



Ultrasound-based multiregional radiomics analysis to differentiate breast masses

Ziman Chen, Michael Tin Cheung Ying

Department of Health Technology and Informatics, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong, China

Correspondence to: Michael Tin Cheung Ying, PhD. Department of Health Technology and Informatics, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, 11 Yuk Choi Rd, Hung Hom, Kowloon, Hong Kong 999077, China. Email: michael.ying@polyu.edu.hk.

Comment on: Guo S, Huang X, Xu C, *et al.* Multiregional radiomic model for breast cancer diagnosis: value of ultrasound-based peritumoral and parenchymal radiomics. *Quant Imaging Med Surg* 2023;13:3127-39.

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We have read the article titled “Multiregional radiomic model for breast cancer diagnosis: value of ultrasound-based peritumoral and parenchymal radiomics” by Guo *et al.* (1) with great interest. The study aimed to classify breast lesions using a multiregional (intratumoral, peritumoral, and parenchymal) radiomics model based on ultrasound imaging. The authors highlighted that the multiregional model demonstrated superior performance to the intratumoral model in distinguishing malignant from benign breast lesions. We commend the authors for their excellent work in exploring the potential clinical application value of the multiregional radiomics model in classifying benign and malignant breast lesions. However, to strengthen the study, some technical issues are suggested for consideration.

Firstly, the authors employed receiver operating characteristic (ROC) curves to determine discrimination performance, calibration curves to appraise diagnostic accuracy, and integrated discrimination improvement (IDI) to assess the performance enhancement resulting from the added diagnostic features. Nonetheless, decision curve analysis (DCA), which is one of the evaluation systems for radiomics models, should also be considered (2). By employing DCA, the practical utility of established models can be evaluated, allowing for quantification of the net benefit to patients across varying risk probabilities. Even

with superior diagnostic performance, a diagnostic model will be ineffective if it offers low clinical benefit and lacks practical clinical application. DCA has been widely applied in evaluating the clinical benefits of radiomics models from multiple dimensions. Secondly, the radiomics model proposed in the present study did not incorporate medical information. Numerous studies have demonstrated the effective differentiation of benign from malignant breast nodules using specific clinical parameters (3,4). Hence, adding these parameters is worthwhile to construct a more comprehensive model. Thirdly, although the authors proposed a radiomics model, the present study did not explore its transformation into a practical diagnostic tool. Development of an online web-based calculator to assist clinicians in applying the developed model to their actual clinical practice should be considered (5). Lastly, despite using the random forest algorithm for model construction, the authors did not explain its benefits. It may be beneficial for the authors to compare the diagnostic effectiveness of various machine learning algorithms (6).

During the analysis of the radiomics model, it is critical to take into account not only diagnostic performance but also clinical utility. In order to construct a more accurate diagnostic model, it is essential to incorporate relevant information about multiple clinical variables and develop and compare multiple algorithmic models.

Supplementary file: Response to “Ultrasound-based multiregional radiomics analysis to differentiate breast masses”.

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Footnote

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Response to “Ultrasound-based multiregional radiomics analysis to differentiate breast masses”

Xingzhi Huang, Suping Guo, Aiyun Zhou, Pan Xu

Department of Ultrasonography, First Affiliated Hospital of Nanchang University, Nanchang, China

Correspondence to: Pan Xu, MM. Department of Ultrasonography, First Affiliated Hospital of Nanchang University, No. 17, Yongwaizheng Road, Donghu District, Nanchang 330006, China. Email: xupan_1989@126.com.

We sincerely appreciate the valuable comments provided by Chen *et al.* (1) on our article titled “Multiregional radiomic model for breast cancer diagnosis: value of ultrasound-based peritumoral and parenchymal radiomics”. In this study, we developed and evaluated a multiregional model by integrating ultrasound-based radiomics from different regions (intratumoral, peritumoral, and parenchymal) for diagnosing breast cancer. The findings suggest that the multiregional radiomic model holds promise as a noninvasive and personalized tool to aid in breast cancer diagnosis. However, further improvement and validation are necessary, as highlighted in the comments. We are grateful for all the constructive feedback and welcome any additional valuable insights. Moreover, we would like to express our gratitude to the journal for providing us with a platform for discussion, which plays a vital role in advancing radiomics research.

We appreciate the opportunity to respond to the raised points and provide further clarification. Firstly, we acknowledge the significance of decision curve analysis (DCA) in assessing the clinical usefulness of radiomic models (2). In our study, we assessed the performance of the multiregional radiomic model to determine whether it serves as an independent risk factor, as well as in constructing and evaluating a combined category that includes radiomics and the Breast Imaging Reporting and Data System (BI-RADS) category. It must be admitted that we overlooked the potential of DCA to offer a comprehensive assessment of practical utility. *Figure S1* shows decision curves, demonstrating the clinical utility of the multiregional model, combined category, and BI-RADS category within our pooled test cohort ($n=252$). Secondly, models that combined the radiomic signature

with clinicopathological parameters have the potential to enhance performance in studies of breast cancer (3,4). However, our decision not to incorporate these parameters was mainly influenced by our primary purpose, which was to determine the added value of ultrasound-based peritumoral and parenchymal radiomics, and we have constructed a combined category as a multivariate model. In future studies, we will record more valuable clinicopathological data to complement and strengthen our studies. Thirdly, the development of online web-based calculators for the practical application of radiomic models has been positively received, which provides clinicians with a user-friendly and accessible tool, facilitating the utilization of radiomic models in their daily practice. In pursuit of this goal, we are dedicated to conducting extensive research, such as employing the “DynNom” R package (5). Lastly, we will prioritize conducting comparative analyses of various machine learning algorithms to develop a more precise model in future studies. Comparing the discrimination of different algorithms is a robust way to construct models. Random forest stands out among other classifiers due to its robustness, high accuracy, resistance to overfitting, interpretability, and ability to handle high-dimensional and interaction features (6). Additionally, we employed a feature selection method based on recursive feature elimination using the random forest as a base classifier. Therefore, using the random forest classifier to construct radiomic signatures was a reasonable choice in this study.

In conclusion, while our study demonstrated the multiregional radiomic model in effectively discriminating between malignant and benign breast lesions, we recognize the need to further strengthen the aspects of model construction and evaluation for its clinical application.

Adhering to a rigorous process and utilizing the radiomics quality score (7) contribute to improving the quality of radiomics studies. Meanwhile, we emphasize the importance of flexibility in research methods to align with study objectives, striking a balance between scientific rigor and innovation. We appreciate the valuable feedback and will incorporate these insights into future research endeavors, aiming for the continued growth and practical implementation of radiomics in healthcare.

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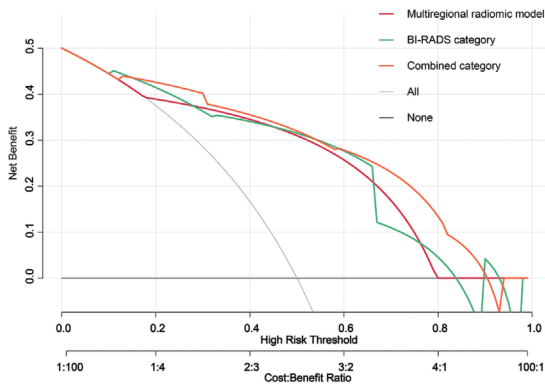


Figure S1 Decision curves for breast cancer diagnosis obtained by using the multiregional radiomic model, BI-RADS category, and combined category in the pooled test cohort (n=252). The multiregional radiomic model, BI-RADS category, and combined category were included as categorical variables in the DCA. BI-RADS, Breast Imaging Reporting and Data System; DCA, decision curve analysis.