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Jane E. Marlow *

Advancements in Neuroimaging Techniques: A Comprehensive Review of Structural and Functional Modalities

Jane E. Marlow [1*], Miguel S. Ortega [2], Priya N. Mehta.[3]

[1] Department of Neuroscience, Avalon Institute of Brain Research, UK

[2] Neuroimaging Center, University of Santiago, Spain

[3] Department of Biomedical Engineering, Techno Health University, India

***Corresponding Author: Jane E. Marlow,** Department of Neuroscience, Avalon Institute of Brain Research, UK

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ABSTRACT

Neuroimaging techniques have revolutionized our understanding of brain structure and function, enabling visualization of neural activity in both healthy and pathological states. This paper presents a comprehensive review of the most widely used neuroimaging modalities, including Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI), Computed Tomography (CT), Positron Emission Tomography (PET), Functional MRI (fMRI), and Electroencephalography (EEG). We compare their principles, advantages, limitations, and current applications in clinical and research contexts. Particular attention is paid to recent advances in multimodal imaging and the integration of artificial intelligence in neuroimaging analysis. Our findings suggest that while no single technique provides a complete picture of brain function, integrated approaches hold significant promise for improved diagnosis, treatment planning, and cognitive neuroscience research.

KEYWORDS:

Neuroimaging, MRI, fMRI, PET, CT, EEG, brain mapping, structural imaging, functional imaging, multimodal integration

INTRODUCTION:

The human brain is an intricate and dynamic organ, whose study requires non-invasive and high-resolution imaging methods. Neuroimaging techniques offer critical insights into both anatomical and physiological processes of the brain, facilitating advancements in neurology, psychiatry, and cognitive neuroscience. Early techniques such as CT scans laid the foundation for structural imaging, while functional modalities like fMRI and PET have expanded our ability to observe brain activity in real-time.

The development of neuroimaging has also significantly improved the diagnosis and treatment of neurological disorders, including Alzheimer's disease, epilepsy, multiple sclerosis, and brain tumors. Furthermore, the integration of machine learning in image processing has enhanced pattern recognition, predictive analytics, and patient-specific modeling. This paper aims to summarize key neuroimaging techniques, their methodologies, applications, and future directions.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This review is based on a systematic analysis of peer-reviewed articles, meta-analyses, and clinical studies published between 2000 and 2025. Databases such as PubMed, Scopus, IEEE Xplore, and ScienceDirect were queried using the following keywords: "neuroimaging", "MRI", "functional imaging", "PET scan", "brain mapping", and "multimodal imaging". Inclusion criteria were studies involving human subjects, clinical trials, and reviews focusing on technological advancements in neuroimaging. Excluded were animal studies, non-English publications, and articles lacking methodological transparency.

Each selected article was categorized by imaging modality, technical specifications, clinical applications, and limitations. Cross-comparison was performed to identify trends and advancements across modalities.

3. RESULTS

The literature review revealed that the most prevalent neuroimaging techniques include:

- **MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging):** Offers high-resolution structural images, especially useful in detecting tumors, white matter lesions, and congenital anomalies.

- **fMRI (Functional MRI):** Measures blood oxygen level-dependent (BOLD) signals, allowing visualization of brain activity in tasks like language processing or sensory input.
- **PET (Positron Emission Tomography):** Assesses metabolic activity using radiotracers; effective in identifying changes in neurotransmitter systems.
- **CT (Computed Tomography):** Quick imaging tool for acute trauma and hemorrhage; limited soft tissue contrast compared to MRI.
- **EEG (Electroencephalography):** Records electrical activity with high temporal resolution; commonly used in epilepsy and sleep research.

Recent studies demonstrate increased interest in **multimodal imaging**, combining techniques such as fMRI-PET or MRI-EEG to gain complementary insights. Moreover, AI-driven image segmentation and pattern analysis are emerging as valuable tools in clinical diagnostics.

4. DISCUSSION

Each neuroimaging modality has distinct strengths and limitations. For instance, MRI provides excellent spatial resolution but lacks temporal sensitivity, whereas EEG has superior temporal resolution but poor spatial localization. PET scans offer metabolic information but involve radiation exposure, making them less suitable for repeated use.

The emergence of **hybrid imaging systems** (e.g., PET/MRI) aims to overcome these limitations by offering simultaneous structural and functional information. Furthermore, machine learning algorithms are being increasingly applied to detect subtle brain changes, predict disease progression, and assist in automated diagnosis.

Challenges remain, including high costs, limited accessibility in developing countries, and the need for standardized protocols across research centers. Nevertheless, ongoing innovation is narrowing these gaps and expanding neuroimaging's potential.

5. CONCLUSION

Neuroimaging techniques continue to play a central role in both clinical practice and neuroscience research. While individual modalities provide valuable data, the integration of structural and functional imaging—along with AI-enhanced analysis—represents the future of brain mapping. Continued advancements in resolution, speed, and data interpretation will further refine our understanding of the human brain and improve patient outcomes in neurological care.

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