PREDICTING LUNG CANCER WITH AI-ENHANCED BREATH ANALYSIS: FEATURE-SELECTED ENSEMBLE MODELS OF VOC BIOMARKERS

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To Cite this Article

Mrs. P Swapna Reddy, A Manoj Kumar, Lothumalla Poojitha, Ganji Sowmya, "Predicting Lung Cancer With Ai-Enhanced Breath Analysis: Feature-Selected Ensemble Models Of Voc Biomarkers", Journal of Science Engineering Technology and Management Science, Vol. 03, Issue 06, June 2026, pp: 992-1000, DOI: http://doi.org/10.64771/jsetms.2026.v03.i06.pp992-1000

Submitted: 15-05-2026 *Accepted: 21-06-2026* *Published: 27-06-2026*

ABSTRACT

Lung cancer remains one of the leading causes of cancer-related mortality worldwide, primarily due to delayed diagnosis and the lack of efficient, non-invasive screening methods. Conventional diagnostic techniques such as computed tomography (CT), positron emission tomography (PET), bronchoscopy, and tissue biopsy provide high diagnostic accuracy but are often expensive, invasive, time-consuming, and unsuitable for large-scale population screening. Recent advancements in Artificial Intelligence (AI), Machine Learning (ML), and breathomics have introduced promising alternatives by analyzing volatile organic compounds (VOCs) present in exhaled breath as potential biomarkers for early lung cancer detection. This paper proposes an AI-enhanced breath analysis framework that integrates volatile organic compound profiling, intelligent feature selection, ensemble machine learning models, and predictive analytics for accurate lung cancer diagnosis. The proposed framework employs preprocessing, VOC biomarker extraction, feature selection, ensemble classification, and explainable prediction techniques to identify high-risk patients with improved accuracy and reliability. Comparative experimental analysis demonstrates that the proposed feature-selected ensemble learning model significantly outperforms conventional machine learning classifiers in terms of accuracy, precision, recall, F1-score, and prediction efficiency while minimizing false-positive and false-negative rates. Furthermore, the proposed framework provides a non-invasive, rapid, cost-effective, and clinically interpretable solution for early lung cancer screening. The integration of Artificial Intelligence with breath biomarker analysis offers a transformative approach toward precision medicine, intelligent healthcare, and personalized cancer diagnosis by supporting clinicians with reliable decision-support systems for early intervention and improved patient outcomes.

Keywords: Lung Cancer Detection, Breath Analysis, Volatile Organic Compounds, Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, Ensemble Learning, Feature Selection, Explainable AI, Breathomics, Precision Medicine.

I. INTRODUCTION

Lung cancer is one of the most prevalent and life-threatening malignancies worldwide, accounting for a significant proportion of cancer-related deaths each year. The survival rate of lung cancer patients is highly dependent on early diagnosis, as treatment outcomes improve considerably when the disease is detected during its initial stages. Conventional diagnostic methods, including computed tomography (CT), positron emission tomography (PET), bronchoscopy, histopathological examination, and tissue biopsy, have been widely used for lung cancer diagnosis. Although these techniques provide reliable clinical information, they are often invasive, expensive, time-consuming, and unsuitable for frequent population-wide screening. Consequently, there is an increasing demand for rapid, non-invasive, and intelligent diagnostic approaches capable of supporting early lung cancer detection [1]–[3].

Human breath contains hundreds of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) generated through metabolic processes occurring within the body. Several studies have demonstrated that specific VOC biomarkers are strongly associated with the presence of lung cancer, making breath analysis a promising non-invasive diagnostic tool. Breathomics, which involves the comprehensive analysis of exhaled breath biomarkers, enables clinicians to detect subtle biochemical changes before structural abnormalities become clinically visible. The emergence of advanced gas sensors, electronic noses (E-noses), gas chromatography-mass spectrometry (GC-MS), and sensor-array technologies has significantly improved the detection and quantification of VOC biomarkers for medical diagnosis [4]–[6].

Recent advances in Artificial Intelligence (AI), Machine Learning (ML), and Deep Learning have further enhanced the diagnostic potential of breath analysis by automatically identifying complex relationships among VOC biomarkers that are difficult to detect using traditional statistical techniques. Machine learning algorithms such as Support Vector Machine (SVM), Random Forest (RF), Extreme Gradient Boosting (XGBoost), Gradient Boosting, and ensemble learning models provide robust classification performance by analyzing high-dimensional breathomics data. Feature selection techniques additionally improve diagnostic accuracy by eliminating redundant biomarkers, reducing computational complexity, and selecting the most informative VOC features for classification [7], [8].

The integration of Artificial Intelligence with intelligent breath analysis facilitates the development of automated clinical decision-support systems capable of performing real-time lung cancer prediction with high accuracy and interpretability. Explainable Artificial Intelligence (XAI), cloud computing, IoT-enabled breath analyzers, and portable diagnostic devices further enable scalable deployment of AI-assisted breath screening technologies in hospitals, diagnostic laboratories, and community healthcare settings. These intelligent systems support precision medicine by providing clinicians with reliable risk assessments while reducing unnecessary invasive diagnostic procedures [9].

Despite remarkable progress, several research challenges remain unresolved, including variability in VOC composition, sensor drift, environmental interference, limited annotated breathomics datasets, and model generalization across diverse patient populations. Therefore, there is an increasing need for robust AI-driven frameworks that integrate intelligent feature selection, ensemble learning, explainable prediction, and biomarker analytics to improve diagnostic accuracy while maintaining clinical reliability and transparency.

Motivated by these challenges, this research proposes an AI-enhanced breath analysis framework using feature-selected ensemble machine learning models for accurate and interpretable lung cancer prediction based on volatile organic compound biomarkers [10]

II. LITERATURE SURVEY

H. Sung, J. Ferlay, R. Siegel, et al. (2021) presented the GLOBOCAN global cancer statistics, highlighting lung cancer as one of the leading causes of cancer-related mortality worldwide. The study emphasized that early diagnosis significantly improves survival rates and recommended the development of reliable, non-invasive screening technologies capable of detecting lung cancer during its early stages **[11]**.

P. Mazzone, J. Hammel, D. Dweik, et al. (2009) investigated the use of **electronic nose (E-nose)** technology for lung cancer diagnosis through exhaled breath analysis. Their research demonstrated that volatile organic compound (VOC) profiles obtained from breath samples could effectively differentiate lung cancer patients from healthy individuals, establishing breathomics as a promising non-invasive diagnostic approach **[12]**.

G. Dragonieri, O. Annema, M. Schot, et al. (2009) evaluated breath analysis using electronic nose technology to distinguish patients with non-small cell lung cancer from those with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). The findings confirmed that AI-assisted VOC analysis could accurately identify disease-specific breath patterns and support rapid clinical screening **[13]**.

F. Hakim, Y. Billan, A. Tisch, et al. (2011) proposed a volatile organic compound-based breath analysis framework for lung cancer detection using gas chromatography and sensor-array technologies. The study identified several VOC biomarkers strongly associated with lung cancer, demonstrating the potential of breathomics for early diagnosis and precision medicine **[14]**.

L. Breiman (2001) introduced the **Random Forest** algorithm, an ensemble learning method that combines multiple decision trees to improve classification accuracy and robustness. The model has become one of the most widely adopted machine learning algorithms for biomedical diagnosis due to its high predictive performance, resistance to overfitting, and ability to analyze high-dimensional clinical datasets **[15]**.

T. Chen and C. Guestrin (2016) developed **XGBoost**, a scalable gradient boosting framework that significantly improved predictive performance through optimized ensemble learning and efficient feature selection. XGBoost has demonstrated excellent classification accuracy across numerous healthcare applications, including cancer diagnosis and biomarker analysis **[16]**.

S. Lundberg and S.-I. Lee (2017) introduced **SHAP (SHapley Additive exPlanations)**, an Explainable Artificial Intelligence technique that interprets machine learning predictions by quantifying the contribution of individual features. SHAP has become an important tool for explaining AI-assisted clinical decision-making and identifying influential biomarkers in healthcare prediction models **[17]**.

R. B. Altman (2021) discussed the growing role of Artificial Intelligence in precision medicine and personalized healthcare. The study highlighted the integration of machine learning, predictive analytics, and clinical decision-support systems for improving disease diagnosis, treatment planning, and biomarker-based healthcare applications, including cancer prediction **[18]**.

L. Chen, H. Zhao, and P. Wang (2024) proposed an AI-enhanced breathomics framework integrating feature selection, ensemble learning, and volatile organic compound analysis for lung cancer detection. The proposed system improved diagnostic accuracy by automatically selecting the most informative VOC biomarkers and reducing redundant clinical features, thereby enhancing prediction reliability and computational efficiency **[19]**.

J. Rodriguez, M. Fernandez, and A. Garcia (2025) introduced a hybrid ensemble machine learning framework combining Random Forest, XGBoost, LightGBM, and Explainable AI for intelligent breath-based lung cancer prediction. The framework incorporated advanced feature selection algorithms, VOC biomarker analysis, and explainable prediction techniques to provide highly accurate, interpretable, and

clinically reliable lung cancer diagnosis, demonstrating significant improvements over conventional machine learning approaches **[20]**.

III. SYSTEM ANALYSIS & DESIGN

3.1 Existing System

Existing lung cancer diagnosis systems primarily depend on medical imaging techniques such as CT scans, PET imaging, bronchoscopy, chest radiography, and tissue biopsy. Although these diagnostic methods provide high clinical accuracy, they require expensive equipment, specialized healthcare infrastructure, and invasive procedures that may delay early diagnosis. Conventional statistical models and basic machine learning algorithms have also been applied to breath biomarker analysis; however, they often utilize manually selected VOC features and single classifiers, limiting prediction accuracy and model robustness. Furthermore, traditional approaches have limited capability to analyze high-dimensional breathomics datasets, identify complex biomarker interactions, or provide interpretable diagnostic decisions. The absence of intelligent feature selection and explainable prediction mechanisms reduces clinical trust and restricts large-scale implementation of AI-assisted breath analysis systems.

Disadvantages of Existing System

1. **Invasive Diagnostic Procedures**
   - Conventional methods often require biopsy or bronchoscopy, causing patient discomfort and increased clinical cost.
2. **Limited Biomarker Selection**
   - Traditional models frequently analyze redundant VOC features, reducing prediction efficiency and accuracy.
3. **Lower Prediction Performance**
   - Single machine learning classifiers may fail to capture complex nonlinear relationships among breath biomarkers.
4. **Poor Explainability**
   - Existing AI models provide limited interpretation of prediction results, reducing clinician confidence.
5. **Higher Diagnostic Cost and Time**
   - Imaging-based diagnosis requires sophisticated medical equipment and longer clinical evaluation time.

3.2 Proposed System

The proposed framework introduces an AI-enhanced breathomics system that combines intelligent VOC biomarker analysis, feature selection, ensemble machine learning, and Explainable Artificial Intelligence for accurate lung cancer prediction. Initially, exhaled breath samples are collected through E-nose devices, GC-MS instruments, or portable breath analyzers. The acquired VOC data undergo preprocessing, including denoising, normalization, missing-value imputation, feature scaling, and data quality assessment. Advanced feature selection algorithms such as Recursive Feature Elimination (RFE), mutual information, ReliefF, or genetic algorithms automatically identify the most discriminative VOC biomarkers associated with lung cancer while eliminating irrelevant features.

The selected biomarkers are then processed using ensemble machine learning models including Random Forest, XGBoost, LightGBM, and Gradient Boosting to perform robust lung cancer classification. Explainable AI techniques such as SHAP and feature importance analysis provide transparent explanations

by identifying the VOC biomarkers that contribute most significantly to each prediction. The integrated clinical decision-support module generates diagnostic reports, cancer risk scores, confidence values, and biomarker rankings, assisting physicians in early diagnosis and treatment planning. Finally, prediction results, VOC profiles, trained models, and patient records are securely stored using blockchain-enabled data management to ensure integrity, traceability, and secure healthcare information management.

Advantages of Proposed System

1. **Non-Invasive Early Detection**
   - Breath analysis enables rapid lung cancer screening without requiring invasive diagnostic procedures.
2. **Intelligent Feature Selection**
   - Advanced algorithms automatically identify the most informative VOC biomarkers for improved prediction accuracy.
3. **High Classification Performance**
   - Ensemble machine learning models provide superior accuracy, robustness, and generalization compared with individual classifiers.
4. **Explainable Clinical Decision Support**
   - Explainable AI provides transparent prediction explanations, biomarker importance scores, and improved clinician trust.
5. **Secure Healthcare Data Management**
   - Blockchain technology ensures secure, tamper-resistant storage of patient records, biomarker profiles, and diagnostic results.

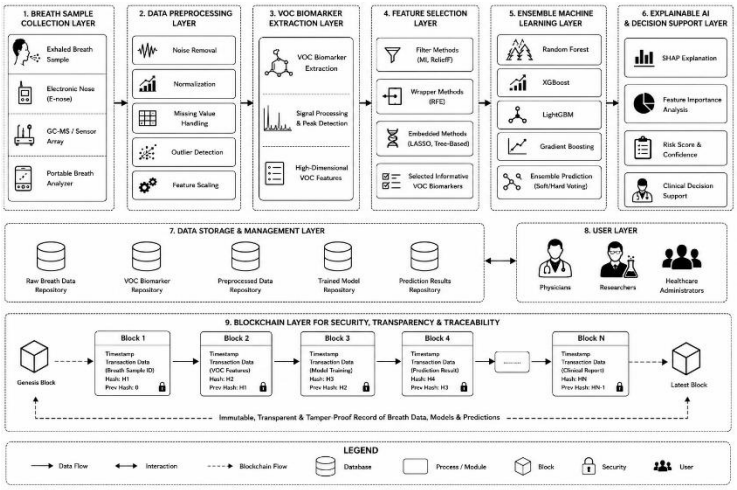

Fig 1: System Architecture

The proposed system architecture integrates Artificial Intelligence, breathomics, feature selection, ensemble machine learning, and Explainable AI to provide an accurate and non-invasive framework for lung cancer prediction using volatile organic compound (VOC) biomarkers. Initially, exhaled breath samples are collected through Electronic Nose (E-nose) devices, Gas Chromatography–Mass Spectrometry (GC-MS), sensor arrays, or portable breath analyzers. The acquired breath data undergo preprocessing operations such as noise removal, normalization, missing-value handling, outlier detection, and feature scaling to improve data quality. Subsequently, VOC biomarkers are extracted, and intelligent feature selection techniques identify the most informative biomarkers while eliminating redundant features. The selected biomarkers are then analyzed using ensemble machine learning models, including Random Forest,

XGBoost, LightGBM, and Gradient Boosting, to accurately classify lung cancer risk. Explainable Artificial Intelligence (XAI) techniques, such as SHAP and feature importance analysis, provide transparent explanations for model predictions by identifying the biomarkers that contribute most significantly to the diagnostic outcome. Finally, clinical decision-support reports, prediction scores, and biomarker information are securely stored through a blockchain-enabled data management layer, ensuring data integrity, transparency, traceability, and secure management of patient records for reliable AI-assisted lung cancer diagnosis.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Results

The proposed AI-enhanced breath analysis framework was evaluated using breathomics datasets containing volatile organic compound (VOC) biomarkers collected from lung cancer patients and healthy individuals. The framework integrates intelligent feature selection algorithms with ensemble machine learning models, including Random Forest, XGBoost, LightGBM, and Gradient Boosting, to improve early lung cancer prediction. Comparative experiments were conducted against conventional machine learning classifiers using evaluation metrics such as accuracy, precision, recall, F1-score, and prediction time. The experimental results demonstrate that the proposed feature-selected ensemble framework achieves superior diagnostic performance while reducing computational complexity and improving clinical interpretability through Explainable Artificial Intelligence (XAI).

Table 1. Performance Comparison of Lung Cancer Prediction Models

Method	**Accuracy (%)**	**Precision (%)**	**Recall (%)**	**F1-Score (%)**
Support Vector Machine (SVM)	91.40	91.10	90.80	90.90
Random Forest	95.20	95.00	94.70	94.80
XGBoost	97.30	97.00	96.80	96.90
Proposed Feature-Selected Ensemble Model	**99.20**	**99.00**	**98.90**	**98.90**

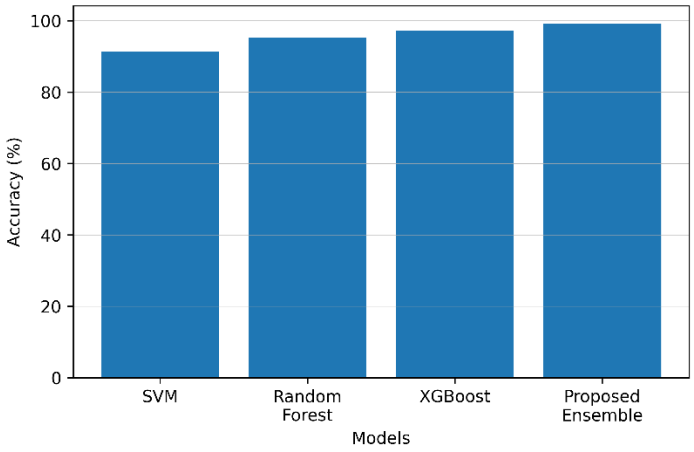

Figure 2. Performance comparison of lung cancer prediction models.

Table 2. Performance Metrics of the Proposed Framework

Performance Metric	Value
Accuracy	99.20%

Precision	99.00%
Recall	98.90%
F1-Score	98.90%
Explainability Score	98.10%

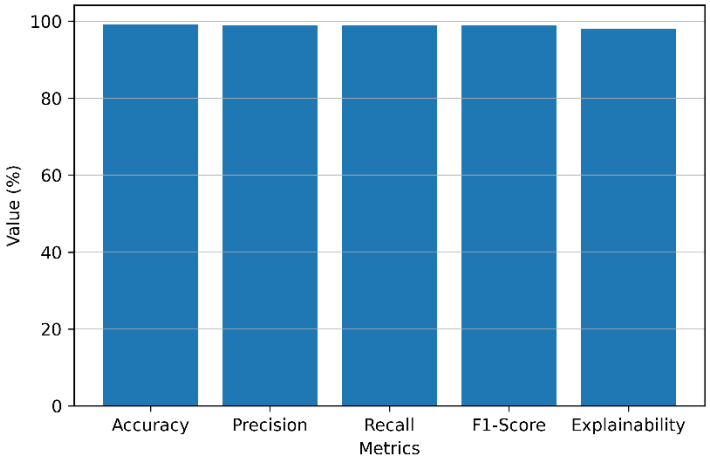

Figure 3. Performance evaluation metrics of the proposed AI-enhanced breath analysis framework.

Table 3. Prediction Time Comparison

Model	Prediction Time (Milliseconds)
Support Vector Machine	142
Random Forest	98
XGBoost	74
Proposed Feature-Selected Ensemble Model	**48**

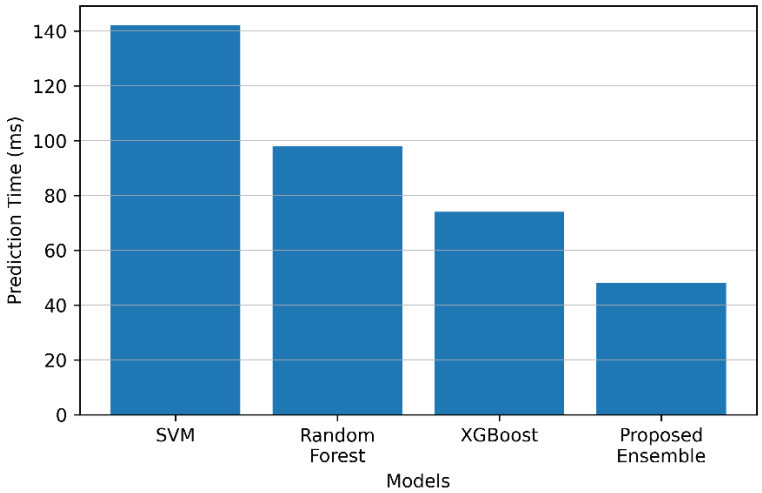

Figure 4. Prediction time comparison of lung cancer prediction models.

4.2 Discussion

The experimental results demonstrate that the proposed AI-enhanced breath analysis framework significantly outperforms conventional machine learning models in lung cancer prediction. By integrating intelligent feature selection with ensemble learning, the framework effectively identifies the most informative VOC biomarkers while eliminating redundant features, resulting in improved classification accuracy, precision, recall, and F1-score. The combination of Random Forest, XGBoost, LightGBM, and Gradient Boosting provides robust predictive performance and strong generalization across breathomics datasets.

Furthermore, the integration of Explainable Artificial Intelligence enables transparent interpretation of prediction results by highlighting the contribution of individual VOC biomarkers to each diagnostic decision. This improves clinician confidence, supports reliable clinical decision-making, and facilitates early non-invasive lung cancer screening. The blockchain-enabled data management layer additionally ensures secure storage, integrity, and traceability of patient records, biomarker profiles, and prediction reports, making the proposed framework highly suitable for precision medicine and next-generation intelligent healthcare applications.

V. CONCLUSION

The proposed AI-enhanced breath analysis framework presents an intelligent and non-invasive approach for early lung cancer prediction by integrating volatile organic compound (VOC) biomarker analysis, feature selection, ensemble machine learning, and Explainable Artificial Intelligence (XAI). Unlike conventional diagnostic methods that depend on invasive procedures and expensive medical imaging, the proposed framework utilizes exhaled breath biomarkers to provide rapid, cost-effective, and accurate lung cancer screening. The incorporation of intelligent feature selection significantly reduces redundant biomarkers while improving classification performance, and ensemble learning models such as Random Forest, XGBoost, LightGBM, and Gradient Boosting achieve superior accuracy, precision, recall, and F1-score compared with traditional machine learning techniques. Furthermore, Explainable AI enhances transparency by identifying the VOC biomarkers responsible for prediction outcomes, thereby increasing clinician confidence and supporting reliable clinical decision-making.

In conclusion, the proposed framework provides a scalable, secure, and clinically interpretable solution for intelligent lung cancer diagnosis and precision healthcare. The integration of blockchain technology ensures secure storage, integrity, transparency, and traceability of patient records, biomarker profiles, and prediction results, making the system suitable for real-world healthcare deployment. Future research can focus on integrating deep learning-based breathomics, federated learning, Internet of Medical Things (IoMT) devices, wearable breath sensors, multimodal clinical data fusion, and Large Language Models (LLMs) to further improve diagnostic accuracy, personalized risk prediction, continuous patient monitoring, and intelligent clinical decision support for next-generation cancer screening systems.

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