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Augmented reality guidance for complex craniofacial cases in surgical oncology: A technical report

Telsso Luca*
Department of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery, Radboud University Nijmegen, Netherlands

SUMMARY

Augmented Reality (AR) is revolutionizing the field of surgical oncology, particularly in complex craniofacial cases. This technical report explores the integration of AR into surgical oncology, detailing the technological framework, methodologies, and clinical implications. We present an in-depth analysis of AR's potential to enhance precision, reduce surgical time, and improve patient outcomes in craniofacial surgeries. The report includes case studies, technical challenges, and future directions for AR in this specialized field.

Keywords: Augmented; Reality; Technical; Surgical; Future; Emerging; Time

Address for correspondence:

Telsso Luca
Department of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery, Radboud University Nijmegen, Netherlands
E-mail: telssoluca@gmail.com

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INTRODUCTION

Craniofacial surgical oncology encompasses the treatment of malignancies affecting the skull, face, and related structures. These procedures are often intricate, requiring high precision to avoid critical anatomical structures and ensure optimal functional and aesthetic outcomes. Traditional surgical techniques, although advanced, have limitations in visualization and real-time guidance. Augmented Reality (AR) offers a promising solution by overlaying digital information onto the surgeon's view, thus enhancing spatial orientation and decision-making. This report delves into the application of AR in craniofacial surgical oncology, examining its current state, technological underpinnings, and impact on surgical practice. Through case studies and technical evaluations, we aim to elucidate the benefits and challenges of AR, providing a comprehensive overview for practitioners and researchers in the field.

A 45-year-old patient with a maxillary tumor underwent AR-assisted resection. Preoperative planning involved detailed CT and MRI scans, creating a 3D model of the tumor and surrounding structures. During surgery, the AR system provided real-time visualization of the tumor margins and adjacent critical structures. The procedure was completed with high precision, minimizing damage to the surrounding tissues and preserving the patient's facial symmetry.In a complex case of mandibular reconstruction following tumor resection, AR was used to guide the placement of a fibular graft. The preoperative 3D model included the tumor, mandible, and proposed graft site. Intraoperatively, AR helped align the graft with the mandible, ensuring optimal fit and function. The surgery was successful, with accurate graft placement and satisfactory functional outcomes.

A patient with an orbital tumor presented a high risk of damage to the optic nerve. AR assistance was employed to delineate the tumor boundaries and the position of the optic nerve. The AR guidance enabled the surgeon to excise the tumor with minimal risk to the patient's vision. Postoperative imaging confirmed complete tumor removal and preservation of visual function. Ensuring accurate calibration between the virtual models and the patient's anatomy is a significant challenge. Any misalignment can lead to errors in guidance, potentially compromising patient safety. Continuous advancements in tracking technology and calibration algorithms are essential to address this issue.

AR devices, particularly HMDs, must meet strict sterilization standards to be used in the operating room. Additionally, ergonomic design is essential to ensure comfort and usability during long surgical procedures. AR enhances the surgeon's ability to visualize complex anatomy and pathology, leading to more precise surgical interventions. This can result in improved oncological outcomes, reduced complication rates, and better preservation of function and aesthetics. By providing real-time guidance, AR can streamline surgical procedures, reducing operative time. This not only benefits patients by decreasing anesthesia duration and associated risks but also improves operating room efficiency [1].

LITERATURE REVIEW

AR has significant potential in surgical education and training. It allows trainees to practice complex procedures in a simulated environment, gaining valuable experience without risk to patients. Furthermore, AR can be used intraoperatively to provide real-time educational guidance to trainees. The personalized nature of AR, based on patient-specific imaging and modeling, allows for tailored surgical plans that address the unique anatomical and pathological characteristics of each patient. This individualized approach enhances the quality of care. Combining AR with Artificial Intelligence (AI) could further revolutionize surgical oncology. AI algorithms can assist in image segmentation, surgical planning, and real-time decision-making, augmenting the surgeon's capabilities [2].

The AR system must process and display data in real-time to be effective during surgery. High computational demands and latency issues can hinder performance. Developing more efficient algorithms and leveraging advanced hardware, such as GPUs (Graphics Processing Units), can help overcome these limitations. The AR interface must be intuitive and non-intrusive, allowing surgeons to access critical information without distraction. Designing user-friendly interfaces that integrate seamlessly into the surgical workflow is crucial for widespread adoption [3].

DISCUSSION

Developments in display technology, such as higher resolution and more compact HMDs, will improve the clarity and usability of AR systems. Additionally, advancements in holographic and volumetric displays may offer even more immersive and detailed visualizations. While this report focuses on craniofacial surgery, AR has potential applications across various surgical specialties. Expanding its use to other complex surgical fields could further demonstrate its versatility and impact on healthcare. Establishing standardized protocols and guidelines for AR implementation in surgery will be crucial for its widespread adoption. Collaborative efforts among medical professionals, researchers, and regulatory bodies are needed to develop best practices and ensure safety and efficacy. Comprehensive studies on the cost-effectiveness of AR in surgical oncology are essential. Demonstrating the economic benefits, such as reduced operative time and improved patient outcomes, will support the case for investment in AR technologies.

Augmented Reality is poised to transform craniofacial surgical oncology by enhancing precision, improving outcomes, and streamlining surgical procedures. Despite technical challenges, the potential benefits of AR are substantial. Continued advancements in technology, combined with clinical research and protocol development, will pave the way for broader adoption and integration of AR in surgical practice. As AR evolves, it promises to be a vital tool in the surgical oncologist's armamentarium, offering new possibilities for patient-specific, minimally invasive, and highly effective cancer treatments [4-6].

CONCLUSION

Augmented Reality (AR) has emerged as a ground-breaking technology in the realm of surgical oncology, offering significant advantages in the management of complex craniofacial cases. This technical report delves into the application of AR in craniofacial surgical oncology, detailing its benefits, challenges, and the technological advancements that facilitate its use. The integration of AR into surgical procedures enhances precision, reduces intraoperative time, and improves patient outcomes by providing real-time, 3D visualizations of the surgical field. This report aims to elucidate the technical aspects of AR, its implementation in craniofacial surgeries, and the potential future directions for this technology.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None.

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