

# Cardiovascular Disease Detection Using Machine Learning

Rodrigo Ibarra, Jaime León, Iván Ávila, Hiram Ponce

Universidad Panamericana,  
Facultad de Ingeniería,  
Mexico

{0252692,0251991,0252002,hponce}@up.edu.mx

**Abstract.** The detection of Cardiovascular Diseases (CVDs) prematurely is of great interest for the Healthcare Industry. According to the World Health Organization, heart diseases represent 32% of global deaths by 2019. In this work, we propose building an interpretable machine learning model to detect CVDs. For this, we use a public dataset consisting of over 320 thousand records and 279 features. We explore the performance of three well-known classifiers and we build them using hyper-parameter techniques. For interpretability, feature relevance is tested. After the experimental results, we found Random Forest to performed the best with 94% of accuracy and 81% of area under the ROC curve. We also implement an easy web application as a tool for detecting CVDs using relevant features information.

**Keywords.** Machine learning, classification, heart disease.

## 1 Introduction

Detecting Cardiovascular Diseases (CVDs) prematurely is of great interest for the Healthcare Industry. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), almost 18M deaths, representing 32% of global deaths in 2019 were caused by heart diseases, as part of CVDs [6]. Furthermore, 75% of these cases took place in low or middle income countries, not to mention that 38% of premature deaths (under the age of 70) were caused by CVDs [6].

On top of that, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) claim that about half of USA's population has at least one of three risk factors for CVD [9]: high blood pressure, high cholesterol and smoking. With that in mind, CDC [3] surveyed

American citizens all over the country which led to a data set containing almost 400k observations, whether the person in question has ever been diagnosed either with Coronary Heart Disease or Myocardial Infarction.

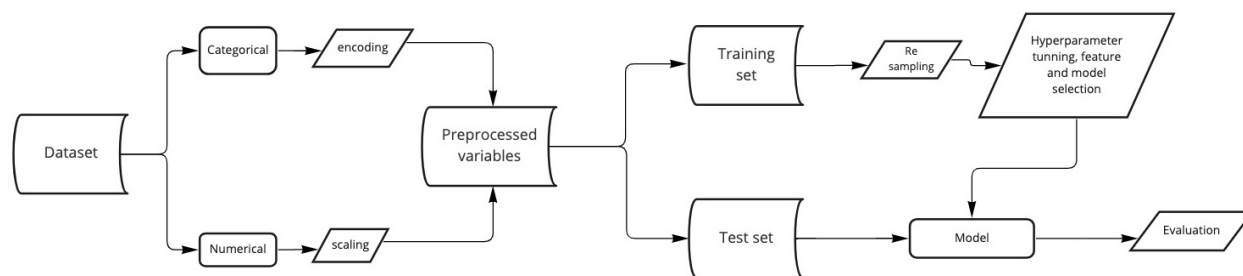
Even though several approaches on how to detect these kind of disease using Machine Learning (ML) have been developed through out recent times, in this work we aim to find a robust yet interpretable way of finding out which risk factors are more strongly correlated with CVDs, particularly Coronary Heart Disease and Myocardial Infarction.

To pursue our goal, we use a public dataset from the CDC to test three different ML models. We defined the importance of features in order to select the most relevant ones. Through a benchmark among these models, we determined the best model. Lastly, we implemented the best model in an easy application that can be used in preventing the detection of CVDs.

Here we aim not only to find an accurate predictor but to examine which risk factors are more closely related to CVD detection, leading to prevention or better and early management.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 summarizes the related work. Section 3 presents the methodology implemented in this work, from the data collection, data preparation, training models, and evaluation of models.

Section 4 shows the experimental results and the implementation in an application. Lastly, Section 5 concludes the paper.



**Fig. 1.** An overview of the ML workflow implemented in this work

## 2 Related Work

Various efforts have been made towards finding out which is the best, most accurate model for CVD detection. In 2018, the work in [8] showed how Decision Trees might not be a great candidate by themselves as it's quite hard not to over-fit, while Support Vector Machines (SVM) can easily outperform Decision Trees and Random Forest or Ensemble Methods can perform well too.

Complementing these results, the authors in [5] have shown how different models performed better while coupled with different over sampling techniques. Particularly, it was found that Synthetic Minority Oversampling was the best match for Random Forest, SVM and Random Over Sampling work great together, too. Also, Adaptive Synthetic Sampling helped, once again, Random Forest gets the best results.

The latter is very relevant as it turns out some other works have been done around finding out which tree-based models work better on CVD detection. Using a data set from UCI Machine learning repository, the authors in [7] found that J48 is the best technique for CVD detection amongst some other well-known tree-based methods.

## 3 Methodology

In this work, we implement the overall workflow for achieving the CVD estimation using ML models, depicted in Fig. 1. This workflow consists of four main steps: data collection, data preparation, training models, and evaluation of models.

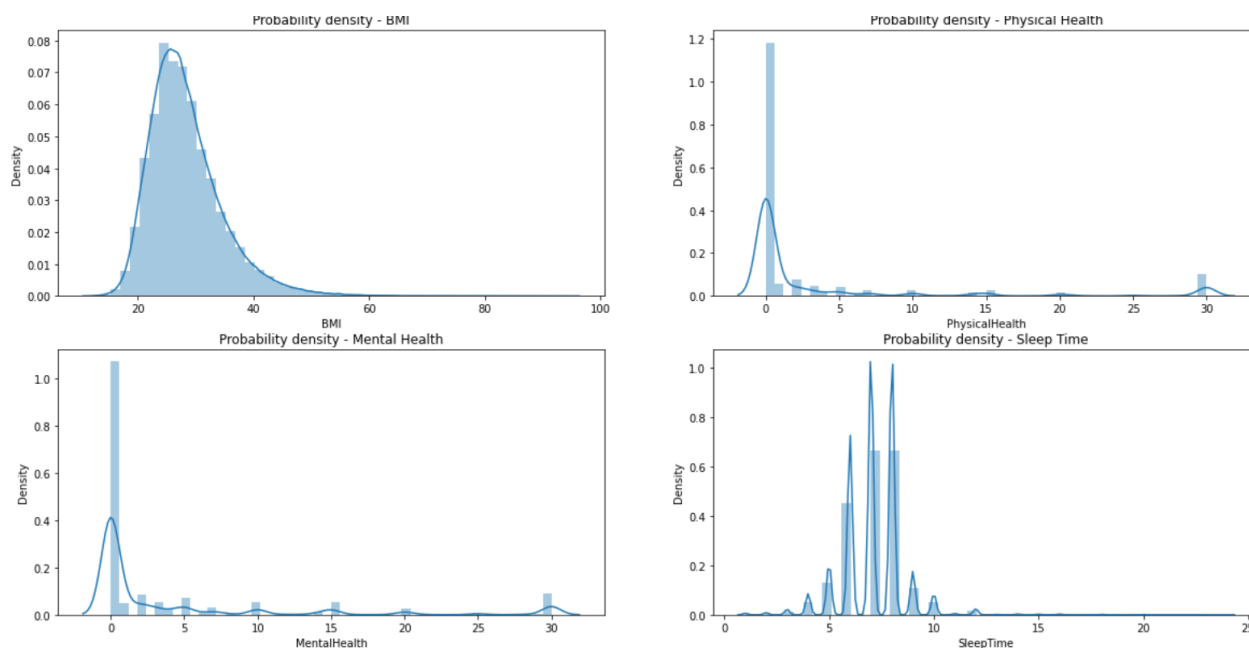
**Table 1.** Categorical variables in the dataset

| Feature          | Categories | Top Category | Frequency |
|------------------|------------|--------------|-----------|
| HeartDisease     | 2          | No           | 292422    |
| Smoking          | 2          | No           | 187887    |
| AlcoholDrinking  | 2          | No           | 298018    |
| Stroke           | 2          | No           | 307726    |
| DiffWalking      | 2          | No           | 275385    |
| Sex              | 2          | Female       | 167805    |
| AgeCategory      | 13         | 65-69        | 34151     |
| Race             | 6          | White        | 245212    |
| Diabetic         | 2          | No           | 269653    |
| PhysicalActivity | 2          | Yes          | 247957    |
| GenHealth        | 5          | Very Good    | 113858    |
| Asthma           | 2          | No           | 276923    |
| KidneyDisease    | 2          | No           | 308016    |
| SkinCancer       | 88         | 788          | 289976    |

### 3.1 Dataset Description

The dataset used for this study, was downloaded from Kaggle repository. Originally, it comes from the CDC's (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System [2] which conducts telephone surveys about the health status of USA's citizens and contained around 300 features. It has been pre-processed and cleaned. So that in this work, we use the smaller data set with 18 features.

The dataset is divided into 13 categorical variables, 4 numerical variables and one categorical target ('HeartDisease'), consisting of 319,795 records without null values; but it is heavily unbalanced. Table 1 represents the frequency of the most common category on each categorical feature, while Fig. 2 represents the distribution of the four numerical variables.



**Fig. 2.** Probability density for the numerical variables in the dataset

Figure 3 shows an example of the relationship between the variables and the target. We know that the number of observations are 319,795, of those 292,422 belong to the negative class. Thus, it is important to balance the data.

### 3.2 Data Pre-Processing

As we are dealing with both categorical and numerical variables on top of an imbalanced dataset, we must have at least three pre-processing tasks to do:

- Perform One-Hot encoding on categorical variables.
- Perform standard scaling to numerical variables.
- We use over sampling and under sampling to balance classes.

For feature preparation, we decided to use the sklearn pre-processing module on Python, OneHotEncoder and StandardScaler, to perform the first part of the process. Then, for

re-sampling, we have used RandomOverSampler and RandomUnderSampler for balancing the classes. And, finally, we split the data in training and holdout sets.

After the EDA we know the data types of the variables, we created a pipeline. The first step was to normalize all numeric features using an standard scaler, for categorical values we used One-Hot encoding, and last we used a label encoder for the target feature. Imputing of null values was not necessary because we did not have any empty values.

Next, we separated the dataset in 80% of training data and 20% of testing data. It is remarkable to say that we stratified the data to assure all the target values were distributed in both train/test sets.

The third step consisted on balancing the target feature because originally we had a ratio of 91 vs 9 of the negative and positive classes respectively. We did a random over-sampling to get a relationship of 70 – 30 and a random under-sampling to get a 50 – 50 ratio. Only the train set was balanced.

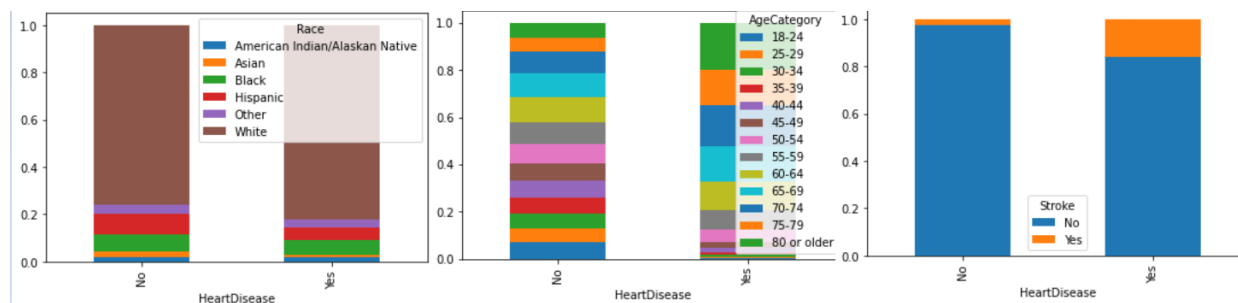


Fig. 3. Target relationship among other variables showing data unbalancing

### 3.3 Building Models

We decided to test three different model classifiers: Stochastic Gradient Descent Based (SGD) Classifier, Logistic Regression, and Random Forest.

We decided to use Optuna [1] for hyper-parameter tuning, which is an open source hyper-parameter optimization framework to automate hyper-parameter search more efficiently. One of the key reasons we decided to use this library is because it is able to do automated search for optimal hyper-parameters using Python conditionals, loops, and syntax. It also uses state-of-the-art algorithms which help to efficiently search large spaces and prune unpromising trials for faster results. In the basis, it uses Bayesian optimization that builds a probability model of the wrapped objective function and uses it to select hyper-parameters to evaluate in the true objective function.

For the SGD Classifier, we use four different hyper-parameters such as alpha, penalty, loss, and max\_iter. For the Logistic Regression model the hyperparameters used were: penalty, c value, solver, and fit\_intercept. Lastly for the Random Forest Classifier, it used four different hyper-parameters such as max\_depth, n\_estimators, criterion, and max\_features.

For hyper-parameter tuning, we implement a 3-fold 20-repetition cross validation technique. Table 2 summarizes the best hyper-parameters per model.

The following graphs shows the objective value for each trial ran by the optuna objective function, in this case, it only shows the top 10 trials. We

can see that it starts with an objective value around 0.76 and after the fourth trial, it shows the best objective value with a value around 0.915.

Figure 4 shows an example of the evolution of the model accuracy (objective function) based on the trials of the different combinations of the hyper-parameters. Another representation of the hyper-parameter evolution under the optimization process can be seen in Fig. 5. In addition, Fig. 6 shows an example of the influence of the hyper-parameters in the model accuracy (objective function). The latter would be interesting for better understanding on the role of the hyper-parameters in the building of the models.

### 3.4 Experimentation

In order to find the best algorithm, we first ran the hyper-parameter optimization process with Optuna. Then, the best classifier is selected in terms of the accuracy metric (1), where, TP, TN, FP, and FN represent true positive, true negative, false positive, and false negative, respectively:

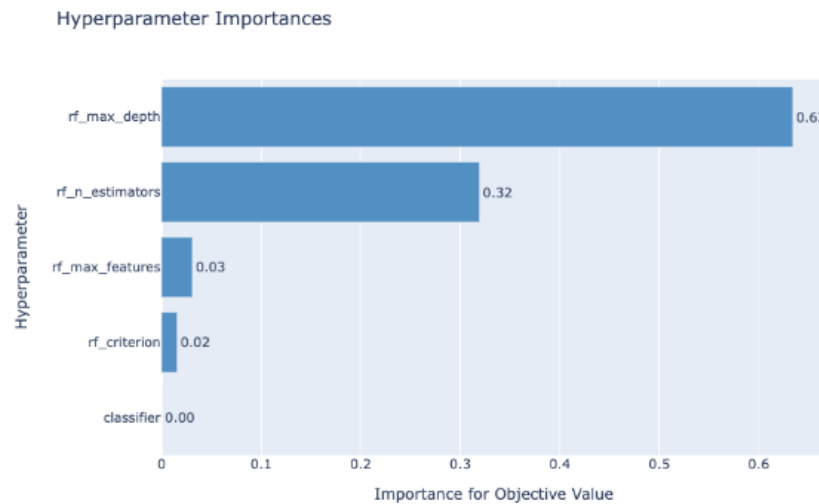
$$Accuracy = \frac{TP + TN}{TP + TN + FP + FN}. \quad (1)$$

In addition, we plot the ROC (Receiver Operator Characteristic) curve [10], which helps us understand the trade-off between sensitivity and specificity. Classifiers that give curves closer to the top-left corner indicate a better performance.



Figure 7 shows the ROC curve of the Random Forest model. We find that our model has an AUC (Area Under Curve) of 0.81, which is equivalent to the probability that a randomly chosen positive instance is ranked higher than a randomly chosen negative instance. Note that the ROC does not

Furthermore, we created an application on Gradio library of Python in order to create a functional application to show our model. In



**Fig. 6.** Hyper-parameters importance in the Random Forest model

**Table 2.** Optimized hyper-parameters for the models

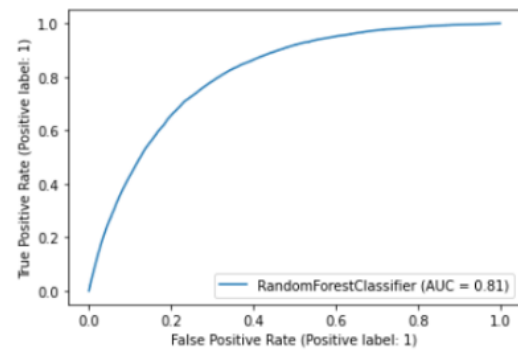
| Model               | Hyperparameters                                                              |
|---------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| SGD Classifier      | alpha=3.81E-5,<br>penalty='elasticnet',<br>max_iter=60                       |
| Logistic Regression | regularization=L2,<br>reg_coefficient=45.52                                  |
| Random Forest       | max_depth=38,<br>n_estimators=299,<br>criterion=gini,<br>max_features='auto' |

**Table 3.** Results of the training models

| Model               | Accuracy (%) |
|---------------------|--------------|
| SGD Classifier      | 76           |
| Logistic Regression | 80           |
| Random Forest       | 94           |

the application, the user inputs the required parameters using a friendly interface, and those inputs are processed in order to obtain a quick result of the heart disease prediction of the person. Figure 9 shows an excerpt of the web application running the Random Forest classifier.

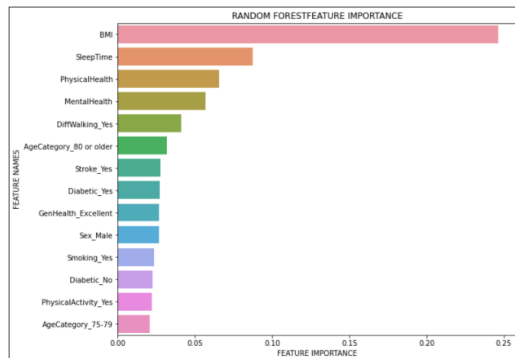
The results validate that our proposal consists of an ML model, to say Random Forest classifier, that is highly accurate (94% of accuracy) and robust



**Fig. 7.** ROC curve of the Random Forest model

enough for a medical application (81% of AUC). Furthermore, we find that the automatic detection of feature relevance (see Fig. 8) is consistent with the literature, in which BMI, sleep time, and physical health are the most common risk factors in CVDs [4].

In addition, we developed a web application tool based on the Random Forest classifier for heart disease estimation, leading to prevention or better and early management of the disease. This work is limited on the data used, since it looks biased in terms of gender and ethnicity, and the dataset is unbalanced too. So, it would be better to expand the investigation with more detailed and unbiased



**Fig. 8.** Feature importance using the Random Forest model

data. However, this work can confirm that this preliminary work might help facing CVD in patients.

## 5 Conclusions

This work proposed to build a robust yet interpretable way of finding out which factors are more strongly correlated with CVDs using machine learning models. To do so, we explored three ML classifiers, and we found that Random Forest model is the best for the dataset used.

It is evident that imbalance is a big problem for this data set on top on non-separability. Other techniques for imbalanced learning can be applied to this problem like class weights, using gradient boosting for a more robust sequential tree ensemble that would help better differentiate the binary classes. Using these techniques should result in better classification performance that could help in many cases. For instance, a Hospital could survey patients and find out whether they are candidates for CVD prevention treatment or feature importance could help pharmaceutical companies target specific drugs on their campaigns or simply.

Even though our model has a good performance, the model needs improvement. For future work, we can use other ML techniques and adding more features to our model for better complexity and understanding of the patient's information. Other data sets can also be explored.

### Heart Disease Prediction Using a Random Forest Classifier

WHAT'S YOUR BMI?

DO YOU SMOKE?

Yes ▾

DO YOU DRINK?

Yes ▾

HAVE YOU HAD AN STROKE?

Yes ▾

HOW MANY TIME HAVE YOU THOUGHT ABOUT YOUR PHYSICAL HEALTH IN THE LAST MONTH

HOW MANY TIME HAVE YOU THOUGHT ABOUT YOUR MENTAL HEALTH IN THE LAST MONTH

DO YOU HAVE ANY DIFFICULTY FOR WALKING?

Yes ▾

HOW DOU YOU IDENTIFY YOURSELF?

Male ▾

WHAT'S YOUR AGE CATEGORY

18-24 ▾

WHAT'S YOUR RACE?

White ▾

ARE YOU DIABETIC?

Yes ▾

DO YOU EXERCISE?

Yes ▾

HOW'S YOUR GENERAL HEALTH?

Excellent ▾

HOW MANY HOURS DO YOU SLEEP PER DAY

HAVE YOU HAD ASTHMA?

Yes ▾

HAVE YOU HAD A KIDNEY DISEASE?

Yes ▾

HAVE YOU HAD SKIN CANCER?

Yes ▾

OUTPUT 0.6s

Heart Disease Prediction: Yes

Avisar

**Fig. 9.** Example of the web application running the Random Forest classifier for CVD prediction

## References

1. Akiba, T., Sano, S., Yanase, T., Ohta, T., Koyama, M. (2019). Optuna: A next-generation hyperparameter optimization framework. Proceedings of

- the 25rd ACM SIGKDD International Conference on Knowledge Discovery and Data Mining, pp. 2623–2631. DOI: 10.1145/3292500.3330701.
2. **CDC (2015).** Centers for disease control and prevention.
  3. **Covid, C., Team, R., COVID, C., Team, R., Chow, N., Fleming-Dutra, K., Gierke, R., Hall, A., Hughes, M., Pilishvili, T., et al. (2020).** Preliminary estimates of the prevalence of selected underlying health conditions among patients with coronavirus disease 2019—United States, february 12–march 28, 2020. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, Vol. 69, No. 13, pp. 382–386. DOI: 10.15585/mmwr.mm6913e2.
  4. **Khan, S. S., Ning, H., Wilkins, J. T., Allen, N., Carnethon, M., Berry, J. D., Sweis, R. N., Lloyd-Jones, D. M. (2018).** Association of body mass index with lifetime risk of cardiovascular disease and compression of morbidity. *JAMA Cardiology*, Vol. 3, No. 4, pp. 280–287. DOI: 10.1001/jamacardio.2018.0022.
  5. **Lakshmanarao, A., Swathi, Y., Sundareswar, P. S. S. (2019).** Machine learning techniques for heart disease prediction. *International Journal of Scientific & Technology Research*, Vol. 8, No. 11, pp. 374–377.
  6. **Mensah, G. A., Roth, G. A., Fuster, V. (2019).** The global burden of cardiovascular diseases and risk factors: 2020 and beyond. *Journal of the American College of Cardiology*, Vol. 74, No. 20, pp. 2529–2532.
  7. **Patel, J., Khaked, A. A., Patel, J., Patel, J. (2021).** Heart disease prediction using machine learning. *Proceedings of Second International Conference on Computing, Communications, and Cyber-Security*, Springer, Vol. 203, pp. 653–665. DOI: 10.1007/978-981-16-0733-2\_46.
  8. **Ramalingam, V. V., Dandapath, A., Raja, M. (2018).** Heart disease prediction using machine learning techniques: A survey. *International Journal of Engineering & Technology*, Vol. 7, pp. 684. DOI: 10.14419/ijet.v7i2.8.10557.
  9. **Van Bussel, E. F., Hoevenaer-Blom, M. P., Poortvliet, R. K. E., Gussekloo, J., van Dalen, J. W., Van Gool, W. A., Richard, E., van Charante, E. P. M. (2020).** Predictive value of traditional risk factors for cardiovascular disease in older people: a systematic review. *Preventive Medicine*, Vol. 132, pp. 105986. DOI: 10.1016/j.ypmed.2020.105986.
  10. **Zhou, Y., Zhang, J., Liu, R. H., Xie, Q., Li, X. L., Chen, J. G., Pan, X. L., Ye, B., Liu, L. L., Wang, W. W., et al. (2021).** Association between health-related physical fitness and risk of dyslipidemia in university staff: A cross-sectional study and a roc curve analysis. *Nutrients*, Vol. 14, No. 1, pp. 50. DOI: 10.3390/nu14010050.

*Article received on 10/06/2022; accepted on 19/08/2022.  
Corresponding author is Hiram Ponce.*