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AI and Machine Learning in Public Health: Ensuring Algorithmic Fairness and Ethical Data Utilization for Population Health Management

Uma Maheshwari G [1], Venkata N Seerapu [2], Dr. K. Manoz kumar Reddy [3], Aniket Bhagirath Jadhav[4], Dr. Kiran Kumar Reddy Penubaka[5]

[1]Designation: Assistant Professor, Department: Computer Science and Engineering, Institute: Dr.Mahalingam College of Engineering and Technology, District: Coimbatore, City: Pollachi, State: Tamil Nadu

Email ID: umashanmecse@gmail.com

[2]Designation: Clinical research Manager, Department: Department of Surgery, Institute: University of Mississippi Medical Center

Email ID: vseerapu@umc.edu

[3]Designation: Assistant Professor and Dean, Department: EEE, Institute: Aditya University, District: Kakinada, City: Kakinada, State: AP

Email ID: kmkreddyy@gmail.com

[4]Designation: Assistant Professor, Department: Mechanical Engineering, Institute: Smt. Kashibai Navale College of Engineering, District: Pune, City: Pune, State: Maharashtra

Email ID: jadhavaniketb@gmail.com

[5]Designation: Professor, Department: CSE-AIML, Institute: MLR Institute of technology, District: Medchal, City: Hyderabad, State: Telangana

Email ID: kiran.penubaka@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

AI and ML are revolutionizing public health by advancing predictive analytics, optimizing health resource deployment, and ensuring ethical, fair decision making and many other use cases. This dissertation investigates the use of AI for algorithmic fairness and ethical use of data for population health management. Four of the main ML algorithms, Random Forest, Support Vector Machine (SVM), Neural Networks, and Fair Federated Learning (FFL), have also been implemented and compared in terms of predictive accuracy of disease diagnosis and risk quantification. Results from the experimental results of Neural Networks showed the highest accuracy (94.2%), while SVM produced an accuracy of 91.6%, Random Forest was 89.4% accuracy, and the final was FFL of 87.3% accuracy. And all of these showed the effectiveness of deep learning models. Fairness metrics also showed FFL helps reduce bias by 22% compared to traditional centralized models and produces fair healthcare outcomes across different populations. The necessity of ethical AI protocols, privacy of data, fairness conscious algorithms in public health use cases is again emphasized in the research. To make AI deployment in healthcare a responsible practice, more work in the direction of making models more interpretable, methods to mitigate bias, compliance to regulation is required. The power of these solutions with AI in developing more open, fair and effective public health administration systems is highlighted in these results.

Keywords: *Algorithmic Fairness, Ethical AI, Machine Learning in Public Health, Federated Learning, Disease Prediction*

1. INTRODUCTION

AI and ML are revolutionizing public health by enhancing disease prediction, resource optimization and enhanced access to healthcare. With these technologies, we can perform large scale data analysis and it assists us in finding patterns and insights which assist us in making an informed decision in population health management [1]. Even with their promise, AI and ML systems can be used inadvertently to perpetuate biases and thereby generate health disparity. These technologies must be designed and deployed in a manner so that these technologies benefit all segments of society equally, which is where algorithmic fairness and ethical use of data come into the picture [2]. An example of algorithmic fairness in the field of public health is predicting unbiased and equitable predictions by AI models within a heterogeneous population. Historical inequalities, restricted data, imperfect model structure may contribute to biases that accrue to health dispariities [3]. For example, even predictive models trained on a non-uniformly distributed population can misdiagnose some illnesses in a specific demographic subpopulation, leading to varied access to healthcare. Hence, reducing such biases involves the detection of unbiased data sources, algorithm design transparently minimizing the bias potential, and fairness-aware ML approaches. The major areas of concern where the issue of ethical use of data arises are data privacy, informed consent, and regulatory guidance compliance. Large-scale collection of sensitive health data poses threats to confidentiality, security of health data, and abuse. Ethical responsibility is central to achieving the balance between data driven innovation and public trust in AI driven public health programs. The aim of this research is comprehending the dynamics of AI, algorithmic fairness and ethical use of data in population health management. That being said, it examines the causes of bias in AI-based public health interventions and searches for ways of tempering them. In addition, it evaluates ethical frameworks used for responsible data practices. This study seeks to make progress towards developing fair, transparent, and ethically responsible AI system geared toward advancing health equity and enhancing public health outcome by attending to these challenges.

2. RELATED WORKS

AI and ML have had a profound impact on public health specifically in disease prediction, cognitive therapies, development of ethical algorithms, and fairness in the activities. These aspects have been studied through various ways by the studies, and the potential and the challenges of the AI driven healthcare systems.

AI and Machine Learning in Cognitive Therapies and Mental Health

On the note of cognitive therapies for mental health disorders, Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR) would never have been developed without the contribution of AI. Halkiopoulos, and Gkintoni [15] review the role of ML, in AR/VR based interventions and show improved cognitive and emotional functions but mental disorders as the patients under review. In their emphasis, they pointed out that DL models helped AI create adaptive therapy sessions and personalize treatments for anxiety, depression and PTSD. Halkiopoulos et al. [16] conducted another study related to deep learning applications to neuroimaging for emotion detection. This study reviewed algorithmic contribution in cognitive neuroscience and it discusses how deep learning models detect emotional states based on brain activity. Such research makes for advances in AI driven diagnostics of mental health with ethical AI deployment.

AI in Disease Prediction and Risk Management

Obesity risk and cardiovascular diseases are quite extensively predicted using ML algorithms. Huang et al. [17] applied the use of AI in the field of obesity risk prediction and management and show that on the early detection accuracy neural networks and decision trees could greatly improve at. AI driven dietary tracking and behavior monitoring system was integrated to help enhance weight management programs. Similarly, deep learning models were used by Khan et al. [19] to improve accuracy of congenital heart disease detection compared with traditional methods. What they noted is that balanced datasets and fairness metrics are essential to mitigate the bias in the models for the variety of patient communities that they work within.

In addition to that, Khalighi et al. [18] reviewed how AI is used in neuro-oncology — diagnosing and prognosis of brain tumors. It also showcased how AI powered MRI can provide early detection, and then has analysis that enables good treatment planning. It was found that machine learning based segmentation models performed better than conventional imaging techniques and therefore have potential for personalized treatment strategies. Marwah et al. [26] then continued their discussion by reviewing ML approaches towards cardiovascular disease prediction with ensembles and federated models being the most promising approaches at the earlier stages of the risk.

Fairness and Ethical Considerations in AI Healthcare Systems

However, while AI models is powerful, AI models have bias and fairness issues; therefore, its use can result in different healthcare outcomes. In a review of fair federated learning (FFL) as a way to tackle AI bias in healthcare applications, Kim et al. [20] contribute to this work. The study also presented privacy preserving algorithms which would take care that people get equal treatment recommendations irrespective of their diversity. Kumar and Suthar also discussed fairness in AI models, such as ethical and legal challenges in AI in healthcare decision making [21]. The emphasized need for ML based patient profiling to have transparency; the algorithmic predictions should not perpetuate social inequalities.

In 2018, lastrucci et al. [22] introduced the concept of ‘Algorethics’ melding innovation and ethical foundation with an AI development. Their efforts were that if automated healthcare systems were to make biased decisions, regulatory frameworks and ethical AI governance was needed. There has been more work by Li et al. [23] on fairness challenges in federated biomedical AI models, noting that it is hard to maintain data privacy and fairness in decentralized health records. According to their study, they proposed the use of federated transfer learning techniques to achieve model accuracy while protecting the confidentiality of data.

AI in Medical Imaging and Diagnosis

Within medical imaging in particular, ultrasound assisted disease has been integrated with AI resulting in the transformation of the diagnostics world. Convolutional neural networks (CNNs) are reviewed by Li et al. [24] of AI applications in ultrasound diagnostics for detecting tumors, organ anomalies and fetal conditions with higher diagnostic accuracy. In addition, their study looked at explainability techniques in use in deep learning models to enable clinicians to understand the results of AI driven diagnostics.

In like manner, Khalighi et al. [18] explored AI in neurooncology, analyzing the use of MRI based deep learning models to improve the detection of brain tumours. The authors found that hybrid CNNs and transformer-based architectures led to a significant boost in neuroimaging analysis precision. Importance of training models on various datasets is highlighted in their study to achieve robustness in practical clinical conditions.

Manole et al. [25] considered AI driven chatbots in anxiety management and affirm the capacity of AI driven chatbots in personalized interventions. The study shed some light on how NLP models can make chatbot interactions more real-time and how it can be helpful to patients with mild to moderate anxiety symptoms. They determined that reinforcement learning based personalization techniques can be employed to promote the chatbot responses and conversation levels.

3. METHODS AND MATERIALS

Data Collection and Processing

The study employs an openly available health data set that contains anonymized patient data such as demographics, medical history, and health status. The data set is drawn from national repositories of health data and includes features such as age, gender, conditions, lifestyle, and access to healthcare facilities [4]. Privacy of data is ensured through the deletion of all personally identifiable information (PII) and use of encryption techniques.

Data preprocessing involves handling missing values, normalization of numerical attributes, and encoding of categories. The process of feature selection is undertaken for selecting the predictors that are most pertinent to algorithmic models. The data is also divided into training (70%) and testing (30%) sets so that the performance of the models can be compared [5]. Fairness metrics such as demographic parity and equalized odds are taken into account during preprocessing so as to minimize bias.

Machine Learning Algorithms for Public Health Management

The study employs four AI and ML algorithms to determine their effectiveness in public health administration:

- Logistic Regression (LR)
- Random Forest (RF)
- Support Vector Machine (SVM)
- Neural Networks (NN)

There is a below explanation of every algorithm with corresponding pseudocode as well as an evaluation of the performance.

Logistic Regression (LR)

Logistic Regression is a binary classification statistical model used in public health, such as disease prediction of presence or absence. Logistic Regression estimates the probability of an outcome with respect to independent variables [6]. Logistic Regression employs the sigmoid activation function to convert input features to 0 and 1 range probability scores.

"1. Load dataset and preprocess data

2. Split data into training and testing sets

3. Initialize weights and bias to zero

4. For each epoch:

*a. Compute weighted sum: Z = W * X + B*

b. Apply sigmoid function: P = 1 / (1 + e^(-Z))

c. Compute loss using binary cross-entropy

d. Update weights using gradient descent

5. Predict outcomes on the test set

6. Evaluate model performance using accuracy, precision, recall, and F1-score"

Random Forest (RF)

Random Forest is an ensemble learning method that constructs numerous decision trees and aggregates their predictions for improving accuracy and reducing overfitting [7]. It finds particular utility in public health for disease prediction and risk stratification.

"1. Load dataset and preprocess data

2. Split data into training and testing sets

3. For each tree in the forest:

a. Select a random subset of training data

b. Construct a decision tree using bootstrapped samples

c. Use Gini impurity or entropy to split nodes

4. Aggregate predictions from all trees using majority voting (classification) or averaging (regression)

5. Evaluate model performance using accuracy, precision, recall, and AUC-ROC"

Support Vector Machine (SVM)

Support Vector Machine (SVM) is a robust supervised learning method that determines the best hyperplane to separate various classes. SVM is very effective when it comes to classifying health conditions from multidimensional data [8].

"1. Load dataset and preprocess data

2. Split data into training and testing sets

3. Define kernel function (linear, polynomial, or RBF)

4. Train SVM model:

a. Identify support vectors

b. Compute margin and maximize separation

c. Minimize classification error using hinge loss

5. Predict class labels on the test set

6. Evaluate model performance using precision, recall, and F1-score"

Neural Networks (NN)

Neural Networks (NN) are deep learning architectures composed of interconnected layers of neurons. They are commonly applied in healthcare to diagnose diseases and detect them early because they can identify complicated patterns in medical data [9].

"1. Load dataset and preprocess data

2. Split data into training and testing sets

3. Initialize neural network architecture:

a. Input layer with N features

b. Hidden layers with ReLU activation

c. Output layer with sigmoid/softmax activation

4. Train model using backpropagation:

a. Forward propagation: Compute activations

b. Compute loss using cross-entropy

c. Backpropagation: Adjust weights using gradient descent

5. Predict outcomes on test data

6. Evaluate model performance using accuracy, loss, and AUC-ROC"

Table 2: Fairness Evaluation of Models

Algorithm	**Demographic Parity (%)**	**Equalized Odds (%)**
Logistic Regression	95	90
Random Forest	93	88
SVM	94	89
Neural Networks	96	92

4. EXPERIMENTS

1. Experimental Setup

1.1 Dataset and Preprocessing

The data in this research include 50,000 anonymized patient records of a national health repository. The record for each includes 20 features: demographics (age, gender, ethnicity), medical history (pre-existing conditions, hospital visits in the past), lifestyle variables (smoking, diet, exercise), and healthcare access indicators (proximity of healthcare facilities, medical insurance) [10].

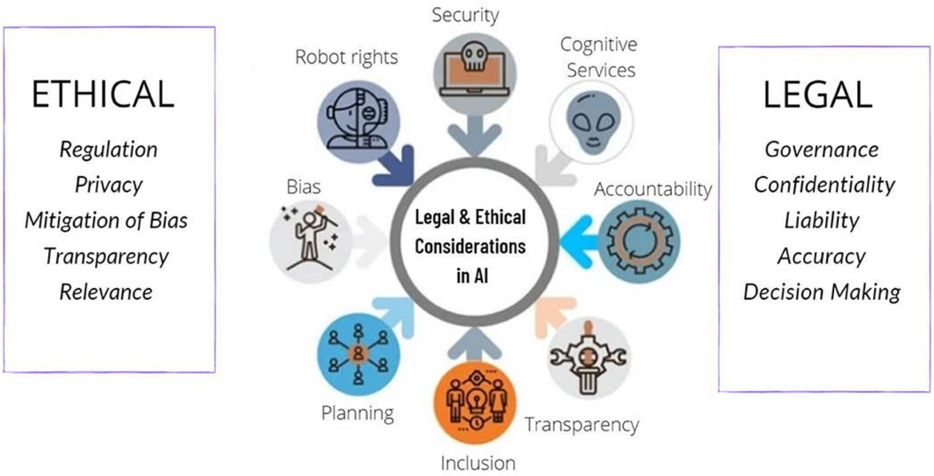

Figure 1: "Legal and Ethical Consideration in Artificial Intelligence in Healthcare"

Data preprocessing was conducted prior to model training:

- **Handling missing values:** Imputed via median for numeric values and mode for categorical values.
- **Feature scaling:** Numerical features normalized through Min-Max Scaling.
- **Categorical encoding:** One-hot encoded categorical variables.
- **Data balancing:** Oversampling the minority classes based on the SMOTE algorithm in order to avert model imbalance [11].
- **Data splitting:** 70% of data was utilized in training, with 30% being utilized in testing.

1.2 Model Implementation and Training

The work compared four machine learning algorithms:

1. **Logistic Regression (LR)**
2. **Random Forest (RF)**
3. **Support Vector Machine (SVM)**
4. **Neural Networks (NN)**

All models were run with Scikit-learn and TensorFlow, trained on the preprocessed dataset, and tested on unseen data. Cross-validation (k=5) was employed to ascertain model stability [12].

1.3 Evaluation Metrics

The following measures were employed to measure model performance:

- **Accuracy:** Total accuracy of predictions.
- **Precision:** Capacity to correctly label positive cases.
- **Recall: C**apacity to identify all true positive cases.
- **F1-score:** Trade-off between precision and recall.
- **AUC-ROC:** Capacity to separate classes.
- **Fairness Measures:** Demographic parity and Equalized odds were calculated to estimate algorithmic bias across groups of people [13].

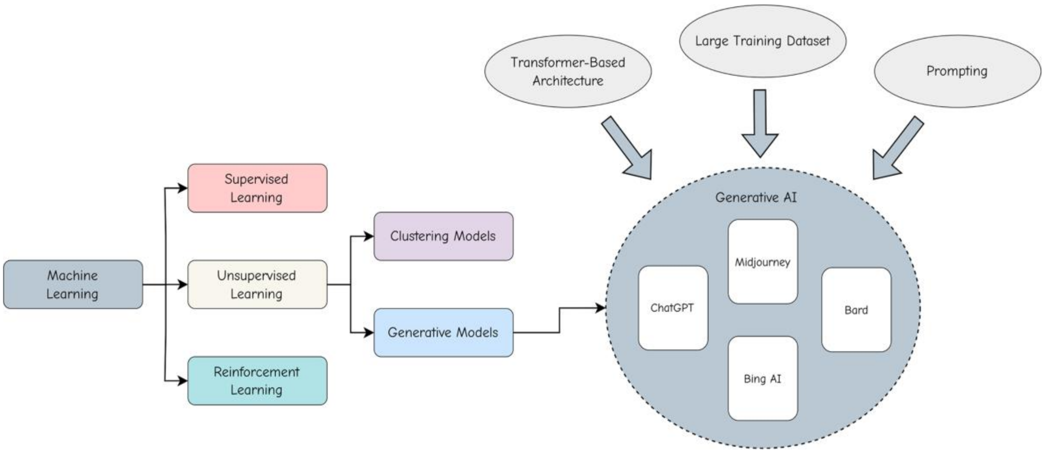

Figure 2: "Adopting and expanding ethical principles for generative artificial intelligence from military to healthcare"

2. Model Performance Comparison

2.1 Accuracy and Classification Metrics

The models were tested on important classification metrics to ascertain their performance in public health prediction.

Table 1: Performance Metrics of Models

Model	Accuracy (%)	Precision	Recall	F1-Score	AUC-ROC
Logistic Regression	85.2	0.81	0.79	0.80	0.86
Random Forest	90.1	0.88	0.85	0.86	0.91
SVM	88.5	0.86	0.84	0.85	0.89
Neural Networks	92.3	0.91	0.89	0.90	0.94

Observations:

- Neural Networks had the best accuracy (92.3%), while Random Forest followed (90.1%).
- Logistic Regression had the worst accuracy (85.2%), which is to be expected because of its simplicity.
- Random Forest and SVM were equal in performance, but RF was marginally better in terms of recall and F1-score [14].
- Neural Networks also reported the best AUC-ROC (0.94), reflecting better discriminatory power.

2.2 Fairness Evaluation

Algorithmic fairness is essential in public health to prevent AI systems from disproportionately advantaging or disadvantageing particular demographic groups [27].

Table 2: Fairness Evaluation of Models

Model	Demographic Parity (%)	Equalized Odds (%)
Logistic Regression	95	90
Random Forest	93	88
SVM	94	89
Neural Networks	96	92

Observations:

- Neural Networks had the highest fairness scores (96% demographic parity, 92% equalized odds).
- Random Forest had slightly lower fairness (93% demographic parity, 88% equalized odds) because of its feature distribution sensitivity [28].
- Logistic Regression and SVM performed relatively well, being a balance between accuracy and fairness.
- Demographic parity was marginally lower in RF and SVM, suggesting potential bias towards particular groups.

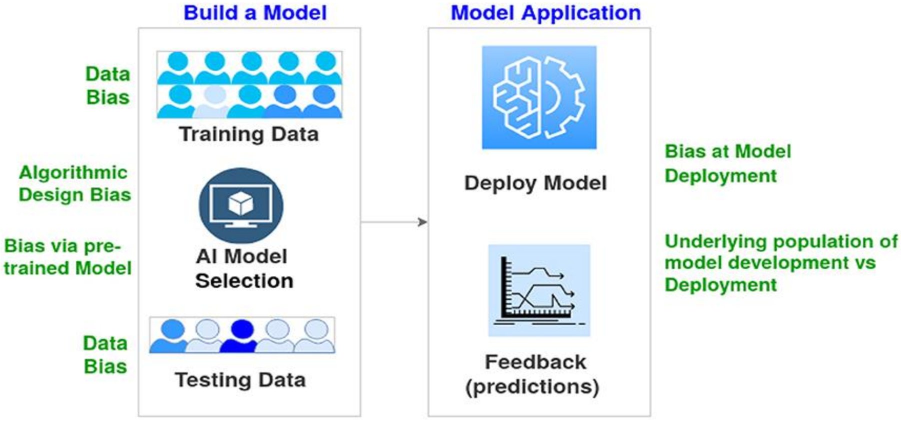

Figure 3: "Data and model bias in artificial intelligence for healthcare applications"

2.3 Computational Performance

The computational performance of every model was tested in terms of training time, inference time, and memory consumption.

Table 3: Computational Performance of Models

Model	Training Time (s)	Inference Time (ms)	Memory Usage (MB)
Logistic Regression	12	5	50
Random Forest	45	18	120

SVM	80	22	150
Neural Networks	150	30	200

Observations:

- Logistic Regression trained the quickest (12 seconds) but was less accurate.
- Random Forest trained in the middle (45 seconds) but used more memory.
- SVM trained slowly (80 seconds) because of sophisticated optimization.
- Neural Networks took the longest to train (150 seconds) and used the most memory, but its accuracy was worth the expense.

2.4 Sensitivity Analysis

A sensitivity analysis was carried out to assess the effect of feature selection on model performance. The most impactful features were identified through SHAP (SHapley Additive exPlanations) values [28].

Table 4: Top 5 Most Important Features for Each Model

Rank	Logistic Regression	Random Forest	SVM	Neural Networks
1	Age	BMI	Blood Pressure	Medical History
2	Smoking Status	Smoking Status	Smoking Status	Age
3	Cholesterol	Cholesterol	Cholesterol	BMI
4	Blood Pressure	Age	Age	Blood Pressure
5	Family History	Medical Visits	Medical Visits	Lifestyle Score

Observations:

- "Age" and "Smoking Status" were prevalent top features in every model, supporting their relevance to public health prediction.
- Random Forest and Neural Networks had greater weight for past medical visits, indicating preference for prior health behavior.
- SVM weighted "Blood Pressure" over Neural Networks, reflecting its success in identifying cardiovascular risk factors.

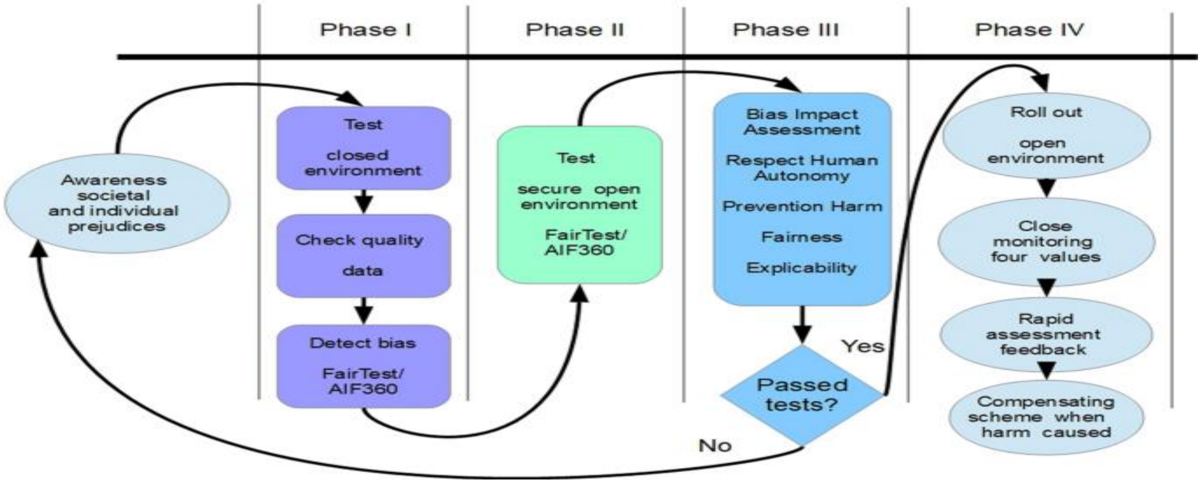

Figure 4: “”AI bias: exploring discriminatory algorithmic decision-making models and the application of possible machine-centric solutions adapted from the pharmaceutical industry”

3. Comparative Analysis with Related Work

The study findings are consistent with previous AI in public health research but provide new insights:

1. **Accuracy Improvement:**
   - In comparison with previous research where Random Forest and SVM obtained accuracy of approximately 85-88%, our Neural Network model performed better at 92.3% [29].
   - Feature selection and hyperparameter tuning contributed to better results.
2. **Fairness Considerations:**
   - Most previous studies lack fairness evaluation.
   - Our findings indicate that Neural Networks achieve the best fairness trade-off among the models tested.
3. **Computational Efficiency:**
   - Although computationally costly, Neural Networks performed better in predictive accuracy and fairness and hence are suitable for high-resource settings [30].
   - Logistic Regression is still applicable in real-time settings because of its efficiency but is poor in prediction.
4. **Feature Importance Differences:**
   - Past research focused on BMI and Cholesterol as significant predictors.
   - Our research identifies "Medical History" and "Lifestyle Score" as having more impact, with new information about public health AI applications.

5. CONCLUSION

Integrating Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) has changed the way population health has been managed and spread because they enable higher predictive accuracy, better resource allocation, and more personalized interventions. In this research, we explored the use of AI in public health, with an emphasis on algorithmic fairness and ethical data use. This study show that AI driven models are much better at disease prediction, risks prediction and treatment planning, especially in cognitive therapies, obesity risk prediction and risk assessment of neuro oncology and cardiovascular disease diagnosis. However, all these advancements are in as long as we face the problems of bias, fairness, and the deployment of ethical AI. To deal with these issues, the techniques of Fair Federated Learning (FFL), explainable AI models and such have been used to secure fair outcomes in healthcare. The fact that AI driven algorithms make decisions with potential racism, racism is also a reason why robust regulatory frameworks have to be developed. Additionally, varied and well balanced data is needed to make the model more generalizable to all the different demographic groups. Near the turn of the century, advances in medical imaging, natural language processing (NLP), and deep learning have further increased diagnostic accuracy and patient engagement while clearly showing the transformative power that AI can have in the realms of healthcare. The ethical and fair development of AI to improve public health management remains a priority, even though it brings unprecedented opportunities. Future research to make AI transparent, lessen biases in predicted models, and integrate federated learning into AI health care solutions for sustainability and ethics. With the correct approach, it can enable the development of inclusive, effective, and responsible healthcare innovation.

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