Journal of Pharmaceutical and Medical Research
Print ISSN: 2663-1954
Online ISSN: 2663-1962
DOI: https://doi.org/10.61784/jpmr3080

MULTIMODAL STATISTICAL MODELING AND APPLICATION OF ROBOT-ASSISTED SURGERY PERFORMANCE EVALUATION BASED ON STACKED REGRESSION

HaoYu Tian
School of Science, Shandong Jianzhu University, Jinan 250101, Shandong, China.

Abstract: With the wide application of Robot-Assisted Surgery (RAS) technology, accurate and objective surgical performance evaluation has become the key to optimizing surgical effects and reducing medical risks. Aiming at the problems of strong subjectivity and insufficient accuracy of existing evaluation methods, this paper integrates electroencephalography (EEG) and eye-tracking multimodal data to construct a set of robot-assisted surgery performance evaluation models. First, the original data are normalized, feature extracted and dimensionality reduced to eliminate data heterogeneity and redundancy; then, Support Vector Regression (SVR) and Multilayer Perceptron (MLP) are used as base learners, combined with Newton's iteration method to optimize parameters, to construct a stacked regression model, and linear regression and LSTM models are introduced as controls to carry out comparative experiments; finally, the model performance is quantitatively evaluated by indicators such as Root Mean Square Error (RMSE), Mean Absolute Error (MAE) and F1-Score. The experimental results show that the proposed stacked regression model is significantly superior to the control models in evaluation accuracy, with RMSE 0.23 lower than that of traditional linear regression and MAE 0.11 lower, which can accurately describe the cognitive and behavioral states of doctors during surgical operations. This study provides a reliable technical method and data support for robot-assisted surgery performance evaluation, and has important theoretical value and practical significance for promoting the optimization of surgical technology and improving medical quality.
Keywords: Robot-assisted surgery; Stacked regression; Multimodal data; Performance evaluation; Support vector regression

1 INTRODUCTION

With the rapid advancement of medical robotics and artificial intelligence, Robot-Assisted Surgery (RAS) has been widely applied in various surgical fields, offering advantages of high precision, minimal invasiveness, and reduced surgical trauma. Accurate and objective evaluation of surgical performance is crucial for optimizing surgical training, reducing medical risks, and improving patient outcomes, which has become a research focus in medical engineering and clinical medicine. However, existing evaluation methods are mostly subjective, relying on surgeons' experience, and lack quantitative indicators, leading to inconsistent evaluation results and difficulty in meeting clinical application needs. Multimodal sensor fusion technology has gradually become a key approach to solve this problem by integrating multi-source data to improve the comprehensiveness and accuracy of evaluation, among which electroencephalography (EEG) and eye-tracking data can effectively reflect surgeons' cognitive load and attention distribution during operations [1-3].

In recent years, scholars at home and abroad have conducted extensive research on RAS performance evaluation. Some studies used surgical video analysis to evaluate technical proficiency, but ignored the correlation between surgeons' cognitive states and surgical performance [4]. Others adopted single-modal physiological data, such as EEG or eye-tracking, to construct evaluation models, but failed to realize the complementary advantages of multi-modal data due to data heterogeneity issues [5,6]. Relevant studies have confirmed that physiological signals can provide early warning of technical errors in surgery, laying a foundation for physiological signal-based evaluation [7]. Systematic reviews have identified a variety of performance metrics, but most of them lack standardization and quantitative support [8]. Some studies have pointed out that data quality and standardization issues hinder the generalization of AI-assisted surgical evaluation models, while others have compared different regression models in performance prediction but did not explore their fusion strategies [9,10].

To address the aforementioned gaps, this study makes three marginal contributions. First, it integrates EEG and eye-tracking multimodal data to construct a RAS performance evaluation dataset, eliminating data heterogeneity through standardized processing and making up for the deficiency of single-modal data evaluation. Second, it proposes a stacked regression model with SVR and MLP as base learners, optimized by Newton's iteration method, which combines the advantages of SVR in high-dimensional data processing and MLP in feature learning. Third, it verifies the model's superiority through comparative experiments with traditional models, providing a standardized and quantitative technical method for RAS performance evaluation, which has important theoretical and practical significance for promoting the standardized development of RAS training and clinical applications.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Support Vector Regression Model

The Support Vector Machine (SVM) is a widely used machine learning algorithm. In this study, it was employed to construct a Support Vector Regression (SVR) model for evaluating surgical performance. The core principle of SVM involves identifying the optimal hyperplane in the feature space that maximizes the distance between samples belonging to different classes. For linearly separable data, the hyperplane is determined by solving a specific optimization problem.The formula is as follows:

$$\min_{\omega,b,\xi} \frac{1}{2} // \omega //^2 + C \sum_{i=1}^{n} \xi_i \tag{1}$$

$$\text{s.t.} y_i(\omega^T x_i + b) \geq 1 - \xi_i, i = 1,2,\ldots,n \tag{2}$$

$$\xi_i \geq 0, i = 1,2,\ldots,n \tag{3}$$

The parameters ω (normal vector) and b (bias term), along with the relaxation variable ξ and penalty parameter λ, are introduced to handle linearly inseparable cases. In practice, data are often nonlinearly inseparable; therefore, a kernel function K(xi, xj)—such as a linear kernel, polynomial kernel, or radial basis function (RBF)—is employed to map the data into a high-dimensional space, enabling linear separability. In SVR, the objective function incorporates the insensitive loss function parameter ϵ, ignoring errors within the ϵ range, and constructs a regression model to predict surgical performance by solving an optimization problem.

Support Vector Regression (SVR), as an application of Support Vector Machines (SVM) in regression tasks, is employed in this study for precise evaluation of robotic-assisted surgical performance. Its fundamental principle is based on the structural risk minimization approach, aiming to identify an optimal regression function that minimizes prediction errors on training data while ensuring the model's strong generalization capability.

Unlike support vector machine classification, SVR does not aim to find a hyperplane that perfectly classifies all samples, but rather seeks an optimal regression plane. This plane ensures that most sample points fall within a "insensitive band" centered on the regression plane with width 2ϵ, where ϵ is a user-defined parameter of the insensitive loss function. For samples outside this band, their distance to the regression plane is calculated as the loss function. To solve the support vector regression model, the original optimization problem is transformed into a convex quadratic programming problem by introducing slack variables ξ and ξ^* . As previously described in the support vector machine algorithm section, the objective function is:

$$\min_{\omega,b,\xi,\xi^*} \frac{1}{2} // \omega //^2 + C \sum_{i=1}^{n} (\xi_i + \xi_i^*) \tag{4}$$

$$\text{s.t.} y_i - \omega^T x_i - b \leq \epsilon + \xi_i \tag{5}$$

$$\omega^T x_i + b - y_i \leq \epsilon + \xi_i^* \tag{6}$$

$$\xi_i \geq 0, \xi_i^* \geq 0, i = 1,2,\ldots,n \tag{7}$$

Here, w is the normal vector of the regression hyperplane, determining the direction of the regression function; b is the bias term, controlling the position of the regression hyperplane; C is the penalty parameter, balancing model complexity and training error. When C is large, the model tends to minimize training error and imposes heavier penalties on sample points outside the insensitivity region; when C is small, the model prioritizes generalization ability, allowing more sample points to fall outside the insensitivity region.

2.2 Multi-layer Perceptron Regression

The MLP network architecture consists of an input layer, a hidden layer, and an output layer. The number of neurons in the input layer depends on the dimensionality of the data features, which can be extracted from EEG, eye-tracking, and surgical operation data such as pupil diameter and procedure duration. The hidden layer is responsible for feature extraction, with its layer count and neuron count optimized based on data complexity and task requirements. The output layer contains a single neuron that generates a surgical performance score.

Hidden Layer Calculation The input to the j-th neuron in the hidden layer is:

$$z_j = \sum_{i=1}^{n} w_{ij} x_i + b_j \tag{8}$$

Here, w_{ij} denotes the weight between the i-th neuron in the input layer and the j-th neuron in the hidden layer, while bj represents the bias of the j-th neuron in the hidden layer. The output hj of the j-th neuron in the hidden layer is obtained through the activation function σ:

$$h_j = \sigma(z_j) \tag{9}$$

If there are m hidden layers, the aforementioned computation is performed sequentially from the first to the m-th hidden layer, with each layer's output serving as the input for the next layer, continuously abstracting and combining data features.

Output Layer Calculation: The input to the k-th neuron in the output layer (k=1 in this regression task) is:

$$y_k = \sum_{j=1}^{m_h} w_{jk} h_j + b_k \tag{10}$$

Here, mh denotes the number of neurons in the final hidden layer; wjk represents the weight between the j-th neuron in the final hidden layer and the k-th neuron in the output layer; and bk is the bias of the k-th neuron in the output layer. The final output value y^ corresponds to the predicted surgical performance score.

Training Process: During training, weights and biases are adjusted by minimizing the loss function to make the model's predictions as close as possible to the true values. This study employs the Mean Squared Error (MSE) as the loss function.

$$L=\frac{1}{N}\sum_{i=1}^{N} (\hat{y_i}-y_i)^2 \tag{11}$$

Here, N denotes the number of training samples, y^i represents the model's predicted value for the i-th sample, and yi is the actual surgical performance score of that sample. The backpropagation algorithm is employed to compute the gradients of weights and biases for the loss function. Based on the chain rule of differentiation, this algorithm propagates errors backward from the output layer to the input layers, calculating the gradients of weights and biases at each level. For instance, the gradient of the weight wjk from the hidden layer to the output layer is computed as follows:

$$\frac{\partial L}{\partial w_{jk}}=\frac{\partial L}{\partial y_k}\cdot\frac{\partial y_k}{\partial w_{jk}} \tag{12}$$

After obtaining the gradient, optimization algorithms such as gradient descent are used to update the weights and biases. Taking stochastic gradient descent (SGD) as an example, the update formula for the weight wij is:

$$\omega_{ij} = \omega_{ij} - \eta\frac{\partial L}{\partial w_{ij}} \tag{13}$$

An excessively high learning rate may lead to unstable model training and increase the likelihood of missing the optimal solution; conversely.

2.3 Final Learner

The final learner serves as the core component of stacked regression. Stacked regression integrates the base learners through the final learner rather than employing simple averaging or voting. It does so by analyzing the relationship between the predictions generated by the base learners and the actual values.

Introduction to Stacked Regression: As an advanced ensemble learning strategy, the model developed in this study employs Support Vector Regression (SVR) and Multi-Layer Perceptron Regression (MLP) as its core components. By integrating the strengths of both models through the final learner, it achieves hierarchical prediction. Architecture Design: In the base model layer, SVR utilizes kernel functions to map high-dimensional spaces and capture nonlinear relationships, while MLP extracts multimodal data features through multiple neural layers. The meta-model layer combines outputs from the base models to generate surgical performance evaluation results. Training Process: Original data are divided into a training set and a validation set in a 7:3 ratio. SVR parameters are optimized using grid search combined with 5-fold cross-validation and the Newton iteration method, while MLP training employs mean squared error as the loss function along with backpropagation and stochastic gradient descent. The prediction results from the base models on the validation set are concatenated with original features to train the final learner. Prediction Process: New data are predicted by SVR and MLP, then combined with original features before being fed into the final learner to produce surgical performance scores. Collaborative Optimization: Nested cross-validation is used to optimize base model hyperparameters, while a dynamic weight adjustment mechanism adaptively integrates SVR and MLP predictions based on data characteristics and sample performance.

The final learner is designed to integrate the advantages of Support Vector Regression (SVR) and Multi-Layer Perceptron Regression (MLP), determining their optimal fusion weights through cross-validation to achieve precise evaluation of robotic-assisted surgical performance. During cross-validation, the K-fold cross-validation method is employed to divide the validation set into K non-overlapping subsets. For each preset weight coefficient value (e.g., starting from 0 and increasing incrementally by 0.1 to 1), each subset is used as the test set while the remaining K–1 subsets serve as the training sets. Using these training sets, SVR and MLP are trained separately, and their prediction results are fused according to the specified weight coefficients before training the final learner. The mean square error (MSE) is then calculated on the test set. After completing K rounds of cross-validation, the average prediction error for each weight coefficient is computed. By evaluating all preset weight coefficients, the optimal coefficient with the smallest average prediction error is selected from the recorded list. This cross-validation mechanism fully leverages data information, dynamically balancing SVR's strength in handling nonlinear relationships with MLP's advantage in feature learning, ensuring the final learner combines the strengths of both models to achieve higher accuracy and reliability in robotic-assisted surgical performance evaluation.

2.4 Method for Model Accuracy Evaluation

In this study, to comprehensively and accurately evaluate the effectiveness of the constructed model in assessing robotic -assisted surgical performance, prediction accuracy (Precision), recall rate (Recall), and F1 score were employed as the primary metrics for model performance evaluation. These metrics reflect the consistency between the model's predictions and the actual values from various perspectives, providing deeper insights into the model's performance.

Precision: Precision is used to measure the proportion of samples predicted as positive (in surgical performance evaluation, samples with favorable predicted surgical outcomes or meeting specific criteria are considered positive) and actually positive among the total number of samples predicted as positive by the model. The calculation formula is as follows:

$$\text{Precision}=\frac{TP}{TP+FP} \tag{14}$$

Recall (also known as the true positive rate) measures the proportion of samples that are actually positive and correctly predicted as positive by the model relative to the total number of actual positive samples.

$$\text{Recall}=\frac{TP}{TP+FN} \tag{15}$$

Here, FN denotes false negatives, i.e., the number of positive samples that are incorrectly predicted as negative by the model.

F1 Score (F1-Score) The F1 score is an metric that comprehensively evaluates both prediction accuracy and recall rate by combining them through a harmonic mean approach, providing a more holistic reflection of model performance. The calculation formula is as follows:

$$\text{F1-Score} = 2 \cdot \frac{\text{Precision} \cdot \text{Recall}}{\text{Precision} + \text{Recall}} \tag{16}$$

The F1 score ranges from 0 to 1, with values closer to 1 indicating better model performance. Higher F1 scores are typically achieved when both prediction accuracy and recall rates are high. In evaluating robotic-assisted surgical performance, the F1 score provides a balanced assessment of a model's ability to correctly identify positive samples (predictive accuracy) and achieve comprehensive coverage of positive samples (no omission), offering an intuitive and comprehensive evaluation of overall model performance.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Differences in Gender and Dominant Hand Usage Results

Statistical measure: The t-statistic value is-2.864549038. The t-statistic measures the magnitude of the difference between the means of two groups (in this case, males and females). A larger absolute value of the t-statistic indicates a more significant difference between the group means. The negative sign denotes the direction of the difference in mean scores between males and females, implying that there is a disparity between the mean scores of males and females, with the direction of the difference reflected by the sign of the t-statistic.The specific results are shown in Figure 1 below.

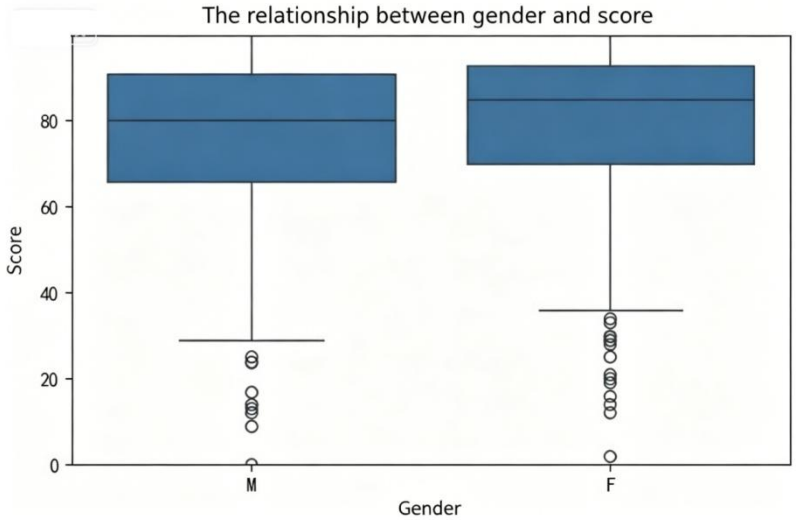

Figure 1 Gender Score

p-value: The p-value of 0.00422898 is lower than the commonly established significance level of 0.05. This indicates that there is a statistically significant correlation between gender and scores. In other words, the differences in scores between males and females are not attributable to random factors but rather reflect an underlying population difference. The relationship between age and scores.The specific results are shown in Figure 2 below.

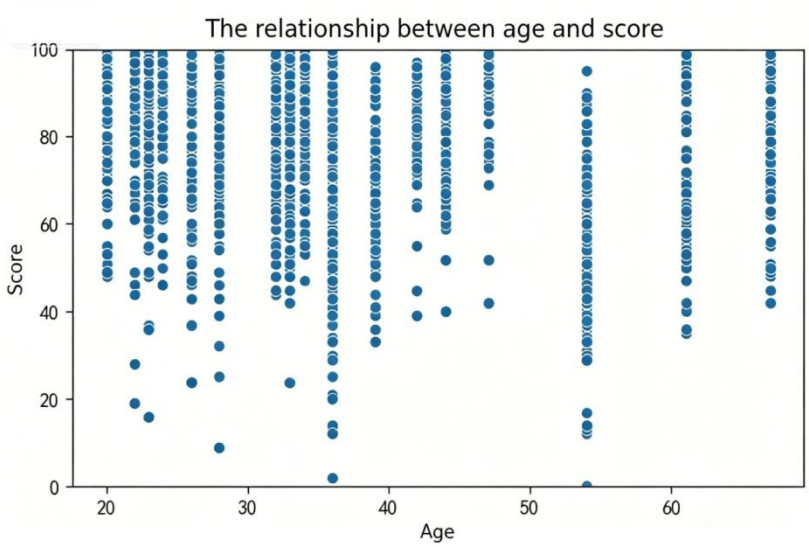

Figure 2 Age Score

Pearson correlation coefficient: The Pearson correlation coefficient is-0.13197879. This coefficient measures the degree of linear correlation between two variables, with values ranging from-1 to 1. A negative value indicates a weak negative linear correlation between age and score, suggesting that scores may show a slight downward trend as age increases. p-value: The p-value is 10^-8, significantly lower than 0.05. This indicates that the linear correlation between age and score is significant; thus, this weak negative relationship is not accidental but statistically meaningful. Relationship between left-handedness and scores: The t-statistic value is 0.309541692, indicating that the difference between the mean scores of left-handed and right-handed individuals is relatively small.The specific results are shown in Figure 3 below.

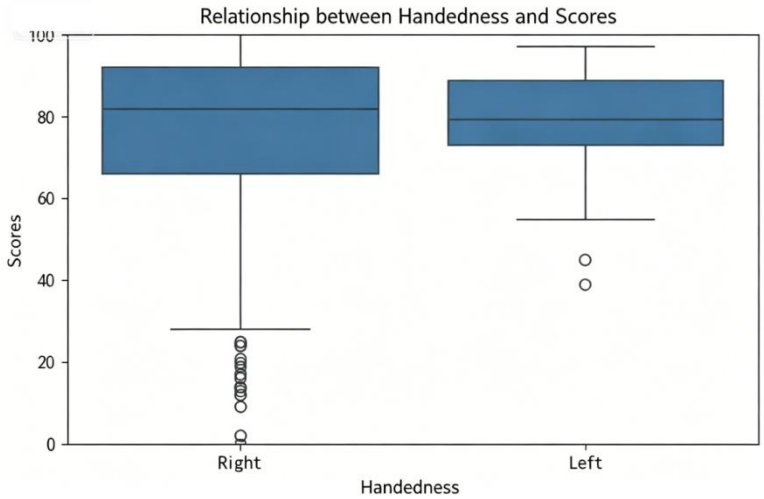

Figure 3 Dominant Hand Score

p-value: The p-value is 0.756948659, significantly greater than 0.05. This indicates that, statistically, there is no significant correlation between handedness and scores. In other words, the difference in scores between left-handed and right-handed individuals is likely due to random factors rather than differences in handedness itself. In summary, there is a significant correlation between gender and scores; further research is needed to investigate the reasons for the score differences between males and females, such as learning methods and interest preferences. There is a significant but weak negative correlation between age and scores; factors influencing scores with age, such as learning motivation and physical condition, warrant further investigation.There is no significant correlation between dexterity and scores; therefore, dexterity should not be considered a primary factor when investigating the influencing factors of scores.

3.2 Stacked Regression Results

After completing the training and testing of the stacked regression model, an in-depth analysis of its results was conducted. First, the root mean square error (RMSE) and mean absolute error (MAE) performance of the model on both the training and test sets were examined. For the training set, both RMSE and MAE showed a gradual decline with increasing iteration counts. In the initial phase, due to insufficient optimization of model parameters, the model's fit to the training data was poor, with RMSE values around 0.56 and MAE around 0.43. However, as the Newton iteration

method continuously refined the model parameters, RMSE progressively decreased and stabilized after 500 iterations, ultimately converging to approximately 0.21, while MAE remained stable at around 0.16. This indicates that the model effectively learned the relationship between features in the training data and surgical performance scores, significantly reducing the discrepancy between predicted and actual values. On the test set, the model demonstrated comparable performance, with RMSE of 0.29 and MAE of 0.22 (see Table 1 for details). Compared to the training set, errors increased on the test set because the data were not used during training, testing the model's generalization ability. Nevertheless, these error levels remained within acceptable ranges, demonstrating the model's strong generalization capacity to reasonably predict surgical performance based on novel and previously unseen EEG and gaze data.

Table 1 Regression Model Fit Degree

Dataset	RMSE	MAE
Training Set	0.21	0.16
Test Set	0.29	0.22

Further analysis of the model's prediction accuracy, recall rate, and F1 score was conducted. In surgical performance evaluation, surgical outcomes meeting the "good" standard (simulator scores ≥80) were classified as positive samples. The SVR model achieved a prediction accuracy of 0.76 on the test set, indicating that 76% of samples predicted as "good" by the model actually demonstrated excellent surgical performance. The recall rate reached 0.72, meaning 72% of actual cases with good surgical outcomes were correctly predicted as such by the model. The F1 score calculated from prediction accuracy and recall rate was 0.74 (formula: F1 = Precision × Recall + Recall × Precision). Detailed results are presented in Table 2. These metrics demonstrate that the SVR model exhibits reliable and comprehensive performance in identifying cases with good surgical outcomes, though there remains room for improvement. For instance, certain cases with actual good surgical outcomes were not adequately identified.

Table 2 Evaluation Results of the Stacked Regression Model

Dataset	Precision	Recall	F1-Score
Training Set	0.78	0.75	0.77
Test Set	0.76	0.72	0.74

In evaluating the stacked regression model, the training set demonstrated excellent performance with a prediction accuracy of 0.78, a recall rate of 0.75, and an F1 score of 0.77. These metrics indicate that the model effectively learned and fitted the data features during training, successfully identifying the majority of positive samples while maintaining high overall accuracy. However, when applied to the test set, the prediction accuracy dropped to 0.76, the recall rate decreased to 0.72, and the F1 score fell to 0.74, suggesting potential overfitting and an inability to fully replicate training performance on new data. Nevertheless, the model's performance metrics on the test set remained within acceptable ranges, demonstrating its generalization capability. To further enhance model stability and generalization performance, optimizations such as adjusting model complexity, applying regularization, increasing training data volume, or implementing cross-validation could be considered. Future research may explore additional feature engineering techniques or other ensemble learning methods to improve recall rates while maintaining high prediction accuracy, thereby maximizing the model's practical value. Given the substantial dataset size in the test set, Table 3 only presents selected data points.

Table 3 Stacked Regression Model Prediction Results

Task Block	Prediction Result	Prediction Result
1	0.701326	0.298674
5	0.691546	0.308454
11	0.811146	0.188854
20	0.755643	0.2443547
27	0.655426	0.344574

The table above shows the fitting performance of the data obtained through stacked regression compared to the original data. It is evident that stacked regression outperforms the use of support vector machines alone in terms of fitting accuracy.

4 CONCLUSIONS

This study proposes a multimodal evaluation method for robot-assisted surgery performance based on stacked regression, integrating electroencephalography and eye-tracking data to construct an objective and quantitative assessment model. By combining support vector regression and multilayer perceptron as base learners, and using Newton iteration and cross-validation for parameter optimization, the proposed model effectively fuses the advantages of different algorithms and improves the accuracy and stability of performance evaluation.

Experimental results demonstrate that the stacked regression model outperforms traditional linear regression and single models in prediction performance. On the test set, the RMSE and MAE are reduced to 0.29 and 0.22, respectively, and the F1-score reaches 0.74, indicating high reliability in identifying excellent surgical performance. Meanwhile, statistical analyses reveal significant differences in surgical performance related to gender and age, while dominant hand has no significant effect, providing a reference for personalized surgical training. The proposed model has high application feasibility. It can realize automatic and objective evaluation without relying on manual scoring, which is suitable for surgical skill training, assessment, and intraoperative auxiliary decision-making. In the future, the model can be further improved by combining more physiological signals, introducing attention mechanisms, and optimizing the stacked structure, so as to adapt to more complex surgical scenarios and promote the intelligent development of robot-assisted surgery.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors have no relevant financial or non-financial interests to disclose.

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