A Review of Computer-Aided Heart Sound Detection Techniques

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Received 8 April 2019; Revised 3 July 2019; Accepted 29 July 2019; Published 10 January 2020

1. Introduction

With the prevalence of unhealthy living habits, cardiovascular disease (CVD) has become one of the major threats to human health. According to the latest statistics of the World Health Organization (WHO) [1], the number of deaths from CVDs reached 17.9 million in 2016; CVD is the leading cause of mortality throughout the world. At present, there are about 290 million people suffering from cardiovascular diseases in China alone, so the prevention and treatment of cardiovascular diseases have become an urgent issue for health-conscious people.

Heart sounds—the sounds made by the heart systole and diastole—can be recorded as heart sound signals, also known as phonocardiography (PCG), whose acquisition is noninvasive and easy. Through PCG data processing and analyzing, the results can be used as an assistant diagnostic tool for the prediction of cardiovascular diseases. However, due to the characteristics of the heart sound signals and the influence of the noise in the environment, the detection of heart sound signals is facing great challenges. On the one hand, the randomness and variability of cardiovascular disease symptoms lead to the complexity and diversity in the signal manifestation. On the other hand, heart sound signals are relatively weak, and the acquisition process of the original signals can be affected by various noises and interferences, resulting in noisy data collected, which can reduce the accuracy of related parameter extractions and increase the uncertainty of diagnosis.

Computer-aided detection technology is a fast, efficient and economical tool [2], which can be applied to quantitative acquisition and the analysis of heart sound signals. By extracting the key parameters in the PCG and comparing the patient's monitoring sequence with the tagged database, not only can more intuitive diagnostic results be obtained automatically, but the potential cardiovascular disease may be further inferred by the experts with their clinical knowledge. In recent years, computer-aided detection technology for the heart sound signals processing and analysis has made remarkable achievements and aroused wide interest [3, 4].

At present, intelligent auscultation technology has not been widely used in clinical diagnosis, and the main method used for heart sound detection is manual auscultation. Therefore, the research and application of computer-aided techniques for heart sound detection will greatly promote development in the field of cardiovascular disease diagnosis.

The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of computer-aided heart sound detection techniques in recent years. The clinical characteristics of heart sound signals are introduced, first. Then, some promising processing and
analyzing techniques for heart sound detection that have
developed over the last five years are reviewed. Next, the deep
learning algorithm that can be applied to the PCG processing
and analysis is discussed. Finally, some promising research
areas in computer-aided heart sound detection techniques are
recommended.

2. Heart Sounds and Cardiovascular Diseases

Vibrations caused by cardiac activities such as myocardial
contraction, heart valve closure, and occlusion of the
ventricular wall are transmitted through the tissue to the
surface of the chest wall and form the heart sound signals
that can be perceived by the human ear and recorded with
electronic instruments. Figure 1 shows the location of heart
valves and arteries associated with auscultation. According
to the order of occurrence in a cardiac cycle, the heart sound
is divided into four components: the first heart sound (S1), the
second heart sound (S2), the third heart sound (S3) and the
fourth heart sound (S4). For each of the 4 components, the
physiological state of the heart is different. Figure 2 shows the
blood flow changes of partial heart sound components in the
heart. The intensity, frequency and correlation of the heart
sound reflect the heart valve condition, myocardial function
and intracardiac blood flow. Table 1 shows the mechanism of
the generation of heart sounds, including the cause, features
and significance of heart sounds [5].

The fundamental heart sounds (FHS) [6] used in clinical
diagnosis include S1 and S2 (S3 appears only in the cardiac
cycles of some healthy young people, and S4 does not appear
in normal cardiac cycles). The period between S1 and S2 in
the same cardiac cycle is called systole, and the one between
S2 and S1 in the next cycle is called diastole. The normal dura-
tion of systole is about 0.35 sec and that of diastole is about
0.45 sec, for a total of 0.8 sec in a complete cycle. These values
are closely related to the occurrence of cardiovascular diseases.
Figure 3 shows two normal cardiac cycles.

Heart sound diagnosis with manual auscultation is a
qualitative method entirely based on the experience of the
expert through analysis of the tone and intensity of the heart
sounds. Computer-aided detection techniques for heart sound
analysis can obtain the quantized characteristic parameters,
which are helpful to find the relationship between the heart
sounds and the related diseases. It is conducive to the
subsequent traceability of data and the formation of database
as well. Therefore, it is significant to research in the non-
invasive diagnosis of cardiovascular disease.

3. Computer-Aided Heart Sound Detection
Techniques

The computer-aided processing of heart sounds includes
denoising [7], segmentation [8], feature extraction and clas-
sification [9].

3.1. Denoising. Due to the influence of the external
environment, heart sound signals are usually coupled with
electromagnetic interference, power frequency interference,
random noise, interference from the human body, breath
sounds, and lung sounds [10]. The diagnostic accuracy of the
detection is directly affected by the quality of the signals and
the features extracted subsequently. Consequently, denoising
is the first essential step to improve the automatic detection
accuracy of heart sounds. The techniques used for heart
sound denoising include discrete wavelet transform (DWT),
adaptive filtering denoising, singular value decomposition
(SVD), etc. In addition, combined methods are applied for
better effects, which help to improve the signal quality and
detection accuracy.

Jain et al. [11] proposed a DWT-based PCG signal
denoising algorithm, using "Coif-5" wavelet as the mother
wavelet and combined with an adaptive threshold estimation
method, a nonlinear intermediate function method and a
 genetic algorithm, to optimize the traditional discrete wavelet
transform (DWT) algorithm. The improved algorithm
delimited the out-of-band noises and removed the lower
detail level coefficients, further improving the denoising
performance. Mondal et al. [12] introduced a novel heart-tone
denoising method based on the combined framework of
| Heart sound | Cause                                                                 | Features                  | Significance                                           |
|-------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| S1          | Closure of the mitral (M1) and tricuspid (T1) valves, opening of the semilunar valve. | Frequency: 50–150 Hz | For the diagnosis of ventricular contractility and atrioventricular valve function, myocarditis, cardiomyopathy, myocardial infarction or heart failure disease. |
|             |                                                                      | Time: 50–100 ms            |                                                        |
| S2          | Deceleration of blood flow in the aorta and pulmonary artery, closure of the semilunar valve, opening of the atrioventricular valve. | Frequency: 50–200 Hz | Relates to the functional state of arterial wall, high/low blood pressure, atherosclerosis, pulmonary heart disease, primary/pulmonary stenosis, left-to-right shunt congenital heart disease. |
|             |                                                                      | Time: 25–50 ms             |                                                        |
| S3          | The blood flowing rapidly from the ventricle impacts the wall of the chamber from the atrium, causing sudden tension and vibration of the ventricular wall, chordae and papillary muscles. | Frequency: 25–70 Hz | Appears in some healthy young people. |
|             |                                                                      | Time: 120–150 ms           |                                                        |
| S4          | Tension and vibration caused by atrioventricular valve and its related structures. | Frequency: <30 Hz | Belongs to pathological heart sounds, appears in some elderly populations and people with early coronary heart disease. |
|             |                                                                      | Time: before S1 about 90 ms|                                                        |
Table 2: Segmentation methods of PCG signals.

| Year | Author | Segmentation method | Dataset | Result |
|------|--------|---------------------|---------|--------|
| 2019 | Giordano and Knaflitz [16] | Envelope-based technique | Sample population of 24 healthy subjects over 10-min-long simultaneous phonocardiography recordings | F1 of 99.2% |
| 2019 | Oliveira et al. [17] | HSMM-GMM | PhysioNet [18], PASCAL [19] and a pediatric dataset composed of 29 heart sounds | F-score of 92% |
| 2019 | Kamson et al. [20], Renna et al. [21] | HSMM, Time-domain analysis, frequency-domain analysis and time-frequency-domain analysis | Training-set-a of 2016 PhysioNet computing in cardiology challenge | Sensitivity, P+, F1 |
| 2018 | Liu et al. [22] | Correlation coefficients matrix | Heart sound & Murmur library of UMich | Sensitivity: 98.63% |
| 2018 | Belmecheri et al. [23] | HMM | A database of 21 clean heart sounds | Sensitivity: 76% |
| 2018 | Alexander et al. [24] | VMD | 3240 PCG recordings from PhysioNet and PASCAL Database: PhysioNet, PASCAL, Michigan, eGeneralMedical and real-time PCG signals | Sensitivity, Specificity, P+, Accuracy |
| 2017 | Babu et al. [25] | EWT | More than 120,000 s of heart sounds recorded from eight independent heart sound databases | Sensitivity, OA |
| 2017 | Varghees et al. [28] | HMM | PhysioNet, PASCAL, Michigan, eGeneralMedical and real-time PCG signals | Sensitivity, Specificity, OA |
| 2017 | Liu et al. [29] | Fractal decomposition (FD) | Michigan (23 different heart sounds and 6 patients’ recordings done in a real clinical environment) | Sensitivity, P, DER |
| 2016 | Springer et al. [30] | HSMM | ECG recordings from 123 deidentified adult patients | F1 of 95.63 ± 0.85% |
| 2015 | Salman et al. [32] | Peak intervals pattern | 1089 cycles from 62 set of normal and abnormal signals | Correct cycle detected rate of 83.38% |
wavelet packet transformation and SVD. According to the standard of mutual information measurement, the most abundant nodes in the wavelet tree were selected, and the noise component from the heart sound signals was suppressed by using the SVD technique to process the coefficients corresponding to the selected nodes. Ali et al. [13] selected different DWT families, threshold types, and signal decomposition levels to denoise the heart sound signals, and evaluated the influence of different wavelet functions and wavelet decomposition levels on the efficiency of the denoising algorithm. They concluded that the Db10 wavelet and the discrete Meyer wavelet with the fourth-order decomposition can obtain the maximum SNR (signal-to-noise ratio) and the minimum RMSE (standard error) of the standard heart sounds. Zheng et al. [14] proposed an innovative denoising framework based on a combination of modified SVD and Compressed Sensing (CS), which can well maintain the original morphological characteristics of heart sounds compared with the traditional techniques such as DWT and empirical mode decomposition (EMD), this framework can obtain a larger SNR. The denoised heart sound signals still had the highest correlation with the original heart sound signals. Deng and Han [15] proposed an adaptive denoising algorithm. Compared with the conventional wavelet method, the proposed algorithm had better denoising effect.

3.2. Segmentation. Segmentation is often performed on the raw signal or the denoised signal. The purpose of segmentation is to find the beginning and end of heart sounds, and to segment S1, S2, systole, and diastole for the subsequent feature extraction. To date, the methods used for heart sounds segmentation mainly include hidden Markov models (HMM), WT, and correlation coefficient matrices, etc. Table 2 summarizes some of the heart sound segmentation literature in the past five years.

3.3. Feature Extraction and Classification. The goal of feature extraction is to find out a small number of representative features to replace the high-dimensional raw signals. In general, the classification model based on features training is more efficient and accurate than that which is based on raw signals training. Feature extraction is often performed on the signal with segmentation. DWT, continuous wavelet transformation (CWT), short-time Fourier transform (STFT) and Mel Frequency Cepstrum Coefficient (MFCC) are commonly used methods for heart sounds feature extraction. Without segmentation, feature extraction can be conducted on the raw signal or the denoised signal.

Classification can be performed on the features, the raw signals and the denoised signals as well. The goal of classification is to present the qualitative results of the detection, dividing the heart sound signals into the normal or abnormal. The classification techniques for heart sounds include HMM, Support Vector Machine (SVM), Artificial Neural Networks (ANN), k-Nearest Neighbor (kNN), Euclidean distance, etc. Table 3 lists the representative literature on the feature extraction and classification of the heart sound signals over the past five years.

These techniques (SVM, kNN, BP neural network, and logistic regression) all utilize machine learning—an algorithm that allows computer systems to effectively access and analyze data to adjust and improve functioning based on patterns and experience, without the need for explicit programming. In recent years, machine learning has been widely used in heart sound classification. As the incidence of cardiovascular disease increases, the amount of heart sound data to be processed is also increasing. In order to ensure the accuracy of classification while processing a large amount of data, deep learning algorithm has emerged.

4. Application of Deep Learning in Heart Sound Classification

Deep learning is a branch of machine learning that imitates the workings of the human brain, through artificial neural networks—complex algorithms inspired by the brain itself. Thus, it can automatically extract the characteristics of original signals and find out the rules among data by means of a deeper learning than the traditional machine learning, thereby improving its accuracy and efficiency of classification. The concept of deep learning was proposed by Hinton et al. [49] in 2006. Deep learning utilizes the relative relationship of space, and combines low-level models to form more complex high-level models, which greatly improves the training performance of the system. In recent years, it has shown good practicality and reliability in the fields of speech recognition [50], image recognition [51], biomedical data analysis [52, 53], signal processing [54], automatic driving [55] and other areas. Deep learning models have been applied to classify heart sound signals, and the models mainly include Deep Neural Networks (DNN), Convolution Neural Networks (CNN), Recurrent neural networks (RNN) and etc. Table 4 lists the representative literature on the deep learning applied in the classification of heart sound signals over the past five years.

Deep learning has shown good superiority in the computer-aided classification of heart sound signals, but it also faces some challenges. First of all, there are too many parameters of the deep learning model, with a large amount of data to be optimized, a long execution time and a large training data set required. Secondly, the deep learning modelling calls for higher configuration of the computer with powerful CPU and GPU for calculation, hence the experiment cost is high, and the model is unsuitable for home computers and microcomputers. However, the portable heart sound devices have great development potential and good application prospects.

5. Conclusions

With the increasing incidence of cardiovascular diseases in recent years, a greater attention has been drawn to non-invasive heart sound detection technology. In this study, the latest research on computer-aided heart sound detection techniques over the last five years has been reviewed, with the applications of deep learning to the heart sound classification as an emphasis.

Regarding the potential contributions of the technology to human health promotion, the following areas for future research are recommended. A large amount of heart sound
| Year       | Author                                      | Feature extraction methods                               | Classifier   | Database                               | Result                      |
|-----------|---------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|--------------|----------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 2019      | Shi et al. [33]                             | Feature extraction algorithm of Springer                  | AdaBoost     | PhysioNet and PASCAL                   | ACC: 96.36%                 |
| 2019      | Nogueira et al. [34]                        | MFCC                                                       | SVM          | PhysioNet                              | Sensitivity: 91.87%         |
|           | Cheng (without segmentation) [35]           | Envelope autocorrelation                                  | SVM          | HSCT11 dataset                        | Accuracy: 97%               |
| 2019      |                                               |                                                            |              |                                        |                             |
| 2018      | Meintjes et al. [36]                        | CWT                                                        | SVM, kNN     | PhysioNet                              | MAcc: 86%                   |
|           | Hamidi et al. [37]                          | Curve fitting, MFCC                                        | Euclidean    | Dataset A from PhysioNet               | MAcc: 92%                   |
|           |                                               |                                                            | distance     | Dataset B from PhysioNet               | MAcc: 81%                   |
|           |                                               |                                                            |              | Dataset C from PhysioNet               | MAcc: 98%                   |
| 2018      | Juniati et al. [38]                         | DWT                                                        | kNN, Fuzzy   | 40 normal heart sounds, 40 extra      | MAcc: 86.17%                |
|           |                                               |                                                            | c-means clustering | systole, 40 murmurs                  |                             |
| 2017      | Kay et al. [39]                             | CWT, MFCC                                                  | BP neural    | PhysioNet                              | MAcc: 85.5%                 |
|           |                                               |                                                            | networks     |                                        |                             |
| 2017      | Karar et al. [40]                           | DWT                                                        | Rule-based   | 22 sets of heart sounds and noise      | MAcc: 95.5%                 |
|           |                                               |                                                            | classification | data from the public database of     |                             |
|           |                                               |                                                            |              | the CliniSurf medical school          |                             |
|           |                                               |                                                            |              | Dataset A: normal heart sounds, extra | MAcc: 76%                   |
|           |                                               |                                                            |              | systole, murmurs, artificial heart     |                             |
|           |                                               |                                                            |              | sounds                                 |                             |
| 2017      | Zhang et al. [41]                           | Tensor decomposition                                       | SVM          | Dataset A: normal heart sounds, extra | MAcc: 88%                   |
|           |                                               |                                                            |              | systole, murmurs, abnormal heart       |                             |
|           |                                               |                                                            |              | sounds                                 |                             |
| 2017      | Langley and Murray (without segmentation)   [42] | /                                                         | Wavelet      | PhysioNet                              | Sensitivity: 94%            |
|           |                                               |                                                            | entropy      |                                        | Specificity: 65%            |
|           |                                               |                                                            |              |                                        | Accuracy: 80%               |
| 2017      | Whitaker et al. [43]                        | Sparse coding                                              | SVM          | PhysioNet                              | Sensitivity: 84.3%          |
|           |                                               |                                                            |              |                                        | Specificity: 77.2%          |
|           |                                               |                                                            |              |                                        | MAcc: 80.7%                 |
| 2017      | Li et al. [44]                              | FFT                                                        | BP neural    | Dataset A from PASCAL                  | MAcc: 88%                   |
|           |                                               |                                                            | networks     |                                        |                             |
|           |                                               |                                                            | Logistic     |                                        |                             |
|           |                                               |                                                            | regression   |                                        |                             |
| 2016      | Deng and Han (without segmentation) [45]     | DWT                                                        | SVM-DM       | Dataset B from PASCAL                  | The highest total precision | 3.17                         |
|           |                                               |                                                            |              |                                        | of 2.03                     |
| 2015      | Zheng et al. [46]                           | EMD                                                        | SVM          | A dataset collected from the healthy   | Sensitivity: 96.59%         |
|           |                                               |                                                            |              | volunteers and CHF patients            | Specificity: 93.75%         |
|           |                                               |                                                            |              |                                        | Accuracy: 95.39%            |
| 2015      | Safara [47]                                 | Wavelet packet tree                                        | Higher-order | A set of 59 heart sounds from different | Best classification        |
|           |                                               |                                                            | cumulants    | categories: normal heart sounds, mitral | accuracies: 99.39%          |
|           |                                               |                                                            | (HOC)        | regurgitation, aortic stenosis, and aortic |                             |
|           |                                               |                                                            |              | regurgitation.                          |                             |
| 2015      |                                               |                                                            |              |                                        | Tenfold cross-validation: 0.92 for noise free case, 0.90 under white noise with 10dB signal-to-noise ratio (SNR), and 0.90 under impulse noise up to 0.3s duration |
| Year | Author | Segmentation method | Dataset | Performance |
|------|--------|---------------------|---------|-------------|
|      |        | Hold out testing    | Sensitivity | Specificity | Accuracy |
|      |        | Ten-fold cross validation | Sensitivity | Specificity | Accuracy |
| 2019 | Wu et al. [56] | CNN | PhysioNet (2575 normal heart sounds and 665 abnormal heart sounds) | 86.46% | 85.63% | 86.0% |
| 2019 | Abduh et al. [57] | DNN | PhysioNet | 91.73% | 87.91% | 89.81% |
| 2018 | Gharehbaghi and Lindén [58] | DTGNN | 130 recordings of the heart sound signal | 89.30% | 97% | 95.50% |
| 2018 | Chen et al. [59] | DNN | PASCAL | 83.9% | 86% | 85.5% |
| 2018 | Yaseen et al. [60] | DNN | 5 categories of heart sound signal, 200 per class (N, AS, MR, MS, MVP) | 83.8% | 98.2% | |
| 2018 | Han et al. [61] | CNN | 2575 normal recordings and 665 abnormal recordings | 91.73% | 87.91% | 89.81% |
| 2018 | Ren et al. [62] | CNN | PhysioNet | 91.50% | 98.33% | 84.67% |
| 2018 | Morales et al. [63] | CNN | PhysioNet | 97% | 93.20% | 95.12% |
| 2018 | Baris et al. [64] | CNN | UoC-murmur database (innocent murmur versus pathological Murmur) and PhysioNet-2016 database (normal versus pathological) | 81.5% | 78.5% | 84.5% |
| 2018 | Messner et al. [65] | DNN | PhysioNet | MAcc | Specificity | Sensitivity |
| 2017 | Ghaemmaghami et al. [66] | DNN | 128 recordings from male and female subjects with healthy hearts | 95.8% | 83.2% | 99.2% |
| 2017 | Sujadevi et al. [67] | RNN & LSTM & GRU | Dataset A from PhysioNet | 53.8% | 55.8% | |
| 2017 | Sujadevi et al. [67] | RNN & LSTM & GRU | Dataset B from PhysioNet | 53.8% | 55.8% | |
| 2017 | Chen et al. [68] | DNN | 311 S1 and 313 S2 from 16 people (11 males and 5 females) | Accuracy: 91.12% | 53.8% | 55.8% |
| 2017 | Yang and Hsieh [69] | RNN | PhysioNet | MAcc: 84% | 53.8% | 55.8% |
| 2017 | Zhang and Han [70] | CNN | Dataset A from PASCAL | Normalized precision: 0.77 | 53.8% | 55.8% |
| 2017 | Faturrahman et al. [71] | DBN | Dataset B from PASCAL | Normalized precision: 0.71 | 53.8% | 55.8% |
| 2017 | Maknickas and Maknickas [74] | CNN | PhysioNet | Accuracy: 84.89% | 53.8% | 55.8% |
| 2017 | Thomaee et al. [75] | DNN | PhysioNet | Accuracy: 84.89% | 53.8% | 55.8% |
| 2017 | Tschannen and Dominik [76] | CNN | PhysioNet | Accuracy: 84.89% | 53.8% | 55.8% |
| 2016 | Potes et al. [77] | AdaBoost & CNN | PhysioNet | 94.24% | 77.81% | 86.02% |
data is needed to supplement the heart sound database. Heart sound data is a reliable source of information for discovering the hidden features of the cardiovascular diseases. Therefore, it is necessary to complete and improve the heart sound database and its corresponding expert annotations, for better model training and a more accurate assistant diagnose. Since large-scaled computer systems are already available in hospitals, it has become feasible to establish the complex deep learning model, which will be able to process the heart sound data. Thus, the data processing and the parameters optimizing techniques need more in-depth study. The deep learning modeling requires higher computer configurations with powerful GPU support, but the compressed deep learning algorithms can work on PC or microcomputers. Since the heart sounds classification model based on compressed deep learning algorithms are more accurate than those based on traditional algorithms, further study on the heart sound classification model based on the compressed deep learning algorithms is helpful to the popularization and application of portable heart sound detection.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

Funding

This study was supported by the National Key Technologies R & D Program of China (No. 2016YFC0303101) and National Natural Science Foundation of Jilin Province, China (No. 20180101049JC). The authors thank the members of the projects committee for their help and thank anonymous reviewers and editors for their helpful comments.

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