Tumor Segmentation in PET and in Multimodality Images for Radiation Therapy

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Outline
1. Tumor segmentation in PET
2. PET target segmentation methods developed at WU
3. Tumor segmentation in multi-modality images: a brief review
4. Summary

PET in Radiation Therapy
- Higher sensitivity and specificity
- Demonstrated useful in staging and detecting cancer, monitoring response
- Delineating tumor volume requires further investigation
  - Poor spatial resolution, blurred boundary
  - FDG uptake is a non-specific biological process
  - Inaccurate PET-CT registration
  - Typically large observer variation

Threshold of Maximum Intensity

Altering threshold level can drastically influence the "tumor" volume


Is A Single Threshold Appropriate?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tumor</th>
<th>SUV&lt;sub&gt;max&lt;/sub&gt; (cm&lt;sup&gt;3&lt;/sup&gt;)</th>
<th>PET&lt;sub&gt;GTV&lt;/sub&gt; at 40% threshold</th>
<th>Optimal PET&lt;sub&gt;GTV&lt;/sub&gt; at threshold</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All (23)</td>
<td>12 ± 8</td>
<td>188 ± 277</td>
<td>44 ± 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;3 cm (4)</td>
<td>3.0 ± 0.4</td>
<td>13 ± 7</td>
<td>14 ± 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≥3 cm (19)</td>
<td>19 ± 9</td>
<td>90 ± 60</td>
<td>58 ± 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;3 cm (6)</td>
<td>16 ± 5</td>
<td>502 ± 348</td>
<td>69 ± 28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Different Thresholding Methods

Narrow: 40% max
Wide: 2.5 SUV
Red: 40% max
Green: 0.15 x mean + background
Yellow: CT


Issues with Fixed Thresholding

- A wide range of threshold values are used
- Tumor volume are sensitive to the threshold value
- Large differences between different threshold selection methods
- Fixed thresholding methods have inherent limitations for tumor delineation in PET
- New methods: adaptive thresholding, iterative thresholding, gradient-based, …
Iterative Threshold Selection as a Function of Mean SUV

- Background SUV or tumor volume is not an independent factor when mean SUV is applied
- 1% error in phantoms

2. PET target segmentation methods developed at WU

Method 1: Two-Stage Segmentation Method

- Adaptive region growing
  \[ I(x, y, z) \geq T \times \text{mean}(R_z), (x, y, z) \in R^3 \]
  Adaptively updated with the region

- Dual Front Active Contour (DFAC) Model
  \[ E(C) = \alpha \int |C'(s)|^2 ds + \lambda \int P(C(s))ds \]

- Results do not depend on initial rough ROI

A Phantom Case

There is a sharp volume increase at \( T = 25\% \)
Define a preliminary tumor boundary at the sharp volume change. It’s independent of the rough ROI.

There is a sharp volume increase at $T = 57\%$

There is a sharp volume increase at $T = 49\%$

The Dual-front Active Contour Model

\[
\epsilon(C) = \alpha \int \left( \frac{C}{C_0} \right)^2 \delta h + \delta_1 \nabla C \frac{\partial h}{\partial h}
\]

Evolve two fronts towards each other

Li and Yezzi, IEEE Trans Pattern Anal Mach Intell 20 (1)
Effects of Source-to-Background Ratio and Tumor Size

- Higher $S/B \rightarrow$ better segmentation
- Larger tumor $\rightarrow$ better segmentation

Effect of Scan Duration

- $S/B = 2$, reduction in statistical noise
- The 1 mL tumor, imperceptible in 2 and 4 min scans, becomes detectable in 8 min
- Some improvement for middle-sized tumors (12, 16 mL)
- No change on the smallest (0.5 mL) or largest tumor (20 mL)

Effect of Reconstruction Algorithm and Smoothing Filter

- OSEM-unsmoothed
- OSEM–2mm
- OSEM–5mm
- FBP-unsmoothed
- FBP–2mm
- FBP–5mm

OSEM is better than FBP

5mm-FWHM post-reconstruction smoothing filter is better than 2mm-FWHM or unsmoothed
Iterative S/B Thresholding

- Calibrated threshold-S/B curves from phantom
- Depends on the initial tumor segmentation
- Phantoms: 10% error for > 1 mL Large spheres → smaller errors
- Patients (lung, H/N): 9% for 0.8 – 7.5 mL, 15% for > 7.5 mL Larger tumors → larger errors

Method 2: Improved Iterative Thresholding

1. Source activity measured on the entire region vs. in a small region around max
   - Better estimate of source activity for a heterogeneous target
   - Including partial volume effect in calibrating S/B Threshold-Volume curves
2. Interpolate Threshold-Volume curves based on the S/B vs. choose a pre-defined one
3. Update S/B Threshold-Volume curves in addition to update volume and threshold
   - For 2 and 3, the curve for the exact S/B is used

Improved Iterative Thresholding

1. Calibrated S/B threshold-volume curves from phantom, S defined using the entire sphere phantom
2. Start with an initial volume V0, such as 40% max
3. Calculate its S/B ratio = R1
4. Generate a threshold-volume curve for R1
5. Find T1 @ V0, using 4.
6. T1 ⇒ V1
7. Repeat 2-6 until converged

Phantoms with Increased Heterogeneity

Some improvements in small tumors and low S/B ratios

Lu, W, Li, H, et al., TH-D-213A-2
Method 3: Spectral Clustering for PET Phantom Segmentation

- Supervised clustering in a graphic representation of image
- Based on both spatial proximity and brightness similarity
- Extendable to multiple image features or multi-modality images

Correction for Partial Volume Effects: Recovery Coefficient vs. Volume and S/B

Large spheres: independent on S/B
Small spheres: decrease w/ S/B

How to Evaluate Segmentation Results in Patient?

- Volume overlap with known "tumor" = 97% 86% ??
- There is no ground truth in patient data
- Manual contouring has large inter-observer variations
- Feasibility of constructing a pathology tumor volume, and and correlating with patient images

3. Tumor segmentation in multi-modality images: a brief review
Objective and Key Issue

- Combine information from multi-modality images: anatomical and functional for tumor and normal tissue segmentation
- Key: how to combine them
  - Visual appreciation (PET, fused PET/CT, CT)
  - Weighting: equal weighting; empirical weighting; normalized to $\mu = 0, \sigma = 1$
  - Information combination operators

Methods

1. Classification or clustering in multi-dimensional data: KNN, fuzzy C-Mean, neural network
2. Active contour model or level set: weighting multi-modality images in the energy function
3. Potential methods: region growing, combined registration / segmentation, data fusion, rule-based
4. Feature extraction, dimensionality reduction by principal component analysis

PET/CT Texture Features in Tumor Segmentation

KNN Classification Results in 40 Patients: Evaluated against manual segmentation

- Best feature: PET coarseness
- Best 3 features: CT coarseness, busyness, PET coarseness, sensitivity = 0.75, specificity = 0.95
Multi-Valued Level Set

- Empirically weighting normalized PET/CT by 1:1.65
- Less uncertain results combining PET/CT

Fuzzy C-Mean Clustering

- Fuzzy C-Mean with the degree of fusion, depending on the membership functions of both modalities to a tissue class and the degree of conflict between them (Banerjee et al. 1999)
  \[ F = k \cdot l_1 + (1 - k) \cdot l_2, \]
  \[ k_i = \left( m_i^1 + m_i^2 - \text{conflict}(m_i^1, m_i^2) \right) + 0.5, \]
- Possibility fuzzy C-Mean (sum of membership ≠ 1), typicality vs. probability (Masulli and Schenone 1999)
- Spatial fuzzy C-Mean (Zhu et al. 2002)

Fuzzy C-Mean with Data Fusion

\[ F = k \cdot l_1 + (1 - k) \cdot l_2, \]
\[ k_i = \left( m_i^1 + m_i^2 - \text{conflict}(m_i^1, m_i^2) \right) + 0.5, \]

- \( k_i \) is the degree of fusion of CT and MRI, for the tissue class \( i \)

18F-FET PET for high-grade gliomas

- Direct measure of the cellular proliferation rate
- Both tumors are only detectable in FET PET

Carbon 11 ($^{11}$C) methionine PET for high-grade gliomas

- Reflect metabolic activity through increased transport mediated by type L amino acid carriers
- Highly expressed in malignant tumors compared with low uptake in the normal brain


Summary

- Quite a few target segmentation methods in PET have been developed. Need comprehensive tests in more realistic phantom data and patient data
- Multimodality images provide important functional information. Will see multimodality image segmentation for more applications in RO
- Evaluation in patients remains a challenge

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