A NOVEL SUPERVISED METHOD FOR CORNEAL FIBRES TORTUOSITY CLASSIFICATION USING A MULTI-SCALE-MULTI-WINDOW APPROACH

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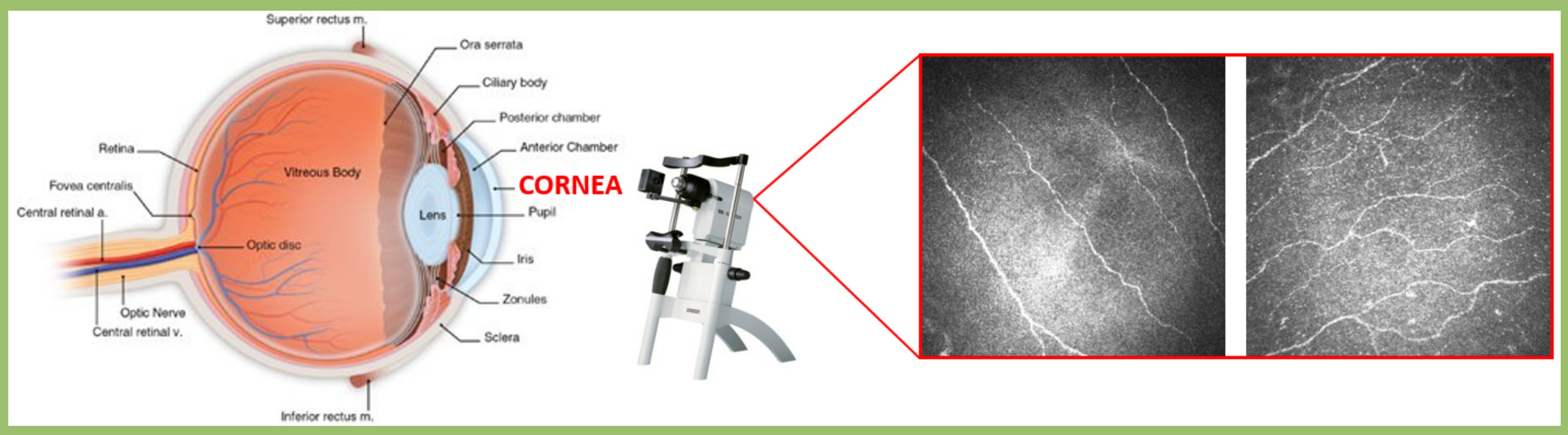
Abstract

We present a novel method for classifying corneal nerves images in 4 levels of tortuosity. We use multi-scale features and a new multi-window algorithm for curvature estimation. A wrapper using logistic ordinal regression or an embedded method based on random forests is applied for feature and scale selection. Tested with 90 images classified by 3 clinicians, the accuracy of our system is 88.89%, 76.67%, 77.22% against each observer, outperforming the best one hold out (76.67%,76.67%,75%).

Clinical Motivation



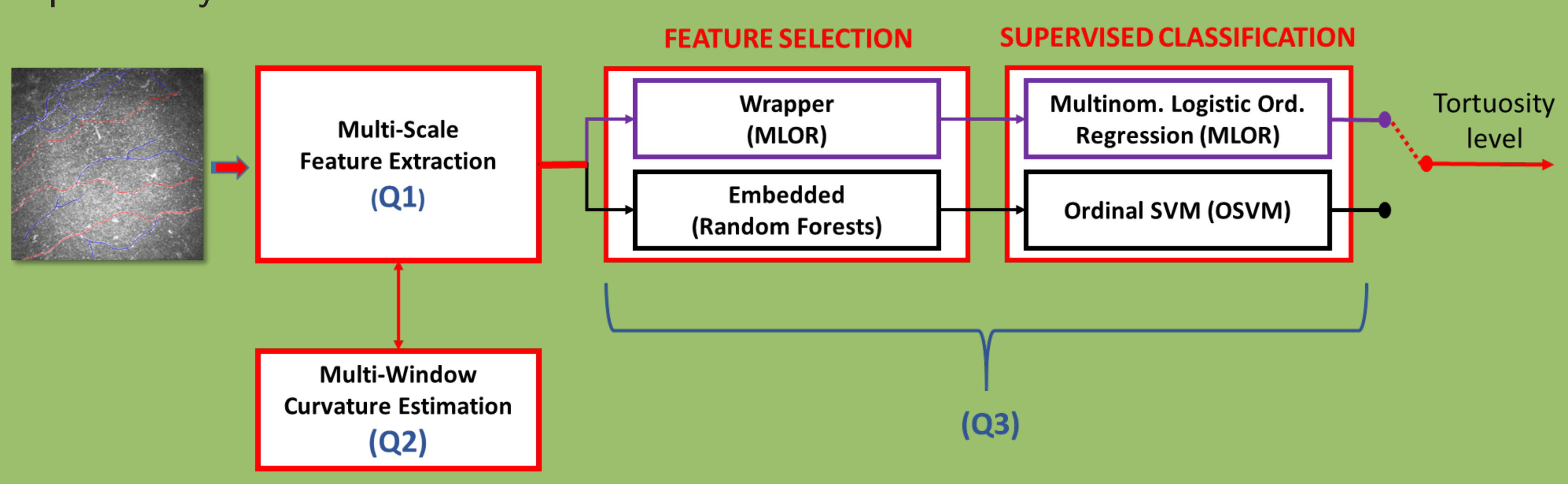
- Corneal fibres appear QUALITATIVELY more tortuous in some diseases (e.g. keratoconic corneas [1, 2], dry eyes [3]);
- Tortuosity significantly higher in Diabetic Retinopathy (DR), one of the leading pathological causes of blindness among working-age people in developed countries [4].

Technical Motivation

MAIN ISSUE: QUALITATIVE assessment leads to high inter-observer and intra-observer variability.
GOAL: to obtain an objective and reproducible tortuosity evaluation.
Q1. Does scale play a role?
Q2. Curvature seems a good feature: how accurately can it be estimated?
Q3. Previous work: is this the right approach?

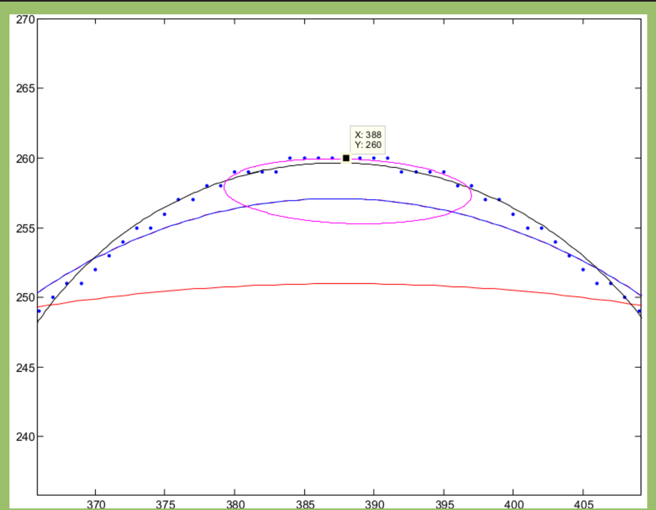
Proposed Approaches

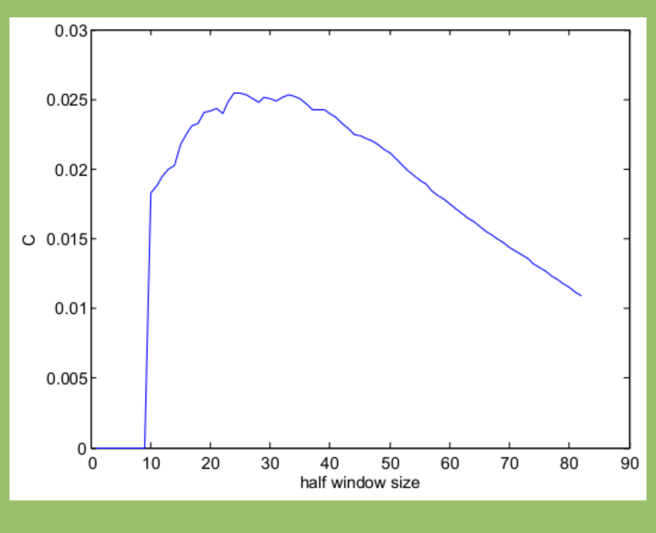
IDEA: tortuosity is likely to be based on ophthalmologist's experience and hardly captured by a formula - hence classifier:



A Multiple-Window Approach for Digital Curvature Estimation

1. At each pixel, apply local ellipse fitting and line fitting using the smallest window size in a pre-defined range $R = [w_m, w_M]$;
2. choose the best fitting function (ellipse-arc or line) based on the sum of squared errors;
3. if ellipse-arc is the best fitting function, compute curvature using analytical derivatives on the estimated ellipse;
4. repeat 1. - 3. for all windows in R;
5. select the maximum estimated curvature over all windows after median filtering to eliminate small, spurious peaks.

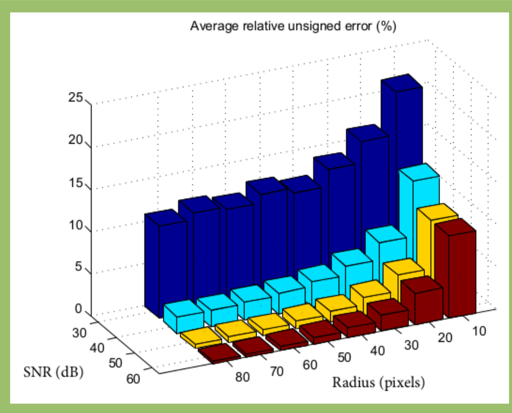




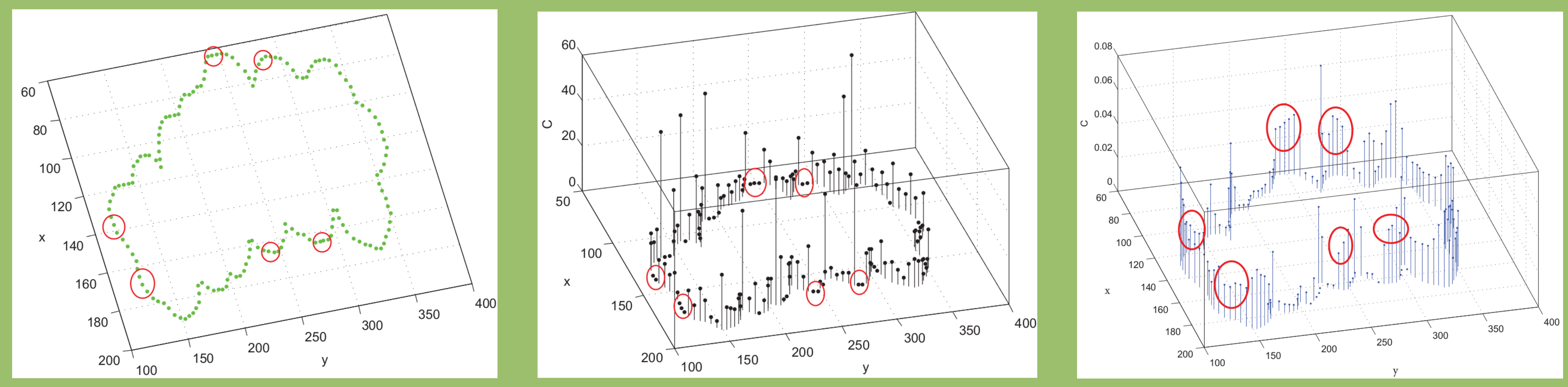
Experiments: Digital Curvature Estimation

- Discretised circles with radii ranging from 10 to 80 pixels are corrupted by radial additive white Gaussian noise;
- Performance is quantified using the ARUE:

$$ARUE = \frac{1}{N}\sum_{i=1}^{N}\frac{|\frac{1}{r} - C_{est}(i)|}{\frac{1}{r}}. \quad (1)$$



Comparison with Matas et al. method using fixed window size



Original boundary — Matas et al. approach — **Proposed approach**

Experiments: Corneal Nerves Images Classification

- Data set: 100 images, 4 levels of tortuosity, 3 ophthalmologists;
- Poor inter-observer agreement ($< \mathbf{50\%}$), the consensus ground truth (CGT - 90 images) is used instead;
- 3 experiments:

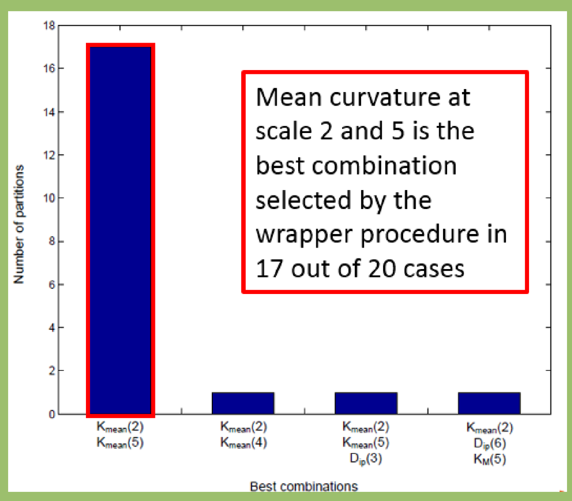
Association with CGT

Perfomance measures	MLOR	OSVM
Acc	84.44%	80.56%
Se	69.77%	61.94%
Sp	89.50%	86.86%
Ppv	69.75%	62.61%
Npv	89.48%	86.84%
MSE	0.3444	0.4222
MAE	0.3222	0.4000

Association with individual GT (Accuracy)

	AK	PH	SA	MLOR
AK	100%	76.67%	75%	**88.89%**
PH	**76.67%**	100%	73.89%	**76.67%**
SA	75%	73.89%	100%	**77.22%**

Are multiple scales effective? (MLOR)



Performance is evaluated using double cross-validation (FS + TESTING).

Conclusions

- Trained with CGT and tested against each observer, our MLOR-based approach outperforms the best observer hold out (benchmark);
- Scale seems to play a role and a multi-scale approach is effective;
- Supervised approach instead of single formula for tortuosity estimation;
- New approach for digital curvature estimation;
- First to propose an automatic method capable of predicting more than 3 tortuosity levels.

References

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