Artificial Intelligence based detection of Parkinson's disease in Magnetic Resonance Imaging brain scans

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Background

Candidate neuroprotective treatments for PD are highlighting the **need for early diagnostic tests**. A number of exploratory imaging techniques have suggested that **early pathological brain changes** may be detectable using dedicated experimental MRI sequences.

We explored whether **machine learning** (ML) might be employed to detect such brain changes on routine MRI scans. A subset of ML known as **deep learning** (DL) has shown great promise in diagnostic medical imaging, sometimes matching or even exceeding the diagnostic performance of radiologists.

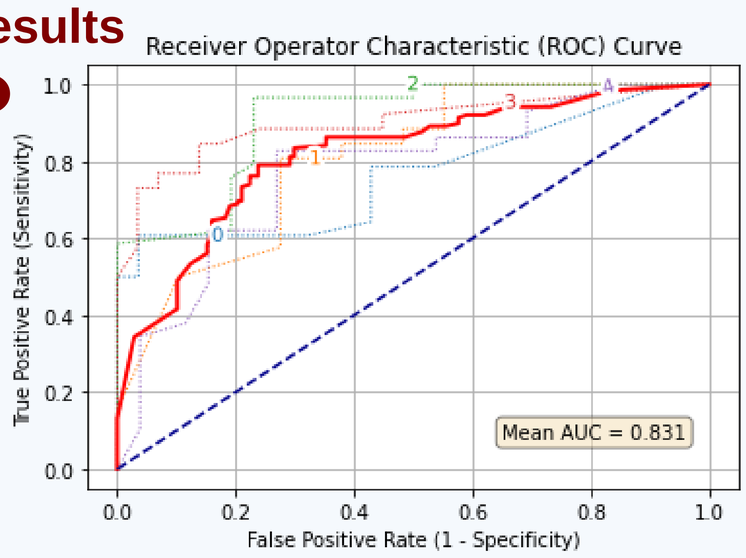
DL offers the potential of **automated diagnosis** by detecting patterns that might be invisible to the human eye. DL methods have sometimes been criticised for being "black boxes", but newly emerging **explainability methods** are allowing the decisions made by DL models to be better interpreted.

Methods

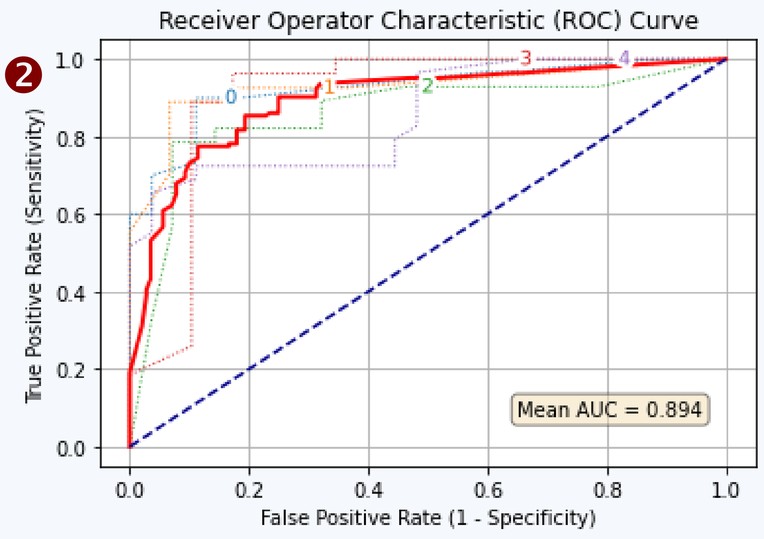
We trained a **convolutional neural network** to classify 138 PD and 60 control brain MRI images acquired from the Parkinson's Progression Marker Initiative (PPMI) database. Models were assessed using 5-fold **cross-validation**.

We used **Deep SHapley Additive exPlanations** (DeepSHAP) to calculate and visualise the contribution of individual pixels to the model's prediction.

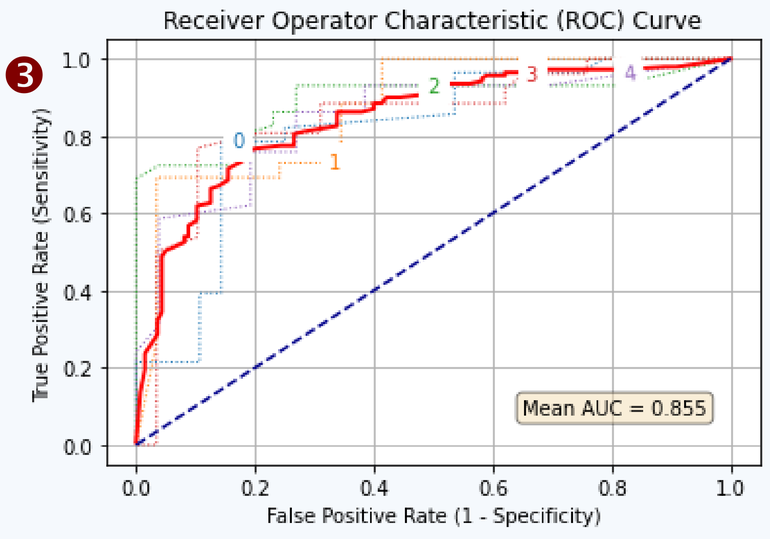
Results



❶ Models trained on**T2** scans classified images with **81% accuracy** and 0.83 ROC area-under-the-curve (AUC).

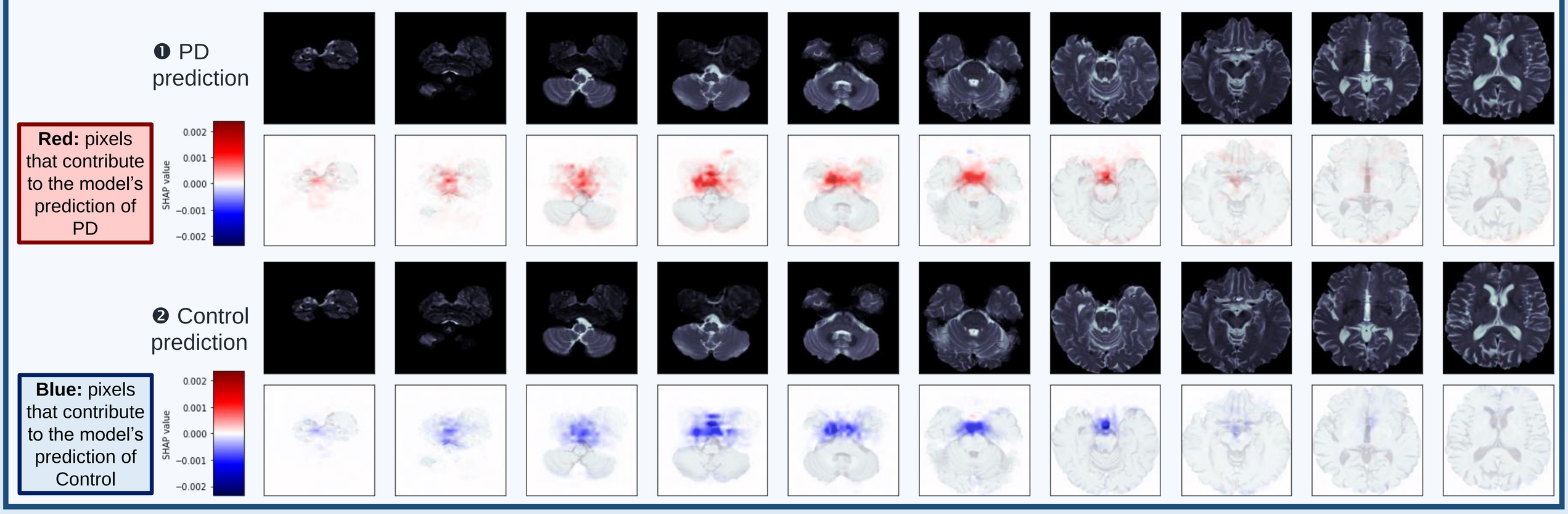


❷ Models trained on **proton density** scans classified images with **84% accuracy** and 0.89 ROC AUC.



❸ Models trained on a **combined dataset of axial T2 and proton density** MRI scans classified images with **79% accuracy** and 0.86 ROC AUC.

The average T2 axial heatmaps generated using DeepSHAP demonstrated **predominant interest in the midbrain** slices:



Conclusion

Our models exhibited **good diagnostic performance**. The use of explainable AI highlighted regions of interest **consistent with the known neuropathology of PD**, providing a focus for future work. We will validate these models in a large dataset of **routinely collected NHS MRI scans**, many of which precede onset of motor symptoms.

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