

Enhancing Intelligent Anemia Detection via Unifying Global and Local Views of Conjunctiva Image with Two-Branch Neural Networks

Lijuan Zheng

South China University of Technology

Shaopeng Liu

Guangdong Polytechnic Normal University

Senping Tian

South China University of Technology

Jianhua Guo

Guangdong Polytechnic Normal University

Xinpeng Wang

Guangdong Polytechnic Normal University

Xiuxiu Liao

Guangdong Polytechnic Normal University

Jiaming Hong (✉ hjm@gzucm.edu.cn)

Guangzhou University of Chinese Medicine

Research Article

Keywords: Intelligent Anemia Detection, Multi-View Learning, Two-Branch Neural Networks, Conjunctiva Image, Anemia

Posted Date: January 3rd, 2022

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21203/rs.3.rs-1170958/v1>

License: © ⓘ This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

[Read Full License](#)

Enhancing Intelligent Anemia Detection via Unifying Global and Local Views of Conjunctiva Image with Two-Branch Neural Networks

Lijuan Zheng¹, Shaopeng Liu^{2,*}, Senping Tian¹, Jianhua Guo², Xinpeng Wang², Xiuxiu Liao² and Jiaming Hong^{3,*}

*Corresponding author:

Shaopeng Liu

149265005@qq.com

Jiaming Hong,

hjm@gzucm.edu.cn

²Department of Computer

Science, Guangdong

Polytechnic Normal

University, Guangzhou,

China

³School of Medical

Information Engineering,

Guangzhou University of

Chinese Medicine,

Guangzhou, China

Full list of author

information is available at

the end of the article.

Abstract

Background: Anemia is one of the most widespread clinical symptoms all over the world, which could bring adverse effects on people's daily life and work. Considering the universality of anemia detection and the inconvenience of traditional blood testing methods, many deep learning detection methods based on image recognition have been developed in recent years, including the methods of anemia detection with individuals' images of conjunctiva. However, existing methods using one single conjunctiva image could not reach comparable accuracy in anemia detection in many real-world application scenarios.

Results: To enhance intelligent anemia detection using conjunctiva images, we proposed a new algorithmic framework which could make full use of the data information contained in the image. To be concrete, we proposed to fully explore the global and local information in the image, and adopted a two-branch neural network architecture to unify the information of these two aspects.

Conclusions: Compared with the existing methods, our method can fully explore the information contained in a single conjunctiva image and achieve more reliable anemia detection effect. Compared with other existing methods, the experimental results verified the effectiveness of the new algorithm.

Keywords: Intelligent Anemia Detection; Multi-View Learning; Two-Branch Neural Networks; Conjunctiva Image; Anemia

1

2 Background

3 Anemia is a typical clinical symptom that the capacity of red blood cells in human peripheral
4 blood is lower than the normal range. As one of the most widespread clinical symptoms all over
5 the world, anemia could bring adverse effects on people's daily life and work [1-2]. Therefore,
6 timely diagnosis and treatment is particularly important for anemia. However, the traditional
7 diagnosis of anemia requires blood sampling for test with professional equipment, which requires

8 extra cost and intervention of professionals, and brings obvious limitation to its wide application
9 in daily life [2-4].

10 In recent years, in order to improve the convenience of anemia examination, many studies have
11 been carried out to investigate the effective approaches of detecting anemia in a noninvasive
12 manner [4-7]. One of the most promising directions was to deploy artificial intelligent algorithms
13 to discover the correlation of anemia with images of human surface organs, including fingernails,
14 retinas, conjunctivas, etc. In other words, instead of testing blood samples, artificial intelligent
15 algorithms for image classification and recognition are applied in anemia diagnosis [8-9]. Due to
16 their non-invasive manner and non-requirement of professional blood testing, such approaches are
17 less expensive, and seem much attractive than the traditional ones.

18 In this paper, we focus on developing more effective algorithms for one of such approaches,
19 that is, to detect anemia with photos of conjunctiva [10-12]. Comparing to other similar
20 approaches like diagnosis with retina images, detecting with conjunctiva images requires no extra
21 professional equipment, which brings much convenience to users. Therefore, it can be easily
22 deployed in Web-based platforms like APPs, and people can take photos and upload them at any
23 time to get a diagnosis result immediately.

24 However, there is some room for improvement in existing algorithms of detecting anemia with
25 conjunctiva images. One of the main issues is that, as was demonstrated in previous reports and in
26 our testing experiments, the existing algorithms could not reach comparable performance with
27 human experts in many real-world applications and could be easily affected by image quality.
28 Such drawbacks might limit its potential application prospects.

29 To further enhance the performance of anemia diagnosis with the photos of conjunctiva, we

30 proposed in this paper a new algorithmic framework to solve such problems. As was discussed in
31 detail later in this paper, the main issue which prevents previous algorithms from achieving higher
32 accuracy may lie in that, they cannot fully exploit the information of the image, especially the
33 local information. Inspired by such analysis, we put forward a new perspective which could unify
34 both global and local information of the image data, and proposed a simple yet effective deep
35 convolutional neural network architecture to fuse them, and obtained a much robust and reliable
36 deep learning model for anemia detection using only one single image of an individual's
37 conjunctiva.

38

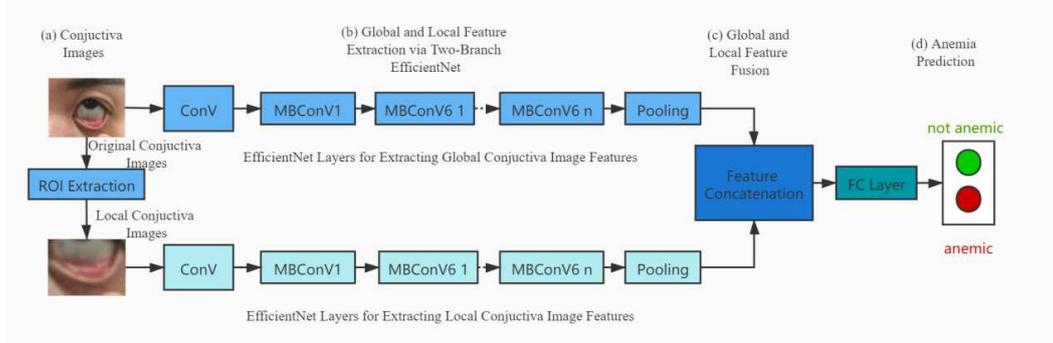
39 **Results**

40 **GLUDA Model**

41 In this article we design a new deep learning paradigm for intelligent anemia prediction using only
42 one single conjunctiva image. Based on our previous results, we find that when observing the
43 conjunctiva image for diagnosis, one of the main inspirations is that, two different views of
44 information (i.e., the global view and the local view) are simultaneously extracted from one single
45 conjunctiva image, and these two views of information are unified in a reasonable approach to
46 help forming comprehensive diagnosis. Motivated by such observation, we propose that similar
47 operations can be deployed into the deep learning architecture to enhance the effectiveness of the
48 algorithm in anemia detection. Thus, we readjust the basic structure of the classic convolutional
49 neural network model and add the structure of multi-view generation and multi-view data fusion
50 to achieve this goal. The overall framework of the new model is depicted in Fig. 1. We refer the
51 new model as GLUDA model (which is short for the full name: Global and Local view Unifying

52 for Detection of Anemia). We illustrated the overall workflow of GLUDA model in Fig.1.

53



54

Fig.1 Overall Framework of GLUDA Model

55

56

57 Training framework of the GLUDA

58 The GLUDA model benefits from several key aspects, among which the two-branch architecture
59 plays a central role in unifying both global and local information of a single conjunctiva image.

60 We choose EfficientNet as the two sub-network structure for constructing the whole network.

61 Recently proposed by Google Brain Team, EfficientNet is an efficient convolutional neural
62 network, which can scale up CNN models by balancing network depth, width, and resolution in a
63 systemic way. Formally, denote the input data image as an input tensor X , then the output of
64 EfficientNet can be formally defined as:

$$65 \text{Eff}(X) = F_K^d \odot F_{K-1}^d \dots \odot F_2^d \odot F_1^d(X), \quad (1)$$

66 where each F_i^d is the i th layer of the network, for $i=1,2,\dots,K$, with K the total number of all the
67 convolutional layers of the sub-network, and d the coefficients for scaling network depth. To get a
68 more compact expression, we can further denote the i th input tensor as $X_{\langle r \cdot H_i, r \cdot W_i, w \cdot C_i \rangle}$, where \langle
69 $H_i, W_i, C_i \rangle$ is predefined tensor shape of the corresponding layer, and $\langle d, r, w \rangle$ is the
70 parameter tuples for scaling network depth, width, and resolution. Therefore, for any input tensor

71 X (as a conjunctiva image), the two sub-network Net_i ($i=1,2$) in GLUDA can be formally referred
 72 to as:

$$73 \quad Net1(X, d, w, r) = \odot_{i=1,2,\dots,S} F_i^{d,L_i}(X_{\langle r \cdot H_i, r \cdot W_i, w \cdot C_i \rangle}), \quad (2)$$

74 and

$$75 \quad Net2(local(X), d, w, r) = \odot_{i=1,2,\dots,S} F_i^{d,L_i}(local(X)_{\langle r \cdot H_i, r \cdot W_i, w \cdot C_i \rangle}). \quad (3)$$

76 Note that we would construct the two EfficientNet sub-branches with exactly the same
 77 structure, and therefore they would share the same predefined tensor shape $\langle H_i, W_i, C_i \rangle$ in each
 78 layer. But the weight parameters would be different after training. Denote the concatenation
 79 operation as F_{conca} , and the fully connected layer as F_c , the output of the GLUDA network can be
 80 written as :

$$81 \quad Net(X, d, w, r) = F_c \odot (F_{conca}(Net1(X, d, w, r), Net2(local(X), d, w, r))). \quad (4)$$

82 To bring all the formal discussions above, the overall training framework of the GLUDA model
 83 can be summarized as follows:

$$84 \quad \text{Max Accuracy}(Net(d, w, r))$$

$$85 \quad \text{s. t.}$$

$$86 \quad Net1(X, d, w, r) = \odot_{i=1,2,\dots,S} F_i^{d,L_i}(X_{\langle r \cdot H_i, r \cdot W_i, w \cdot C_i \rangle})$$

$$87 \quad Net2(X, d, w, r) = \odot_{i=1,2,\dots,S} F_i^{d,L_i}(X_{\langle r \cdot H_i, r \cdot W_i, w \cdot C_i \rangle})$$

$$88 \quad Net(X) = F_c \odot (F_{conca}(Net1(X, d, w, r), Net2(local(X), d, w, r))),$$

$$89 \quad \text{Memory}(Net) \leq \text{memory_constraints},$$

$$90 \quad \text{FLOPS}(Net) \leq \text{flops_constraints}, \quad (5)$$

91 where $\text{memory_constraints}$ and flops_constraints are constraints of the computation resources.

92 To obtain the optimal parameters for the whole network, compound scaling method and a small

93 grid search could be applied. Briefly speaking, the compound scaling method would set $d =$
94 $\alpha^\theta, w = \beta^\theta, r = \gamma^\theta$, and $\alpha \cdot \beta^2 \cdot \gamma^2 \approx 2$, with user-specific coefficient θ and search optimal $\alpha \geq$
95 $1, \beta \geq 1, \gamma \geq 1$ for appropriate depth, width and resolution settings for the network.

96 From the formal optimization target in Eq.(5), and considering the structure of conjunctiva
97 images processed in our empirical experiments, below we show the experiment result of the
98 proposed GLUDA model.

99 **Experiment Results**

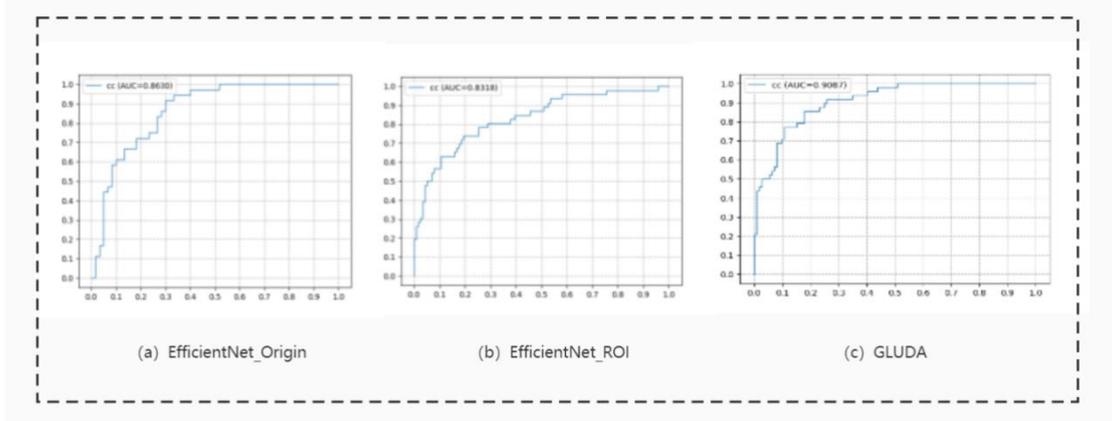
100 To evaluate the proposed model, we collected conjunctiva image data from patients enrolled in
101 Zhongshan Ophthalmic Center, Third affiliated Hospital at Sun Yat-sen University and People's
102 Hospital of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, from June 2019 to November 2019. To make a
103 more comprehensive comparison, we developed two series of model training and testing in our
104 experiments, considering whether data augmentation operation was incorporated in the learning
105 process.

106 We reported the experimental results of both series in Table 1, Fig. 2 and Fig.3. Row 2 to row 4
107 in Table 1 and Fig. 2 showed testing results of models without data augmentation. And row 6 to
108 row 8 in Table 1 and Fig. 3 showed testing results of models using data augmentation, where
109 random rotation, cropping and flipping and applied and the size of the augmented training set are
110 extended to 1396 in total. In each series of the experiments, GLUDA models outperformed
111 EfficientNet_Origin and EfficientNet_ROI, respectively. When data augmentation was not
112 adopted, GLUDA model achieved the highest scores among all the three models, with AUC =
113 0.9087, Acc = 0.7937, and EfficientNet_ROI obtained the lowest score, with AUC =
114 0.9305, Acc = 0.8313. The sensitivity and specificity scores and their corresponding 95% CI

115 intervals are also the highest for the GLUDA model. When data augmentation was applied before
 116 training, we could observe that all three models could achieved higher scores comparing to their
 117 counterpart model without augmentation, and among the three models, GLUDA could still
 118 obtained the highest scores in AUC, Acc, Sen, and Spe, respectively. According to such
 119 comparison results, GLUDA model could fuse global and local views of conjunctiva images in an
 120 effective approach, therefore outperformed the other two models which only use global
 121 (EfficientNet_Origin) or local (EfficientNet_ROI) views of conjunctiva images.

122 **Table 1. Performance of GLUDA vs. other models in the test set**

Not Augmented	Acc (95% CI)	Sen (95% CI)	Spe (95% CI)
GLUDA	0.7937(0.8539,0.9442)	0.8542(0.7245,0.8492)	0.7679(0.7912,0.9005)
EfficientNet_Origin	0.7604(0.7801,0.9179)	0.8056(0.6661,0.8347)	0.7333(0.7153,0.8723)
EfficientNet_ROI	0.7125(0.7662,0.8818)	0.8043(0.638,0.777)	0.6754(0.736,0.8584)
Augmented	Acc (95% CI)	Sen (95% CI)	Spe (95% CI)
GLUDA	0.8313(0.8802,0.9606)	0.8723 (0.656, 0.8814)	0.8142(0.8118,0.9154)
EfficientNet_Origin	0.7812(0.6886,0.8522)	0.8649(0.7823,0.9193)	0.7419(0.6324,0.80779)
EfficientNet_ROI	0.75 (0.6776,0.8107)	0.7872(0.7175,0.8435)	0.7345(0.6612,0.7969)



123

124

Fig 2. Performance of GLUDA vs. other models without data augmentation

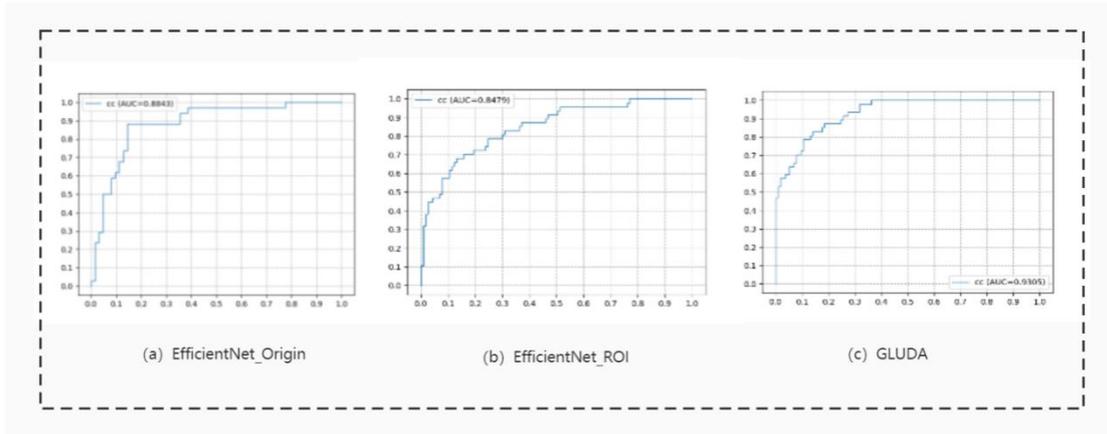


Fig 3. Performance of GLUDA vs. other models with data augmentation

Discussion

Model discussion

The heuristic of the new model was motivated by observing how professionals form their comprehensive diagnosis of anemia with the anemia images. Let's consider the following decision-making process: as a professional, when using a conjunctiva image for assisting anemia diagnosis, one would first make a preliminary judgment on the overall image of conjunctiva, considering the potential risk of whether the corresponding individual has anemia. Then, in order to further verify or reject this judgment, one will continue to carefully observe the regions of interest (ROI), and make comparative analysis with the whole image, and finally get a comprehensive judgment of the anemia diagnosis.

Several key steps in the GLUDA model can be summarized as follows:

Firstly, in addition to the original image data serving as the global view, the region of interest (ROI) from the original image, serving as the local view data. Formally, for any conjunctiva image data x_s , we perform ROI extraction algorithm to produce the local view data, denoted as:

$$x'_s = local(x_s), \quad (6)$$

where $local()$ denotes any appropriate ROI extraction algorithm. The obtained local view image

143 is then resized to the same size of x_s , which is also denoted as x'_s for convenience. x_s and x'_s is
144 then treated as two equal parts to form a tuple as the input of the model, i.e.,

$$145 \quad x_s \rightarrow (x_s, x'_s), \quad (7)$$

146 and the learning task is reframed to obtain a mapping function f which produce the following
147 mapping for any (x_s, y_s) with high generalization ability:

$$148 \quad f: (x_s, x'_s) \rightarrow y_s. \quad (8)$$

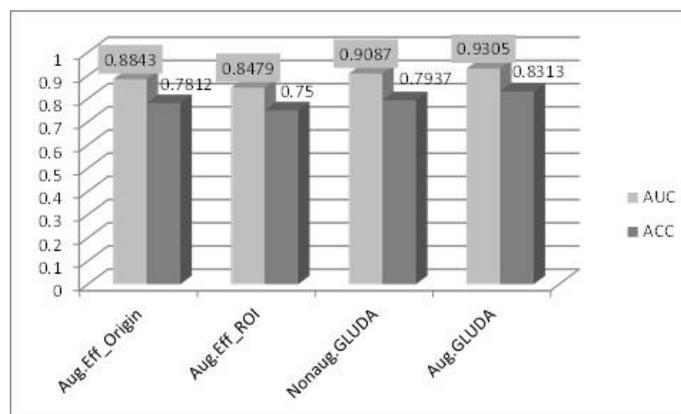
149 Secondly, the overall framework comprises two branches of deep convolutional neural
150 networks, which server as feature extractor for the original conjunctiva image and the ROI
151 conjunctiva image, respectively. The network block architecture of each branch is identical to that
152 of the EfficientNet model, which comprises convolutional layers, mobile inverted bottleneck
153 MBConv layers and Pooling layers as its building blocks [25-27]. There are various versions of
154 EfficientNet model, and we adopt EfficientNet-B0 in our study for convenience but note that other
155 versions can substitute for EfficientNet-B0 here without substantial influence.

156 Thirdly, the extracted higher-level features of the two branches are fused together, and are
157 passed through fully connected layers to learn a more comprehensive prediction. To be concrete,
158 for each view of the image data, after passing through the layers of the branch, a set of higher-
159 level features are obtained. To fuse these two sets of features, a simple concatenation operation
160 was carried out, which would concatenate these two sources of features into a unified one. The
161 fused features are then eventually passed through the FC layer to output a prediction of anemia.
162 Note that alternative feature fusion operations other than concatenation might also be
163 applicable here, but simple concatenation operation has well served the task here and works well
164 in practice.

165

166 **Experiment discussion**

167 One of the aspects worth emphasizing is that, we could observe from the results that, even
168 when training without data augmentation, the obtained GLUDA model could still outperformed
169 EfficientNet_Origin and EfficientNet_ROI trained with data augmentation. We plot the comparing
170 results in Fig.4. Such contrast is impressive, considering that in this case GLUDA only used 532
171 conjunctiva images for training, which is far less than the 1396 augmented images for training
172 EfficientNet_Origin and EfficientNet_ROI. Given that data augmentation could provide extra
173 information to boost model training in many cases, it might be reasonable to conclude that the way
174 GLUDA fuse two views of conjunctiva images had successfully draw into valid discriminative
175 information for training, which would be missing when only a single view of conjunctiva images
176 was used. Such augmentation of information is parallel to that of data augmentation, since the
177 performance of GLUDA could be further improved when trained with augmented set, which could
178 be found in Figure 4.



179

180 Fig.4 GLUDA obtained competitive results even without data augmentation

181

182 **Conclusion**

183 In this paper, we proposed a new algorithmic framework for the problem of anemia detection
184 using individuals' images of conjunctiva. Compared with the traditional blood testing method, this
185 method has great advantages in the convenience of application due to its inventiveness manner.
186 However, existing work using one single conjunctiva image could not reach expected accuracy in
187 many real-world application scenarios. Motivated by the observation that professionals can benefit
188 from their abilities in comprehensively unifying both global and local information of a single
189 conjunctiva image in enhancing the accuracy of anemia diagnosis, we proposed a two-branch
190 neural network architecture to fully explore such two views of the conjunctiva image and achieved
191 a much robust and reliable performance in intelligent diagnosis.

192 In our future work, we would continue to investigate other alternative approaches of unifying
193 multiple views of conjunctiva image data other than the proposed two-branch neural network
194 approach. Furthermore, considering that the paradigm proposed might benefit other clinical or
195 medical application tasks involving image recognition, we will continue to explore more potential
196 applications of this method.

197

198 **Methods**

199 **Various approaches in detecting anemia**

200 Here, we review some of the related work, including the various approaches in detecting anemia
201 with images, and one of the main deep learning research in processing multi-modal data, i.e.,
202 multi-modal deep learning, whose idea was adopted in designing the proposed new algorithm.

203 Anemia detection methods without blood testing: Due to the universality of anemia detection
204 and the inconvenience of traditional blood detection methods, several alternative non-invasive

205 approaches have been investigated in recent years. For instance, several previous works have been
206 done to investigate the correlation of anemia and physical signs such as the pallor of conjunctivae,
207 tongue, palms and nailbed [7, 12,13]. Since such approaches often need human intervention for
208 estimation and are prone to be affected by subjective judgement of people, they have the
209 disadvantages of instability and labor-intensive.

210 In order to enhance the objectivity and stability of diagnosis, more methods based on automatic
211 image processing and recognition have been developed. For example, [9] proposed to use multi-
212 linear regression to estimates hemoglobin levels with color data and metadata of fingernail bed
213 smartphone photos, and use them as indicated index for detecting anemia. [10] proposed to use
214 neural networks for building detecting models with conjunctiva images. [3] proposed a deep
215 learning algorithm which was trained using retinal images and alternative metadata to output
216 predicts of blood-haemoglobin levels for anemia diagnosis. [15] developed a smartphone App to
217 estimate hemoglobin level for detecting anemia given a light source shining through a patient's
218 finger.

219 The above approaches mainly rely on traditional image processing technology which is prone to
220 be affected by the image defects in color and other aspects, and often needs experts' intervention
221 to justify the image quality, making them instability and labor-intensive. Therefore, many
222 researchers choose to switch to deep learning approach for more stable and intelligent detection.
223 Such approach aims at training deep learning models with a set of annotated images, which would
224 give automatic diagnosis without any intervention of professionals. [11] Developed a deep
225 learning approach which uses fundus retinal images plus patients' metadata to perform automated
226 anemia screening. [16] constructed neural network models for anemia detection using conjunctiva

227 images. [17] proposed a U-Net based conjunctiva segmentation model to detecting anemia. To
228 summarize, previous work of this line have showed the huge potential of deep learning for anemia
229 detection with conjunctiva images, but there is still more room for improvement to make such
230 technology more feasible and robust.

231 Deep Learning for Multimodality Medical Data: Many practical medical or clinical applications
232 involve multiple modalities rather than single modality data. Therefore, the analysis and
233 processing of multimodality medical data with deep neural network has gradually become a
234 research hotspot [18-19]. Hyperdensenet [20] is a 3D complete convolutional neural network,
235 which extends dense connection to multimodal medical image segmentation task. Experiments
236 show that hyperdensenet achieves satisfactory results in the brain tissue segmentation challenge.
237 In [21], a network suitable for multimodal medical image scene was designed to fuse the
238 complementary anatomical and functional information from different modal images of PET and
239 CT, so as to realize the automatic detection of lung cancer. [22] uses multimodal (B-scan, color
240 Doppler, elastography), multiple angle (cross section and vertical section) breast image data sets
241 to construct an interpretable deep convolution neural network for multi-channel ultrasound image
242 fusion. MMFNet [23] uses multiple encoders to extract multimodal MRI image features, and then
243 fuses the features to complete the semantic segmentation task of nasopharyngeal carcinoma
244 through the decoders. In [24], the novel coronavirus pneumonia severity was predicted with
245 convolution neural network and regression analysis model, using both CT images and structured
246 information from medical records. To the best of our knowledge, little work on multimodality
247 deep learning for anemia detection has been done in previous works, and there is a lot of room for
248 exploration in this research direction. And the approach proposed in this study might be a useful

249 exploration in applying multimodal algorithms in unifying both global and local information in
250 this aspect.

251

252 **Problem formulation**

253 Formally, the learning task of this study is as follows: given a collection of conjunctiva images as
254 training data instances, with each image labeled with Y/N annotated by professionals (Y meaning
255 the corresponding individual is diagnosed as having anemia and N meaning otherwise), the target
256 of the task is to construct a deep learning model, which could output an anemia prediction at
257 professional level for any individual, after given his/her image of conjunctiva. To be concrete, we
258 can formally describe the task as: given training data set $D = \{(X_s, y_s), s = 1, 2, \dots, m\}$, where X_s
259 denotes the conjunctiva image of the s -th individual, m denotes the sample size, and y_s denotes the
260 diagnosis result of anemia status of the corresponding individual. We wish to construct a deep
261 learning model for mapping X_s to y_s with high accuracy and generalization ability.

262 As was confirmed by previous clinical research and empirical studies, the rich information
263 contained in conjunctiva images can really provide a sufficient basis for the diagnosis of anemia.
264 Therefore, such learning task is empirically solvable, and all we need to do is to design more
265 effective models based on the characteristics of the data and the task.

266 However, there is some room for improvement in existing algorithms of in this line of work. To
267 be concrete, as was demonstrated by previous research and in our testing experiments, when using
268 a single conjunctiva image with traditional CNN architecture for anemia detection, it might be
269 difficult to achieve professional judgment accuracy in many cases, especially when there are
270 problems such as unqualified shooting quality or color difference in the images.

271 Through careful analysis of this situation, we found that one of the main reasons for this
272 situation is, the current deep learning model applied to anemia detection does not fully consider
273 correlation of the global and local information of the image, which makes it easy to encounter
274 problems when it encounters images with poor image quality. We believe that the ability to
275 combine global and local information is an important reason why experts can obtain high accuracy
276 diagnosis. To this end, we proceed to design a deep learning structure with this fusion ability.

277 **Data preparation**

278 All images obtained are anonymized before the experiment, and informed consent was obtained
279 from all the patients. The whole data set contains a total of 852 conjunctiva images, with labels of
280 anemic or non_anemic respectively, and each image's label was obtained according to the
281 corresponding patient's laboratory Hb measurements within 24 hours of photography. All the
282 images are resized to 224*224*3 before training. The whole data was randomly divided into three
283 sub-sets, i.e., training set, verification set and test set. We randomly select around 60% of the
284 whole anemic images and around 60% of the whole non_anemic images to form the training set,
285 and randomly select about 20% of the whole anemic images and about 20% of the whole
286 non_anemic images to form the verification set, and the rest of all the images are put together to
287 form the test set. Note that we divided the whole data set in this manner to ensure that the
288 proportion of positive and negative instances remains almost unchanged across the three sub-sets.

289 The information of the data set with size of each class is showed in Table 2 .

290

Table 2 Conjunctiva Images Data

class label	non_anemic	anemic	total
whole data	575	277	852

training set	353	179	532
verification set	109	51	160
test set	113	47	160

291

292 **Evaluation criteria**

293 Considering that the sample sizes for different classes are unbalanced in our data set (the sample
294 size of non_anemic conjunctiva images are more than two times of the size of anemic ones), we
295 use focal loss [28] as loss functions for our GLUDA model and other comparing models.
296 Formally, for every conjunctiva image, if the model output the probability of the ground truth
297 label as p_t , then its focal loss would be:

$$298 \quad \text{FL}(p_t) = -(1 - p_t)^\gamma \log(p_t), \quad (9)$$

299 where γ is a user-defined balanced parameter. As is universally acknowledged, focal loss function
300 is specially designed for training problems with class imbalance. For all the models trained in this
301 section, we simply set γ to be 0.5 across all experiments.

302 Several evaluation criteria were chosen to measure the performance of different models. The
303 first one is the area under ROC curve (AUC), where ROC stands for the Receiver Operating
304 Characteristic. The other three ones include Sensitivity (Sen), Specificity (Spe) and Accuracy
305 (Acc). Denote TP and FP as the number of true positives and false positives, and TN and FN as the
306 number of true negatives and false negatives, respectively, then the three criteria above can be
307 written as follows:

$$308 \quad \text{Sen} = TP / (TP + FN) \quad (10)$$

$$309 \quad \text{Spe} = TN / (TN + FP) \quad (11)$$

310
$$\text{Acc} = (TP + TN)/(TP + FP + TN + FN) \quad (12)$$

311

312 To evaluation the performance of GLUDA model, especially its effectiveness in unifying both
313 global and local views of conjunctiva images, we choose the state-of-the-art EfficientNet as the
314 base model, and use various forms of conjunctiva images as input to obtain different models for
315 comparison. Since GLUDA model uses building blocks of EfficientNet as its main components,
316 such choice of model is relatively reasonable. Specifically, to verify the effectiveness of GLUDA
317 in unifying both global and local views of conjunctiva images, we benchmarked it with the
318 following two models:

319 (1) EfficientNet_Origin: EfficientNet model trained using the original conjunctiva images;

320 (2) EfficientNet_ROI: EfficientNet model trained using the ROI of the original conjunctiva
321 images.

322 The training details and parameter settings of GLUDA model and the comparing models are
323 described as follows. First, as is pre-processed above, we set the input data format as 224*224*3,
324 and use the default network structure of EfficientNet_B0 to form the framework of
325 EfficientNet_Origin, EfficientNet_ROI, and the corresponding building blocks of GLUDA. We
326 adopted transfer learning with the pre-trained EfficientNet_B0 to fine tune the models. We use
327 Adaptive Moment Estimation (Adam) as the optimizer in training all the models, and set the
328 learning rate as 0.003, the learning rate decay factor as 0.99 and the batch size as 16, respectively.
329 Secondly, all the models are trained using the training set showed in Table. 1. And we set the total
330 number of epochs to be 50, and use AUC on the verification set as reference value in performing
331 model selection to output the final models. Thirdly, the AUC, Sen, Spe and Acc of the obtained

332 models (EfficientNet_Origin, EfficientNet_ROI and GLUDA, respectively) on test set are
333 calculated and output for performance comparison.

334

335 **Declarations**

336 **Ethics approval and consent to participate**

337 This study procedure was approved by the Ethics Committee of Third affiliated Hospital at Sun
338 Yat-sen University, and written informed consent was acquired from all participants.

339 **Consent for publication**

340 All participants gave written informed consent for the publication of findings.

341 **Availability of data and materials**

342 The data sets used and/or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding
343 author on reasonable request.

344 **Competing interests**

345 The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

346 **Funding**

347 This work was supported by the National Natural Science Foundation of China, [Grant Number
348 62173151, Lijuan Zheng, Senping Tian], Natural Science Foundation of Guangdong Province
349 [Grant Number 2019A1515012048, Shaopeng Liu, Jianhua Guo], The Opening Project of
350 Guangdong Province Key Laboratory of Big Data Analysis and Processing at Sun Yat-sen
351 University, [Grant Number 202001, Jiaming Hong], The Social Sciences Project of Guangzhou

352 University of Chinese Medicine [Grant Number 2021SKYB01, Jiaming Hong].

353 **Authors' contributions**

354 Conception and design: Lijuan Zheng, Shaopeng Liu, and Jiaming Hong. Administrative support:
355 Senping Tian, Shaopeng Liu and Jiaming Hong ; Collection and assembly of data: Xinpeng
356 Wang ,Xiuxiu Liao and Jianhua Guo, ; Data analysis and interpretation: Jiaming Hong, Shaopeng
357 Liu, Xiuxiu Liao, Lijuan Zheng, and Senping Tian; Manuscript writing: All authors; Final
358 approval of manuscript: All authors.

359 **Acknowledgements**

360 Not applicable.

361 **Authors' information**

362 ¹ Department of Automation Science and Engineering, South China University of Technology,
363 Guangzhou, China. ² Department of Computer Science, Guangdong Polytechnic Normal
364 University, Guangzhou, China. ³ School of Medical Information Engineering, Guangzhou
365 University of Chinese Medicine, Guangzhou, China.

366

367

368 **References**

369 [1] Smith RE, JR. The clinical and economic burden of anemia. The American journal of
370 managed care (2010)

371 [2] WHO. Haemoglobin concentrations for the diagnosis of anaemia and assessment of severity:

372 WHO; 2011

373 [3] Tham Y C , Cheng C Y , Wong T Y . Detection of anaemia from retinal images. Nature
374 Biomedical Engineering, 2019, 4(1):1-2.

375 [4] Kim T , Choi S H , Lambert-Cheatham N , et al. Toward laboratory blood test-comparable
376 photometric assessments for anemia in veterinary hematology[J]. Journal of Biomedical Optics,
377 2016, 21(10):107001.

378 [5] Shah N , Osea E A , Martinez G J . Accuracy of noninvasive hemoglobin and invasive point -
379 of - care hemoglobin testing compared with a laboratory analyzer[J]. International Journal of
380 Laboratory Hematology, 2014, 36(1)

381 [6] Wittenmeier E , Bellosevich S , Mauff S , et al. Comparison of the gold standard of
382 hemoglobin measurement with the clinical standard (BGA) and noninvasive hemoglobin
383 measurement (SpHb) in small children: a prospective diagnostic observational study[J]. Paediatr
384 Anaesth, 2015, 25(10):1046-1053.

385 [7] Ashwini K , Mandar K , Rajnish J , et al. Accuracy and Reliability of Pallor for Detecting
386 Anaemia: A Hospital-Based Diagnostic Accuracy Study[J]. Plos One, 2010, 5(1):e8545.

387 [8] Mitani A , Huang A , Venugopalan S , et al. Detection of anaemia from retinal fundus images
388 via deep learning[J]. Nature Biomedical Engineering, 2020, 4(Suppl.):1-10.

389 [9] Mannino R G , Myers D R , Tyburski E A , et al. Smartphone app for non-invasive detection
390 of anemia using only patient-sourced photos[J]. Nature Communications, 2018, 9(1).

391 [10] Collings S , Thompson O , Hirst E , et al. Non-Invasive Detection of Anaemia Using Digital
392 Photographs of the Conjunctiva[J]. Plos One, 2016, 11(4):e0153286.

393 [11] Jain P , Bauskar S , Gyanchandani M . Neural network based non - invasive method to detect

394 anemia from images of eye conjunctiva[J]. International Journal of Imaging Systems and
395 Technology, 2020.

396 [12] Sheth T N , Choudhry N K , Bowes M , et al. The Relation of Conjunctival Pallor to the
397 Presence of Anemia[J]. Journal of General Internal Medicine, 1997, 12(2):102-106.

398 [13] Chalco J P , Huicho L , Alamo C , et al. Accuracy of clinical pallor in the diagnosis of
399 anaemia in children: a meta-analysis[J]. BMC Pediatrics,5,1(2005-12-08), 2005, 5(1):46.

400 [14] Mitani A , Huang A , Venugopalan S , et al. Detection of anaemia from retinal fundus images
401 via deep learning[J]. Nature Biomedical Engineering, 2020, 4(Suppl.):1-10.

402 [15] Wang E J , Li W , Hawkins D , et al. HemaApp: noninvasive blood screening of hemoglobin
403 using smartphone cameras.[J]. GetMobile Mobile Computing and Communications, 2017,
404 21(2):26-30.

405 [16] Jain P , Bauskar S , Gyanchandani M . Neural network based non-invasive method to
406 detect anemia from images of eye conjunctiva[J]. International Journal of Imaging Systems
407 and Technology, 2020.

408 [17] Kasivisw An Ath An S , Vijayan T B , Simone L , et al. Semantic Segmentation of
409 Conjunctiva Region for Non-Invasive Anemia Detection Applications[J]. Electronics, 2020,
410 9(8):1309.

411 [18] Du J, et a. An Overview of Multi-Modal Medical Image Fusion. Neurocomputing, 2016, 215:
412 3–20.

413 [19] Zhou T, Ruan S, Canu S. A review: Deep learning for medical image segmentation using
414 multi-modality fusion. Array, 2019, 3-4: 100004.

415 [20] Dolz J, Ayed I B, Jing Y, et al. HyperDense-Net: A hyper-densely connected CNN for multi-

416 modal image segmentation. IEEE Transactions on Medical Imaging, 2019, 38(5): 1116-1126.

417 [21] Kumar A, Fulham M, Fen D, Kim J. Co-Learning Feature Fusion Maps From PET-CT
418 Images of Lung Cancer. IEEE Transactions on Medical Imaging, 2020, 39, 204-217.

419 [22] Qian X, et al. Prospective assessment of breast cancer risk from multimodal multiview
420 ultrasound images via clinically applicable deep learning. Nature biomedical engineering. 2021.

421 [23] Chen H, et al., MMFNet: A multi-modality MRI fusion network for segmentation of
422 nasopharyngeal carcinoma, Neurocomputing., 2020(394):27-40.

423 [24] Lassau N, et al. Integrating deep learning CT-scan model, biological and clinical variables to
424 predict severity of COVID-19 patients. Nature Communications2021, 12:634.

425 [25] Tan M , Le Q V . EfficientNet: Rethinking Model Scaling for Convolutional Neural
426 Networks. 2019. Proceedings of the 36th International Conference on Machine Learning, 2019

427 [26] Sandler M , Howard A , Zhu M , et al. MobileNetV2: Inverted Residuals and Linear
428 Bottlenecks[C]// 2018 IEEE/CVF Conference on Computer Vision and Pattern Recognition
429 (CVPR). IEEE, 2018.

430 [27] Tan M , Chen B , Pang R , et al. MnasNet: Platform-Aware Neural Architecture Search for
431 Mobile[C]// 2019 IEEE/CVF Conference on Computer Vision and Pattern Recognition (CVPR).
432 IEEE, 2019.

433 [28] Lin T, Goyal P , Girshick R , et al. Focal Loss for Dense Object Detection[C]// 2017 IEEE
434 International Conference on Computer Vision (ICCV). IEEE, 2017:2999-3007.

435

436