

Early and Prediagnostic Detection of Pancreatic Cancer from Computed Tomography

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JOHNS HOPKINS
UNIVERSITY

2018 **FELIX**
Lustgarten

2021  Joined JHU

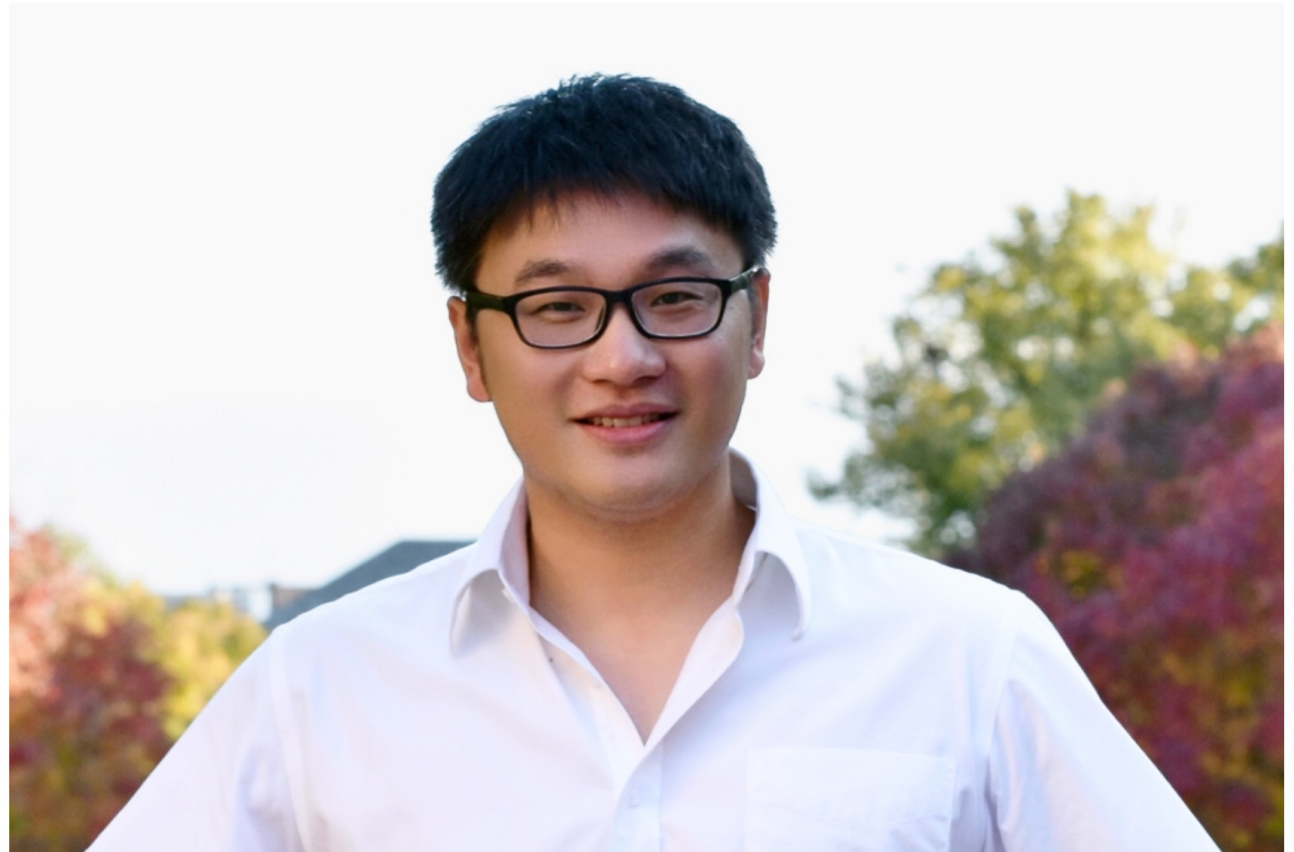
2023 **FELIX-Civitas**
Lustgarten &
McGovern

2025 **FELIX-Civitas**
Lustgarten &
NIH

**This talk summarizes a lot of research
over the last four years**

**ZONGWEI ZHOU AWARDED \$2.8
MILLION NIH GRANT**

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Early Detection of Cancer (#2 Killer)

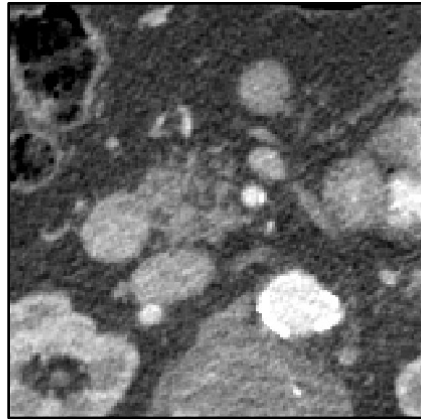
- Early detection of cancer enables surgery and will save many lives.
- For pancreatic cancer, the five-year survival rate increases from about **7-10%** to **40-45%** if detected at an early stage.
- **80,000,000** Computer Tomography (CT) scans taken each year in the US, enabling to screen many people.
- Radiologists can detect pancreatic cancer from CT scans, but the sensitivity of early pancreatic cancer is only **33-44%**.
- This motivates the development of AI algorithms for detecting and localizing early cancer from CT scans, less than 2 cm, and even before tumors are visible.

A Successful Story

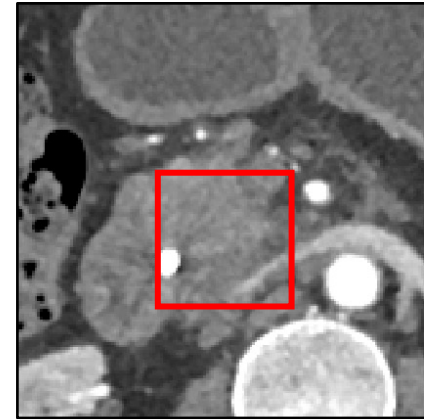
- We formulate this problem as *Semantic Segmentation*.
- We developed an AI algorithm and train it to classify voxels as Healthy Pancreas, Tumor, or Background.
- For the pancreas, our AI has achieved very high performance.

	Sensitivity early tumors ≤ 2 cm	Sensitivity all-size tumors	Specificity
Radiologists	33–44%	76–92%	82–96%
Our AI	94%	97%	99%

A Successful Story



**Prediagnostic
CT scans**



**Diagnostic
CT scans**

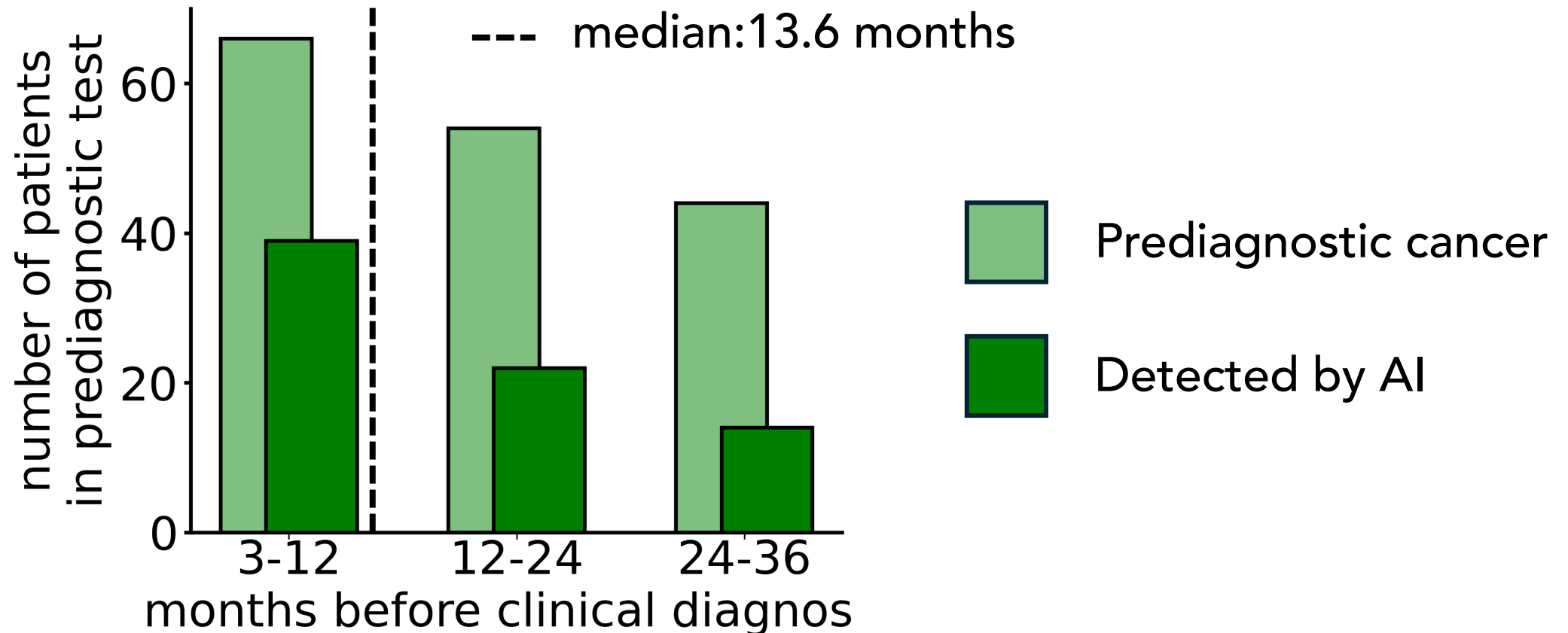
2021

3-36 months
before diagnosis

2024

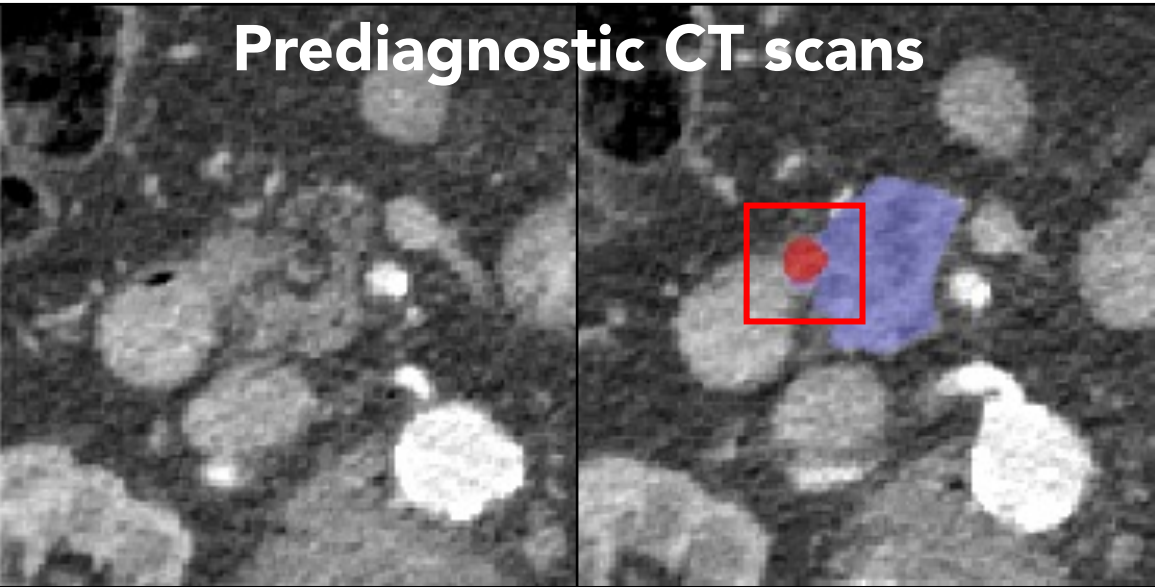
A Successful Story

- Our AI can detect cancer **13.6 months** earlier than radiologists.



A Successful Story

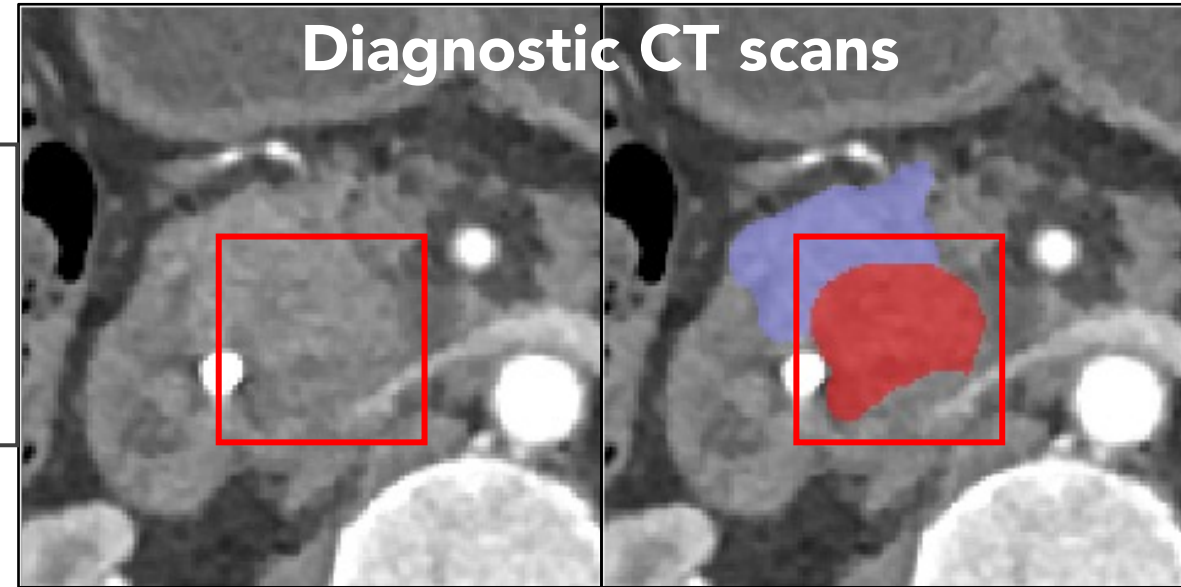
- Our AI can also **localize** these cancer in prediagnostic scans.



Radiologists

AI

● Pancreatic Tumor



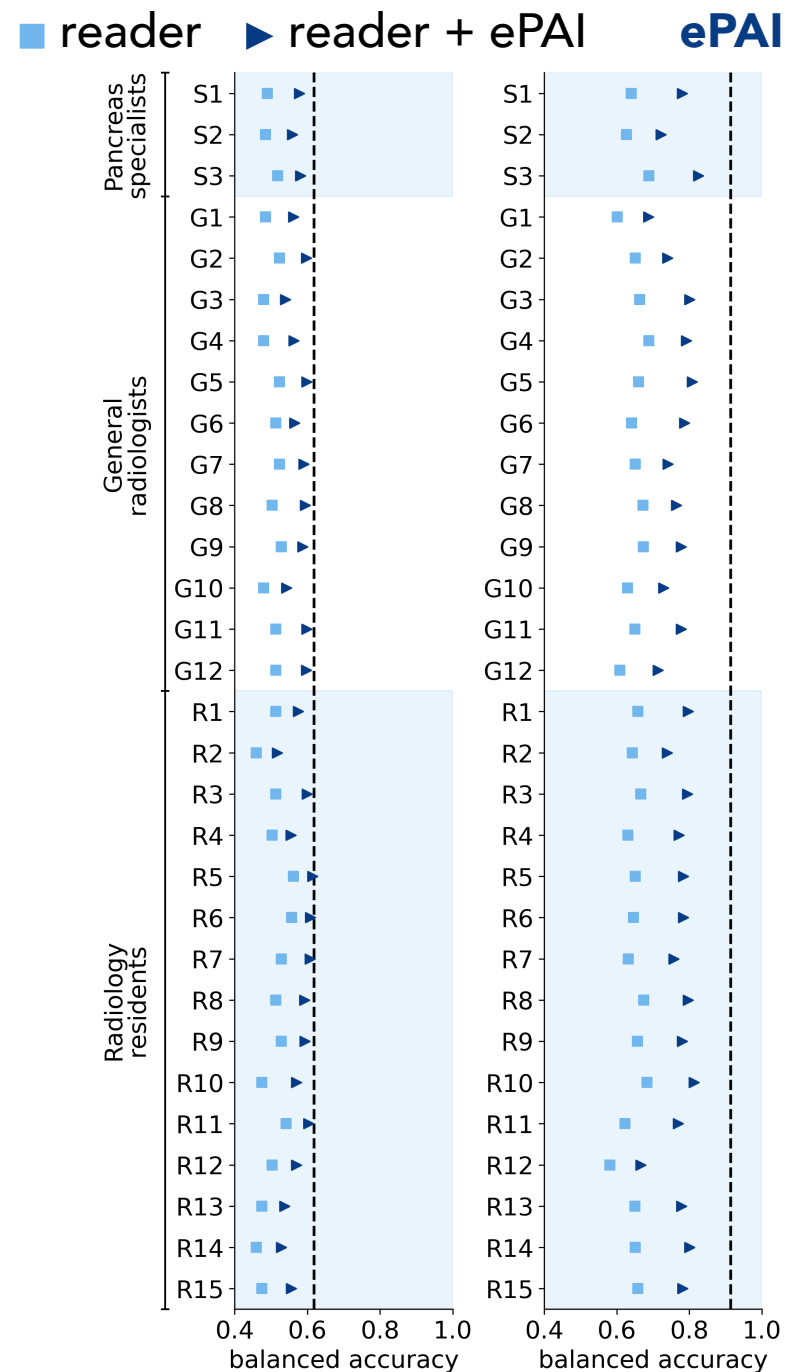
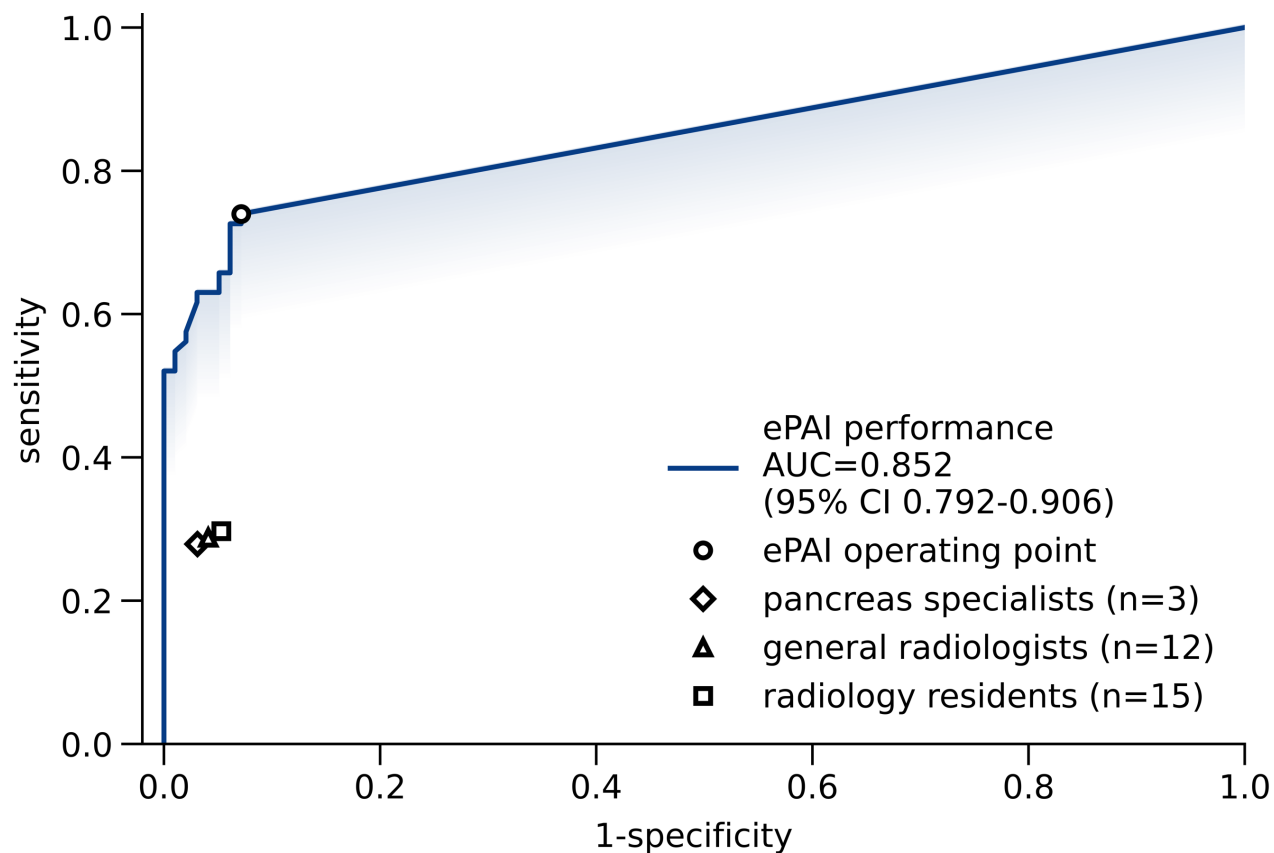
Radiologists

AI

● Healthy Pancreas

A Successful Story

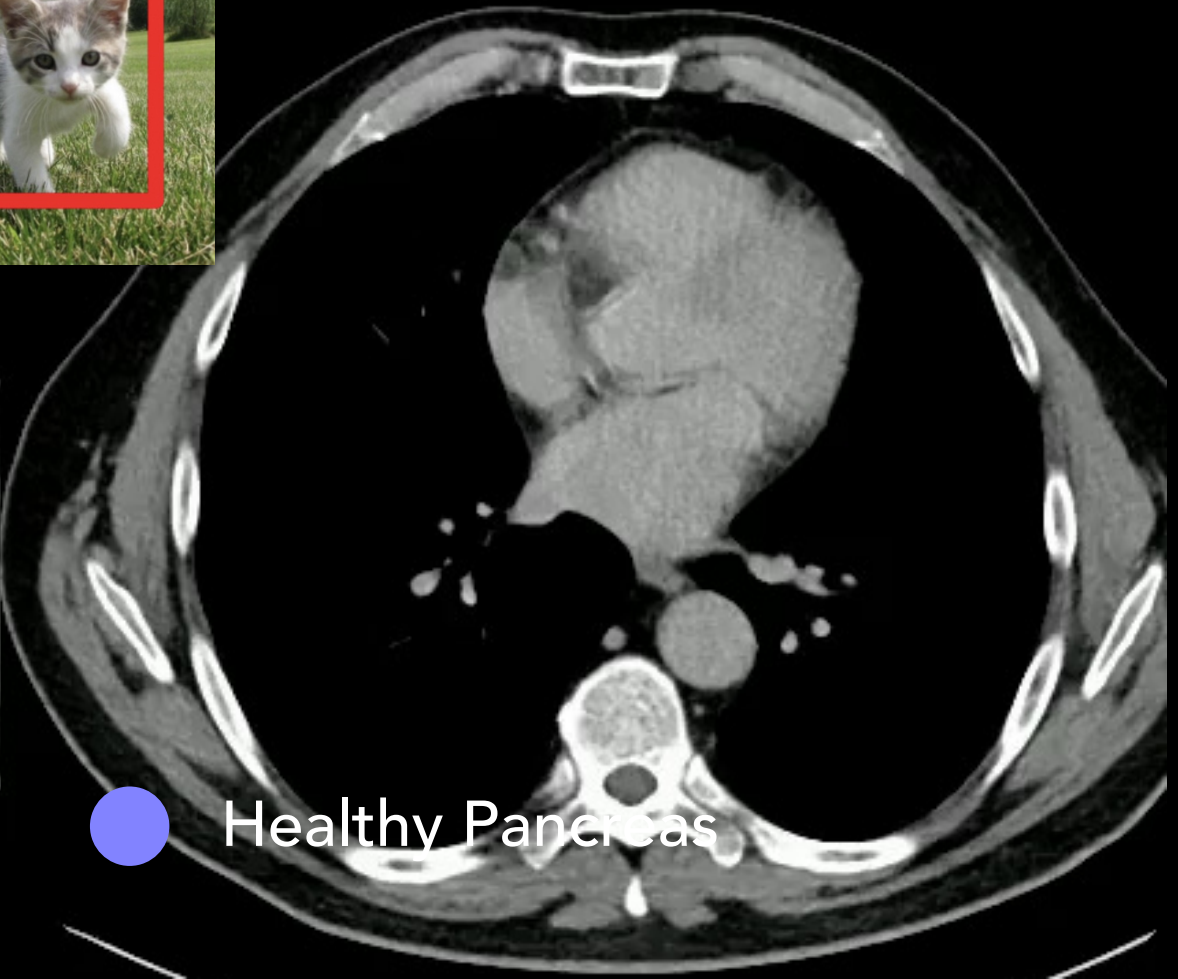
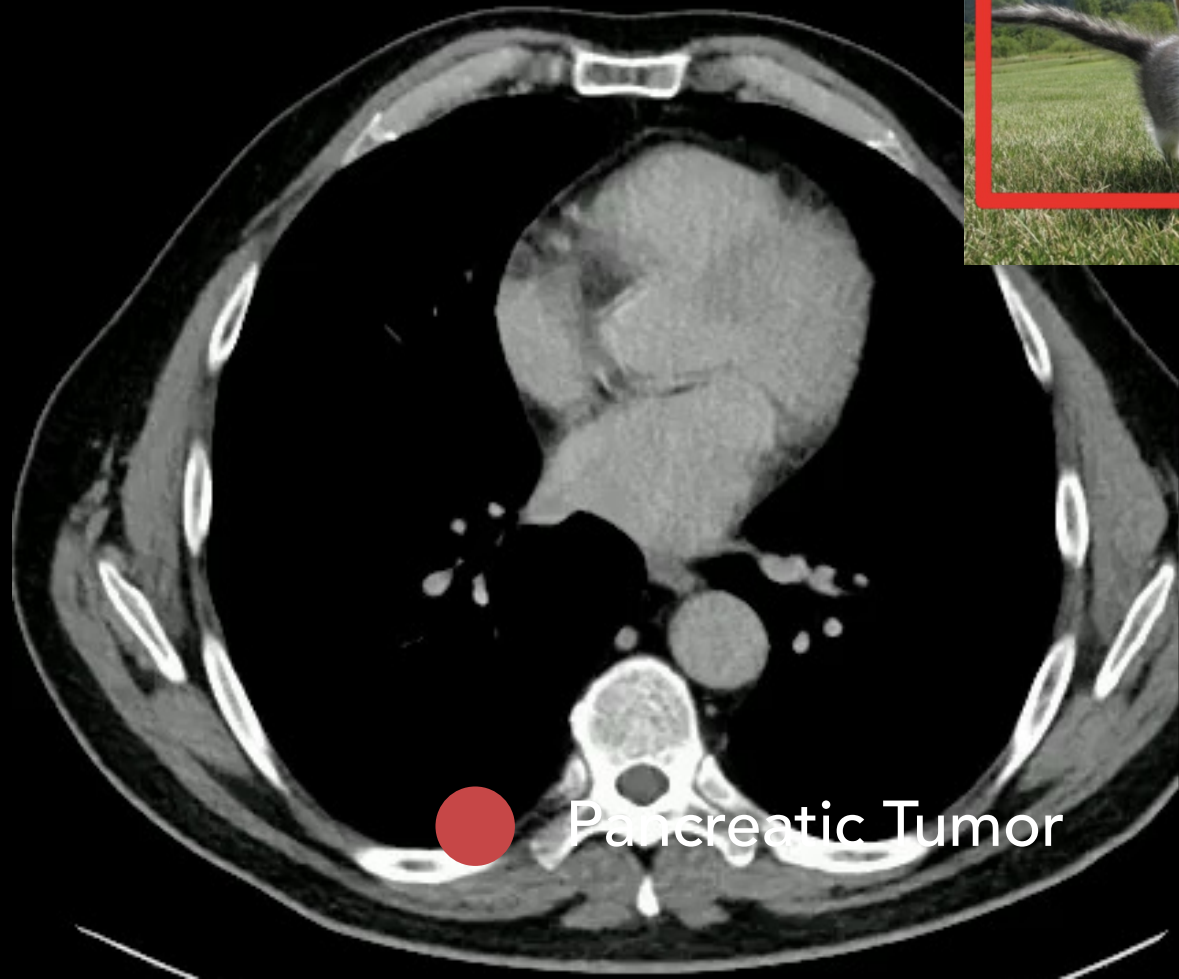
- Our AI can be an assistive tool for radiologists.



Challenges (1/3)

- **Algorithms:** How to detect small cancer?
- **Data:** Where to get data from different hospitals?
- **Annotations:** How to annotate the data?

Tumors (0.0001%) in 3D medical images vs. objects (5-50%) in 2D natural images



Chapter I. Segmentation Architectures

- AI is an extremely dynamic research field. Novel AI algorithms are continually being created and improved.

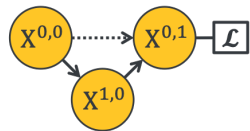
Medical Image Segmentation

1.	U-Net	(<u>O. Ronneberger et al., 2015</u>)	125,000 cites
2.	UNet++	(<u>Z. Zhou et al., 2019</u>)	16,000 cites
3.	TransU-Net	(<u>J. Chen et al., 2021</u>)	8,000 cites
4.	nnU-Net	(<u>F. Isensee et al., 2020</u>)	8,000 cites
5.	...		

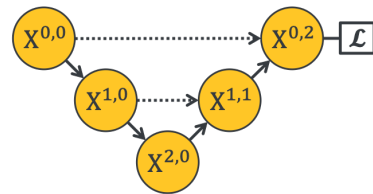
Developing Segmentation Architectures

- UNet++ is suitable for segmenting tumors of a wide range of sizes (Z. Zhou et al., TMI 2019; [AMIA Edward H. Shortliffe Doctoral Dissertation Award](#)).

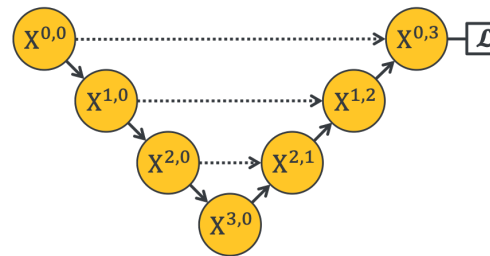
(a) U-Net L^1



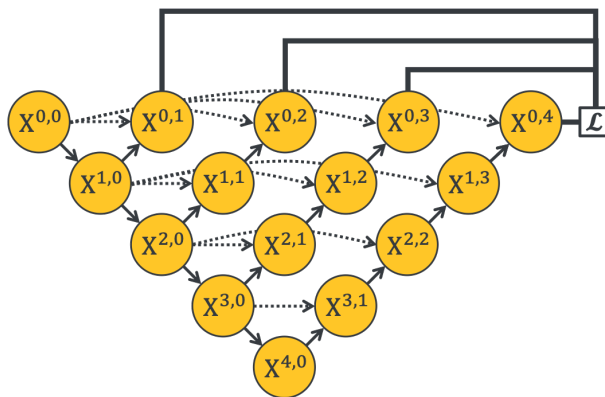
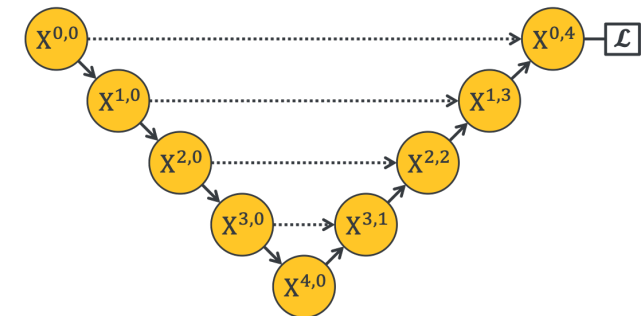
(b) U-Net L^2



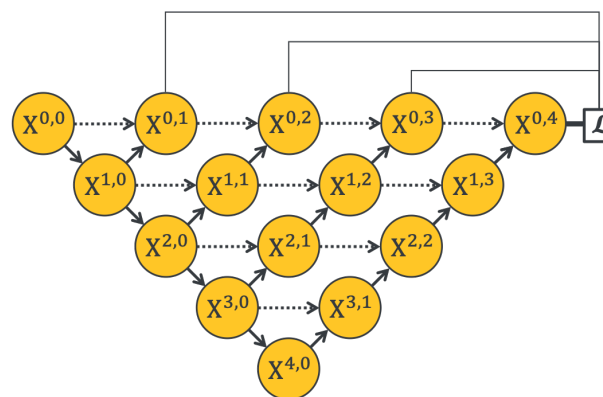
(c) U-Net L^3



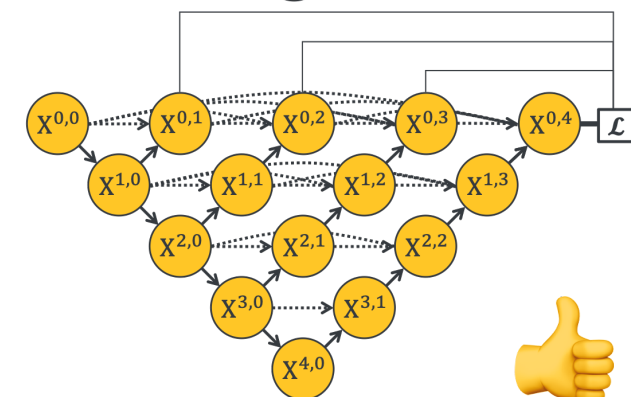
(d) U-Net (L^4)



(e) U-Net^e



(f) UNet+



(g) UNet++

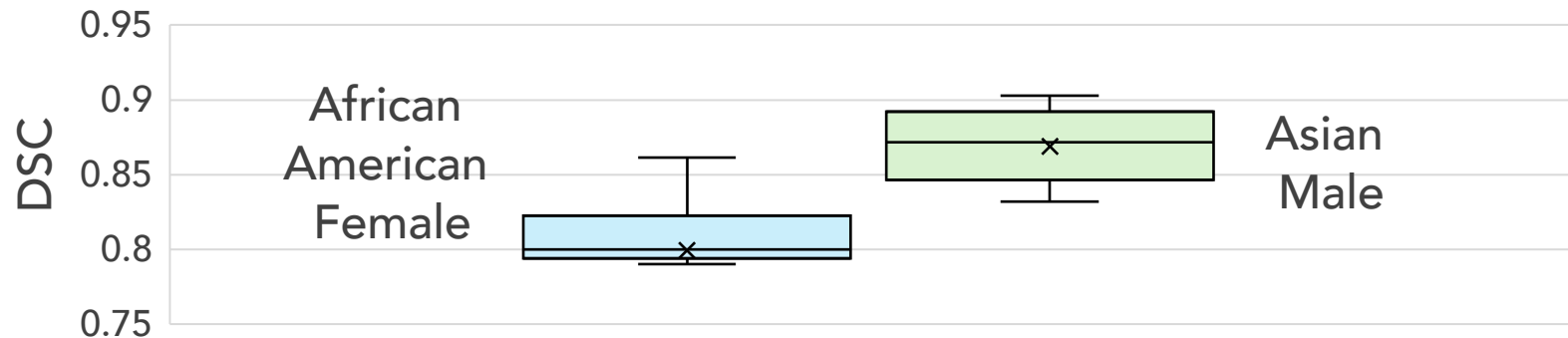


Challenges (2/3)

- **Algorithms:** How to detect small cancer?
- **Data:** Where to get data from different hospitals?
- **Annotations:** How to annotate the data?

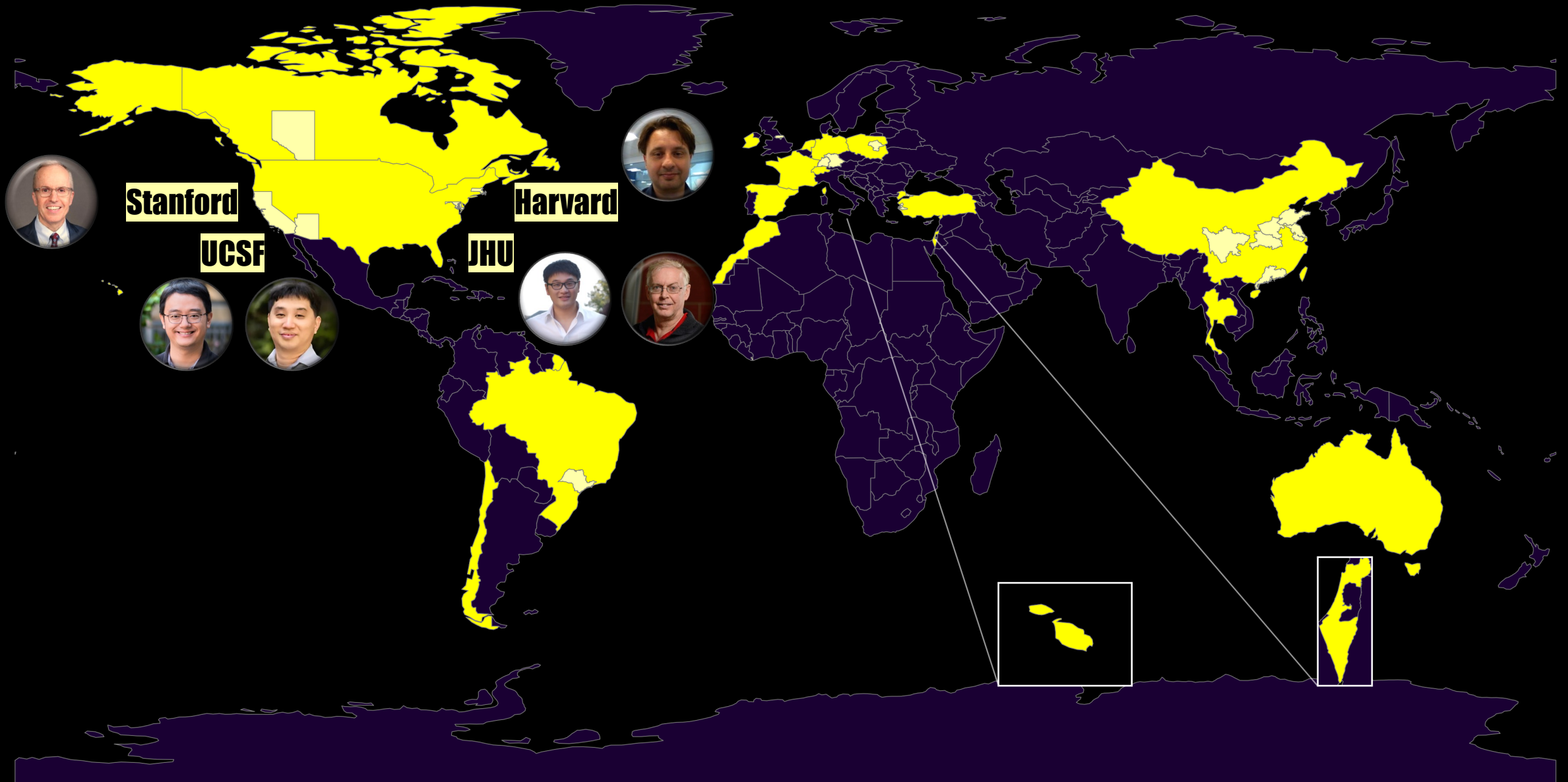
Rigorously Evaluating Medical AI

- It is critical to test CT scans from other hospitals, as they may use different scanners and imaging protocols, and patient demographics (e.g., race, gender, age) can vary even within the same hospital.
- This is called the *Domain Transfer (DT)* problem ([A. Lubonja et al., MICCAIW 2025](#)).

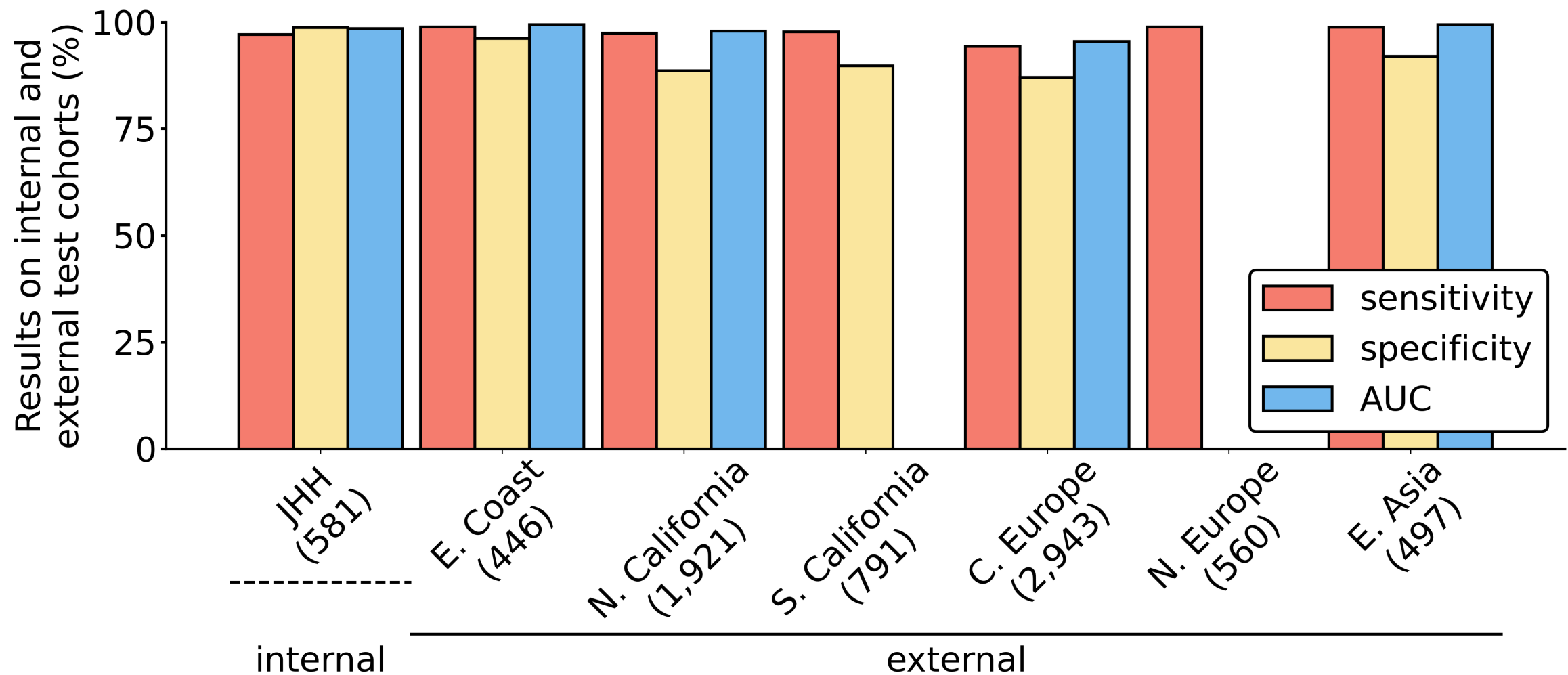


[GitHub.com/ariellubonja/RankInsight](https://github.com/ariellubonja/RankInsight)

We have access to CT scans from **145 hospitals** worldwide,
and our **collaboration** is expanding



Rigorously Evaluating Medical AI

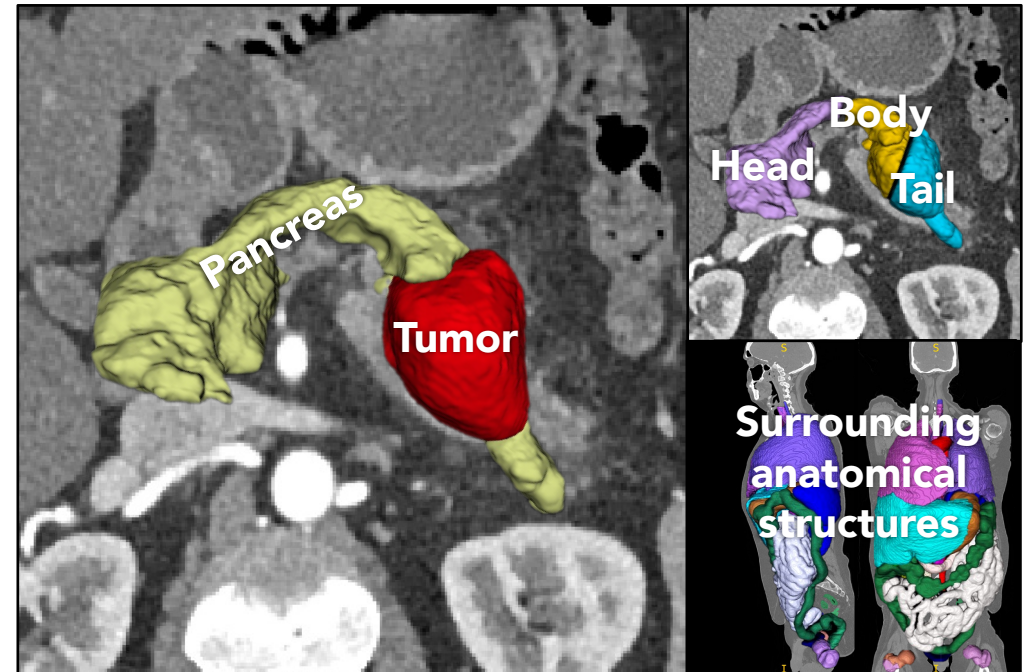


Challenges (3/3)

- **Algorithms:** How to detect small cancer?
- **Data:** Where to get data from different hospitals?
- **Annotations:** How to annotate the data?

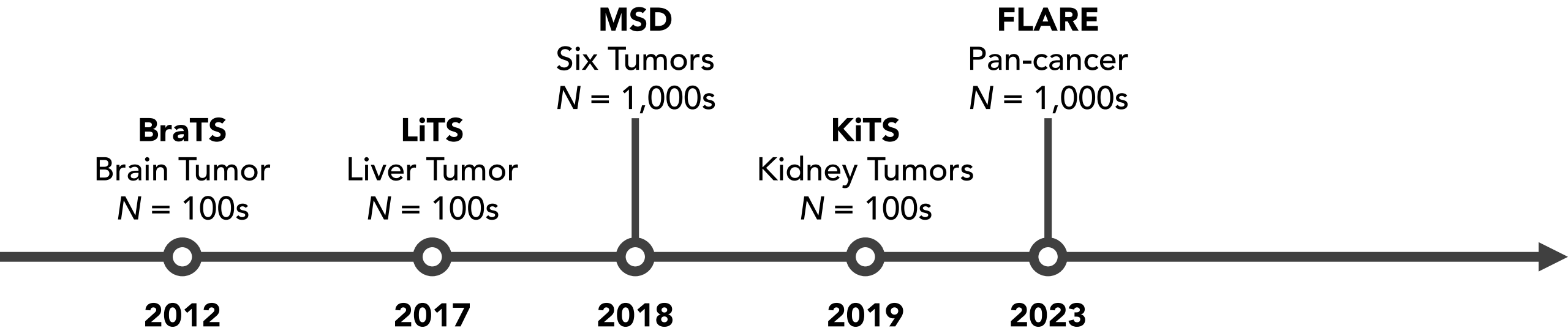
Behind the Success: The JHU Dataset

- **>5,000** voxel-wise annotated CT scans, requiring **25** person years.
- It trains high-performance AI algorithms (Xia et al., medRxiv, 2022)
 - Sensitivity = 97%, Specificity = 99%
 - Exceed radiologist performance.
 - Generalizable to multiple centers.
- *But it is private!*
- **\$6M, five-year annotations**



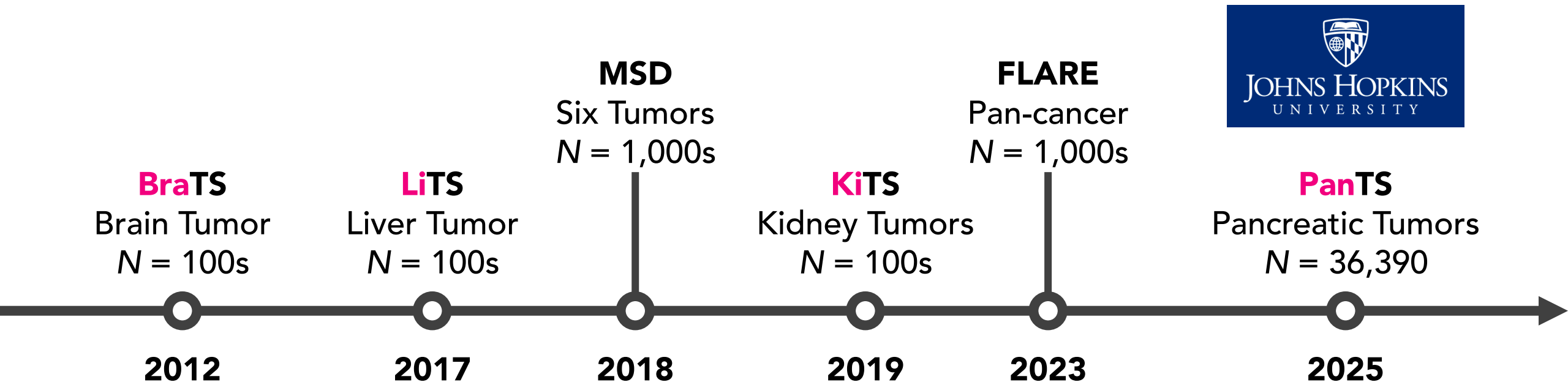
Annotated Tumor Datasets Should Be Open to More Researchers

- There's a huge data gap in medical AI right now, particularly when you have rare diseases, uncommon conditions (e.g., cancer).



Annotated Tumor Datasets Should Be Open to More Researchers

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Our AI Strategy (Two Chapters)

- I. Active learning, quickly creating voxel-wise annotations
- II. Novel strategies, reducing the need of voxel-wise annotations
 - A. Radiology reports as weak supervision
 - B. Synthetic tumors as additional training data

Chapter 1. Annotations with Active Learning

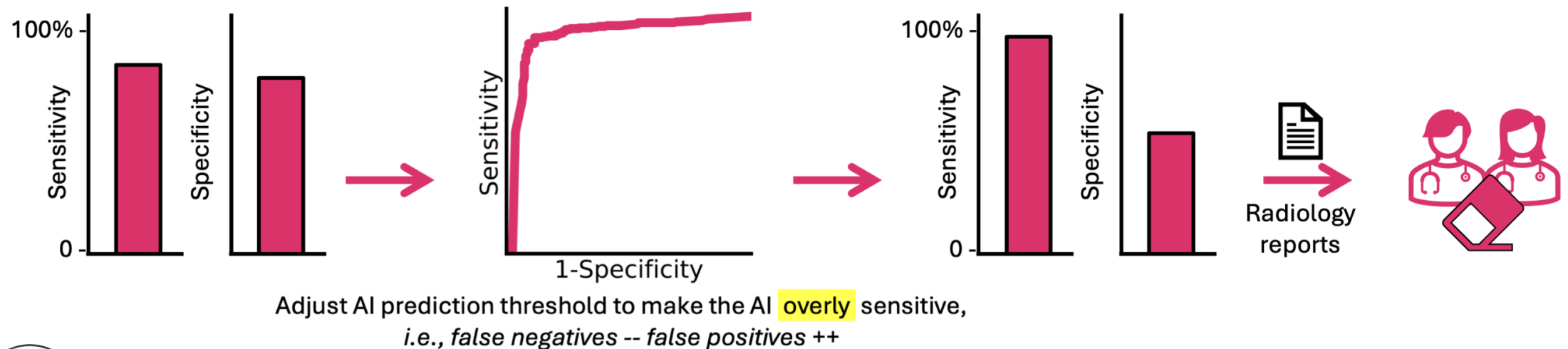
- We created the largest, annotated, **public** CT dataset.
- It provided **9,901** patients' CT scans of human subjects with and without cancer collected from **145** hospitals worldwide.
- We created voxel-wise annotations in this dataset by active learning.
- We speed up
 - organ annotations by **533x** (W. Li et al., MIA 2024)
 - tumor annotations by **80x**



<https://www.zongweiz.com/dataset>

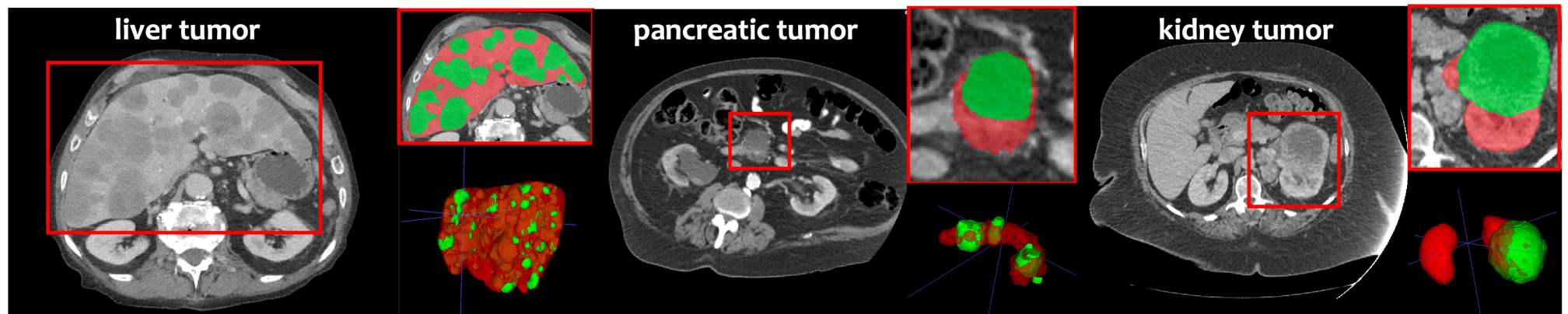
Efficient Tumor Annotations

- Make the AI highly sensitive, offering a strong starting point for radiologist review and edit at least **80x** faster (Zhou et al., ISBI 2024).



Efficient Tumor Annotations

- Make the AI highly sensitive, offering a strong starting point for radiologist review and edit at least **80×** faster (Zhou et al., ISBI 2024).
- (I) Editing an AI-generated tumor takes **~1 minute**. (rarely needed)
- (II) Removing a false positive takes **<5 seconds**.
- In contrast, manual annotation from scratch takes **4–5 minutes**.



PANTS

Pancreatic Tumor Segmentation



[GitHub.com/MrGiovanni/PanTS](https://github.com/MrGiovanni/PanTS)

```
git clone https://github.com/MrGiovanni/PanTS.git; cd PanTS  
bash download_PanTS_data.sh  
bash download_PanTS_label.sh  
http://www.cs.jhu.edu/~zongwei/dataset/PanTSMini\_Label.tar.gz
```

PanTS is a large-scale, multi-institutional dataset, containing **36,390** three-dimensional CT volumes from **145** medical centers, with expert-validated, voxel-wise annotations of over **993,000** anatomical structures, including *pancreatic tumors, pancreas head, body, and tail, and 24 surrounding anatomical structures such as vascular/skeletal structures and abdominal/thoracic organs.* (Li et al., NeurIPS 2025)



[GitHub.com/MrGiovanni/PanTS](https://github.com/MrGiovanni/PanTS)

A Huge Annotated Internal Dataset



Internal use only; open for collaboration

Funded by

NIH R01 (PI: Zongwei Zhou, Yang Yang, Kang Wang),

Lustgarten Foundation (PI: Alan Yuille), and

McGovern Foundation (PI: Alan Yuille)

81.7 million

2D CT images

241,336

3D CT volumes

377

anatomical structures

145

hospitals



A team of 23 board-certified radiologists



A Huge Annotated Internal Dataset

Voxel-wise annotated 16 tumor types: adrenal · bladder · bone · breast · colon · duodenum · esophagus · gallbladder · kidney · liver · lung · pancreas · prostate · spleen · stomach · uterus

81.7 million

2D CT images

241,336

3D CT volumes

377

anatomical structures

145

hospitals



A team of 23 board-certified radiologists



Voxel-wise annotated 377 anatomical structures: abdominal cavity · adrenal gland left · adrenal gland right · airway · anterior eyeball segment left · anterior eyeball

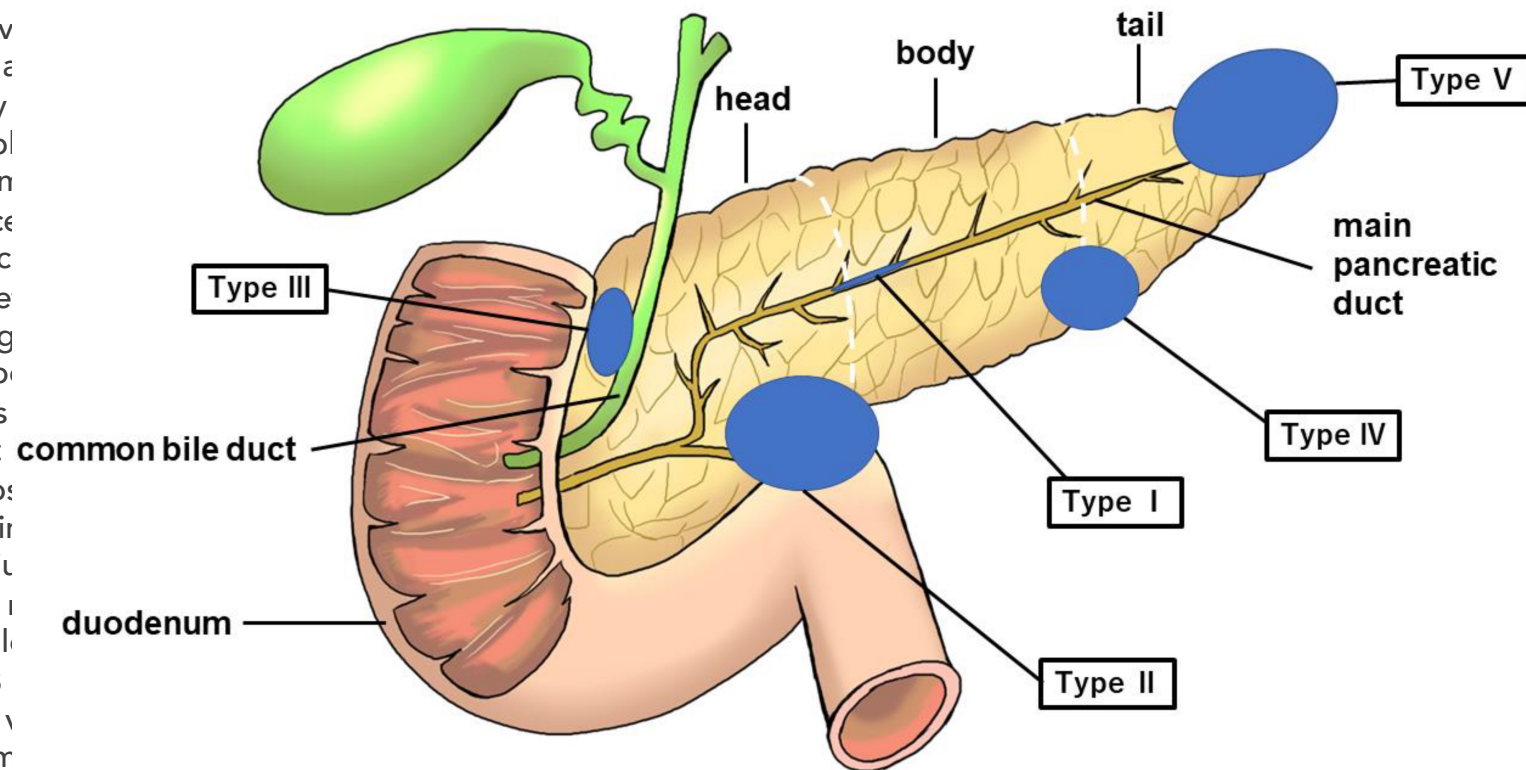
segment right · anterior scalene left · anterior scalene right · aorta · arm left · arm right · arms · artery brachiocephalic · artery common carotid left · artery common carotid right · artery internal carotid left · artery internal carotid right · artery subclavian left · artery subclavian right · atrial appendage left · arytenoid cartilage · auditory canal left · auditory canal right · autochthon left · autochthon right · bladder · blood · body · body extremities · body trunc · bones · both lips · brachiocephalic trunk · brachiocephalic vein left · brachiocephalic vein right · brain · brain ventricle · brainstem · breast left · breast right · bronchus · buccal mucosa · carotid artery left · carotid artery right · carpal · carpal left · carpal right · caudate nucleus · cbd stent · celiac artery · celiac trunk · central sulcus · cerebellum · cerebrospinal fluid · cervical esophagus · cheek left · cheek right · clavicle left · clavicle right · cochlear left · cochlear right · colon · colostomy bag · common bile duct · common carotid artery left · common carotid artery right · common iliac artery left · common iliac artery right · common iliac vein left · common iliac vein right · compact bone · coronary artery · costal cartilages · cricoid cartilage · cricopharyngeus · digastric left · digastric right · duodenum · esophagus · eye lens left · eye lens right · eyeball · eyeball left · eyeball right · face · fat · femur left · femur right · fibula · fibula left · fibula right · fingers left · fingers right · frontal lobe · gall bladder · gland structure · glottis · gluteus maximus left · gluteus maximus right · gluteus medius left · gluteus medius right · gluteus minimus left · gluteus minimus right · gonads · gray matter · hard palate · head · heart · heart atrium left · heart atrium right · heart myocardium · heart tissue · heart ventricle left · heart ventricle right · hepatic vein · hepatic vessel · hip left · hip right · humerus left · humerus right · hyoid · hypopharynx · iliac artery left · iliac artery right · iliac vena left · iliac vena right · iliopsoas left · iliopsoas right · inferior oblique muscle left · inferior oblique muscle right · inferior pharyngeal constrictor · inferior rectus muscle left · inferior rectus muscle right · inferior vena cava · insular cortex · intermuscular adipose tissue · internal capsule · internal carotid artery left · internal carotid artery right · internal jugular vein left · internal jugular vein right · intestine · kidney · kidney left · kidney right · lacrimal gland left · lacrimal gland right · larynx · lateral pterygoid left · lateral pterygoid right · lateral rectus muscle left · lateral rectus muscle right · lentiform nucleus · leg left · leg right · legs · levator palpebrae superioris left · levator palpebrae superioris right · levator scapulae left · levator scapulae right · liver · liver segment 1 · liver segment 2 · liver segment 3 · liver segment 4 · liver segment 5 · liver segment 6 · liver segment 7 · liver segment 8 · lung · lung left · lung lower left lobe · lung lower right lobe · lung middle right lobe · lung right · lung trachea bronchia · lung upper left lobe · lung upper right lobe · lung vessels · mammary gland left · mammary gland right · mandible · masseter left · masseter right · medial pterygoid left · medial pterygoid right · medial rectus muscle left · medial rectus muscle right · mediastinal tissue · mediastinum · metacarpal · metacarpal left · metacarpal right · metatarsal · metatarsal left · metatarsal right · middle pharyngeal constrictor · middle scalene left · middle scalene right · muscle · muscle fat · muscle of head · nasal cavity left · nasal cavity right · nasopharynx · occipital lobe · optic chiasm · optic nerve left · optic nerve right · oral cavity · oropharynx · pancreas · pancreas body · pancreas head · pancreas tail · pancreatic duct · parietal lobe · parotid gland left · parotid gland right · parotid glands · patella · patella left · patella right · pericardium · phalanges feet · phalanges hand · pituitary gland · platysma left · platysma right · portal vein · portal vein and splenic vein · postcava · posterior eyeball segment left · posterior eyeball segment right · posterior scalene left · posterior scalene right · prevertebral left · prevertebral right · prostate · prosthetic breast implant · psoas major muscle left · psoas major muscle right · pulmonary artery · pulmonary vein · radius · radius left · radius right · rectum · rectus abdominis muscle left · rectus abdominis muscle right · renal vein left · renal vein right · rib cartilage · rib left 1 · rib left 2 · rib left 3 · rib left 4 · rib left 5 · rib left 6 · rib left 7 · rib left 8 · rib left 9 · rib left 10 · rib left 11 · rib left 12 · rib right 1 · rib right 2 · rib right 3 · rib right 4 · rib right 5 · rib right 6 · rib right 7 · rib right 8 · rib right 9 · rib right 10 · rib right 11 · rib right 12 · sacrum · scalp · scapula left · scapula right · seminal vesicle · septum pellucidum · sigmoid colon · skeletal muscle · skin · skull · small bowel · soft palate · spinal canal · spinal cord · spleen · spongy bone · sterno thyroid left · sterno thyroid right · sternocleidomastoid left · sternocleidomastoid right · sternum · sternum corpus · sternum manubrium · stomach · styloid process left · styloid process right · subarachnoid space · subclavian artery left · subclavian artery right · subcutaneous adipose tissue · submandibular gland left · submandibular gland right · submandibular glands · superior mesenteric artery · superior oblique muscle left · superior oblique muscle right · superior rectus muscle left · superior rectus muscle right · superior vena cava · supraglottis · tarsal · tarsal left · tarsal right · temporal lobe · temporalis left · temporalis right · thalamus · thoracic cavity · thymus · thyrohyoid left · thyrohyoid right · thyroid cartilage · thyroid gland · thyroid left · thyroid right · tibia · tibia left · tibia right · toes left · toes right · tongue · trachea · trapezius left · trapezius right · ulna · ulna left · ulna right · uterocervix · uterus · veins · venous sinuses · vertebrae C1 · vertebrae C2 · vertebrae C3 · vertebrae C4 · vertebrae C5 · vertebrae C6 · vertebrae C7 · vertebrae L1 · vertebrae L2 · vertebrae L3 · vertebrae L4 · vertebrae L5 · vertebrae S1 · vertebrae T1 · vertebrae T2 · vertebrae T3 · vertebrae T4 · vertebrae T5 · vertebrae T6 · vertebrae T7 · vertebrae T8 · vertebrae T9 · vertebrae T10 · vertebrae T11 · vertebrae T12 · visceral adipose tissue · white matter · zygomatic arch left ·

Voxel-wise annotated 377 anatomical structures: abdominal cav

segment right · anterior scalene left · anterior scalene right · **aorta** · a
right · artery internal carotid left · artery internal carotid right · artery
auditory canal right · autochthon left · autochthon right · bladder · bl
vein left · brachiocephalic vein right · brain · brain ventricle · brainstem
carpal left · carpal right · caudate nucleus · **cbd stent** · **celiac artery** · ce
· clavicle left · clavicle right · cochlear left · cochlear right · colon · c
iliac artery left · common iliac artery right · common iliac vein le
cricopharyngeus · digastric left · digastric right · duodenum · esophag
· fibula · fibula left · fibula right · fingers left · fingers right · frontal lob

left · gluteus medius right · gluteus minimus left · gluteus minimus
myocardium · heart tissue · heart ventricle left · heart ventricle right
iliac artery left · iliac artery right · iliac vena left · iliac vena right · iliop
constrictor · inferior rectus muscle left · inferior rectus muscle right · in
left · internal carotid artery right · internal jugular vein left · internal ju
larynx · lateral pterygoid left · lateral pterygoid right · lateral rectus
superioris left · levator palpebrae superioris right · levator scapulae l
liver segment 5 · liver segment 6 · liver segment 7 · liver segment 8
trachea bronchia · lung upper left lobe · lung upper right lobe · lung v
pterygoid left · medial pterygoid right · medial rectus muscle left · m
right · metatarsal · metatarsal left · metatarsal right · middle pharyngeal constrictor · middle scalene left · middle scalene right · muscle · muscle fat · muscle of head · nasal
cavity left · nasal cavity right · nasopharynx · occipital lobe · optic chiasm · optic nerve left · optic nerve right · oral cavity · oropharynx · **pancreas** · **pancreas body** · **pancreas**
head · **pancreas tail** · **pancreatic duct** · parietal lobe · parotid gland left · parotid gland right · parotid glands · patella · patella left · patella right · pericardium · phalanges feet
· phalanges hand · pituitary gland · platysma left · platysma right · **portal vein** · **portal vein and splenic vein** · **postcava** · posterior eyeball segment left · posterior eyeball
segment right · posterior scalene left · posterior scalene right · prevertebral left · prevertebral right · prostate · prosthetic breast implant · psoas major muscle left · psoas
major muscle right · pulmonary artery · pulmonary vein · radius · radius left · radius right · rectum · rectus abdominis muscle left · rectus abdominis muscle right · renal vein

right · seminal vesicle · septum pericardium · sigmoid colon · skeletal muscle · skin · skull · small bowel · soft palate · spinal canal · spinal cord · spleen · spongy bone · sterno
thyroid left · sterno thyroid right · sternocleidomastoid left · sternocleidomastoid right · sternum · sternum corpus · sternum manubrium · stomach · styloid process left ·
styloid process right · subarachnoid space · subclavian artery left · subclavian artery right · subcutaneous adipose tissue · submandibular gland left · submandibular gland
right · submandibular glands · **superior mesenteric artery** · superior oblique muscle left · superior oblique muscle right · superior rectus muscle left · superior rectus muscle
right · superior vena cava · supraglottis · tarsal · tarsal left · tarsal right · temporal lobe · temporalis left · temporalis right · thalamus · thoracic cavity · thymus · thyrohyoid left
· thyrohyoid right · thyroid cartilage · thyroid gland · thyroid left · thyroid right · tibia · tibia left · tibia right · toes left · toes right · tongue · trachea · trapezius left · trapezius
right · ulna · ulna left · ulna right · uterocervix · uterus · veins · venous sinuses · vertebrae C1 · vertebrae C2 · vertebrae C3 · vertebrae C4 · vertebrae C5 · vertebrae C6 ·
vertebrae C7 · vertebrae L1 · vertebrae L2 · vertebrae L3 · vertebrae L4 · vertebrae L5 · vertebrae S1 · vertebrae T1 · vertebrae T2 · vertebrae T3 · vertebrae T4 · vertebrae
T5 · vertebrae T6 · vertebrae T7 · vertebrae T8 · vertebrae T9 · vertebrae T10 · vertebrae T11 · vertebrae T12 · visceral adipose tissue · white matter · zygomatic arch left ·



Focusing on specific type of cancer will require finer annotations.

right · seminal vesicle · septum pericardium · sigmoid colon · skeletal muscle · skin · skull · small bowel · soft palate · spinal canal · spinal cord · spleen · spongy bone · sterno
thyroid left · sterno thyroid right · sternocleidomastoid left · sternocleidomastoid right · sternum · sternum corpus · sternum manubrium · stomach · styloid process left ·
styloid process right · subarachnoid space · subclavian artery left · subclavian artery right · subcutaneous adipose tissue · submandibular gland left · submandibular gland
right · submandibular glands · **superior mesenteric artery** · superior oblique muscle left · superior oblique muscle right · superior rectus muscle left · superior rectus muscle
right · superior vena cava · supraglottis · tarsal · tarsal left · tarsal right · temporal lobe · temporalis left · temporalis right · thalamus · thoracic cavity · thymus · thyrohyoid left
· thyrohyoid right · thyroid cartilage · thyroid gland · thyroid left · thyroid right · tibia · tibia left · tibia right · toes left · toes right · tongue · trachea · trapezius left · trapezius
right · ulna · ulna left · ulna right · uterocervix · uterus · veins · venous sinuses · vertebrae C1 · vertebrae C2 · vertebrae C3 · vertebrae C4 · vertebrae C5 · vertebrae C6 ·
vertebrae C7 · vertebrae L1 · vertebrae L2 · vertebrae L3 · vertebrae L4 · vertebrae L5 · vertebrae S1 · vertebrae T1 · vertebrae T2 · vertebrae T3 · vertebrae T4 · vertebrae
T5 · vertebrae T6 · vertebrae T7 · vertebrae T8 · vertebrae T9 · vertebrae T10 · vertebrae T11 · vertebrae T12 · visceral adipose tissue · white matter · zygomatic arch left ·

A Series of AI-Ready Datasets

"Annotating **240,000 CT scans** with **72 million anatomical shapes** would require an expert radiologist to have started working around **420 BCE**—the era of Hippocrates—to complete the task by 2025.
*We did it in **two years**.*" says lead author Zongwei Zhou



Chapter **II.** Strategies to Further Reduce Need of Voxel-Wise Annotations

- A. **Radiology reports** as weak supervision for multi-cancer detection
- B. **Synthetic tumors** as additional training data for small tumors

Chapter **II.A.** Reports as Weak Supervision

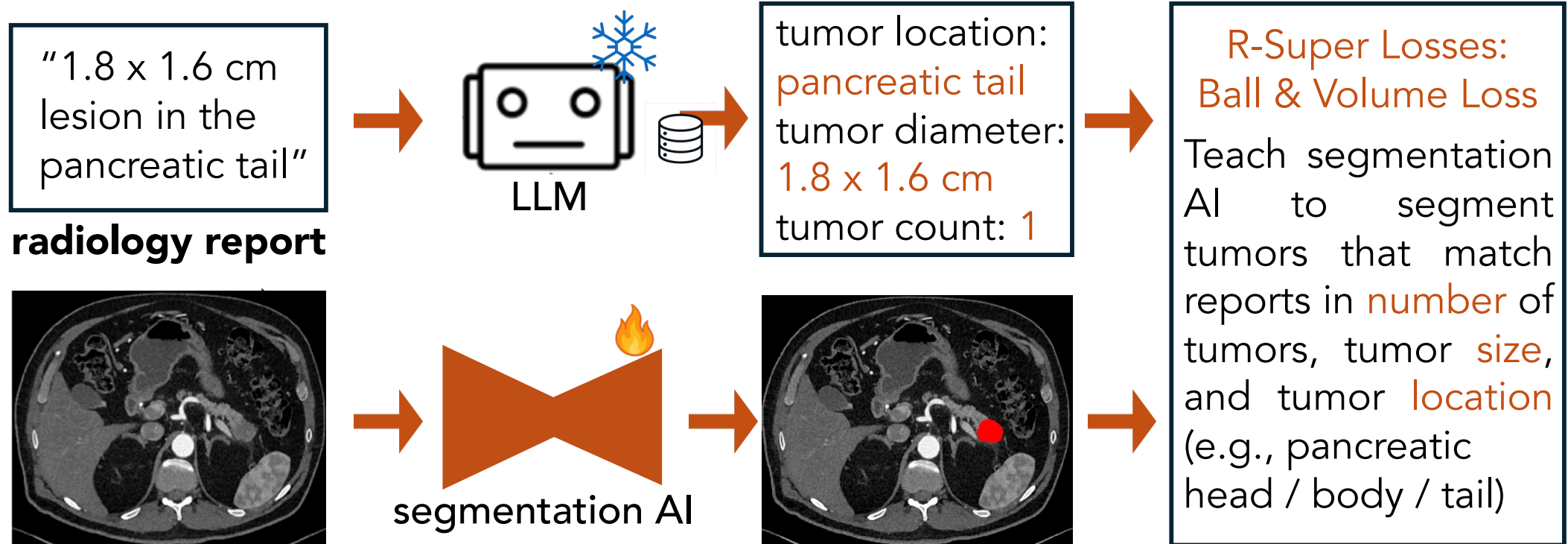
- Public datasets have few tumor Image-Mask pairs, only **10s to 100s**.
- By contrast, reports are written every day by radiologists—Public datasets already provide around **25,000** CT-Report pairs, and a single hospital can easily accumulate over **500,000** CT-Report pairs.
- We enable AI to learn tumor segmentation directly from these reports (P. Bassi et al., [MICCAI 2025 Best Paper Award, Runner-up; RSNA 2025 Science Poster Award](#)).



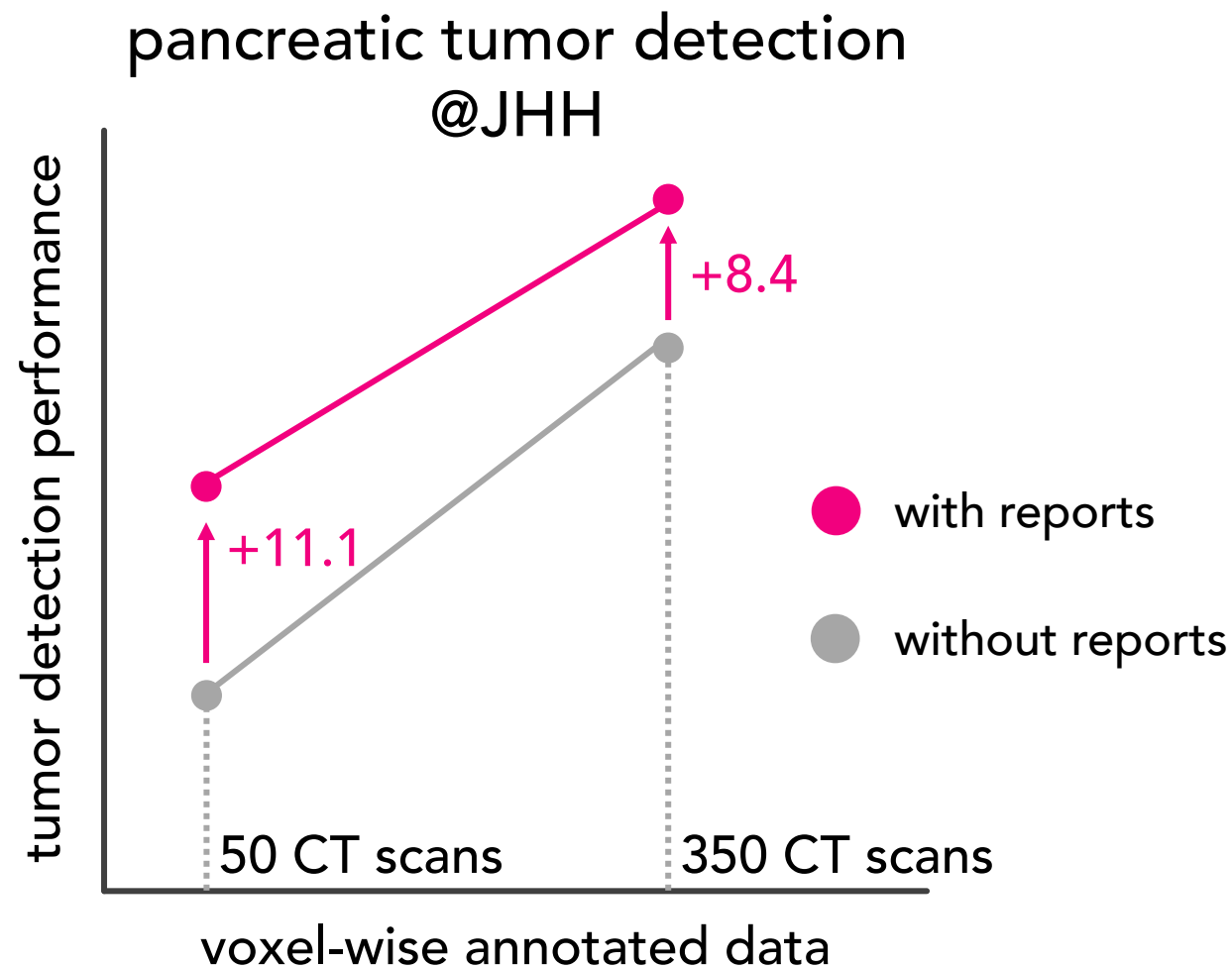
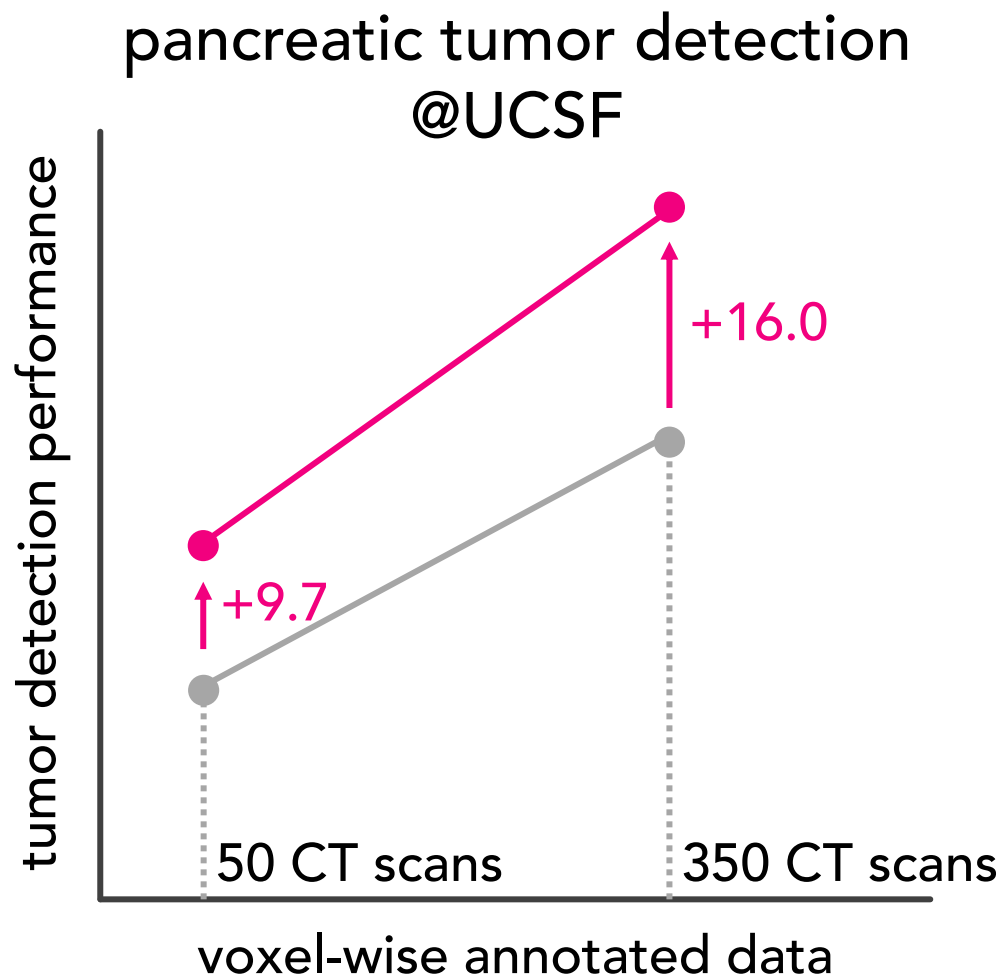
[GitHub.com/MrGiovanni/R-Super](https://github.com/MrGiovanni/R-Super)

Chapter II.A. Reports as Weak Supervision

- R-Super, a novel AI training method that enforces the consistency between AI segmented tumors and report descriptions such as tumor **number, size, and location**.



Scaling Laws in Reports Supervision



Reports Supervision for Multi-Cancer

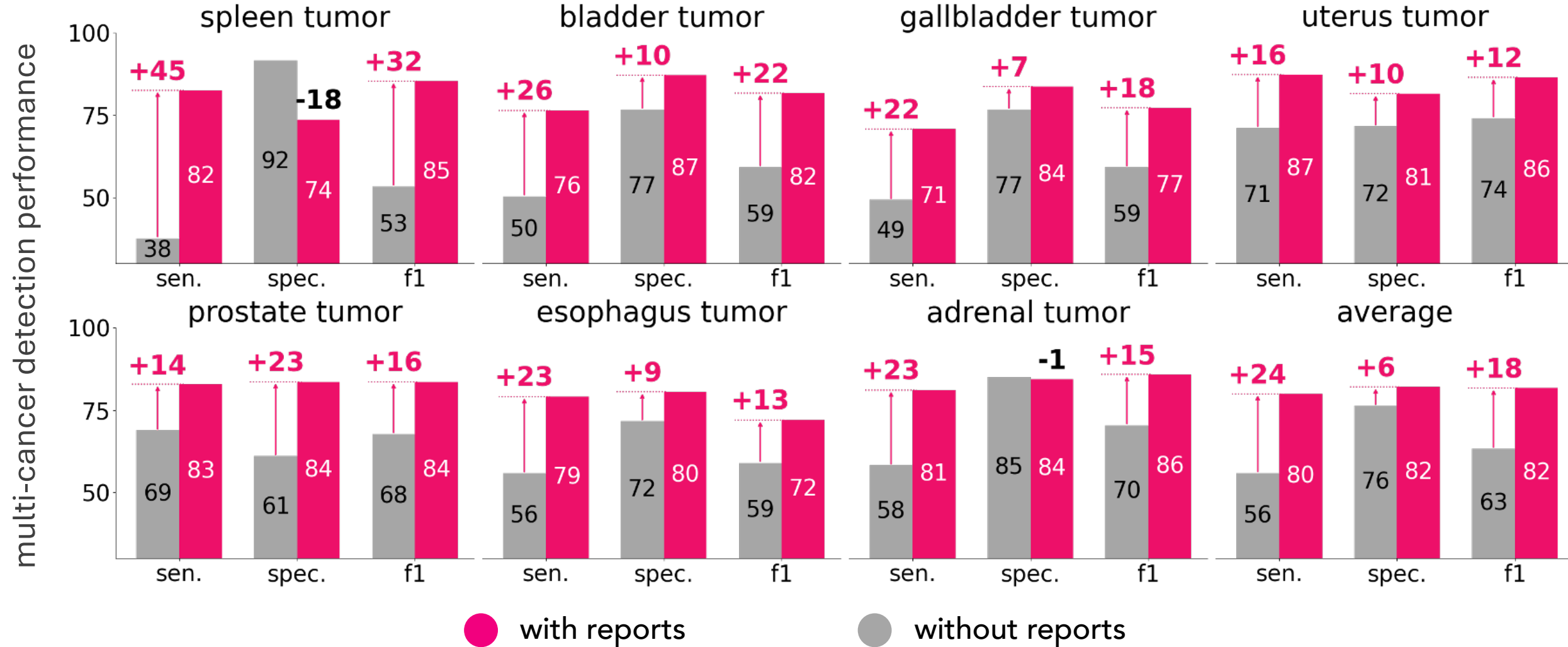
- We have curated a dataset of **117,000** Image–Report and **270** CT–Mask pairs for tumors in the adrenal, bladder, esophagus, gallbladder, prostate, spleen, and uterus.
- No publicly available Image–Mask pairs exist for these tumor types.
- We will release the **first** AI model that can segment these tumor types.
- *Many thanks to the Image & Image-Report data providers!*



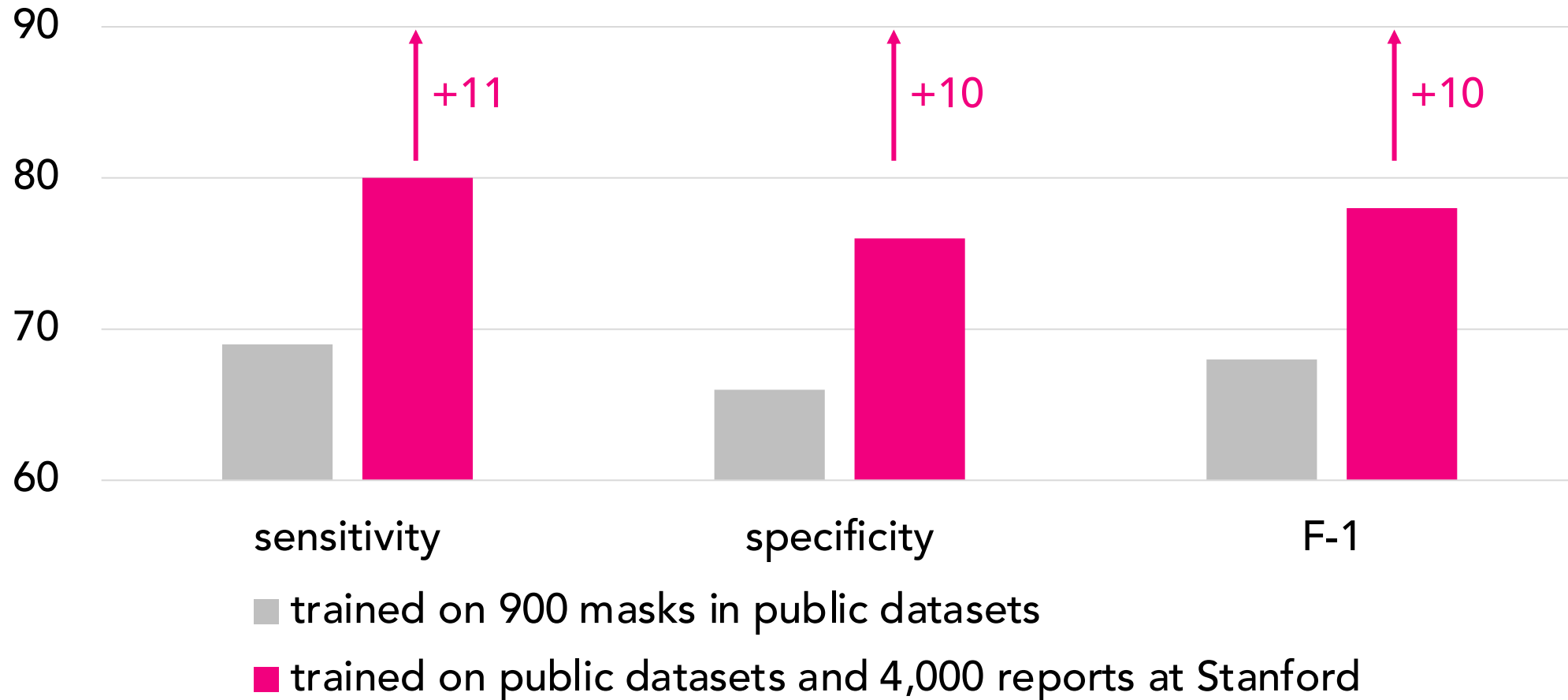
[GitHub.com/MrGiovanni/R-Super](https://github.com/MrGiovanni/R-Super)



Reports Supervision for Multi-Cancer



Reports for Different Hospitals



Chapter II.C. Synthetic Data

- There's a huge data gap in medical AI right now, particularly when you have rare diseases, uncommon conditions (e.g., cancer).
- Early-stage tumor scans are 10–20 times less common than late-stage scans in clinical datasets.
- We don't have enough early-stage tumor scans to train these models; unfortunate these are the tumors we must detect to improve survival.
- Synthetic data can be a big piece of that puzzle (Lai et al., MICCA 2024).



[GitHub.com/MrGiovanni/Pixel2Cancer](https://github.com/MrGiovanni/Pixel2Cancer)

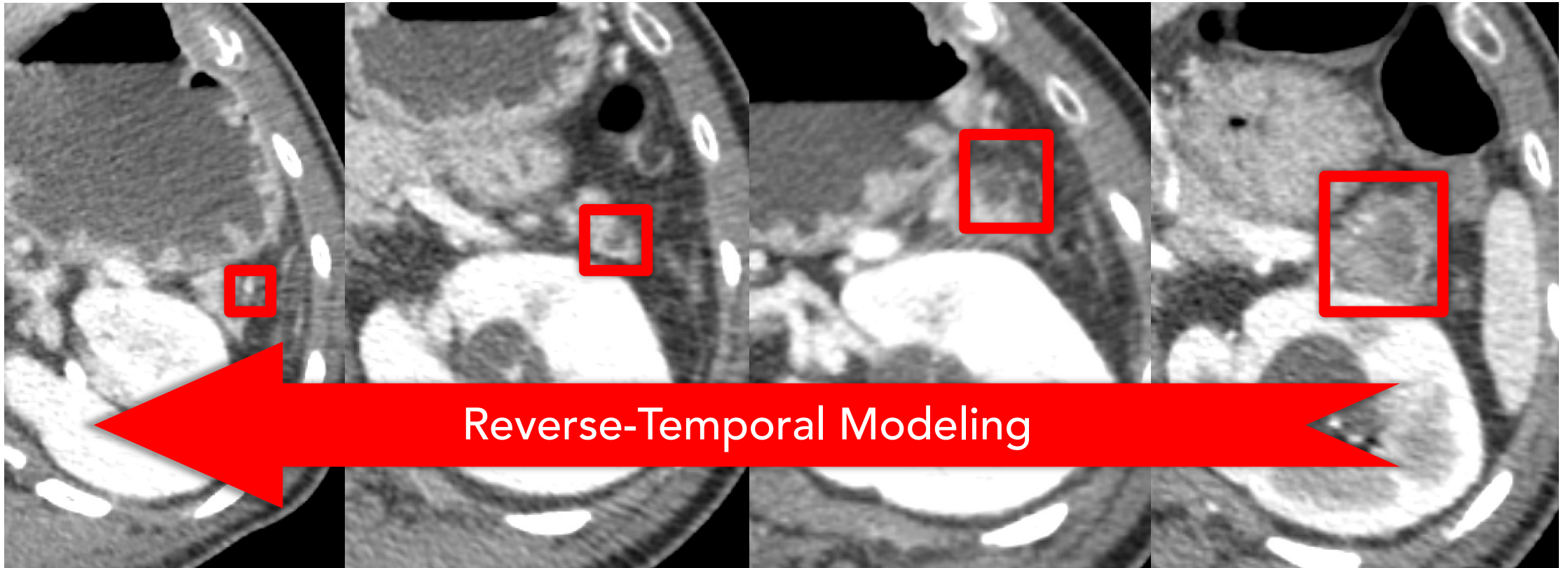
Synthetic Tumors as Time Machine

12/3/2004

9/31/2005

3/23/2006

6/4/2007



Reverse-Temporal Modeling

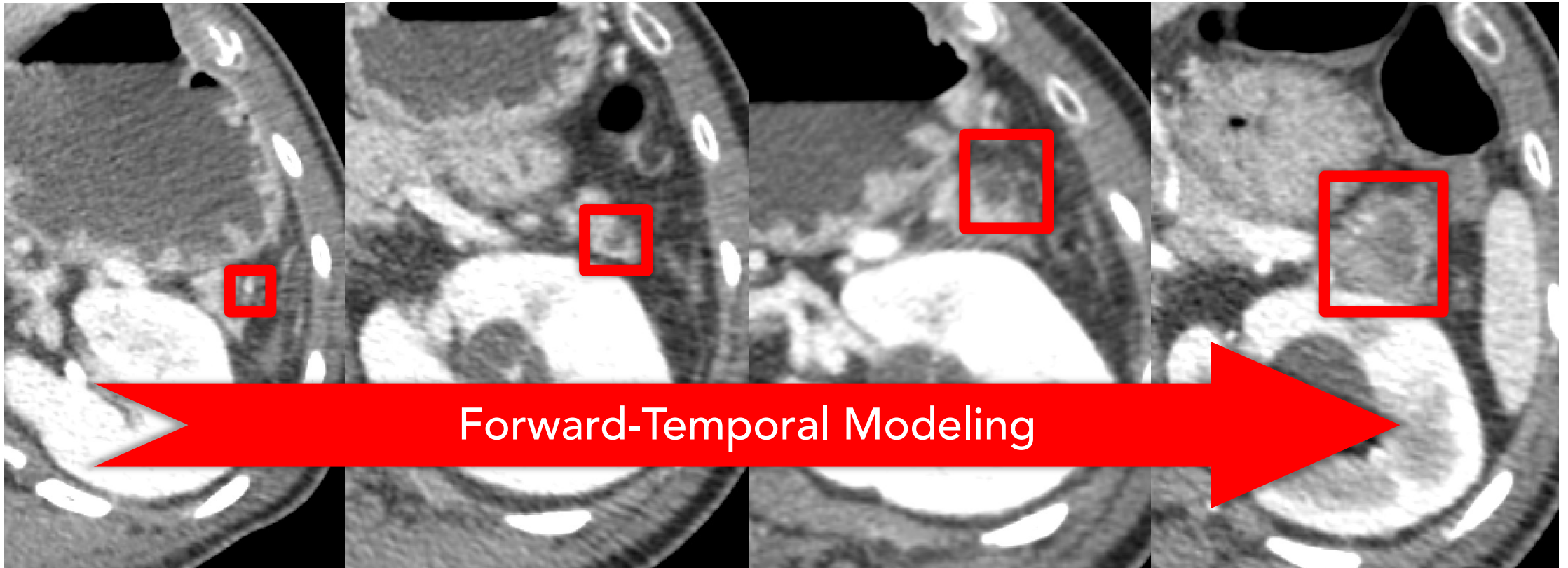
Synthetic Tumors as Time Machine

12/3/2004

9/31/2005

3/23/2006

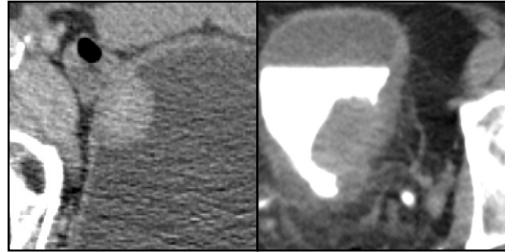
6/4/2007



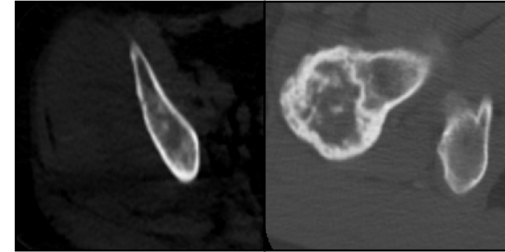
Visual Turing Test for Radiologists



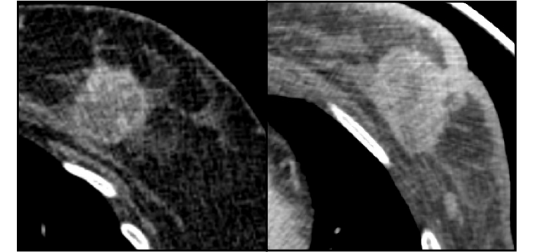
(a) real or fake test



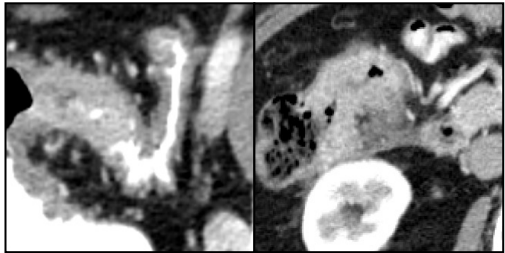
(b) bladder tumor



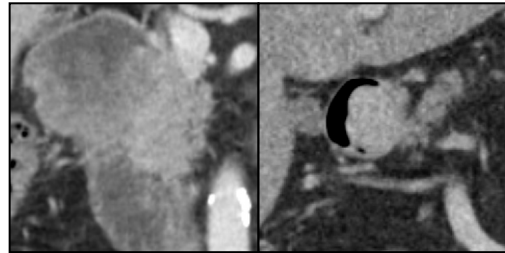
(c) bone tumor



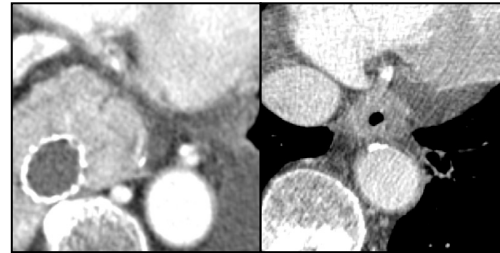
(d) breast tumor



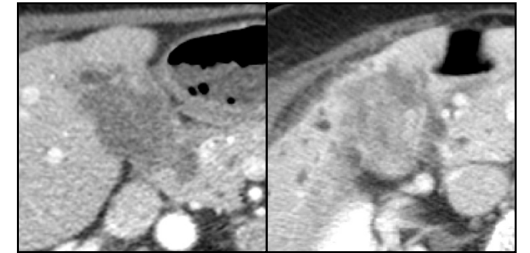
(e) colon tumor



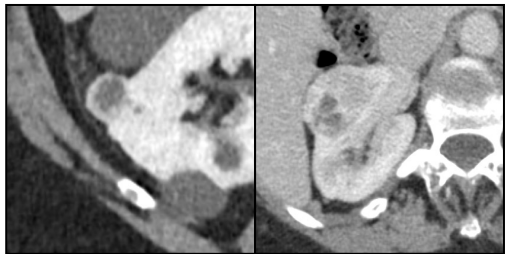
(f) duodenum tumor



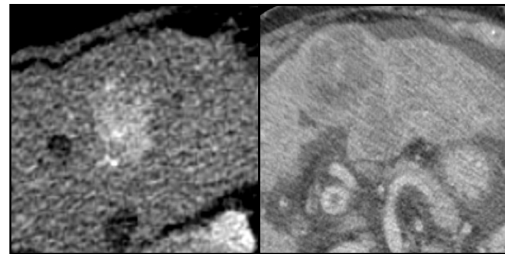
(g) esophagus tumor



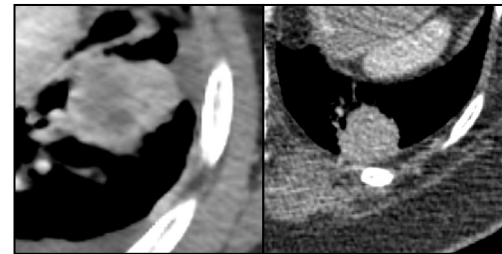
(h) gallbladder tumor



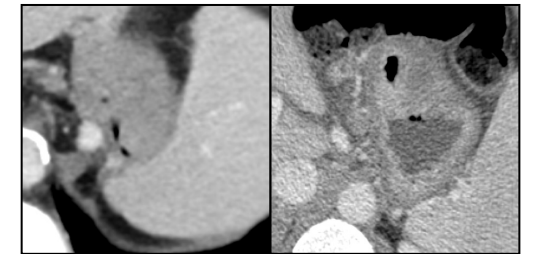
(i) kidney tumor



(j) liver tumor



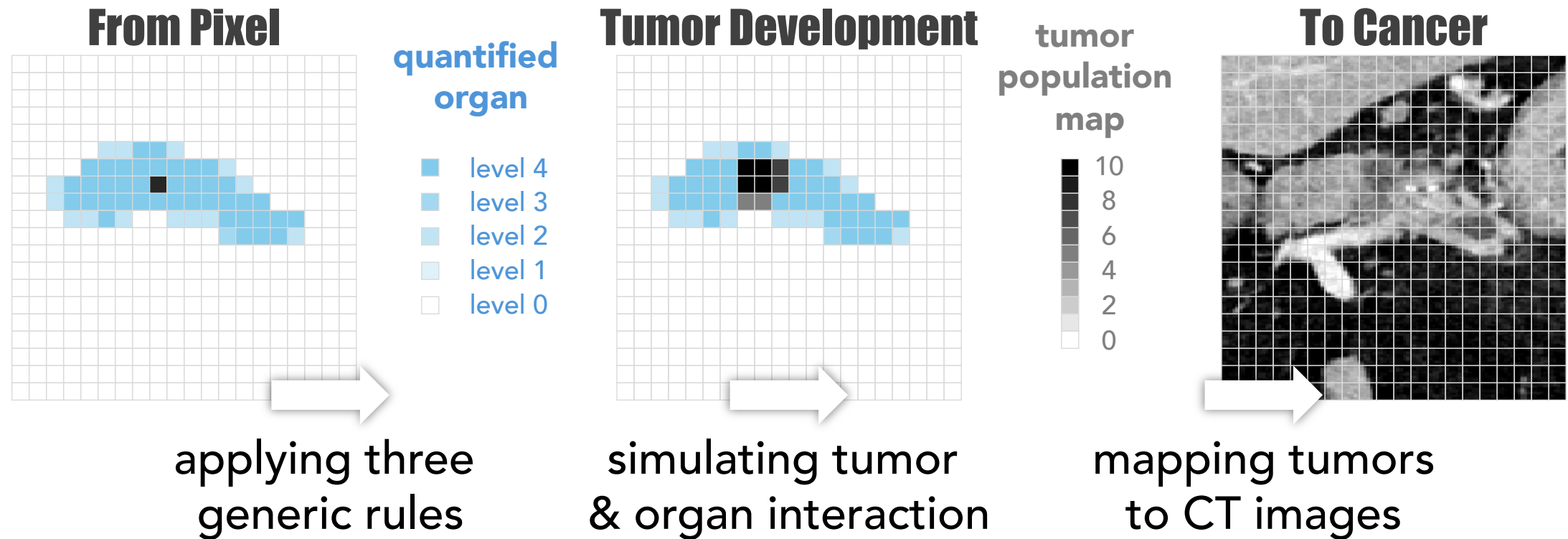
(k) lung tumor



(l) stomach tumor

Tumor/Vessel/Duct/Organ Synthesis

- We developed “game of life” to simulate tumor development (Lai et al., MICCAI 2024) and applied diffusion models to create synthetic tumors.

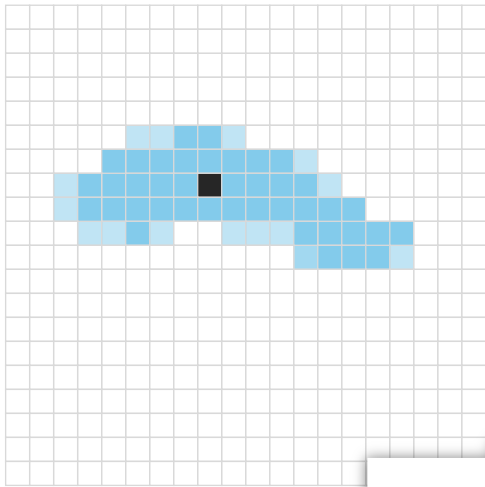


Tumor/Vessel/Duct/Organ Synthesis

Cellular Automata

a mathematical model that uses simple rules to simulate complex systems

From Pixel

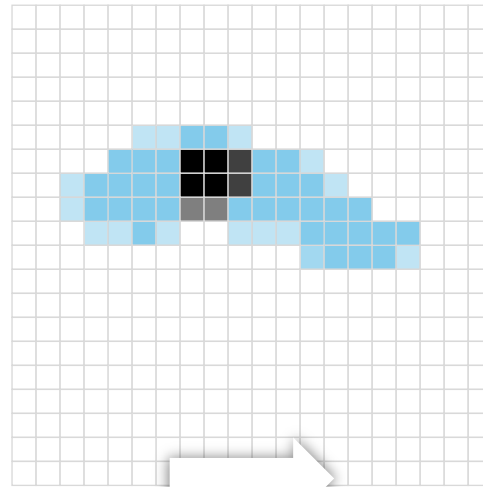


quantified
organ

- level 4
- level 3
- level 2
- level 1
- level 0

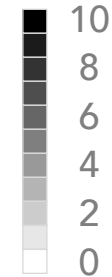
applying three
generic rules

Tumor Development

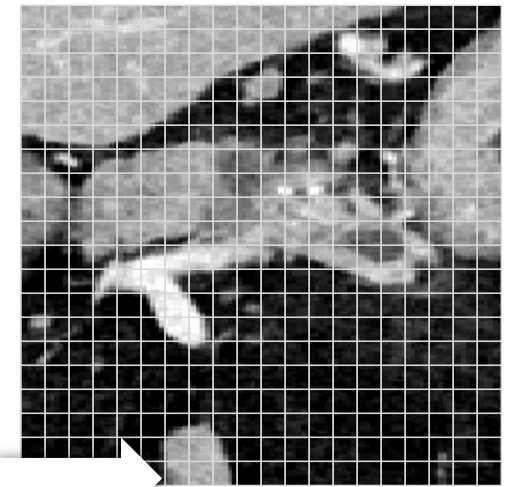


simulating tumor
& organ interaction

tumor
population
map

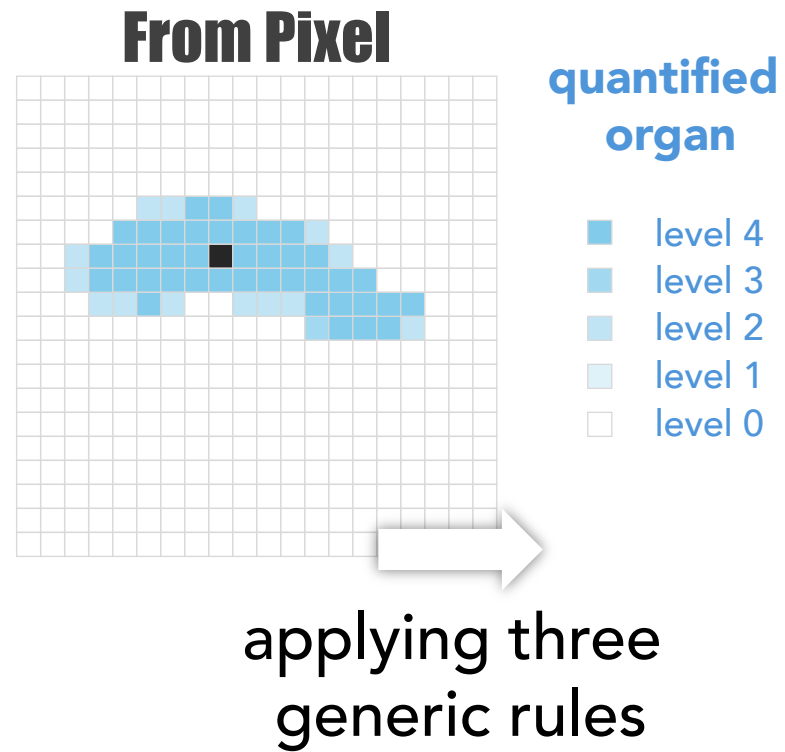


To Cancer

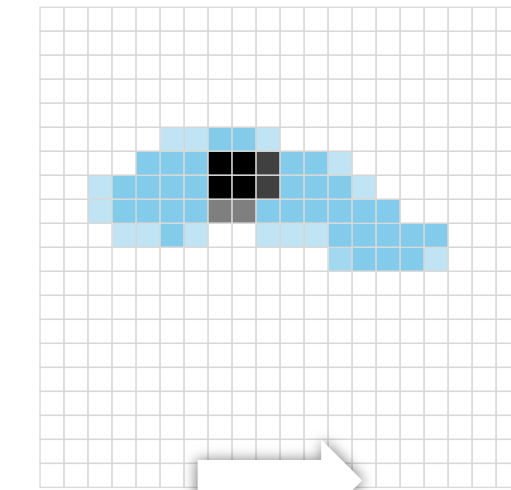


mapping tumors
to CT images

Tumor/Vessel/Duct/Organ Synthesis



Tumor Development

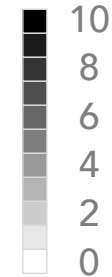


simulating tumor
& organ interaction

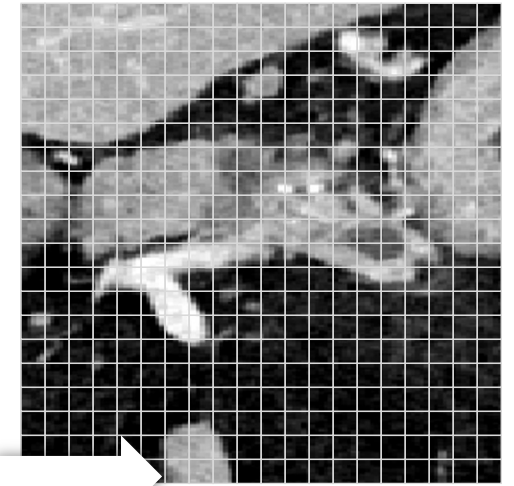
Diffusion Models

*conditioned on tumor/vessel/duct/organ
shapes simulated by cellular automata*

tumor
population
map



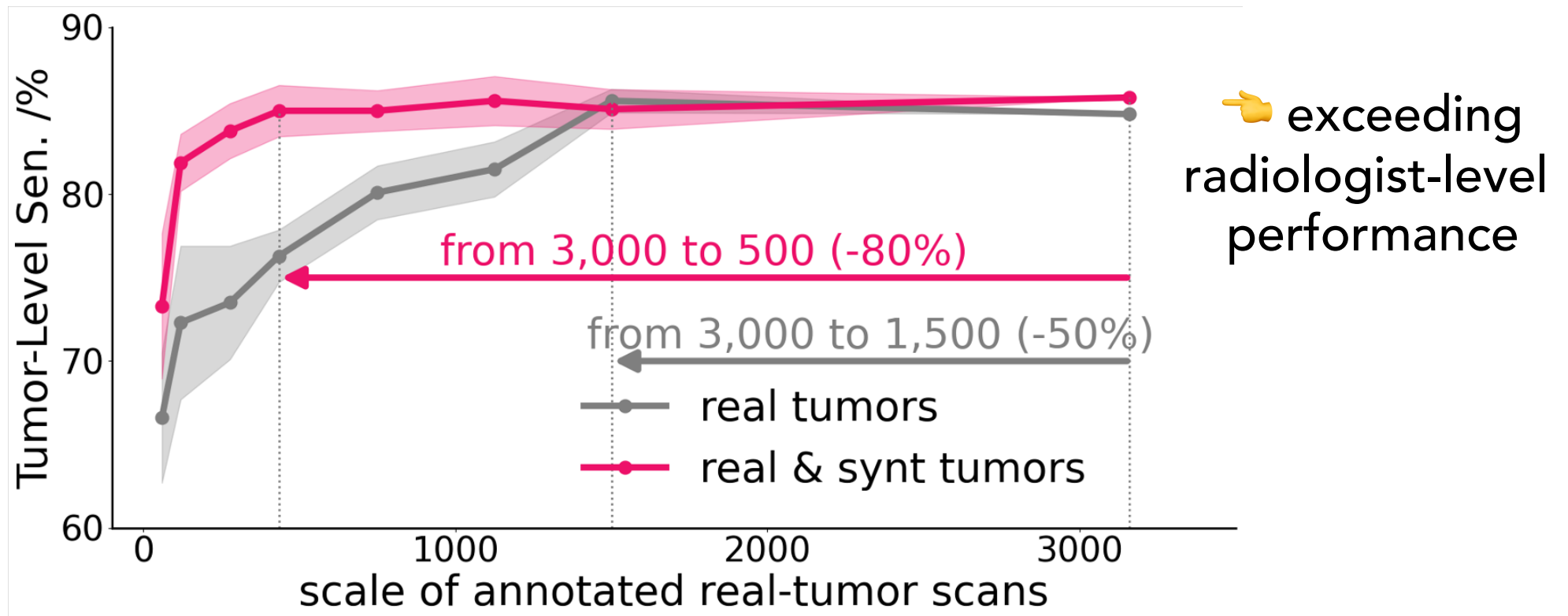
To Cancer



mapping tumors
to CT images

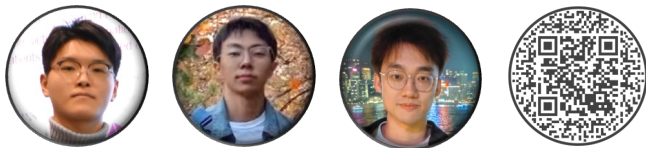
Scaling Laws in Synthetic Tumors

- Synthetic data reduces the need for voxel-wise annotated real data from 1,500 down to 500. (Q. Chen et al., ICCV 2025).



Synthetic Data for Small/Tiny Tumors

- Synthetic data improves sensitivity of detecting small tumors (≤ 2 cm) by **5% (89% $\rightarrow$ 94%)** (Q. Chen et al., CVPR 2024; Q. Hu et al., CVPR 2023)
- The smallest lesion we detected was 2 mm.



[GitHub.com/MrGiovanni/SyntheticTumors](https://github.com/MrGiovanni/SyntheticTumors)

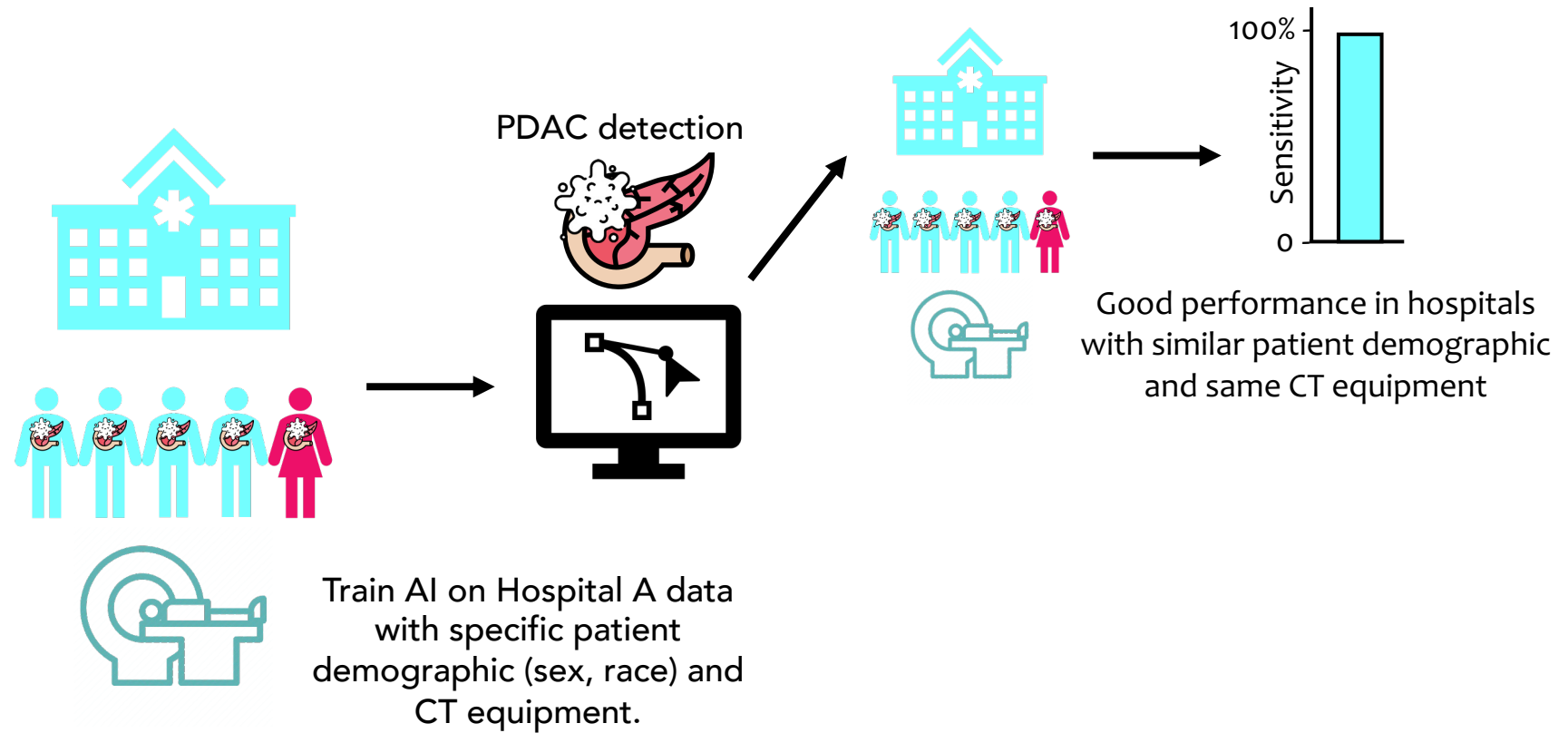
Synthetic Data for Small/Tiny Tumors

- Real-world tumor datasets are often biased.
 - E.g., Tumor location: about 65% of pancreatic tumors arise in the head of the pancreas with the remaining roughly one-third in the body or tail.
- Targeted data augmentation enabled by error analysis and synthetic data (X. Li et al., TMI 2025)
 - The AI often misses small tumors in the body or tail of the pancreas.
 - We can add more synthetic small tumors in these regions during training.



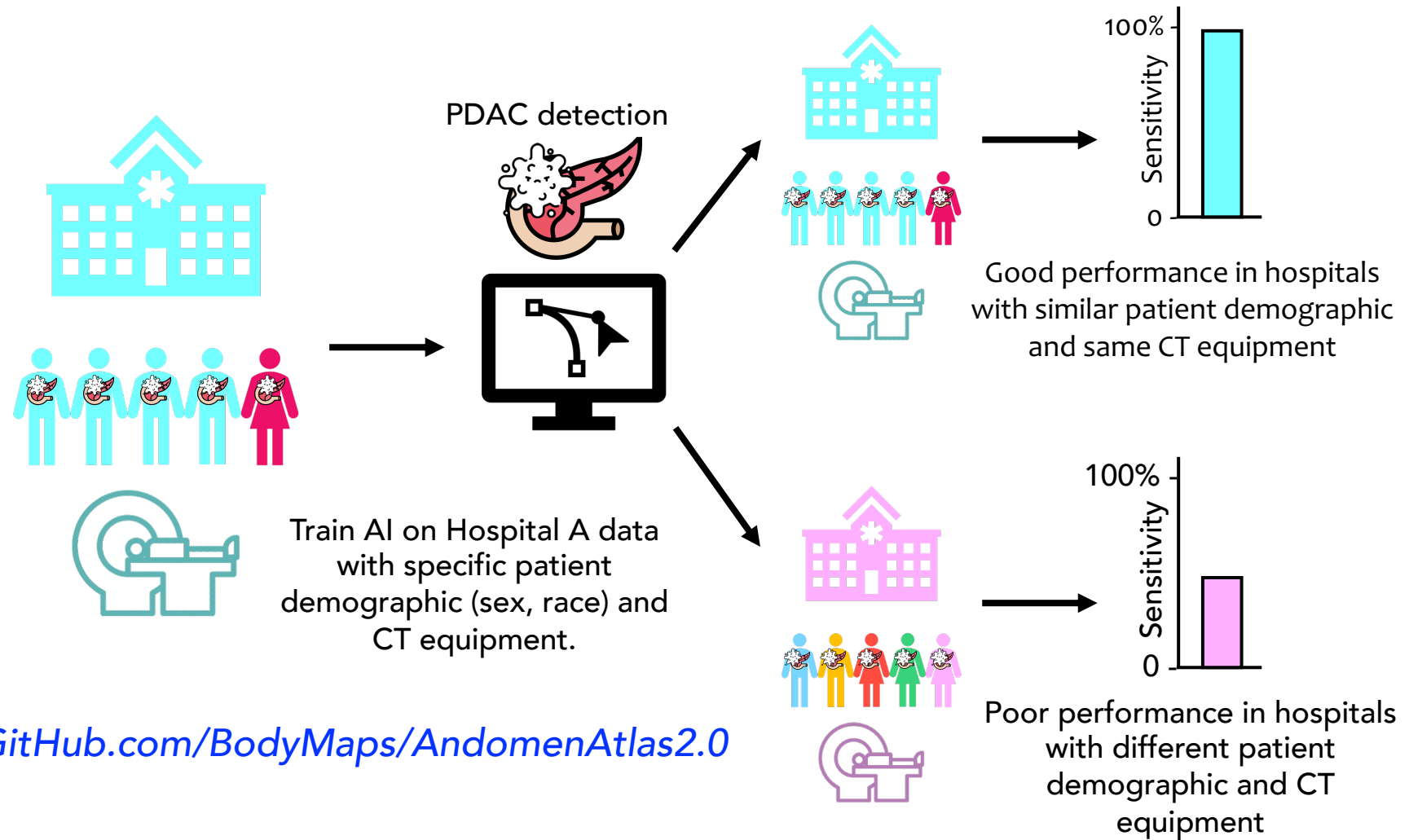
[GitHub.com/MrGiovanni/TextoMorph](https://github.com/MrGiovanni/TextoMorph)

Synthetic Data for Different Hospitals



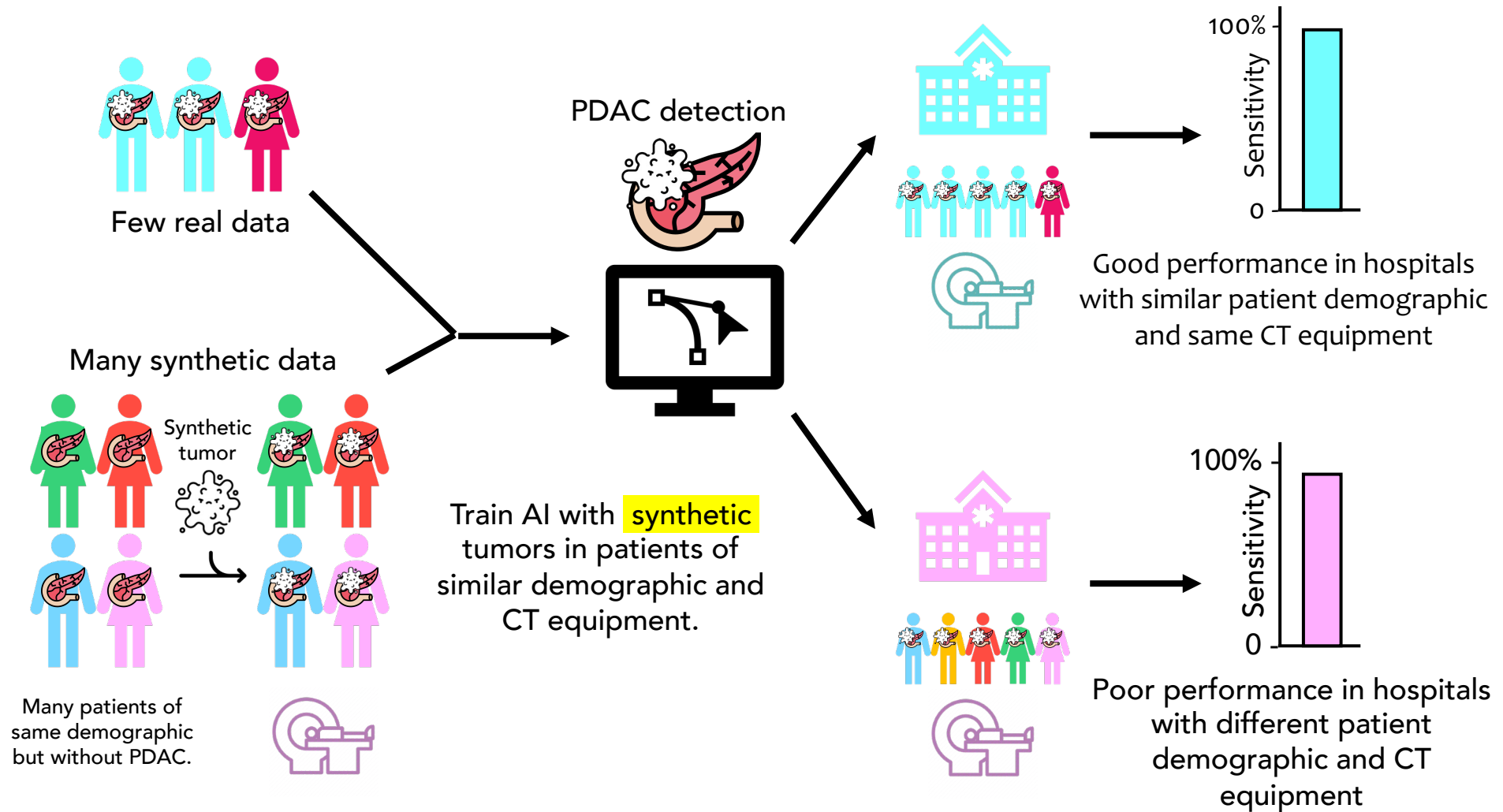
[GitHub.com/BodyMaps/AndomenAtlas2.0](https://github.com/BodyMaps/AndomenAtlas2.0)

Synthetic Data for Different Hospitals



[GitHub.com/BodyMaps/AndomenAtlas2.0](https://github.com/BodyMaps/AndomenAtlas2.0)

Synthetic Data for Different Hospitals



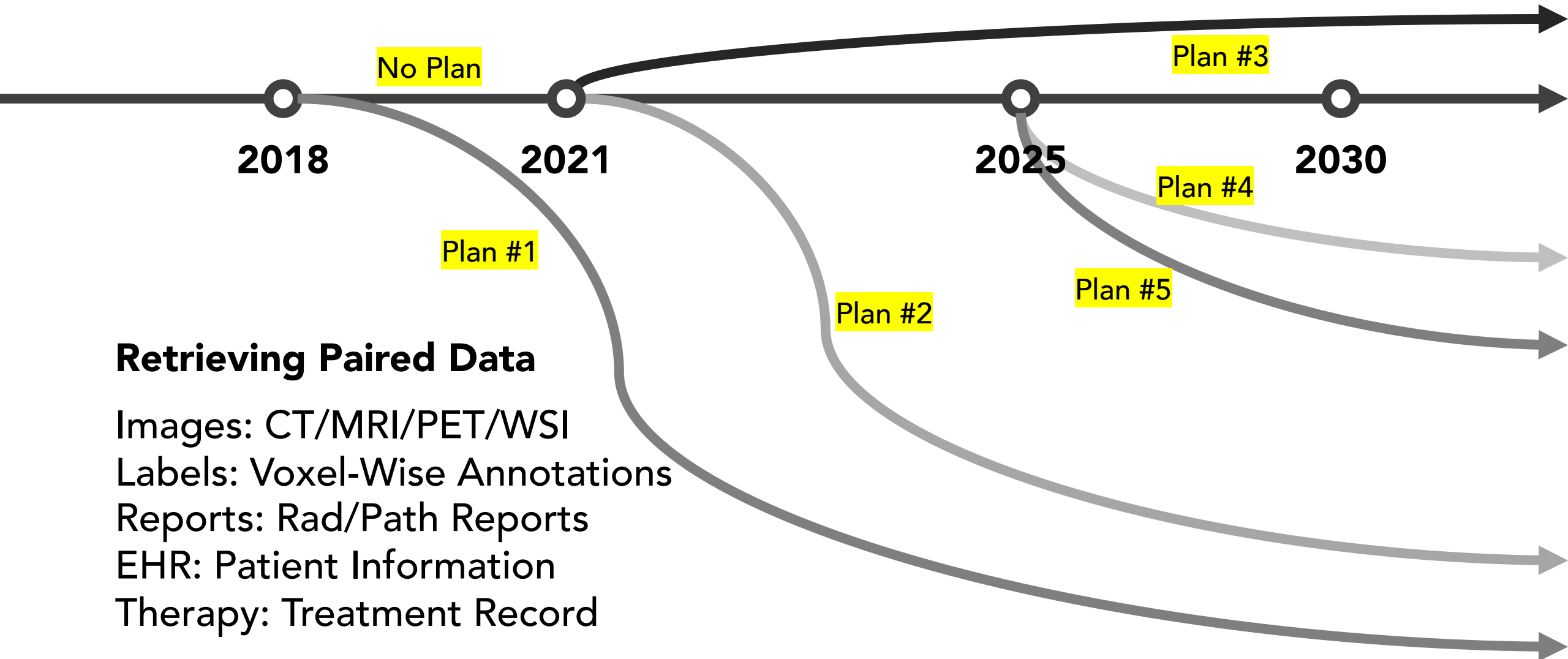
Other Projects & Future Work

- Even bigger datasets to ensure algorithms perform well at most institutions (1-10 Million).
- Pre-diagnostic detection – years before conventional detection in all abdominal organs. (NIH R01 Under Review)
- Understanding cancer development prior to diagnosis through causal models that incorporate causality and treatment. (Yang et al., ICCV 2025)
- Increasing resolution of CT scans using AI techniques. 2MM is almost of the limit of what can be detected. (Lin et al., NeurIPS 2025)

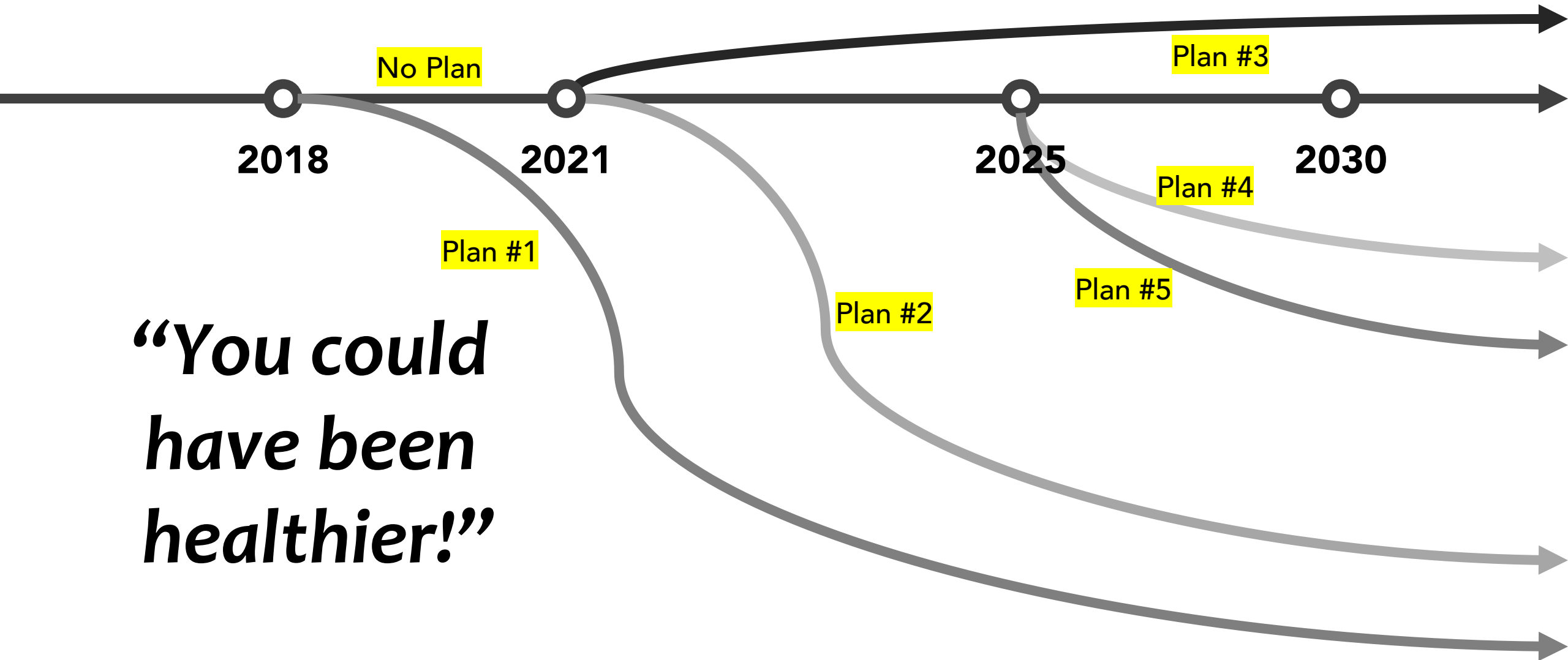
If you had unlimited resources to build a “dream” dataset for AI in cancer research, especially cancer prevention, detection, and treatment, what would it look like?

What modalities, metadata, and labels would you prioritize?

NIH **R01**: Multimodal+Longitudinal Analysis



NIH **R01**: Multimodal+Longitudinal Analysis



A still from the movie Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness. Doctor Strange, played by Benedict Cumberbatch, is shown from the waist up, wearing his red and blue robe. He has a red mark on his forehead and is holding his hands out, palms facing each other, with green magical energy swirling between them. The background is a dark, industrial-looking environment with some glowing orange light sources.

The One Possibility

Over 14 Million Futures

Report Generation

Early Cancer Detection

Organ Segmentation

Patient Retrieval

Applications

Algorithms

Research Topics	Featured Achievements	Peer-Reviewed Publications
I. Segmentation Architectures	UNet++, 15,000 Citations	TMI, MIA, ICCV, NeurIPS, RSNA
II. Annotations with Active Learning	AbdomenAtlas, $N = 240,000$	MIAx2, CVPRx2, MICCAI, NeurIPS, RSNAx12
III.A. Medical Foundation Models	Models Genesis, MICCAI Best Paper Award & MIA Best Paper Award	TPAMI, TMI, MIA, CVPRx2, ICLRx2, ICCV, MICCAIx4, RSNAx12
III.B. Vision & Language	Finalist, MICCAI Best Paper Award	ICCV, MICCAI, ISBI, RSNAx2
III.C. Tumor Synthesis & Generation	Segmentation of 16 Cancer Types	CVPRx2, ICCVx3, MICCAI, RSNAx10

Wishlist for my “dream” dataset

1. Multi-modal data of tumors in multiple organs, including CT of different contrast phases, MRI of different sequences, PET, and their reports
2. Long-term follow-up with clear timelines
3. Large screening + non-cancer cohorts (including healthy and high-risk people)
4. Imaging + pathology linked for the same lesions
5. High-quality outcome labels (recurrence, survival, toxicity)
6. Standardized imaging protocols + scanner metadata
7. Treatment details (drug/radiation/surgery with dates and doses)
8. Multi-omics where feasible, plus repeat blood or DNA samples over time
9. Diverse populations and many hospitals (to reduce bias)
10. Multi-expert annotations with disagreement recorded

Thank you!

