remarkable levels: 99.52% for normal mitral valves, 99.38% for mild mitral regurgitation, 99.31% for moderate mitral regurgitation, and 99.59% for severe mitral regurgitation [20].

➤ *Aortic Stenosis Evaluation*

• *Comprehensive AI Assessment Systems*

A groundbreaking proof-of-concept investigation utilized an unprecedented dataset of 530,871 deidentified echocardiograms from 171,571 men and 158,404 women, with a median follow-up period of 4.1 years. The developed artificial intelligence system demonstrated superior performance in aortic stenosis assessment compared to traditional methods, correctly identifying 95.3% of patients with traditional high-gradient aortic stenosis versus only 73.9% identification rate using the continuity equation [21].

This comprehensive AI approach offers significant clinical advantages by determining aortic stenosis severity without requiring left ventricular outflow tract velocity measurements or dimensional parameters. The system maintains reliable performance across diverse patient populations, including those with both normal and impaired left ventricular systolic function. Such automated assessment tools represent a paradigm shift toward more consistent and objective evaluation of valvular heart disease severity [22].

➤ *AI in Computer Tomography*

Artificial intelligence (AI) has introduced significant advancements in cardiac and coronary computed tomography (CCT), particularly in problem detection such as coronary artery stenosis, plaque characterization, and risk prediction. AI applications leverage machine learning (ML) and deep

learning (DL) to automate and enhance several aspects of CCT, offering faster, reproducible, and more accurate diagnostic tools than traditional manual methods. Below are comprehensive details regarding the detection of coronary problems using AI in CCT, referenced in Vancouver style.

➤ *Stenosis Detection*

AI algorithms show strong performance in identifying significant coronary artery stenosis. Recent meta-analyses and multicentre studies demonstrate that AI models can outperform or match radiologists for detecting stenosis of $\geq 50\%$ and $\geq 70\%$:

A systematic review including 17 studies and over 5,500 patients showed AI reached a sensitivity of 0.92 (95% CI: 0.88–0.95), specificity of 0.87 (95% CI: 0.80–0.92), and area under the curve (AUC) of 0.96 (95% CI: 0.94–0.97) for detecting stenosis $\geq 50\%$. Performance was even higher for more severe stenosis and for detection of calcified plaque (sensitivity 0.93, specificity 0.94, AUC 0.98) [23].

Advanced tools such as AI-based coronary stenosis quantification (AI-CSQ) leverage convolutional neural networks to create three-dimensional models of coronary anatomy. These tools enable precise measurement of stenosis severity, achieving AUCs of 0.92 and 0.93 for 50% and 70% stenosis, respectively, when compared to invasive quantitative coronary angiography (QCA), the gold standard. Specificities in these analyses are frequently above 80%, with negative predictive values often exceeding 90% [24].

➤ *Plaque Characterization and Quantification*

Artificial intelligence techniques have shown significant promise in the automated evaluation of coronary plaques using coronary CT angiography (CCTA). These tools can effectively distinguish between calcified and non-calcified plaque components, perform accurate segmentation of coronary vessels, and measure plaque volume. Additionally, they are capable of identifying imaging markers associated with potentially high-risk atherosclerotic lesions [25]. When applied to coronary calcium scoring, AI-based methods exhibit strong concordance with manual analysis, with reported sensitivity reaching up to 93.3% and an intraclass correlation coefficient of 0.99 [26].

➤ *Advanced AI Applications in Nuclear Cardiac Imaging*

Nuclear cardiology has progressed dramatically beyond its early days of planar gamma-camera imaging and basic tomographic scans. The introduction of hybrid systems—such as SPECT/CT, PET/CT, and MRI—has greatly sharpened diagnostic accuracy. At the same time, the development of targeted radiotracers and breakthroughs in molecular imaging have set the stage for AI to play a transformative role in clinical practice [27].

II. CLINICAL APPLICATIONS AND IMPACTS

➤ *Image Enhancement*

- **Denosing:** Deep learning-based reconstruction techniques provide superior noise reduction and image quality compared to traditional iterative reconstruction methods [28].
- **Super-Resolution Imaging:** Generative AI methods reconstruct high-resolution 3D images from low-dose scans, enabling improved myocardial segmentation and analysis [29].

➤ *Automated Diagnosis*

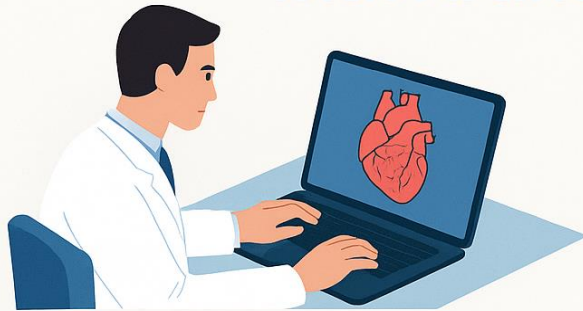
- **Coronary Artery Disease Detection:** AI models incorporating clinical and imaging data deliver diagnostic accuracy on par with expert interpretation [30].
- **Myocardial Fibrosis Classification:** Radiomics and machine learning techniques help in distinguishing different cardiomyopathies through tissue characterization [31].
- **Video Transformers:** Transformer-based models effectively interpret cine MRI to detect conditions like pulmonary hypertension with expert-level performance [32].

A cohort of 1,638 individuals without previously diagnosed coronary artery disease underwent both SPECT myocardial perfusion imaging and invasive coronary angiography. In this group, a deep learning algorithm demonstrated superior predictive performance with the total perfusion deficit, achieving AUCs of 0.80 versus 0.78 on a per-patient basis and 0.76 versus 0.73 per vessel, respectively. Notably, the model required less than one second to assess each new case. A separate investigation evaluated the utility of an artificial neural network for the detection of coronary artery disease [33].

➤ *Transforming Heart Failure Management with Artificial Intelligence"*

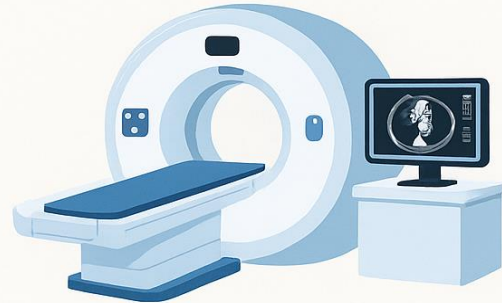
Sanchez-Martinez and colleagues have definitively demonstrated that employing an unsupervised machine learning approach to assess left ventricular long-axis motion at rest and during exercise is crucial for diagnosing heart failure with preserved ejection fraction [34]. As illustrated in Figure 4, artificial intelligence plays a pivotal role in heart failure management—enabling early detection, improving imaging interpretation, supporting continuous remote monitoring, and personalizing treatment strategies based on patient-specific data.

Transforming Heart Failure Management with Artificial Intelligence



Early Detection

AI models identify at-risk individuals for heart failure



Imaging Analysis

AI enhances image interpretation and quantification



Remote Monitoring

AI detects changes in heart rate patterns



Personalized Treatment

AI tailors therapy based on patient data

Fig 4 AI is Transforming Heart Failure Care Through Early Detection, Advanced Imaging, Remote Monitoring, and Personalized Treatment.

Inan et al. unequivocally established that integrating remote monitoring of heart failure patients with advanced machine learning techniques effectively differentiates between compensated and decompensated states. Moreover, a comprehensive investigation from Sweden identified four distinct patient phenotypes, each exhibiting unique clinical trajectories and varying responses to treatment, through sophisticated machine learning analysis [35]. Additionally, Koulaouzidis et al. developed a robust predictive model for heart failure hospitalization risk by meticulously analyzing daily non-invasive telemedicine measurements, including blood pressure, heart rate, and weight. Their algorithm, which examined both individual signal vectors and complex combinations via multiresolution analysis, found that the most powerful prediction stemmed from the integration of weight and diastolic blood pressure over an eight-day monitoring period, achieving an impressive AUC of 0.82 ± 0.02 [36].

➤ *Smart Beats: AI Transforming Arrhythmia Detection*

Since the introduction of digital ECGs, machine learning techniques have been used to automate ECG interpretation. Although these approaches demonstrated strong sensitivity and specificity for identifying normal sinus rhythm, they initially underperformed compared to expert logists in detecting arrhythmias. Common challenges included interference from noise, variability or low amplitude of P waves leading to false atrial fibrillation diagnoses, difficulties with paced rhythms, poor signal quality, patient

tremor, and unfamiliar rhythm patterns. As ML models have advanced—incorporating sophisticated noise-filtering, enhanced feature extraction and selection strategies, and even unsupervised deep neural networks—automated ECG analysis has markedly improved, with arrhythmia detection accuracy now approaching 95% [37]. The advent of unsupervised deep neural network models has spurred growing research into uncovering latent disease signatures within standard 12-lead ECG recordings. To date, these approaches have successfully identified conditions such as hyperkalaemia [38], heart failure, hypoglycaemia, and even variations in emotional state.

Non-invasive arrhythmia assessment is gaining traction before ablation procedures, supported by machine learning (ML)-driven advancements in cardiac imaging. Deep learning, especially convolutional neural networks, has significantly improved the speed, accuracy, and quality of cardiac MRI, particularly in image segmentation and scar detection.

These tools have enabled precise identification of myocardial scarring, essential for planning ablation strategies like scar homogenization in ventricular tachycardia and targeting fibrotic areas in persistent atrial fibrillation. Automated methods now match expert accuracy while being vastly more time-efficient.

ML has also advanced ECG technology, with body surface mapping (using up to 252 electrodes) combined with CT imaging to create 3D heart models. This allows for non-invasive localization of arrhythmic foci and supports personalized treatment planning through virtual heart simulations and potential non-invasive ablation strategies [39].

III. CONCLUSION

The adoption of artificial intelligence in cardiovascular care represents a profound evolution across all stages—from prevention and early detection to diagnosis, risk assessment, personalized treatment, and outcome forecasting. Advanced machine learning and deep learning models achieve expert-level accuracy in interpreting ECGs, echocardiograms, cardiac CT scans, and nuclear imaging, enabling swift, automated measurement of structural and functional metrics, identification of subtle pathological indicators, and more reliable prediction of adverse events. Integrating telemonitoring with sophisticated analytics offers continuous evaluation of heart failure progression and hospitalization risk, while innovative unsupervised techniques reveal hidden patient subgroups and early disease markers. However, realizing AI's full promise requires overcoming obstacles related to data integrity, model transparency, broad applicability, ethical governance, and clinical integration. Moving forward, efforts should focus on federated and self-supervised learning to harness diverse, privacy-protected datasets; large-scale, multicenter trials to verify performance across varied populations; and intuitive, clinician-friendly platforms supported by clear regulatory pathways. Addressing these challenges will pave the way for truly individualized, data-driven cardiovascular medicine and help alleviate the global impact of heart disease.

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