

HUMAN vs. VISION MODEL PERFORMANCE FOR TWO MEDICAL IMAGE ESTIMATION TASKS

by

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A Dissertation submitted to the faculty of The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Biomedical Engineering.

Chapel Hill

1995

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ABSTRACT

A computed method for measuring medical image quality would allow fast and economical evaluation of image acquisition and display systems without the need for arduous, expensive human observer experiments. It would help such a method to be predictive of human assessment if it reflected the principles thought to govern the operation of the visual system. This dissertation research implemented and tested the accuracy of a measure of medical image quality that incorporates a model of human vision in a simulation of human image interpretation. It was hypothesized that the model, by performing in a way that reflected the inherent capabilities and limitations of a human, would be predictive of human performance as physical properties of the image varied. The core model of shape perception, a theory for the representation of objects that may serve as a fundamental perceptual basis for a number of medical image interpretation tasks, was applied in computing estimates of the depth of a vessel stenosis in an angiogram and the position of a radiation treatment field relative to the spinal cord in a portal image. Parameters of those imaging systems that have significant effects on the physical characteristics of the images, such as the amount of imaging system blur or the extent of contrast-enhancing processing, were systematically varied. Model and human task performance was studied as a function of the parameters in order to assess the extent to which the model predicted the human results. In most instances, the analysis suggested that the conformance of the model and human data was not sufficient to allow use of the visual model as proposed. The conclusion explores the potential factors in those discrepancies and reiterates the claim that image quality assessments based upon fundamental principles of visual perception might eventually be utilized successfully for medical image interpretation tasks.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Academic contributions to this multidisciplinary research came from many and diverse sources. I wish to thank the five members of my committee for overseeing my research. In particular, Dr. Stephen Pizer loyally advised me for my entire graduate career and will be forever an example to me of academic integrity and scientific excellence. In addition to my committee, Dr. Christina Burbeck provided crucial insight for matters of psychophysics. Dr. David Eberly spent countless hours patiently helping me with mathematics. Drs. Mauro and Rosenman made clear to me the clinical issues for the application of my research. Joy Telle, Tim Roeder, Carolyn Din, and Jodi Fruth were all cheerful, helpful administrative assistants. I received computer assistance or software from Dr. Daniel Fritsch, Brad Hemminger, and Michael North. I am indebted to Doug Taylor for help with the statistical analyses of my data. It was Robert Cromartie's dissertation that generated my interest in the question investigated in this work. Finally, I am grateful to Dr. Etta Pisano and the Medical Image Presentation Project, NIH grant P01-CA47982, for my employment throughout graduate school.

This dissertation represents the culmination of six years of graduate research and toil. It was accompanied by occasional joys and consistent penury. I wish to thank anonymously the many contributors to this feat of persistence who thoughtfully and frequently provided accommodations such as dinners and car rides.

My family and friends have all been tremendously supportive. Their pride and interest in my successes make the hair lost in graduate school seem almost inconsequential. I need to thank especially Jennifer from Canada for teaching me to canoe. Finally, while I often wish that my father were alive to witness my progress these last ten years, it is the faithful presence and inspirational guidance of my mother that mean the world to me.

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