A Multi-level Classification Framework for Multi-site Medical Data: Application to the ADHD-200 Collection[☆]

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Abstract

Recently, the culture of sharing medical data has emerged impressively, reducing significantly the barrier to the development of medical research accordingly. As open-access large datasets result from this significant initiative, data mining techniques can be considered for the development of interpretable expert systems to help in diagnosis. However, the collaborative effort of information gathering yields heterogeneous databases because of technical and geographical factors. Indeed, on the one hand, the harmonization of protocols for data collection is still missing. On the other hand, cultural and social factors impact locally both the epidemiology and etiology of a given disease. Ignoring these factors could weaken the credibility of studies based on multi-site data. Thereby, our work tackles the development of computer-aided diagnosis systems relying on heterogeneous data. For such a purpose, we propose a multi-level approach (inspired by multi-level statistical modeling) based on decision trees (in the sense of machine learning). This framework is applied on the public ADHD-200 collection for the study of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

Keywords: Clinical Decision Support Systems, Decision Trees, Multi-level Approach, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

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1. Introduction

During the last decade, the sharing of large-scale medical data appears to be a growing trend encouraged by the scientific community. Several medical databases were launched publicly to address different health concerns (Esfandiari et al., 2014; Di Martino et al., 2014; Ihle et al., 2012; Kerr et al., 2012; Milham et al., 2012; Church, 2005; Hunter et al., 2005; Mueller et al., 2005). Some initiatives aim not only at sharing databases, but also software tools to manage information at best (Milham, 2012). Such a culture of data sharing is valuable to the research sphere (Ross, 2016; Mennes et al., 2013; Ross & Krumholz, 2013; Piwowar et al., 2008). Indeed, access to data is henceforth facilitated, especially to researchers not having the medical information on hand usually. Among others, specialists of computer science and mathematics can contribute their expertise at the technological level notably. The interaction of medicine with other disciplines is made possible therefore. Moreover, with the sharing of large-scale data, a same issue is approached in different ways worldwide, so research is enriched and accelerated. At last, a common framework of open-access data encourages local and international research centers to make their own databases available online. This virtuous circle multiplies the mass of available information, and the quality of studies is improved accordingly.

In particular, opening such access to data allows to focus on the explanation of some diseases/troubles through the detection of physiological foundations and/or typical symptoms. The advent of data mining allows to meet these needs, and to develop expert systems for the purpose of aid in diagnosis (Esfandiari et al., 2014; Parvathi & Rautaray, 2014). Such a decision support system should preferably be *interpretable*, i.e. able to show how a diagnosis is acquired (Lavrač, 1999), and *readable*, through assessment criteria making sense (Wagholikar et al., 2012)

The efforts deployed to gather data collaboratively are undeniably outstanding, nevertheless, they yield databases whose use is challenging. Indeed, the harmonization of data collection protocols is still missing (Milham et al., 2012). Across sites, data acquisition differs in terms of equipment calibration, experimental conditions, and sampling methodologies (Abraham et al., 2017). There exist also variations in the strategies that are used to process medical images (Abraham et al., 2017). Besides, the influence of cultural and social factors on both the epidemiology and etiology of diseases is established since the past century (Trostle, 2005; Link & Phelan, 1995; Landy, 1977). These factors of disparities are added to the natural heterogeneity of medical data, caused by the different natures of information available on a patient (interviews, phenotype, scans) and their interpretation by physicians (Wasan et al., 2006; Cios & Moore, 2002). Hence, multi-site medical data remain in reality a patchwork of subsets that cannot be merged into a single dataset without any adaptation. As inconsistency may arise from the use of heterogeneous medical data, studies generally focus on subsets withdrawn from these large databases (Abraham et al., 2017). The collective attempts to share large open-access data are therefore partially rewarded: admittedly, the access to medical data is easier, but the open-access databases remain not fully exploited.

In our study, we attempt to tackle the development of interpretable and readable diagnosis support models able to cope with a medical multi-site database. We propose an application to the ADHD-200

collection (Milham et al., 2012), an example of stable and recent release of multi-site medical database launched for the study of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). The main contributions of our work are exposed below.

- After the study of Abraham et al. (2017), we propose another way to deal with the issue of heterogeneous multi-site medical databases. The work of Abraham et al. (2017) proposed two cross-validation strategies that enable to acquire models less sensitive to the heterogeneity of multi-site medical databases. In our work, instead of questioning the validation phase to address this issue, we propose a rethinking of the learning process to develop models able to help in diagnosing a disease/trouble, under a novel *hierarchical* spirit.

- In previous works, to predict a diagnosis, hierarchical systems were set up to practice classification in two steps: (1) to dissociate healthy and pathological cases and (2) to detect the type of pathology. The methodologies lied on the development of either two classifiers per dataset (site) or two classifiers across the whole database. The novelty of our proposal is related to the hybrid nature of our hierarchical classifier where *intra-site* and *inter-site variabilities* play both a role at different levels to deliver a final robust diagnosis. To the best of our knowledge, such a procedure is innovative and allows to take into consideration geographical parameters in contrast to the work of Abraham et al. 2017. We will name our proposition as a *multi-level approach* since it is inspired by the theory of multi-level analysis.

- The work presents new results as concerns the ADHD-200 collection. In particular, we do not consider domain-specific features to solve the classification task, but rather features having demonstrated success in other domains. The results show that these *meaningful features* provide interesting interpretations for helping in diagnosing ADHD.

In section 2, we will expose our case study, before developing the materials and methods of this work in section 3. The results of our study will be presented and discussed in section 4. Finally, we will conclude this paper in section 5.

2. A case study: Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

Approximately five to seven percent of children and teenagers are likely to be confronted one day with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)[1]. Also affecting adults, this mental trouble is characterized by inattention, and/or hyperactive-impulsive attitudes. Generally, people with ADHD have to deal with a reduced self-control impairing notably their ability to express serenely their feelings, to the detriment of their social and professional daily life.

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[1]http://adhd-institute.com/burden-of-adhd/epidemiology/

Table 1: Summary of the ADHD-200 training data

Site	Age	Gender		TD	ADHD	Total
		F	**M**			
PU	8-17	52	142	116	78	194
KKI	8-13	37	46	61	22	83
NI	11-22	17	31	23	25	48
NYU	7-18	77	145	99	123	222
OHSU	7-12	36	43	42	37	79
Pitt.U	10-20	43	46	89	0	89
WU	7-22	28	33	61	0	61
Total		290	486	491	285	776

Today, the subject's environment (mainly parents and teachers) constitutes almost the only source of information that practitioners have to make a diagnosis, unmistakably subjective. Research is still ongoing to better understand the physiological bases of the trouble.

In 2011, researchers from various fields of expertise were challenged to propose an objective assessment of ADHD in the context of the ADHD-200 contest (Milham et al., 2012). As a working basis, a multi-site medical database, called the ADHD-200 collection, was released online[2]. The database includes clinical (phenotypic) and neuroimaging data (resting-state functional and structural magnetic resonance images) on altogether 947 patients. Typically Developing (TD) and ADHD affected patients are included in the database. ADHD cases are expressed in three types: Inattentive (ADHD-I), Hyperactive-Impulsive (ADHD-HI) and a Combination of both types (ADHD-C). Eight sites contributed to the collection of data: Peking University (PU), Kennedy Krieger Institute (KKI), NeuroImage (NI), New-York University (NYU), Oregon Health & Sciences University (OHSU), University of Pittsburgh (Pitt.U), Washington University in St. Louis (WU) and Brown University[3]. Tables 1 and 2 present the subjects' distribution according to multiple criteria as regards both training and test sets (see also Milham et al. 2012). Let us note that the ADHD-HI type (Hyperactive-Impulsive) was not predicted as the associated population is very low in the training set.

The ADHD-200 collection can be qualified as a heterogeneous medical dataset as it includes instances of various geographical origins whereas social factors influence the local prevalence of ADHD (Russell et al., 2014); the subsets were not collected according to a common protocol (Bellec et al., 2017); the gender representativeness as well as the healthy and pathological cases proportions can significantly vary according to sites.

Actually, the inter-site variability of the ADHD-200 collection has been largely raised as a complex aspect to deal with (Bellec et al., 2017). To manage it, two main strategies were envisaged by previous works:

- learn a single model on the whole data collection D, ignoring local specificities of the underlying datasets

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[2]The dataset is available at http://fcon_1000.projects.nitrc.org/indi/adhd200/.
[3]Brown University data were discarded in this work as the results of diagnosis are not supplied for this site.

Table 2: Summary of the ADHD-200 test set

Site	Age	Gender		TD	ADHD	Total
		F	**M**			
PU	8-15	19	32	27	24	51
KKI	8-12	1	10	8	3	11
NI	13-26	13	12	14	11	25
NYU	7-17	13	28	12	29	41
OHSU	7-12	17	17	28	6	34
Pitt.U	14-17	2	7	5	4	9
WU	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total		65	106	94	77	171

$D_1, \ldots, D_k$, and identifying the latter potentially by a nominal variable, so hoping that the learning process will be sensitive to this information, e.g. in Deshpande et al. 2015; Brown et al. 2012; Dai et al. 2012; Eloyan et al. 2012; Sidhu et al. 2012;

- learn a model on each one of the datasets $D_1, \ldots, D_k$, so ignoring possible global characteristics of the whole collection D, e.g. in Colby et al. 2012.

In our sense, the first approach simplifies drastically the modeling of discrepancies. The second approach intercepts better the specificity of each group but does not allow any cross of information on a more global level.

From neuroimaging data, typical information such as correlation measures between brain regions of interest, graph theory metrics, morphometric features are computed and used for learning (Deshpande et al., 2015; Guo et al., 2014; Eloyan et al., 2012; Colby et al., 2012; Dai et al., 2012; Fair et al., 2012; Sidhu et al., 2012; Smith et al., 2011; Rubinov & Sporns, 2010; Telesford et al., 2010; Bullmore & Sporns, 2009; Marrelec et al., 2006). As a large number of features is raised accordingly, successful tools such as Principal Component Analysis (PCA), Support Vector Machine with Recursive Features Elimination (SVM-RFE, see Guyon et al. 2002), as well as other variants of SVM (Aytug, 2015) are considered for dimensionality reduction. Even if some of these features could be easily interpreted, they are either introduced in a process of dimensionality reduction that could lead to loose the real sense of the information, or drown in a large mass of data, from which they hardly override. Furthermore, the classifiers that are considered in this context do not contribute to increase the interpretability of the features. Indeed, countless studies have privileged Support Vector Machine (SVM) as a predictor of ADHD (Riaz et al., 2016; Strigo et al., 2013; Chang et al., 2012; Colby et al., 2012; Dai et al., 2012; Fair et al., 2012; Sidhu et al., 2012; Wee et al., 2012; Mueller et al., 2011; Anuradha et al., 2010). In Deshpande et al. 2015, accuracies accounting for 90% in ADHD and healthy subjects dissociation, and nearly 95% between ADHD subtypes could be reached thanks to Artificial Neural Networks (ANN). Such classifiers achieve high prediction accuracies, but they lack of interpretability and readability (Wagholikar et al., 2012). Indeed, such models, through equations (SVM) and networks of weighted sums (ANN), can be assimilated to

black boxes, i.e. the relation between the model inputs (patient's features) and output (patient's diagnosis) is difficult to establish clearly.

3. Materials and methods

The medical context involves special requirements (Cios & Moore, 2002; Moore & Hutchins, 1980). Therefore, we propose a multi-level approach that is consistent with the medical way of thinking and which addresses simultaneously the issue of heterogeneous multi-site medical data. We will justify and develop this approach in section 3.1. Afterwards, we will advocate the use of decision trees as white-box models in section 3.2. We will expose how to tune and validate such models in an appropriate way in section 3.3. Finally, we will present the data of our case study in section 3.4, and expose the modalities of results reporting in section 3.5.

3.1. Multi-level approach

Numerous disorders exist in several types. Although basically suffering from the same disorder, patients may exhibit different types of this disorder. That is the case, for example, for allergies where patients suffering from a common hypersensitivity to environmental factors can express it in different forms such as asthma, rhinitis, conjunctivitis (Tanno et al., 2014). In the same way, psychological disorders are often characterized by a spectrum of conditions such that these conditions appear as different ways in which a same trouble is expressed (Maser & Akiskal, 2002). For example, as previously stated, ADHD exist in three types: inattentive and/or hyperactive-impulsive.

In each case, the diagnosis question could be solved in a hierarchical way:

1. first, in checking the absence or presence of the disorder;

2. then, in detecting the disorder type in case of a positive diagnosis.

Such a hierarchical structure is interesting as it allows to consider different assessment criteria in two steps. Indeed, a medical dataset can contain voluminous information on a subject (Cios & Moore, 2002), though the information is not necessarily required in its integrity to solve each of the problems consisting of either detecting the disorder or defining the disorder type. Thus, to simplify the learning process, a feature extraction process can help to raise the most interesting information at each step of the diagnosis. From a medical point of view, this hierarchical structure could potentially lead to technical simplifications, e.g. if expensive and sophisticated information (as scans) are required on the second stage of a diagnosis only.

Obviously, this cascade configuration appears as justified; besides, it has been considered in previous works, e.g. in Colby et al. (2012). However, we propose to adapt this approach in the case of multi-site data. Indeed, the latter involve geographical and technical variations that we could hardly ignore. As mentioned beforehand, geographically distinct sites may be associated to variations in the epidemiology and etiology of a trouble. Moreover, the interpretation of medical data may be different according to physicians, such a

difference being perhaps strengthened by this same factor of localization. Besides, technical disparities include variations impacting data acquisition and processing strategies.

Let us suppose a multi-site database $D_1, \ldots, D_k$, each D_i representing a *site* subset. Let us assume, first, that there are no technical heterogeneities, i.e. data were collected according to a same core protocol. It is consistent to group subsets that would have been collected in sites belonging to a same cultural and social entity. In proceeding so, we obtain datasets called $E_1, \ldots, E_j$, each E_i representing an *entity* subset with $j \leq k$. Using these data grouped by entity, we propose a multi-level approach to solve the hierarchical classification problem exposed in the preceding paragraphs.

- In a first level, a classifier should be trained to detect a potential anomaly in a patient. This classifier is developed by homogeneous entity, i.e. based on a training set E_i related to a same cultural and social identity i.

- In a second level, a classifier should be trained to predict a disorder type. At this stage, if a model is developed by entity, there could be a few number of available instances because the corresponding training set consists of pathological instances only, i.e. $E_i^{Disorder} = E_i \setminus E_i^{Healthy}$. That is why, it is better to use the union of sets $\cup_{i=1}^{j} E_i^{Disorder}$.

This approach is inspired by the multi-level analysis theory that has addressed different issues in varying methods (Segenreich et al., 2015; Lecron et al., 2012; Timmerman, 2006). For example, Jansen et al. (2005) introduced the Multi-level Simultaneous Component Analysis (MSCA). The main idea of such a method consists of relying on PCA by decomposing information of instances into two contributions. The first one concerns the evolution of every individual's properties in time and is, consequently, expressed in a *within-individual space*. The second component is expressed in a common space to all instances, called *between-individual space* and allows to raise a global tendency. We transpose this principle in our work, not in the context of an analysis, but to develop a classification scheme. In a first level, we develop a model per entity to detect a potential trouble. Then, in a second level, to detect the trouble type, we cross all the instances regardless of the entity to which they belong. In proceeding so, we make the hypothesis that the classification of a disorder type should be non cultural or social dependent. This may be a realistic hypothesis as, at this level, the question to solve is to detect how a trouble is expressed.

The problem of technical heterogeneities is solved on a case-by-case basis. For example, if signals were collected in the same experimental conditions, but were amplified with different gains, then the problem is solved in applying a gain factor to one of both signals groups to make the comparison possible. It must be emphasized that the full elimination of variations may sometimes be impossible, notably because some of these variations could be ignored by the user of the medical database. That is why it is preferable to cross-validate the classifiers trained on such data. Indeed, cross-validation techniques randomly withdraw instances from the training set as validation sets (see section 3.3), which allows to integrate the robustness to variations as part of the assessment (Abraham et al., 2017).

3.2. Decision trees as interpretable models

As mentioned in introduction of this paper, an aid in diagnosis system should be able to provide physicians with explanations on how a decision is taken (Stoean & Stoean, 2013; Wagholikar et al., 2012; Lavrač, 1999). Different models, such as trees and rules, can fit within this requirement, as they are so called white-box models. In our work, we focused on decision trees.

A decision tree encode a reasoning under the intuitive shape of trees, which makes it a suitable candidate in our goal of developing practical models, i.e. interpretable and readable. Furthermore, in a medical context, a decision tree can be used in situations of extreme emergence, as the time for decision inference is low. Moreover, a decision tree does not require any computerization, as it may be simply read (Lavrač, 1999).

Underlying on a recursive and greedy algorithm (Bishop, 2007; Quinlan, 1993, 1986), the learning of a decision tree process unfolds in accordance with the logic of dividing and conquering. The model is developed in dividing gradually all training instances contained in the root node, to establish the most coherent possible groupings based on common or at least, comparable characteristics. So the learning process is run on a set of training features which is not necessarily needed in its entirety; only the most substantive features are selected to develop a decision tree. The model enhances directly a subset of interesting features for diagnosis, which is not the case of other categories of classifiers.

3.3. Validation procedures

Given a training set, decision trees learning may be adjusted by two parameters: the minimal number of training instances required by leaf m and the confidence level c about pruning (Quinlan, 1993). The parameter m constitutes a stop criterion of the learning process; it also tunes the granularity of the model. Thus, increasing m (by default set at 2) may provide more overarching models and makes them less sensitive to noise. As for parameter c, it is associated to a post-pruning process; it is lead to achieve a fair compromise between the length of decision trees and their predictive error rates.

In our work, we maintained the default value of c (25%). As regards the parameter m, it has been adjusted by a 10-fold cross-validation technique (10-fold CV). We admitted this parameter varied between 5 and 20, the latter representing approximately 10% of the size of the considered training datasets; the classifier whose parameter m is associated with the highest cross-validation prediction rate was held as relevant (see Algorithm 1).

The classifiers were then assessed by a holdout validation procedure, with respect to the test sets provided by the ADHD-200 collection. We reported performance indicators (Witten & Frank, 2005; Klösgen & Zytkow, 2002) that are well suited to the medical context of this work (Cios & Moore, 2002); they are defined hereafter. Let us note TP (respectively TN), the number of true positives (resp. negatives), that is, the number of patients rightly predicted by the model as pathological (resp. healthy) and FP (resp. FN), the number of false positives (resp. negatives), that is, the number of patients wrongly predicted as pathological (resp. healthy).

- *Accuracy* corresponds to the rate of successful predictions:

$$A = \frac{TP + TN}{TP + FP + TN + FN} = \frac{TP + TN}{\text{Number of instances}}$$

- *Specificity* corresponds to the ability to detect healthy patients, i.e. the true negative rate:

$$tn = \frac{TN}{TN + FP} = \frac{TN}{\text{Number of healthy individuals}}$$

- *Sensitivity* corresponds to the ability to detect pathological patients, i.e. the true positive rate:

$$tp = \frac{TP}{TP + FN} = \frac{TP}{\text{Number of pathological individuals}}$$

Algorithm 1 Training a classifier

1: **procedure** TRAINCLASSIFIER(validationMethod)
2:     **for** $m \leftarrow 5, 20$ **do**
3:         classifier $\leftarrow$ executeTraining(m, validationMethod)
4:         **if** classifier.accuracy > bestAccuracy **then**
5:             bestAccuracy $\leftarrow$ classifier.accuracy
6:             bestModel $\leftarrow$ classifier
7:         **end if**
8:     **end for**
9:     **return** bestModel
10: **end procedure**

3.4. Data

3.4.1. Learning features

From the ADHD-200 collection features, age, gender, handedness and intellectual quotient were used for training as phenotypic data. In the paper, they are denoted as AGE, GEN, HAND, IQ respectively. We use the notation PHEN to designate the set of four clinical data, i.e. PHEN = {AGE, GEN, HAND, IQ}.

As for brain images, we focused exclusively on resting-state functional Magnetic Resonances Images (fMRI) rather than structural ones since recent studies showed functional brain activity involvement as significant in neurological phenomena (Abraham et al., 2017; Sidhu et al., 2012; Purdon et al., 2011). Brain images were preprocessed under the initiative of the Neuro Bureau according to the called *The Athena* pipeline (The Neuro Bureau, 2011). Such a major work lead to the extraction of BOLD (Blood Oxygenation Level Dependent) signals, measuring the functional brain activity. The associated signals reflect variations in oxyhemoglobin and deoxyhemoglobin concentrations in blood caused by the neuronal activity (Aguirre et al., 1998; Logothetis & Wandell, 2004). Timecourse values of the signals are extracted for each cerebral Region of Interest (ROI). Brains are parceled according to a standard: Automated Anatomical Labeling (AAL) atlas was considered in this work (116 ROIs), which involves a set of 116 time series available for each subject (Tzourio-Mazoyer et al., 2002). For the sake of simplicity, the cerebral zones are numbered from 1 to 116. The Atlas matches

these numbers with the names of the cerebral zones. Two successive numbers (odd and even, as, for example, 3 and 4) indicate regions having the same spatial location within the left and right hemispheres of the brain.

From fMRI signals, we computed statistical features on the one hand, and frequency features by applying a Discrete Fourier Transform on the second hand. These features are successfully used in several domains, e.g. in music signals classification and speech recognition (Lambrou et al., 1998; Le et al., 2011; Tzanetakis & Cook, 2002) (see Table 3). When these features are computed with regard to a precise brain region, they are indexed by a number, representing the code of the cerebral zone to which the attribute refers, i.e. V_{15} indicates the signal variance of the cerebral zone 15, $V_{15,27,40}$ represents a set of three values concerning the signal variance of zones 15, 27, 40.

Table 3: Features computed on fMRI signals

Feature	Key	Meaning	Interpretation
Variance	V	Energy of fMRI signal	Always positive. The higher the variance is, the more energetic the signal is.
Skewness	S	Symmetry of fMRI intensity distribution	If positive (negative) skewness, fMRI distribution concentrated on the left (right) of the mean signal value.
Kurtosis	K	Aspect of fMRI intensity distribution	If kurtosis superior (inferior) to three, fMRI intensity distribution more (less) shaped than a Gaussian one.
Frequency	F	Frequency associated to the line of maximal amplitude of DFT spectrum.	The higher this frequency is, the more dynamic the fMRI signal is.
Centroid	C	Center of mass of DFT spectrum.	Gives an idea on the global dynamism of the fMRI signal.

Thus, a set of 116 features by modality (variance, skewness, kurtosis, frequency, spectral centroid) was computed, which means that, for each patient, biomarkers accounted for 580 features altogether, in addition to the four clinical attributes (age, gender, handedness and IQ). A feature extraction was clearly required to avoid the curse of dimensionality (Witten & Frank, 2005). This was achieved thanks to a correlation-based feature subset selection (Hall, 1999), an efficient heuristic used to detect a combination of attributes that weakly correlates (to avoid overlapping data) but are highly correlated with the prediction variable.

3.4.2. Selected datasets

As mentioned in section 3.1, in multi-site datasets, it is consistent to group subsets that would have been collected in sites belonging to a same cultural and social entity. However, in the case of the ADHD-200 collection, a preliminary socio-cultural analysis showed us that each site has to be treated as its own entity.

The multi-level approach presented in section 3.1 was applied on some datasets of the ADHD-200 collection. Let us note that the datasets of the University of Pittsburgh (Pitt.U) and of Washington University in St. Louis (WU) include only Typically Developing (TD) subjects (see Table 1). They were thus discarded from our study. The NeuroImage (NI) dataset was also discarded because IQ values are missing.

For the detection of a possible trouble (first level), we illustrated our approach with Peking University (PU) and New-York University (NYU) datasets which are associated to geographically opposed socio-cultural factors. For the identification of the trouble type (second level), we crossed the information of both sites in addition to those of Kennedy Krieger Institute (KKI) and Oregon Health & Sciences University (OHSU) to enrich the resulting training dataset. Some instances were discarded because of missing values regarding phenotypic data and/or brain images. Tables 4 and 5 present the number of instances that were used in this study on levels I and II respectively. As mentioned before, we computed 584 features for each dataset.

Table 4: Summary of the dataset used in level I

Sites	Set	Total	TD	ADHD
NYU	Training	210	93	117
	Test	41	12	29
PU	Training	193	116	77
	Test	51	27	24

Table 5: Summary of the dataset used in level II

Sites	Set	Total	Inattentive (ADHD-I)	Combined (ADHD-C)
PU/KKI/NYU/OHSU	Training	245	137	108
	Test	60	38	22

Before learning on the second level, it was necessary to consider how to conciliate sources of heterogeneity impairing data that were to cross in this level. In particular, we realized on one hand that discrepancies affected variance evolving in different ranges of values according to sites since measured signals were probably amplified with different factors. To inhibit this effect, the measures of variances were reported to the average variances measured by site and by cerebral zone. On the other hand, frequencies associated with the maximal amplitude of the Fourier spectra were reported to the maximal frequency of these spectra to homogenize data whose sampling times differ. Finally, it shall be noted that New-York site measured handedness according to the Edinburgh method in continuous values comprised between -1 and 1 (Oldfield, 1971), while other sites provided labels (0 - left-hander, 1 - right-hander, 2 - ambidextrous). Thus, on the second level, New-York handedness values were adjusted in nominal variables in accordance with Edinburgh scale.
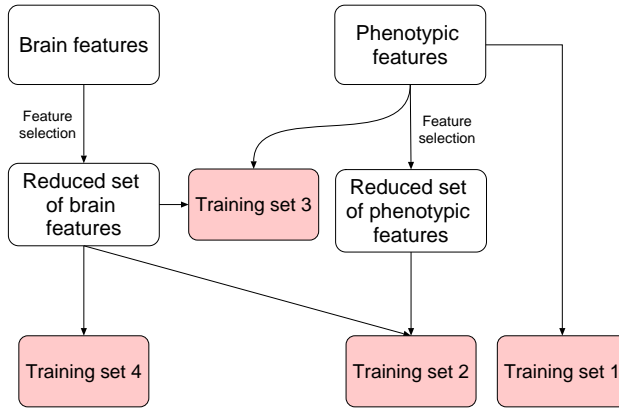
Figure 1: Training sets used to develop classification models

3.5. Results reporting

In the following section, we present the results and the discussion regarding our multi-level approach, based on selected datasets from the ADHD-200 collection. For each site of level I and for level II, our work was based on four variants of training sets, as shown by Figure 1. A first model was learned on phenotypic features exclusively (Training set 1). Then, we learned a model constituted of reduced phenotypic and brain features (Training set 2). As there are only four phenotypic features, we also trained models on training sets constituted by these phenotypic features and the reduced set of brain features (Training set 3). Finally, we considered a training set including only reduced brain features (Training set 4). Training sets 1 and 4 were considered to check if either phenotypic or brain features may alone provide a reliable classifier and a diagnosis accordingly.

The content of these training sets are explicitly given in section 4. Besides, the prediction rates we report are related to the holdout validation. The tables present also the value of parameter m (selected by 10-fold CV).

4. Results & Discussion

In this section, we aim to enhance the relevance of the multi-level approach as a classification scheme implemented to deal with multi-site medical datasets and to address the problem of aid in diagnosis of troubles existing in different types. As previously stated, this approach is evaluated in the context of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. The results of the learning process are exposed in sections 4.1 and 4.2. For the development of decision trees, we considered the implementation of algorithm C4.5 proposed by WEKA software[4]. Note that the numbers given in the nodes of the illustrated decision trees extracted from this

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[4]Available at http://www.cs.waikato.ac.nz/ml/weka/.
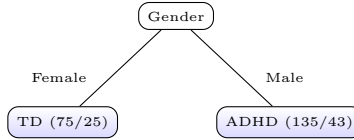
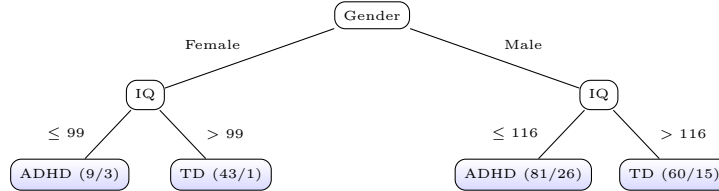Figure 2: New-York phenotype-based diagnosis

Figure 3: Peking phenotype-based diagnosis

software (Figures 2-7) relate respectively to the total number of training cases covered by the associated branching n_t and the number of instances wrongly classified e_t. This is noted as n_t/e_t. Finally, a synthesis of the accuracies on both levels of classification is provided in section 4.3.

4.1. ADHD - TD dissociation

In the ADHD - TD dissociation, the learning process was first exclusively exercised out of the only clinical dataset (PHEN) to measure its impact on prediction rates. The results of the learning process exerted on the phenotypic New-York and Peking sets are exposed in Tables 6 and 7 respectively. Figures 2 and 3 present the corresponding decision trees. While observing the results, we can already notice differences in the expression of clinical factors. In both cases, the diagnosis is surely gender-based, but the intellectual quotient is particularly significant in Peking site. In this latter case, a high prediction rate was acquired by the exclusive use of the phenotype in comparison to New-York site.

We prepared the other training sets (as exposed in section 3.5), following the results of the feature extraction exposed by Table 8. As expected, among the phenotypic features, the gender was raised as relevant, in addition to IQ as regards Peking site.

On New-York site, the feature selection process practiced on the neurological attributes returned signal variances of cerebral zones labeled 15, 27, 32, 40, 70, 87, 88 as the most meaningful features. From this result, we considered three variants of training sets. The associated prediction rates with regards to the test set are exposed by Table 6.

Table 6: Prediction rates with regard to New-York test set

Modality	m	A (%)	tn (%)	tp (%)
PHEN	17	58.5	33.3	69.0
GEN - $V_{15,27,32,40,70,87,88}$	6	61.0	75.0	55.2
PHEN - $V_{15,27,32,40,70,87,88}$	**9**	**68.3**	**75.0**	**65.5**
$V_{15,27,32,40,70,87,88}$	15	51.2	83.3	37.9

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Table 7: Prediction rates with regard to Peking test set

Modality	m	A (%)	tn (%)	tp (%)
PHEN	9	82.4	85.2	79.2
GEN, IQ - $V_{32,37}$, K_{38}, $F_{16,62}$	6	78.4	92.6	62.5
PHEN - $V_{32,37}$, K_{38}, $F_{16,62}$				
* *Original*	12	76.5	81.5	70.8
* *Adjusted*	-	**82.4**	**81.5**	**83.3**
$V_{32,37}$, K_{38}, $F_{16,62}$	13	51.0	88.8	8.3

Table 8: Results of the feature extraction process

	New-York	**Peking**
Phenotypic attributes	GEN	GEN, IQ
Brain attributes	$V_{15,27,32,40,70,87,88}$	$V_{32,37}$, K_{38}, $F_{16,62}$

- [GEN - $V_{15,27,32,40,70,87,88}$] is the set of features strictly suggested by the feature selection process. The resulting classifier (see Figure 4) makes a first dissociation based on gender, before developing a further discussion about the variance of fMRI signals issued by some cerebral regions.

- [PHEN - $V_{15,27,32,40,70,87,88}$] includes notably all phenotypic attributes. The learning process gives raise to a model which differs from the previous one on the last subdivisions mainly (see Figure 5).

- [$V_{15,27,32,40,70,87,88}$] includes only variance features. The associated model presents poor performances on both training and test sets, matching practically with the luck of belonging to one of both groups (ADHD and TD).

The same process was applied as regards Peking site. The feature selection process applied to neurological factors reveals that significant attributes are $V_{32,37}$, K_{38}, $F_{16,62}$. From this result, three training sets were constituted as previously and the performances of the associated models are reported in Table 7. The decision tree acquired by modality [PHEN - $V_{32,37}$, K_{38}, $F_{16,62}$] presents a low granularity but the corresponding m parameter value leads to make discussion about IQ for girls impossible. That is why, as a final proposition, we manually adjusted the decision tree, in re-establishing the subdivision based on IQ (see Figure 6). We shall note an under-representation of girls in the Peking collection, as well as an imbalance of ADHD and TD cases proportions within the same population. Indeed, the training set includes 52 girls and among them, only seven are affected by ADHD. In this actual state, it was practically impossible to emphasize further parameters in the goal of diagnosing girls, if it were not of focusing examination on IQ, based on a threshold of 99.

It is actually interesting to notice that subdivisions towards variance are operated on values which do not have an intrinsic meaning. Indeed, these values depend on measurement conditions. However, as variance is a measure of energy of fMRI signals, the subdivisions are based on how vigorous is the neuronal activity on a given region of interest. The role of gender seems crucial as it can lead to opposite interpretations for a same
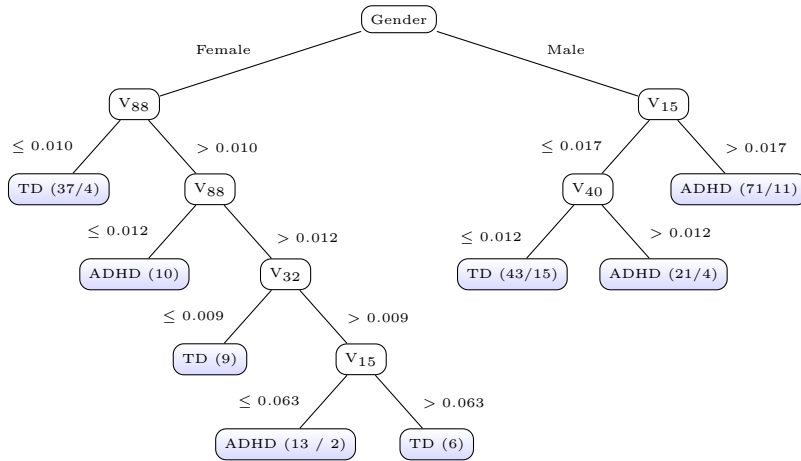
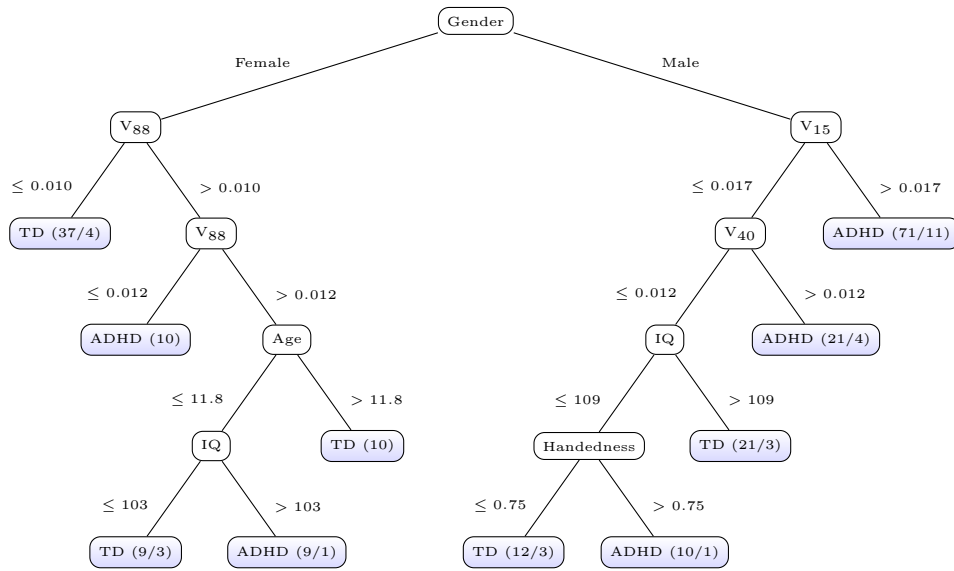Figure 4: Model learned on the New-York set [GEN - $V_{15,27,32,40,70,87,88}$]

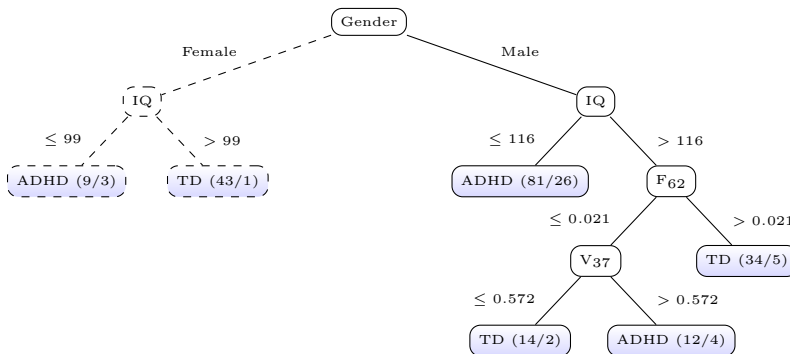Figure 5: Model learned on the New-York set [PHEN - $V_{15,27,32,40,70,87,88}$]

Figure 6: Model learned on the Peking set [PHEN - $V_{32,37}$, K_{38}, $F_{16,62}$], adjusted for further discussion as regards girls (dotted line)

Table 9: Synthesis of prediction rates

		New-York (%)	Peking (%)
Level I	Accuracy	68.3	82.4
	Specificity	75.0	81.5
	Sensitivity	65.5	83.3
Level II	Effective accuracy on ADHD types	66.0	60.0
Levels I - II	Global accuracy	58.0	66.7

cerebral zone, e.g. in Figure 4, as for zone 15. Actually, we can notice that the trees are able to explain how the diagnosis is stated for every patient, through understandable features.

4.2. ADHD-I - ADHD-C dissociation

We first exercised learning on phenotypic data (PHEN) to notice that IQ has no more importance in the ADHD-I - ADHD-C dissociation. We noticed also a change in the impact of the gender, no more imposed at the root of the developed decision trees to make way for age, even if gender keeps a crucial role in the underlying subdivisions (see Figure 7). The resulting prediction rate on the test set is **70.0%** ($m = 17$, $tn = 76.3\%$, $tp = 59.1\%$). As for feature selection on the whole set of features, this indicates the relevance of the following attributes: AGE, V_{47}, $F_{33,46,64,65,66}$, $C_{12,63}$. Among trees acquired by variants of combinations of these attributes, the one learned on [GEN, AGE - V_{47}, $F_{33,46,64,65,66}$, $C_{12,63}$] set caught our attention as providing the highest cross-validation accuracy on the training set ($m = 7$, $A = 66.7\%$, $tn = 65.8\%$, $tp = 68.1\%$); but it has a depth of 8 instead of 3 for the previous tree. Finally, we prefer to keep the decision tree based on phenotypic data since it is more compact and thus more readable without loosing on the accuracy.
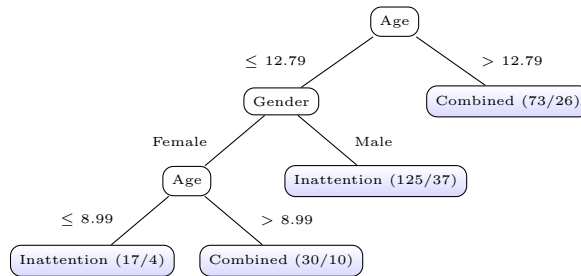

Figure 7: Second level phenotype-based diagnosis

4.3. Synthesis

Let us now aggregate the performances on both levels of classification in New-York and Peking sites (see Table 9). The models that we finally selected to compute these performances (sections 4.3 and 5) achieve a fair compromise between the model size and their performance on the training set. Among the subjects correctly predicted as affected by ADHD, we measured the proportion of subjects for whom the ADHD type was also well predicted, the latter rate which we called *effective accuracy on ADHD types* in Table 9.

5. Conclusion

Our results suggest that the multi-level approach is sufficiently relevant and efficient for the ADHD-200 collection.

On the first level of classification aiming at dissociating ADHD and TD subjects, we acquired interesting prediction rates in comparison to the recent state of the literature (Riaz et al., 2016) (see Table 10). This comforts the idea that the decision tree classifier and the chosen features are interesting for prediction.

Table 10: Comparison of performances with regard to New-York and Peking test sets on the binary problem ADHD vs TD

	Our results	Riaz et al. (2016)
NYU	**68.3%**	61.0%
PU	**82.4%**	64.7%

On the other hand, Table 11 presents the prediction rates we acquired in our study against the average results of the ADHD-200 contest[5] and those of Colby et al. (2012) on the global problem (TD vs ADHD-I vas ADHD-C). The comparison with the results of Colby et al. (2012) is quite interesting, since it advocates the advantage of a hybrid approach. As a matter of fact, they solved the problem in a hierarchical way and processed each site separately.

Table 11: Comparison of performances with regard to New-York and Peking test sets on the full problem

	Our results	ADHD-200	Colby et al. (2012)
NYU	**58.0%**	35.2%	37.0%
PU	**66.7%**	51.0%[6]	57.0%

Actually, our study shows that it is possible to aim at clarity through white boxes such as decision trees based on interpretable features without damaging the qualities of prediction. Moreover, the multi-level framework appears as promising for other multi-site data collections. Of course, this multi-step approach is questionable, notably as regards the underlying hypotheses on which it is build. Furthermore, it needs that every group contributing to data gathering delivers enough instances to develop a local model on the first level. Moreover, there should be, in each group, a representation of both ADHD and TD population. This problem is partly solved when several groups delivering data belong to the same homogeneous entity (in a cultural and social sense).

Our clinical collaborators welcomed the multi-level approach and the initiative of focusing on interpretable and readable models. Moreover, they believe promising the results achieved on the detection of ADHD and its characterization. Actually, through this work, we propose a basis for new perspectives in neuroscience, notably as regards ADHD. Indeed, the interpretability and readability of both the feature extraction and

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[4]This prediction rate is given on 44% of the Peking set by the ADHD-200 consortium as an estimation of the actual value.
[5]Available at http://fcon_1000.projects.nitrc.org/indi/adhd200/results.html.
[6]This prediction rate is given on 44% of the Peking set by the ADHD-200 consortium as an estimation of the actual value.

learning processes allowed to raise interesting observations. In particular, it should be noted that only a limited amount of cerebral zones were raised as pertinent among 116 zones altogether. Among the features considered for learning, the variances of fMRI signals were largely involved in the tree subdivisions with an interesting interpretation related to the dynamism of the neuronal activity. Furthermore, the different results acquired per site confirms the influence of cultural and social factors in the diagnosis. The importance of both gender and intellectual quotient for the Peking subjects in contrast to New-York subjects illustrates perfectly this point.

As future prospects, a particular attention could be brought on a differentiated accentuation of the true positive and negative rates. Indeed, an aid in diagnosis model characterized by a high specificity and low sensitivity is a priori preferable on a model that has an opposite tendency. Indeed, in the latter case, some patients could be more often diagnosed positively with a trouble. Yet, we may conceive the risks that such a diagnosis represents if the concerned patient, in reality not affected by the trouble does not need any therapy or, maybe more viciously, undergoes an inadequate one as affected by another trouble. At last, it can be worthwhile considering one-class classification techniques to develop models able to leave a third possibility in the first step of the diagnosis: the patient is not healthy, nor affected by the trouble to which special attention is paid, but by another unknown trouble. To this end, largest datasets are still to be gathered and shared.

6. Acknowledgments

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