Harnessing Artificial Intelligence for the Next Generation of 3D Printed Medicines

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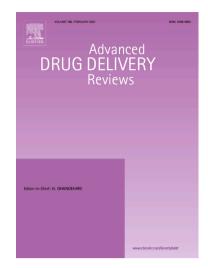
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1 Harnessing Artificial Intelligence for the Next Generation of 3D

Printed Medicines

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Abstract

2	Artificial intelligence (AI) is redefining how we exist in the world. In almost every sector of society, AI is
3	performing tasks with super-human speed and intellect; from the prediction of stock market trends to
4	driverless vehicles, diagnosis of disease, and robotic surgery. Despite this growing success, the
5	pharmaceutical field is yet to truly harness AI. Development and manufacture of medicines remains
6	largely in a 'one size fits all' paradigm, in which mass-produced, identical formulations are expected to
7	meet individual patient needs. Recently, 3D printing (3DP) has illuminated a path for on-demand
8	production of fully customisable medicines. Due to its flexibility, pharmaceutical 3DP presents
9	innumerable options during formulation development that generally require expert navigation.
10	Leveraging AI within pharmaceutical 3DP removes the need for human expertise, as optimal process
11	parameters can be accurately predicted by machine learning. Al can also be incorporated into a
12	pharmaceutical 3DP 'Internet of Things', moving the personalised production of medicines into an
13	intelligent, streamlined, and autonomous pipeline. Supportive infrastructure, such as The Cloud and
14	blockchain, will also play a vital role. Crucially, these technologies will expedite the use of
15	pharmaceutical 3DP in clinical settings and drive the global movement towards personalised medicine
16	and <mark>Industry 4.0</mark> .
17 18 19 20 21 22	Keywords: Additive Manufacturing; Digital pharmaceutics and pharmaceutical sciences; Digital therapeutics and healthcare; Drug product design and development; Computer aided design of printlets Computational modeling and finite element analysis; Fabricating gastrointestinal drug delivery systems and dosage forms; Personalized pharmaceuticals and medical devices; Mass customization and machine learning; Falsified and counterfeit oral pharmaceutical products.
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1 Intelligent 3D Printing of Personalised Medicines

The last 25 years have experienced a digital revolution: from the naissance of wireless internet access to global smart phone uptake, widespread use of cloud storage, and the permeation of social media into everyday life. At first, it was human intelligence that conceived and utilised these transformative technologies. Now, we find that technology is being hardwired for intelligence far beyond human capacity; allowing it to entertain us, highlight lucrative financial investments, and maintain our health, to name just a few applications [1-5]. The language of data is fast surpassing traditional spoken or written languages on the stage of global communication and connectivity. As data storage and capacity steadily mount with each passing year, systems are fed increasing information, allowing them to become smarter [6].

Artificial intelligence (AI) encompasses a plethora of technologies driving the current data revolution [7]. Applications of AI can be narrow, whereby intelligence is directed at single tasks, such as smartphone personal assistants, the discovery of novel drugs, or diagnosis of disease from medical images [8-10]. Alternatively, AI applications can be afforded cognitive ability similar to the human brain, by which robust AI systems retain memory and apply knowledge across different domains. The latter form of AI is growing in momentum, exemplified by the development of driverless cars that autonomously recognise unexpected obstructions, monitor exact lane position, and govern optimal vehicle functioning simultaneously [11]. An even more recent application of AI is its unification with networks of interconnected hardware, known as the 'Internet of Things' (IoT). In an IoT, devices with distinct capabilities are wirelessly connected to perform integrated functions. IoT has conceived the concept of smart houses, in which a network of sensors and control devices fully automate tasks of daily living: from the management of heating, lighting, and security, to ordering groceries and synchronising a morning alarm with breakfast [12]. Combined, AI and IoT permit the intelligent automation of limitless processes.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has placed emphasis on innovation through utilising digital health technologies and developing novel analytical approaches to advance healthcare [13], which was answered by diagnostic companies, where recently the FDA has approved AI-based software for diagnostics [14, 15]. Compared to other fields, the development and supply of pharmaceuticals sits behind the forefront of modern technology, who employ *in silico* tools to expedite discoveries. BASF released Zoomlab™ for predicting the properties of formulations, such as tabletability. The software is based on the SEDEM system that was developed 15 years ago but is yet to be widely adopted by

pharmaceutical researchers. It requires users to input 12 properties of the API, which include flowability, hygroscopicity, particle size and the homogeneity index [16, 17]. F-CAD is another software used in the industry to guide formulation development. Similar to Zoomlab™, the physical-chemical properties of the API are required, but in addition, so are the physical-chemical properties of the excipients [18]. The drawback with these software is that they can be difficult to readily incorporate into the current workflow and are exhaustive, costing both time and materials in order to gather the input data. Hence, these optimisation methodologies have not been widely adopted by pharmaceutical researchers. This lack of an *in silico* tool consequently positions the pharmaceutical field behind others in harnessing their capabilities to expedite discoveries.

Medicine largely remains in a 'one size fits all' paradigm, in which patients are administered mass-produced pharmaceutical products with very little flexibility on dose or formulation. The last decade has witnessed an awakening to the shortcomings of this inflexible treatment model, with a push for personalised medicines that meet individual patient needs [19, 20]. 3D printing (3DP) promises a nexus for personalised medicine [21-27]. The FDA approval of Spritam, and the more investigation new drug (IND) clearance for Triastek's T19 – indicated for rheumatoid arthritis [28] – has set the precedence for 3DP as a viable manufacturing technology, demonstrating that they are viable fabrication technologies. However, both these examples do not capitalise on 3DP ability to produce personalised dose. The modern catalogue of 3DP technologies provide the ability to produce medicines with fully customisable drug contents, morphology, release kinetics, aesthetics, and taste profiles: on-demand at the point of patient need [29-31]. Notable examples of patient-centred 3DP medicines include tablets with braille designs for the visually impaired; multi drug-loaded hearing aids with anti-biofilm properties; microdevices with stimuli-responsive release mechanisms; and abuse-deterrent opioid tablets [32-37]. The first clinical study demonstrating the benefits of pharmaceutical 3DP over traditional manufacturing methods published its results in 2019, accelerating the transition of 3DP of medicines to mainstream clinical practice [38].

As a fully automated and digitalised technology, pharmaceutical 3DP is a natural partner to AI. In numerous fields, AI and physical devices are being united to create intelligent robots. Indeed, robotics is one of the most explored applications of AI. In medicine, intelligent robots are being increasingly applied to perform surgical procedures and aid remote patient assessment; their use spurred on by the COVID-19 pandemic [39, 40]. Within manufacturing technology, robotics and AI are predicted to come to the frontier of industry – permitting streamlined, autonomous production 24 hours a day with minimal

1 human intervention [41]. Al is likely to be a key facilitator in pharmaceutical 3DP's translation to the 2 clinic. Machine learning (ML), a powerful subset of AI, can aid the formulation development process 3 within pharmaceutical 3DP. Because 3DP of medicines offers a large number of possibilities over the 4 final product, such as the different compositions of the starting materials, design considerations (e.g. 5 shape and dimensions), and printing parameters (e.g. speed, temperature), the process of designing a 6 formulation presents an innumerable number of options that ordinarily require expert navigation. Here, 7 ML can be leveraged to learn from the large volume of pre-existing data to predict new outcomes, irrespective of the number of variables that need to be analysed. Consequently, the need for expert 8 9 formulation scientists is reduced from the clinical setting, and ML can manage the formulation of 3DP 10 medicines for any given scenario. ML can also guide the printing process by calculating ideal processing parameters, such as printing temperature, nozzle diameter, laser speed, or light exposure time. In 11 12 contrast to Zoomlab™ and F-CAD, ML does not require specific material properties to make the 13 prediction, and hence does not require the user to expend time and money collecting further data, 14 although the option is there should the researcher wishes to include the properties. Moreover, 15 continuous maintenance of printers can be Al-managed, ensuring that supply of medicines is not interrupted due to machine failures [42, 43]. An advanced goal of pharmaceutical 3DP is to achieve a 16 17 fully autonomous and intelligent pipeline of personalised medicines supply in the healthcare setting. 18 IoT-based technology can realise this vision: a network of robots will be connected to 3D printers to 19 support formulation compounding, post-processing, quality control (QC), and packaging. As such, human 20 resources, error, and bias will be almost entirely removed from pharmaceutical 3DP and patients will 21 gain 24/7 access to quality, personalised medicines. 22 This review will focus on the next era of pharmaceutical 3DP, in which AI is harnessed to achieve 23 the streamlined and autonomous production of 3DP medicines. As methods of pharmaceutical 3DP are 24 manifold, we begin by providing an overview of technologies available, with consideration of challenges 25 within each. Non-AI industrial techniques for process optimisation will then be discussed, namely design 26 of experiments; mechanistic models; pharmacokinetic modelling; and finite element analysis. Next, a 27 background on AI and ML will be covered, followed by how they overcome the pitfalls of traditional 28 unintelligent techniques, and an in-depth analysis of how they can be leveraged for 3DP of medicines. 29 Finally, an overview of IoT and an evaluation of the trajectory of the pharmaceutical 3DP field will be

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provided.

1 2 The Modern Catalogue of Pharmaceutical 3D Printing Technologies

- 2 Pharmaceutical 3DP represents a collection of distinct technologies that together allow the printing of
- 3 almost any conceivable medicine. To understand where AI can align with pharmaceutical 3DP, it is first
- 4 necessary to recognise the heterogeneity and the challenges within the various techniques. Each 3DP
- 5 method contains its own unique features, advantages, and limitations, suited to the use of different
- 6 excipients and drugs. An overview of contemporary pharmaceutical 3DP techniques is presented in
- 7 **Table 1**.
- 8 **Table 1.** An overview of pharmaceutical 3D printing technologies.

3D printing technology	Material	Mode of	Advantages	Limitations
		fusion		
Material Extrusion				
Fused Deposition Modelling (FDM)	Thermoplastic polymers	Heat	 Ease of use Inexpensive Different materials can be printed together 	 Not suitable for heat-labile molecules Relatively low resolution Complex structures require support.
Direct powder extrusion (DPE)	Thermoplastic polymers	Heat	 Ease of use Inexpensive Different materials can be printed together Single-step process 	 Relatively resolution Complex structures require support
Semi-solid Extrusion (SSE)	Gels, pastes		 Suitable for heat-labile drugs, and biomaterials Conducted at room temperature 	 Relatively low resolution Requires post-processing steps

Stereolithography (SLA)	Liquid photopolymer	Laser beam	 High resolution Relatively fast Suitable for heat-labile drugs 	 No FDA approved excipient suitable for oral delivery applications Post-processing (curing) necessary Overhangs require support
Digital Light	Liquid	Light	High resolution	 No FDA approved excipient suitable
Processing (DLP)	photopolyme		 Smooth finishing Relatively fast Suitable for heat-labile drugs 	for oral delivery applicationsOverhangs require supportPost-processing required
Continuous Liquid	Liquid	Light and	• High	• Expensive
Interface Production	photopolyme	r oxygen	resolutionObjects can	 No FDA approaved excipient suitable
(CLIP)			be easily removed • Fast • Suitable for heat-labile drugs	for oral delivery applications
Material Jetting				
Ink Jet Printing (IJP)	Liquid solvent	Evaporation, UV curing, reactive jetting	 High resolution Suitable for heat-labile drugs (only for piezoelectric ink jet printers) 	 Performance dependent on formulation properties Chemical stability of drugs in solvent
Powder Bed Fusion				
Selective Laser Sintering (SLS)	Thermoplastic polymer, metal & ceramic	Laser beam	Does not require supportsHigh resolution	 Potential thermal degradation of drug due to short term exposure to heat

			 Feed material can be too friable recycled and reused Able to confer rapid disintegration Objects can be too friable friable
Binder Jetting			
Binder Jetting	Polymer powder	Liquid binder	 Does not require support Suitable for heat-labile drugs Potential drug hydrolysis due to presence of solvent Time consuming drugs

2.1 Material Extrusion

2.1.1 Fused Deposition Modelling (FDM)

4 FDM, a thermal material extrusion technology, is one of the most explored 3DP technologies within

pharmaceutical research [44]. Its popularity is mostly attributed to its low costs, versatility, and its ability

to produce products with high mechanical strength. A diverse range of drug delivery systems have been

fabricated by FDM to meet patient-specific needs [24], including tablets [45, 46] (also referred to as

Printlets™ [47]), capsules [48], beads and catheters [49], topical masks [50], orodispersible films [51,

52], mouthguards [53], implants, transdermal microneedles [54], vaginal rings [55], scaffolds for tissue

engineering [56], and subcutaneous devices [57, 58].

FDM 3DP is a two-step process, which can be achieved by coupling hot-melt extrusion (HME) with FDM 3DP [59]. In HME, raw pharmaceutical materials are fed into a hopper and are subject to heat and pressure whilst moving through a rotating screw, which produces long strands of filaments of solid dispersions. With HME, high drug loading of filaments can be achieved, as opposed to the alternative of impregnating filaments with a drug-containing solution [45, 46]. The balance of brittleness and stiffness of filaments are assessed, as well as softness, diameter, and uniformity. Subsequently, filament feedstocks are fed into the FDM printer, where molten material is deposited, layer-by-layer, onto a platform creating a 3D object. The resolution of the object is dependent upon the thickness of the extruded filament, typically 100 μm.

1 In general, excipients used are thermoplastic polymers, which include polylactic acid (PLA), 2 polyvinyl alcohol (PVA) and hydroxypropyl methylcellulose (HPMC). By selecting specific polymers or 3 blends of polymers [60, 61], desired quality attributes can be achieved. Drug release properties can be 4 modified by tuning the infill percentage [62], polymer matrix composition [59], compartmentation [63], 5 structural shape [64] and shell thickness. 'Polypills' have been fabricated using FDM, allowing the 6 combination of several drugs in a single capsule with bespoke release patterns [65, 66]. FDM is also 7 capable of fabricating complex structures like microneedles for parental delivery [67] and implants [57, 68, 69]. 8 9 Despite its versatility, a key limitation of FDM 3DP is its incompatibility with heat-labile drugs. 10 While selected polymers have been deemed suitable for low-temperature printing (i.e. 70 °C), the 11 majority of conventional polymers used for FDM printing necessitates high temperatures to be extruded 12 [70]. Additionally, other 3DP technologies discussed below can achieve products with higher resolutions. 13 A challenge common to every present-day pharmaceutical 3DP technology is the largely empirical 14 process of selecting the appropriate process parameters and composition of drug product. The 3DP 15 scientist must consider the parameter space for formulation, HME, and FDM particulars. Within each 16 space there are numerous considerations, such as proportion of starting materials, use of excipients 17 (such as lubricants, binders, plasticisers, disintegrant, antioxidant, and solubiliser), extrusion 18 temperature, printing temperature, printing speed, horizontal and vertical resolution [44]. A more 19 comprehensive list of parameters vital to FDM are enumerated in ref. [71]. 20 **Direct powder extrusion (DPE)** 21 Direct powder extrusion is a material extrusion technology akin to FDM, wherein a powder mix 22 containing the active pharmaceutical ingredient is directly extruded through the nozzle of the printer 23 [72, 73]. Like in FDM, the powder mix is fused together through the application of heat and pressure as 24 the particles flow through a rotating screw. However, unlike FDM, DPE obviates the HME step in FDM 3D 25 printing. In this way, DPE permits the fabrication of pharmaceutical powder mixtures that might have 26 been unsuitable for FDM printing due to inadequate mechanical characteristics of the HME filaments. 27 While it shares several drawbacks with FDM 3DP, the one-step fabrication process of DPE confers 28 simpler and faster manufacturing. Most of the reported DPE papers are single-screw, and hence face the same challenges as single-screw HME, such as poor mixing [74, 75]; expanding the system to twin-screw 29 30 would require consideration on the effect of the travel speed, since more load will be carried.

1 2.1.3 Semi-solid Extrusion (SSE)

- 2 SSE is an extrusion-based 3DP technique involving the deposition of viscoelastic 'ink' onto a build plate
- 3 [76]. Here, gels or pastes containing the active pharmaceutical ingredient are extruded through a
- 4 syringe-based tool-head nozzle and deposited layer-by-layer on a platform to form a 3D object [77].
- 5 Unlike other aforementioned material extrusion-based technologies, SSE can be achieved at room
- 6 temperature, making it ideal for heat-labile compounds. It is for this feature that SSE is extensively used
- 7 in bioprinting, where living cells are printed to form tissues and complex structures. Examples of SSE
- 8 applications in the pharmaceutical sphere include the fabrication of rectal suppositories [78, 79],
- 9 paediatric-friendly tablets [80], orodispersible tablets [81], and implants [82].

SSE is a technique that would benefit greatly from an optimised and automated means of formulation development. The quality of the final product is heavily influenced by numerous process parameters and physicochemical properties of the mixture. These include the rheological properties and miscibility of the mixture, the flow rate, the processing temperature, and the printing speed [83]. Furthermore, as the diameter of nozzles used in SSE is often larger than that in FDM, the printing resolution achieved by SSE 3DP can be relatively lower than FDM 3DP. Post-processing steps, such as drying or cooling, are also necessary, during which the product might be distorted if the mechanical

2.2 Vat Photopolymerisation (SLA, DLP, CLIP)

properties have not been optimised.

Vat polymerisation 3DP cures liquid photopolymerisable resins using light, sequentially building a desired solid object layer by layer [31, 84]. There are three main types of vat photopolymerisation 3DP: stereolithography (SLA), digital light processing (DLP), and continuous liquid interface production (CLIP) [85]. The three methods vary subtly. SLA employs a concentrated beam of ultraviolet (UV) light or a laser, to selectively sketch and harden layers of liquid photopolymer [86]. DLP projects light images, composed of square pixels, onto resin from a digital projector screen. CLIP shines UV light through an oxygen permeable window, which hardens the resin above. A key advantage of CLIP over SLA and DLP is that the bottom hardened layer of the printed product does not adhere to the printer, due to 'inert space' created by the oxygen permeable membrane. This means that products can be easily removed from the printer without mechanical force after 3DP. In terms of manufacturing speed, DLP printing briefly projects each resin layer with whole images, rather than drawing them with a UV beam or laser, thus is a significantly faster fabrication method than SLA. When first released, CLIP claimed to print

items 25 to 100 times faster than SLA and DLP, however, this was later proven to be generally unfounded for 3DP items that are not composed of thin lattice-like structures [85].

Together with material jetting 3DP, vat polymerisation printing has the advantage of producing items with the best surface resolutions of all additive manufacturing technologies. This is because the UV, visible, and laser light sources can be shone at resolutions as low as 5 μm, allowing the production of highly intricate structures [87]. Moreover, the light curing methods of vat polymerisation are especially suited to the production of medicines, as avoidance of excess heat in the printing process evades the thermal degradation of susceptible drugs. Fast photopolymerisation also makes SLA, DLP, and CLIP some of the quickest 3DP methods, an important feature for printing medicines in a clinical setting, where demand may be urgent [33]. The unique properties of vat polymerisation have been successfully exploited for several pharmaceutical applications. Polypills containing several drugs in distinct layers, with tuneable release profiles, have been printed using SLA [33, 88]. Such methods are well suited to reducing tablet burden for patients with polypharmacy. Elsewhere, SLA has been employed to fabricate drug-loaded tablets with modified release characteristics, and drug-loaded hydrogels [89, 90]. DLP is similarly capable of printing modified release tablets and has also been used to fabricate antibacterial dental devices [91-93]. Interesting applications of CLIP in pharmaceutics include anti-cancer drug loaded devices, and microneedles for the delivery of biotherapeutics over skin [94, 95].

As with all manufacturing processes, vat polymerisation has several disadvantages and challenges. A prominent issue is the biocompatibility of the uncured resin, which if not addressed has been reported to be toxic. Photopolymerisation reactions, initiated by free radicals, also have the propensity to react with drugs, potentially altering the drug release profile [88]. Depending on the materials used, reactive monomers in resin may be toxic or irritant, necessitating post-processing of printed products. Post-processing involves exposing a finished 3DP object to UV or visible light, to ensure all liquid resin monomers are polymerised and hardened. Without this step, harmful monomers may remain on or within the item, and the risk of post-printing conformational warping is increased [96]. Attention should also be paid to the compatibility of API with the photopolymer, as a recent study revealed the occurrence of a Michael addition reaction between amlodipine and PEGDA [88]. Vat polymerisation might also be unsuitable for heat labile drugs, as the temperature of the system might inadvertently increase as a result of the exothermic photopolymerisation reaction [31]. Lastly, any unsupported overhanging parts of structures must be supported by removable scaffolding in the vat polymerisation process, increasing production time and steps [85].

2.3 Material Jetting

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2.3.1 Inkjet Printing

- Inkjet printing (IJP) is a material jetting-based 3DP techniques involving the deposition of viscoelastic
 'ink' onto a build plate. Here, droplets of solvent are generated either through vaporisation of ink within
- 5 the printer nozzle, or through the use of a piezoelectric material that vibrates and ejects droplets upon
- 6 the application of a voltage [97]. Droplets are commonly deposited onto an edible substrate, but studies
- 7 have also explored the fabrication of complete tablets obviating the need for a substrate [98]. Deposited
- 8 droplets are subsequently solidified through various means, including solvent evaporation, UV curing, or
- 9 reactive jetting. Apart from flexible dosing, IJP enables the fabrication of high-resolution patterns
- through the precise control of droplet extrusion rate and positioning. Various studies have exploited this
- unique feature to fabricate 2D QR encoded dosage forms, either through the deposition of drug-loaded
- 12 ink into the pattern of the QR code [99], or by printing QR codes and data matrices onto the surface of
- 13 FDM-produced tablets [100]. These studies support ongoing efforts to combat counterfeit medicines,
- 14 ensuring safe transport of medicines through the supply chain and safeguarding patient safety [101].

With the aid of UV curing, 3D structures can be obtained using IJP [102-104].

Formulation development is a key challenge within IJP. Satisfactory printing performance is highly dependent on the combined physical properties of the formulation, such as surface tension, viscosity, and density [105]. Suboptimal physical properties can cause issues such as splashing of the droplet upon impact with the substrate and nozzle blockage. While the carrier fluid forms the bulk component and largely drives the formulation's physical properties, drugs and excipients will nevertheless influence viscosity, surface tension, and therefore printability. Beyond physical considerations, the stability of drugs and excipients is critical in such solvent-based systems. While thermal degradation can be avoided by using a piezoelectric inkjet printer, chemical stability is primarily determined by the choice of carrier fluid and drug. The most commonly reported carrier fluid in pharmaceutical inkjet printing is water; alternative solvents must be developed for drugs prone to hydrolysis. Clearly, novel means of formulation development will greatly alleviate time and labour investment within inkjet printing and other 3DP technologies.

2.3.2 Powder Bed Fusion (SLS, DMLS, EBM, SLM)

- 29 In powder bed fusion, heat is used to bind powder particles that are deposited in a build area or bed to
- 30 build up the 3D object. These include Selective Laser Sintering (SLS), Direct Metal Laser Sintering (DMLS),
- 31 Electron Bean Melting (EBM) and Selective Laser Melting (SLM) [30, 106]. To date, only SLS has been

explored for the manufacture of pharmaceuticals. Here, a laser traces a pattern and fuses powder

particles on the surface of the build plate. The process is repeated each time a fresh layer of powder is

deposited by a roller until the entire 3D object is printed. SLS offers unique advantages for printing orally

administered medicines, such as intricate and complex geometries [32, 107], and orally disintegrating

structures [108, 109]. A recent review has provided a comprehensive overview on the principles and

applications of SLS [110].

Though heat is applied only momentarily during powder bed fusion, thermal degradation of the active pharmaceutical ingredient (API) can be a limitation with some types of SLS printers, especially when printing heat-labile compounds [110]. Additionally, SLS and other powder bed fusion technologies produce powder waste, causing its cost-effectiveness to suffer. Finally, while the porosity of SLS-printed tablets can confer rapid oral disintegration properties, it can also lead to unacceptable friability. Consequently, there is a need to optimise manufacturing parameters, such as temperature and powder composition, for the production of tablets with satisfactory mechanical properties, disintegration properties, and thermal stability.

2.3.3 Binder Jetting

Similar to powder bed fusion technologies, binder jetting involves the layer-by-layer build-up of a 3D object through the binding of powder particles [111]. However, unlike powder bed fusion technologies, thermal energy is not used to fuse the particles together. Instead, a liquid binder is selectively extruded and deposited across the powder bed. Notably, the licensed 3DP medicine Spritam* is fabricated using binder jetting. Though heat is not applied during printing, drug stability remains a concern as the application of the liquid binder may result in hydrolysis. In addition, binder jetting tends to be time-consuming as the printed object must be left for up to 48 hours to allow solvent evaporation. In addition to general 3DP features, binder jetting also requires consideration of factors concerning the liquid binder, including its viscosity and stability.

2.3.4 Electrohydrodyamic Printing

Electrohydrodynamic Printing (EHDP) is another material jetting technology that is distinct from other
3DP technologies in that an external electric field is used to jet the material [112]. It is this feature that
has allowed EHDP to garner attention, which provides EHDP with the ability to achieve smaller printing
resolutions and faster printing times compared to similar 3DP setups where an electric field is not
incorporated [113-115]. EHDP has been applied in pharmaceutics to primarily fabricate films [116-120].

- 1 However, EHDP has been reported to produce unstable jets, which can result in large batch-to-batch
- 2 variation, as well as limited thus far to vertically small products [121, 122].

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3 Alternative Optimisation Techniques to Machine Learning in 3D

Printing

- 6 Due to the complexity of pharmaceutical 3DP, a trial-and-error approach to the development of new
- 7 medicines often wastes time, money, materials, and importantly may not result in an optimal product.
- 8 There are many choices to be made when developing a novel 3DP medicine, ranging from the macro:
- 9 such as printing technology and formulation components; to the micro: including printer settings and
- 10 fine morphological features. Whilst the experience of experts is often sought for research projects, this
- is less feasible in clinical settings where printing demand far outstrips the availability of experienced 3DP
- 12 practitioners. Moreover, the knowledge-led approach is not standardised or structured. For this reason,
- 13 predictive tools are useful in identifying optimal process parameters as they apply existing scientific
- 14 knowledge to the production of new medicines. Several optimisation techniques are already established
- in industry, with varying scopes of utility. These techniques can be used to ascertain pharmaceutical 3DP
- 16 'rules' that may be applied to print medicines without the presence of an expert, to achieve desired
- 17 medicine characteristics. Optimisation techniques are key tools in multiple sectors owing to their ability
- 18 to minimise both cost and resource wastage, whilst accelerating innovation. The pharmaceutical
- 19 industry has come to rely on traditional methods of process optimisation for various formulation
- development tasks [86, 87]. Recent work has demonstrated how such tools can accelerate project
- 21 timelines from years to months [85]. In some cases, techniques can predict how medicines will behave
- 22 in vivo, thus reducing requirements for animal experiments. To fully recognise where AI can provide
- 23 benefit to pharmaceutical 3DP, it is important to recognise the modalities of existing tools and their
- 24 limitations. The applications of four non-AI optimisation techniques within pharmaceutical 3DP will
- 25 henceforth be discussed.

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3.1 Design of Experiment

- 27 Design of experiments (DoE) is a non-learning mathematical technique extensively used in
- 28 pharmaceutics. DoE is a systematic model for process optimisation that studies how input parameters
- 29 (e.g. drug loading) relate to each other and the desired output (e.g. tablet strength) [123]. For example,
- 30 variables that could impact tablet breaking force include binder content and excipient porosity and

friability [124]. DoE allows mapping of the extent that variables affect the experimental outcome, alone
and in combination. DoE projects generally follow a similar structure. Firstly, the research objective is
defined, such as 'optimise the strength of 3DP tablets'. Next, researchers must consider what process
variables are likely to have a considerable impact on the outcome [125]. This step requires specialist
process knowledge, careful consideration of all possibilities, and elimination of bias. Once all significant
process variables have been agreed upon, researchers must select which to investigate in their DoE
model. If researchers choose to investigate many variables, then greater time, money, and consumables
will be required to build an accurate and robust model. Following variable selection, levels of variables
to investigate need to be chosen. Two-level DoE models are very common, though more levels can be
investigated if researchers are comfortable in building larger, more complicated models. In a two-level
design with numerical variables, a 'low' and 'high' point are selected for each (Figure 1). This selection
will define the range over which the model can be used. For example, if printing temperatures of 50 °C
and 100 °C are chosen as the two levels, then researchers would not be able to use the resulting DoE
model to predict printing outcomes outside 50 $-$ 100 $^{\circ}$ C [123]. Once experiment variables and their
levels are decided upon, then model design can be determined. DoE model design can be a complex
task, and other sources go into substantial depth on this process [126]. These decisions will be
influenced by available resources, statistical power, and operational considerations. If a full-factorial
design is chosen, then all possible experimental permutations are performed. Fractional factorial designs
sample a subset of the full-factorial, which can be used to reduce the number of experiments required,
albeit at the expense of reduced statistical power. In this way, the experimental space is covered
without having to perform all possible iterations. DoE designs are followed by performing experiments
that sequentially alter variables' levels, testing how individual variables affect the outcome, and often
whether there are compounding effects between variables. Once data collection is complete, then
statistical methods such as ANOVA are used to analyse how variable levels relate to the outcome.
Researchers can then use the model to predict what variable settings will result in an optimal outcome.
To date, DoE in 3DP of pharmaceuticals has been applied to evaluate structure—function relationships of
various parameters for FDM, SLS and SSE [127-131].

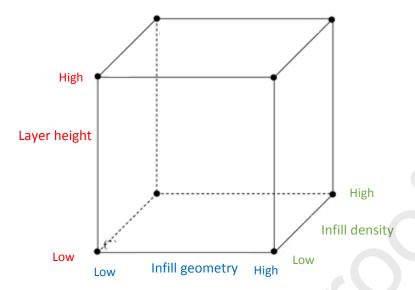


Figure 1 Two-level full-factorial DoE design considering three numerical independent variables implicated in 3D printing.

3.2 Finite Element Analysis and Computational Fluid Dynamics

Similar to DoE, finite element analysis (FEA) and computational fluid dynamics (CFD) are another standard optimisation techniques used in both academia and industry, applied in fields such as aerospace, electronics and biomechanics. In fact, the FDA is actively investing in CFD for medical devices and biological fluids [132]. The wide adoption of both techniques can be attributed to the high degree of accuracy that can be achieved, which in some instances has been found to be more accurate than results obtained from experimental measurements [133, 134]. An additional appeal is that simulations can be performed that are experimentally challenging to conduct [135]. Both modelling techniques are able to simulate a range of forces that products are subjected to, including mechanical stress, heat and fluid dynamics, which seamlessly allows researchers to optimise their design thereafter. The process involves loading the design of interest and applying stresses that are anticipated for the design, factoring in both magnitude and direction. The results of the stresses on the design can be observed by the user, and hence provides a 'white-box' effect. This has been leveraged by pharmaceutical researchers in 3DP to visualise the stress distribution in microneedles, thermodynamic behaviours in FDM filaments, air flow in inhalers, and rupture behaviour of coated capsules [136-139].

1 3.3 Mechanistic Modelling

- 2 Mechanistic models are mathematical models built using physical laws to explain process variables, and
- 3 have been applied to 3DP [140]. These types of models require domain expertise, which depending on
- 4 the model developed, will require knowledge of thermodynamics, particle physics, and fluid dynamics
- 5 [141]. A salient advantage of mechanistic models is that they can be regarded as 'white-box' modelling
- 6 since the dependent variable is clearly explainable [142]. Mechanistic modelling has been explored for
- 7 3DP, with relevant models covering filler impregnation, predicting mechanical properties,
- 8 photopolymerisation kinetics, and heat absorption in powder-bed technologies [140, 143-146].
- 9 However, for pharmaceutical 3DP mechanistic modelling has not been thoroughly employed. Unlike
- other techniques (DoE and FEA), there are no readily available software to simulate mechanistic models
- for 3DP. Two notable studies incorporating mechanistic models within pharmaceutical 3DP have been
- 12 conducted by Zidan et al. (2019), whereby rheological characteristics of formulations were modelled.
- 13 Rheology is an invaluable tool to understanding processing conditions [147], which in the study
- ultimately led to improving the flow rate of pastes during printing [148, 149].

4 Artificial Intelligence and Fundamentals of Machine Learning

- 16 ML is one of the main AI technologies [150]. The goal of AI is to achieve super-human intelligence.
- 17 Classic AI, also referred to as symbolic AI, was able to achieve this through a rule-based system, whereby
- 18 rules were hard-coded into models through human intervention. Hence, symbolic AI requires
- 19 researchers to first learn the rules and then code the relationship into an algorithm. This is a drawback
- 20 because time and resources are needed to first identify relationships. Moreover, rules will need to be
- 21 revised if new rules are identified, which consequently makes symbolic AI difficult to scale-up. ML AI on
- the other hand uses statistical learning techniques that allow a machine to establish its own relationship
- 23 between explanatory and response variables. Therefore, ML is able to adapt as the training data
- changes (**Figure 2**). ML algorithms can work at speeds well beyond human intellect, with a much lower
- 25 risk of error, therefore it is unsurprising how ML has come to transform so many contemporary
- disciplines and processes [8, 151-154].

- The ML process involves a series of stages that combine to form an overall pipeline (**Figure 3**).
- 28 Typically, data must be pre-processed and possibly vectorised prior to any learning taking place. The
- 29 pre-processing stage is to ensure the data is cleaned and ML-friendly. In a survey conducted, it was
- found that ML practitioners spend most of their time, up to 60-80%, on cleaning data and pre-

processing [155]. For one, datasets are rarely ML compatible, with issues encountered include missing data, incorrect data, and outliers. Such anomalies can impact the performance of a ML model and in some cases, lead to invalid predictions. In addition, pre-processing can enrich data, which in turn can facilitate the ML technique in discerning patterns. Such methodologies include removing noisy variables or reducing the number of features considered by an algorithm. Although ML can be approached in a *plug-and-play* manner, whereby unprocessed data is directly fed to an algorithm, taking the additional steps to clean and pre-process data can significantly improve prediction performance. An adage used within physical experimentation also applies to ML: by taking the additional steps to ensure the starting materials are properly pre-treated, one can improve the consistency of the end product.

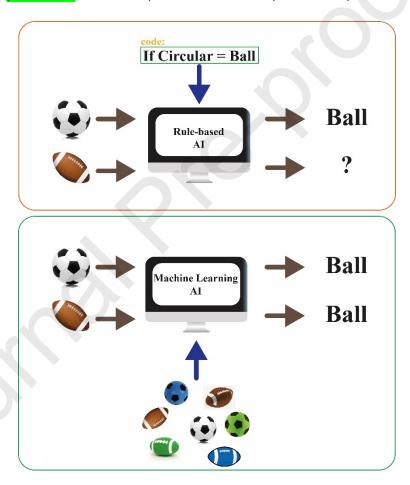
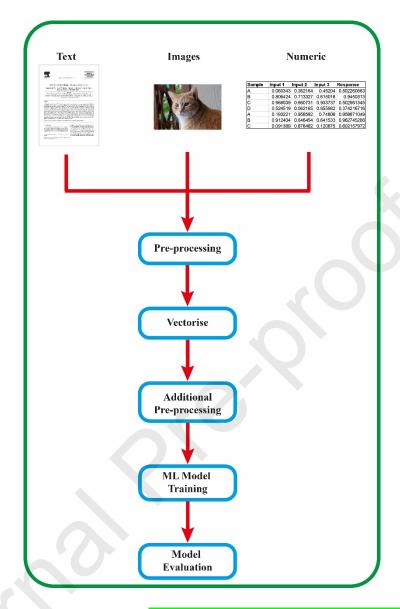


Figure 2. The difference between rule-based and machine learning AI. The former requires a user to explicitly code, in this example, the definition of a ball; whereas the latter is given images of the target and asked to learn from the dataset.

Once data is clean, learning can begin. Mode of learning varies depending on the specific ML
technique used and is discussed in more depth in Sections 4.1.1-4.1.5. Generally, algorithms are trained
to recognise patterns in data, which they can then attach rules to, hence 'learning' how data features
map to outcomes. Once data has been fed into a ML algorithm, and a model is formed, then predictions
for new data can be made. There are various metrics that are used to evaluate the performance of ML
techniques since there is no one metric that holistically describes predictive performance. Thus, a
frequent practice is to evaluate the performance using several metrics. For classification techniques,
metrics include accuracy, precision, recall, specificity, Cohen's kappa, and Matthew's correlation
coefficient. For regression analysis, common metrics include the root mean squared error, mean
absolute error and coefficient of determinations (r²). Metrics can be additionally useful for comparing
the performance of different ML techniques or different pre-processing strategies [156].



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Figure 3. Overview of a typical ML pipeline. ML can handle text, images and numeric data formats. Though a 'plug-and-play' approach can be taken with ML, pre-processing can help enrich input data and ultimately improve model performance.

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4.1 Machine Learning Techniques

4.1.1 Supervised learning

- There are several subclasses of ML, of which supervised learning is one. Supervised learning involves
- 9 directing an algorithm to solve a specific question. The algorithm is presented with data that has been
- 10 labelled, describing the question of interest. For example, labels could be medicine 3D printability, or
- optimum 3DP temperature [156]. The former label in this example illustrates a classification ML task, as

1 medicines are classified as being 3D printable, or alternatively, not 3D printable. The latter exemplifies a regression task, because a specific printing temperature is given from a continuous range (Figure 4). A supervised ML algorithm takes a subset of the labelled data, known as the training data, and uses it to learn how dataset features relate to labels; e.g. how the physical properties of a medicine affect its 3D printability. After learning how data features relate to data labels, the ML algorithm can use a second subset of the data, known as testing data, which is unseen to the machine, to verify how accurate its 7 predictions are. Supervised learning has been used to classify gene-disease association, pattern recognition of pharmaceutical raw ingredients [157, 158].

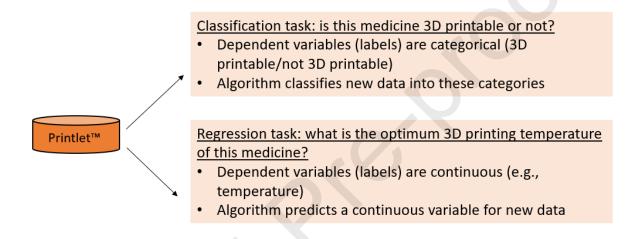


Figure 4. Difference between classification and regression ML tasks.

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Frequently used supervised algorithms include multilinear regression, decision trees, random forest, support vector machine, and artificial neural networks (ANN). Multilinear regression is a series of linear regression calculations, seeking to fit a regression line through a multi-dimensional space [159]. As the name suggests, decision trees make their predictions by learning classification rules within data based on the dataset features (Figure 5). A decision tree consists of nodes and branches, where each node splits into further nodes until the terminal node. The user can define how each node splits. For classification tasks, a popular splitting decision is based on probability, where the algorithm learns the split with the greatest probability of obtaining the correctly labelled class [160]. Multiple decision trees can be used to establish the best prediction, which are referred to as random forest. Essentially, random forests are a collection of decision trees that are randomly divided, learning random subsets of

- 1 explanatory variables. The final step is then to pool the results together, and depending on the user-
- 2 defined method, random forest can then obtain an average or the majority vote [160].

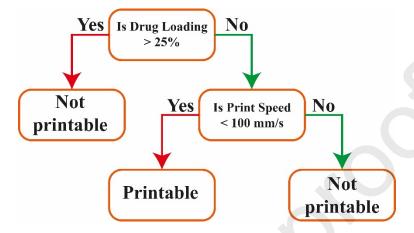


 Figure 5. A schematic depicting an example of a simple decision tree. In this example, a decision tree is learning the rules for determining printability based on drug loading and print speed.

next layer (Figure 7) [162].

Support vector machines create a decision boundary seeking to separate the different classes. The decision boundary consists of a linear hyperplane and support vectors, where the latter determines the margin of the decision boundary [161] (**Figure 6 (A)**). Hence, the input data needs to possess a linear relationship. For non-linear datasets, the *kernel trick* can be employed for SVM, whereby the data is projected onto a high-dimensional feature space, and subsequently a linear hyperplane is fitted (**Figure 6 (B)**). With the *kernel trick*, SVM is an attractive ML technique for both linear and non-linear datasets. Artificial neural networks are another commonly used algorithm, first modelled in 1943. Inspired by biological neurons, an ANN consists of interconnected nodes, which are connected by edges. Each node performs a calculation, factoring in the weighted values received from preceding nodes, where if a given threshold is reached, then the node is activated, and the signal is propagated to the

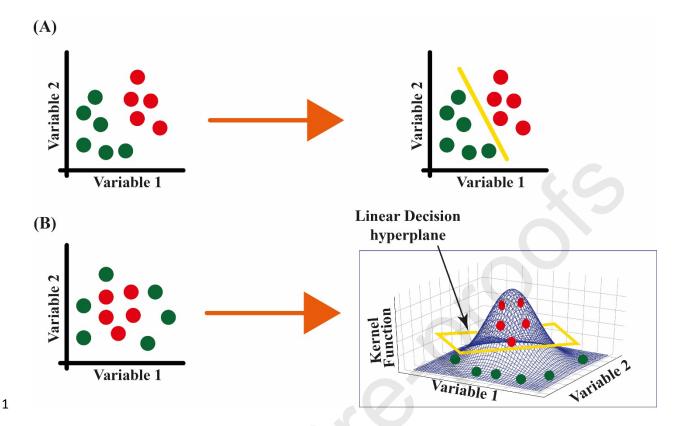


Figure 6. Schematic illustrating the classification principle behind SVM. This algorithm learns through creating hyperplanes in order to separate different classes. If the input data is non-linear, then the 'kernel trick' is used to find linearly separable hyperplanes between different classes.

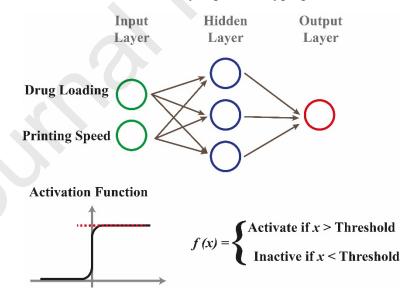
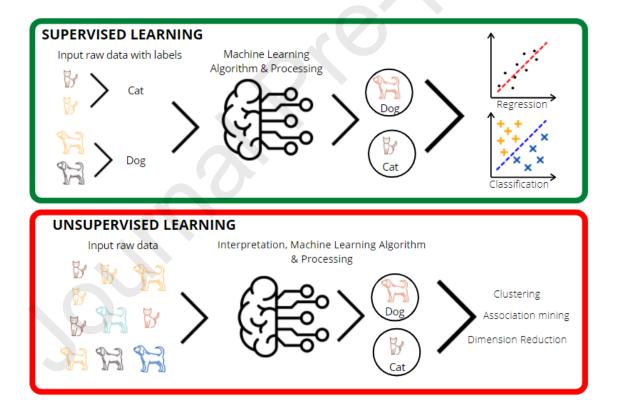


Figure 7. Schematic of ANN. Inspired by biological neurons, the algorithm consists of nodes (coloured circles) and edges (arrows) that communicate together provided the threshold for the activation function has been reached. ANN is inspired by the workings of a biological neurone.

4.1.2 Unsupervised learning

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- 2 Unsupervised learning involves the identification of patterns in data, without access to labels. For this
- 3 reason, no predefined questions are asked of the algorithm; the algorithm identifies differences in data
- 4 without being told what differences to look for [163, 164]. For example, an unsupervised algorithm
- 5 could be supplied with the pharmaceutical properties of thousands of 3D printed tablets, and of its own
- 6 accord find if there is a relationship between tablet porosity and disintegration speed. Unsupervised
- 7 learning provides researchers with a powerful tool to analyse data without human bias [165]. By
- 8 choosing to not ask specific questions, algorithms may find patterns in data that researchers had not
- 9 previously considered. A common unsupervised ML technique is clustering, in which a model learns
- differences between data points, and clusters them into groups for visualisation of a data trends [166].
- 11 Key clustering algorithms include hierarchical clustering, k-means, and divisive analysis [167].
- 12 Unsupervised learning has been used to classify P-glycoprotein inhibitors [168]. The difference between
- supervised and unsupervised learning is portrayed in **Figure 8**.



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Figure 8. Illustration depicting the difference between supervised and unsupervised learning. Supervised learning requires the input data to be annotated by the user, and can perform both regression and classification tasks. Unsupervised learning does not require the data to be annotated, and thereby saving time. Instead, unsupervised learning requires the algorithm to

- inherently identify difference between groups. Unsupervised learning is generally used for
- 2 clustering, association mining and dimension reduction.

3 4.1.3 Semi-supervised learning

- 4 Semi-supervised learning, as its name suggests, sits at the intersection between supervised and
- 5 unsupervised methods [169]. Semi-supervised projects begin with a dataset that is partially labelled. In
- 6 the modern world of big data, partially labelled datasets are a common occurrence [170]. Unsupervised
- 7 learning techniques are used to label unlabelled data by drawing inferences from data with labels [171].
- 8 Subsequently, supervised techniques are then used to identify relationships between data features and
- 9 their labels. Semi-supervised learning is a useful approach for increasing the quantity of useable data in
- a set. Increasing the amount of data is often sought after to increase the external validity of a ML model.
- 11 As with all experiments, increased sampling typically leads to more reliable and transferable results.
- 12 Labelling of data by humans can require significant time, money, and is prone to mistakes. In
- juxtaposition, the same task carried out by unsupervised ML methods is often fast, efficient, and
- 14 fastidious.

15 4.1.4 Reinforcement learning

- 16 Reinforcement learning is a goal-directed technique applied to unlabelled data [172]. Reinforcement
- 17 algorithms are set a goal and then the ML model works towards accomplishing this in an iterative, self-
- 18 teaching manner. For example, a reinforcement algorithm has mastered the boardgame Go through
- self-teaching alone, achieving super-human performance [173]. During reinforcement learning actions
- are applied, and their success is judged based on how close they bring the algorithm to its end goal. For
- 21 example, a 3D printer with in-built reinforcement learning would tweak printing parameters and
- 22 quantify what effect they have on tablet hardness. If a chosen parameter results in an outcome that
- deviates from the end goal, the algorithm experiences 'punishment', and learns not to carry out such an
- 24 operation again. Conversely, if a parameter moves the system closer to the goal, then the algorithm will
- experience 'reward', and will learn that this is a positive action. With time reinforcement algorithms
- 26 learn how to avoid punishment and maximise reward, eventually leading them to achieve their goal
- 27 [174].

28

4.1.5 Deep Learning

- 29 Deep learning is a subset of ML that is garnering increasing attention in recent years [175]. Deep
- learning is an extension of artificial neural networks, whereby networks extend more deeply and thus
- interact at higher complexities [176]. ANN typically have three layers: an input, a hidden layer, and an

- 1 output layer. In deep learning, the number of hidden layers can extend into the 100s [177]. This has
- 2 resulted in deep learning being able to outperform other ML algorithms for large datasets, and to easily
- 3 model complex interactions between features [176, 178]. Additionally, the neural architecture can be
- 4 made such that deep learning can be used for either supervised, unsupervised or reinforcement
- 5 learning, and thus expands deep learning's application.

5 Applications of ML in Pharmaceutical 3D Printing

- 7 Both 3DP and ML are enabling features of the fourth industrial revolution, Industry 4.0, whereby
- 8 traditional manufacturing methods are advanced and automated [179]. Despite both technologies
- 9 existing for decades, it was only recently that the two began to merge (*Figure 9*). ML has the potential
- to drastically change how research in 3DP is approached in both research and clinical settings. Recently,
- 11 Gongora et al. found that ML can reduce the number of FDM experiments by 60-fold [180], whilst
- 12 Ruberu et al. reported that process optimisation through ML can considerably reduce the number of
- bioprinting experiments to below 50, out of a possible 6,000 to 10,000 [181]. Evidently, these will
- 14 expedite research discoveries and facilitate personalised, on-demand printing of medicines. ML has
- been applied to different stages of the 3DP pipeline, which here are categorised as pre-printing, in-situ
- or real-time printing, and post-printing.

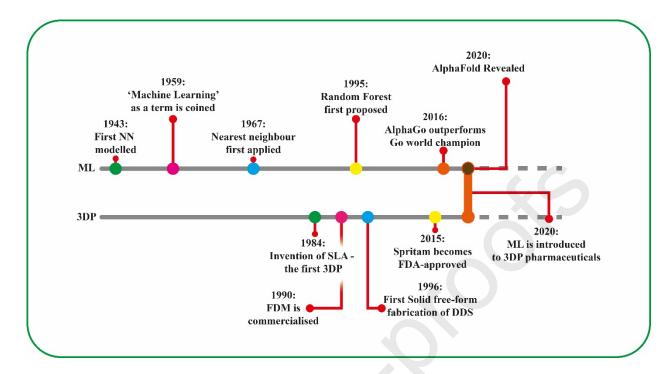


Figure 9. Side-by-side timeline depicting key landmarks in ML and 3DP research until 2020. Although both technologies align with Industry 4.0, they have been mostly researched independently to one another. In 2020 articles combining ML and 3DP of pharmaceuticals begin to be published. (NN: neural network).

5.1 Machine Learning in the Pre-Printing Stage

Pharmaceutical formulation is a complex task ordinarily requiring expert experience. Even seemingly insignificant changes to formulation design can significantly affect the final medicine characteristics and *in vivo* behaviour. For example, tablet geometry can considerably affect drug dissolution rate, and the choice of excipients can affect bioavailability [182, 183]. In pharmaceutical 3DP, formulations are often personalised and thus different from one batch to the next. Thus, specialists in the field must rely on their knowledge to adapt formulations to suit the pharmaceutical needs of the individual [50]. There are many factors to consider during personalised formulation design, some include: patient's swallowing capacity, flavour preferences, required drug dose, required drug release kinetics, presence of disease, sex, age, motor skills, and coadministered medications [184-199]. ML has the capacity to consider all these factors and predict optimal formulation design features based on an individual's requirements [154, 200-202]. Within the pharmaceutical formulation field, ML has been used to predict medicines' stability, drug loading capacity, drug release kinetics, and clinical patient response, to name a few applications [203-208]. These are all directly applicable to formulation of 3DP medicines.

1	In the pharmaceutical world, ML has mostly been used to predict and optimise drug release
2	[209-220]. Medicines' drug dissolution profiles are a fundamental characterisation technique in
3	pharmaceutics [221]. Traditional evaluation of drug dissolution is time-consuming, expending large
4	quantities of consumables, such as buffers, and requiring apparatuses with high capital costs, such as
5	UV-Vis spectrophotometers and dissolution baths. Therefore, ML prediction of medicines' dissolution
6	behaviour could allow researchers to experimentally screen only the formulations predicted to have the
7	best results (i.e. formulations of interest); hence allowing scientists to redirect time and resources to
8	other aspects of the formulation process. Several studies have used ML to predict dissolution profiles of
9	3DP medicines (<i>Figure 10</i>). ANN has been used to predict the dissolution behaviour of DLP-fabricated
10	Printlets™ [222]. Two ANN were compared, where one model only used the material composition as an
11	input, and the second ANN model used both the material composition and the DLP exposure time. It
12	was revealed that the ANN architecture using solely the material composition obtained an R ² of 0.981
12 13	was revealed that the ANN architecture using solely the material composition obtained an R^2 of 0.981 when compared to the experimental data, whereas the ANN architecture factoring exposure time
13	when compared to the experimental data, whereas the ANN architecture factoring exposure time
13 14	when compared to the experimental data, whereas the ANN architecture factoring exposure time yielded an R ² of 0.996, thus inferring the exposure time to be a pertinent input. Another study compared
13 14 15	when compared to the experimental data, whereas the ANN architecture factoring exposure time yielded an R ² of 0.996, thus inferring the exposure time to be a pertinent input. Another study compared the performance of four different ML techniques to predict the dissolution profiles of FDM products,
13 14 15 16	when compared to the experimental data, whereas the ANN architecture factoring exposure time yielded an R ² of 0.996, thus inferring the exposure time to be a pertinent input. Another study compared the performance of four different ML techniques to predict the dissolution profiles of FDM products, using rheological properties as inputs [210]. The study revealed that a non-linear technique, decision
13 14 15 16 17	when compared to the experimental data, whereas the ANN architecture factoring exposure time yielded an R ² of 0.996, thus inferring the exposure time to be a pertinent input. Another study compared the performance of four different ML techniques to predict the dissolution profiles of FDM products, using rheological properties as inputs [210]. The study revealed that a non-linear technique, decision trees, outperformed other linear techniques in predicting drug release profiles. A third study
13 14 15 16 17	when compared to the experimental data, whereas the ANN architecture factoring exposure time yielded an R ² of 0.996, thus inferring the exposure time to be a pertinent input. Another study compared the performance of four different ML techniques to predict the dissolution profiles of FDM products, using rheological properties as inputs [210]. The study revealed that a non-linear technique, decision trees, outperformed other linear techniques in predicting drug release profiles. A third study investigating ML for prediction of drug release using the material composition as input found ANN to
13 14 15 16 17 18	when compared to the experimental data, whereas the ANN architecture factoring exposure time yielded an R ² of 0.996, thus inferring the exposure time to be a pertinent input. Another study compared the performance of four different ML techniques to predict the dissolution profiles of FDM products, using rheological properties as inputs [210]. The study revealed that a non-linear technique, decision trees, outperformed other linear techniques in predicting drug release profiles. A third study investigating ML for prediction of drug release using the material composition as input found ANN to achieve near perfect predictions, as depicted in Figure 10 (Ciii), thus highlighting the utility of ML in

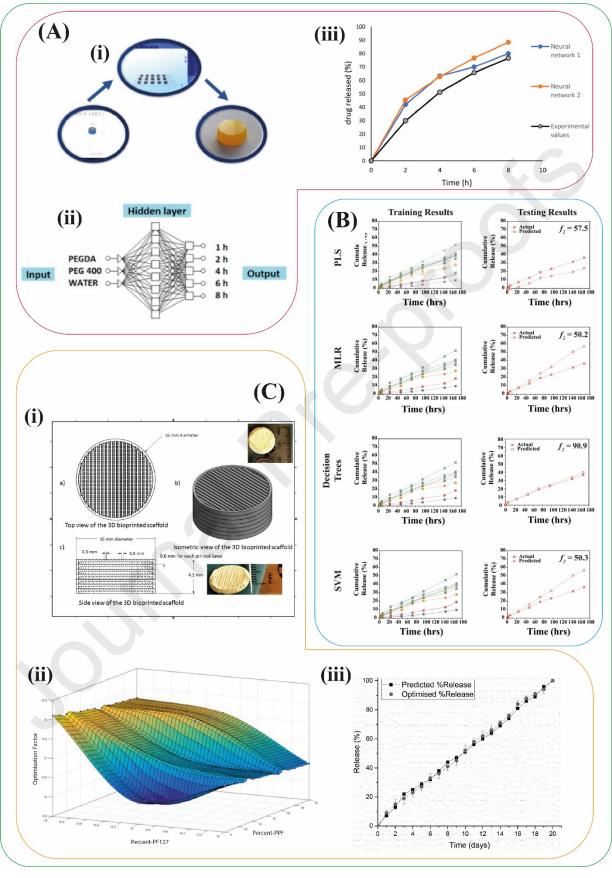


Figure 10. Machine learning applied to predict 3DP medicines' drug release profiles. (A) The inputs for (i) SLA formulated printlet were processed using (ii) ANN to (iii) predict the dissolution profile [222]. (B) Several MLTs were compared, where it was determined decision tree produced the most accurate predicted dissolution profile [210]. (C) ANN were also used on (i) bioprinted scaffold to determine (ii) the correlation between inputs and outputs, to (iii) ultimately determine the release profile [223].

ML has also been used to predict the printability of formulations: a key consideration of 3DP formulation design [156]. In the first study using big pharmaceutical 3DP data with ML, researchers built a dataset comprised of 614 drug-loaded formulations for FDM filaments produced by HME, incorporating 145 distinct excipients. Each formulation was labelled according to the filament mechanical characteristics (e.g. good, brittle, flexible), printability (i.e. printable or not), and both extrusion and printing temperatures. With this labelled dataset it was possible to employ supervised learning to predict filaments' printability (**Figure 11**). The study investigated several methods of supervised learning. The model was able to predict the qualitative filament mechanical properties, such as whether the filament was flexible, brittle or good. Solely using the weighted fraction of the materials in a formulation as inputs, a printability accuracy of 76% was obtained.

As mentioned in **Section 4**, pre-processing of data prior to ML can help improve the performance of a model. With this in mind, the authors of [156] created an additional four feature sets using their pharmaceutical domain expertise. One of the limitations of using material names as an input is it means predictions cannot be made for materials not existing within the training dataset. Hence, the rationale for engineering new feature sets was to improve the generalisability of the model. A feature set called Physical Properties was engineered. This feature sought to use weighted physical properties of a formulation as inputs; the glass transition temperature (Tg), melting temperature, and molecular weight. Hence, if a material did not exist in the dataset, or if the material was used as a primary polymer rather than a plasticiser (e,g, PEG), then this was not a problem for the ML model as it could consider the weighted properties of the formulation. Although the model accuracy when using Physical Properties decreased to 70%, it afforded the ability to apply ML models to formulations with new materials without having to re-train the model using new materials. As a transparency check to ensure the ML models were learning the correct information, random forest was used to rank the importance of materials in formulations on response variables. It was subsequently discovered that the concentration of the primary polymer was the main determinant for predicting printability, followed by

- 1 plasticiser concentration, which are formulations variables that experienced 3DP practitioners would
- 2 agree influence the printability of a formulation.

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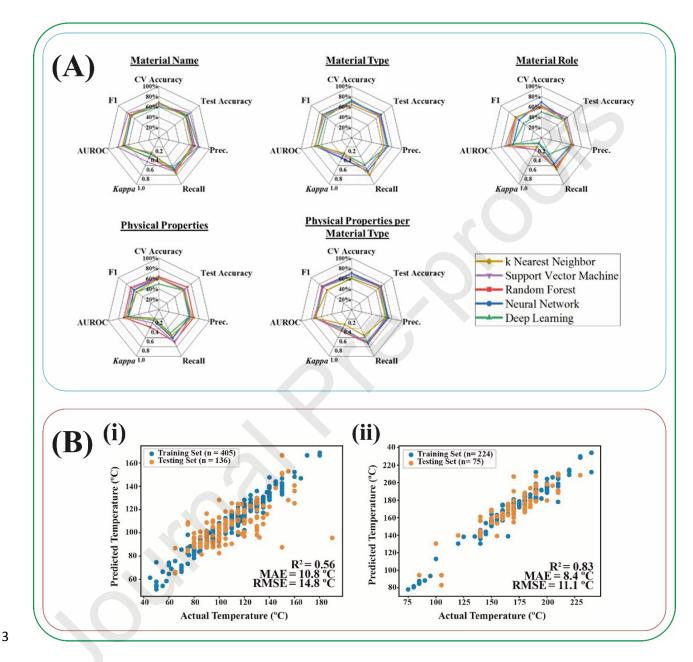


Figure 11. (A) Machine learning performances for determining the printability of FDM formulations using five different feature sets. **(B)** Random Forest predictions for the **(i)** extrusion and **(ii)** printing temperature [156].

Further to supervised learning, unsupervised learning has also been applied to support the preprinting stage. As mentioned, unsupervised learning does not require labelling of data with explanatory

1	variables. An advantage is that models are not influenced by subjective or erroneous human labelling,
2	allowing algorithms to naturally establish patterns in the dataset. An unsupervised ML technique that
3	has been widely used is principal component analysis (PCA). PCA learns a transformation that maps
4	high-dimensional data to low-dimensional representations, capturing the variation in the data [224,
5	225]. As well as being used as a ML technique is its own right, PCA's powerful dimensionality reduction
6	can also be applied to the pre-processing stage of ML to reduce dataset noise. PCA has been used to
7	predict the feedability of filaments for FDM pharmaceutical printing (Figure 12 (A)) [226]. By
8	measuring mechanical properties of filaments, and generating a force-distance profile, PCA was found to
9	cluster similar filaments together, which were termed as 'feedable', 'tunable' or 'non-feedable'. Here
10	PCA shows that complex mechanical plots can be made more interpretable with ML, allowing the
11	discernment of patterns. As illustrated in Figure 12(A), it is visually easier to interpret PCA results than
12	raw data. Alternatively, PCA can be paired with another unsupervised technique, k-means, to further
13	streamline ML [227]. K-means seeks to cluster neighbouring points, which in the example in Figure
14	12(A) would have been able to distinguish between feedable and non-feedable filaments. With this
15	combination the raw data could have been directly fed to a k-means algorithm, outputting a filament's
16	feedability without needing to visually inspect the PCA plot (Figure 12 (A iii)).
17	Clearly, ML has many applications in the pre-printing stage of medicines manufacture.
18	Researchers can harness computer intelligence to streamline formulation development, producing 3D
19	printable formulations that will result in products personalised to individual patients. Whereas manual
20	compounding and testing of many iterations of formulations could take weeks to find a suitable product,
21	Al can dramatically reduce this timeline. Ultimately, this will mean that development of personalised
22	3DP medicines will be accelerated; granting patients access to bespoke pharmaceuticals with shorter
23	lead times. This will be particularly useful in time-sensitive clinical situations.

lead times. This will be particularly useful in time-sensitive clinical situations.

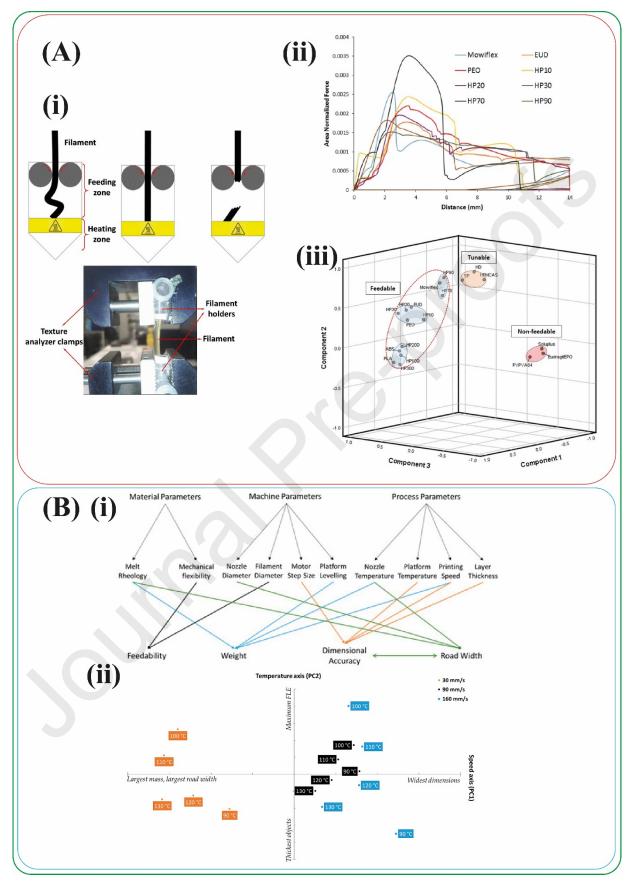


Figure 12. Models developed using PCA, an unsupervised learner, to predict the printability of formulations. (A) (i) An in-house tester was made to replicate the feeding behaviour of filaments during FDM. (ii) A force-distance plot was generated from the tester, which was (iii) subsequently analysed by PCA to determine the 'feedability' of filaments [226]. (B) (i) Summary of the interaction between material properties and processing parameters. (ii) A biplot generated using PCA depicting the relationship between processing parameters and print properties [228].

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5.2 Automated 3D Printing of Medicines

9 A key goal of pharmaceutical 3DP is to leverage AI to create a seamless, autonomous 3DP process.

10 Currently, researchers are required to input printing process parameters before each batch of medicines

is produced. Setting fixed parameters is not an option in the production of personalised

pharmaceuticals, as printer settings can directly affect the performance of an end product. For example,

printing temperature will need to be controlled when printing heat-labile drugs. Moreover, light

exposure time in DLP printing can affect the mechanical properties of a product, consequently affecting

drug release profile [229]. ML algorithms have the capability to transform 3DP into an autonomous

process, facilitating the printing of medicines without the need for on-hand expert advice.

Both supervised and unsupervised methods of ML have begun to be used to predict optimal printing conditions for medicines. One study demonstrated how PCA can determine how FDM printing parameters such as printing speed and temperature will affect the final product quality [228]. The analysis allowed rapid interpretation of the relationship between multiple variables. For example, using a PCA biplot, it was observed that printing speed was negatively correlated with product road width and product mass. Figure 12 (Bii) illustrates that samples printed with the same printing speed clustered together. Besides these categorical features, another key dependent variable are the processing temperatures. Historically, recommended starting HME temperature for formulations is guided by a rule of thumb, which recommends starting with anywhere between 15-60 °C above the Tg of the formulation. Recently, supervised ML techniques were used to predict optimal HME and FDM printing temperatures, where accuracies of \pm 8.9 and \pm 8.9 °C, respectively, were achieved (**Figure 11 (B)**) [156]. The benefit with this approach over the *rule of thumb* is it obviates the need to perform time-consuming differential scanning calorimetry measurements to determine the T_g. In addition, the recommended starting temperature output by ML is narrower than the rule of thumb [230]. Hence, ML offers a rapid and cheaper alternative to recommending the HME extrusion temperature. To date, there are no rule of thumbs or standardised predictive algorithms for the FDM temperature, and thus the study was the first

to establish the ideal printing temperature. The ML techniques were combined to produce a web-based software, which allows users to take advantage of predicting both the extrusion and printing temperature, as well as filament aspect and printability (http://www.m3diseen.com/predictions/).

Another application of Al during pharmaceutical 3DP is the automatic *in situ* detection of manufacturing defects. Intelligent recognition of deviations from optimal printing would allow researchers to leave pharmaceutical 3DP to work autonomously, thus facilitating 24/7 supply of personalised medicines in healthcare settings. One approach to achieving *in situ* printing correction is to pair ML with computer vision, another subset of Al. Computer vision, also referred to as machine vision, seeks to achieve super-human interpretation of images or videos [231]. A recent example of merging ML with computer vision was developed for detecting anomalies during laser powder bed additive manufacturing [232]. The printer was fitted with a camera to take images and monitor the printing process. The algorithm was then trained to detect multiple anomalies through algorithm adaptation, a feature superior to traditional computer vision algorithms that are used to detect one event per image. The algorithm was trained on a dataset containing pixels that were classed as either anomaly-free, or one of the six potential anomalies frequented during the printing process (**Figure 13**). Positively, the algorithm was found to achieve 100% accuracy in detecting absence of anomalies and 89% accuracy for detecting an anomaly.

Aside from photographic images, videos can also be processed by ML techniques, made possible by advancements in deep learning, namely handling of copious and complex information. Pairing deep learning with live video monitoring was demonstrated to autonomously correct FDM printing for both over- and under-extrusion [233]. Prior to achieving autonomy, a training procedure was performed off-line to train the model, which was used to classify 'over-extrusion', 'under-extrusion', or 'good-quality' printing. The model was then applied real-time, whereupon detecting irregular extrusion, the FDM printer was able to adjust the printing speed, flow rate or nozzle height. Deep learning was discovered to achieve an accuracy of above 98% in predicting the quality of the part, and predictions were made at times considerably faster than human reactions permit.

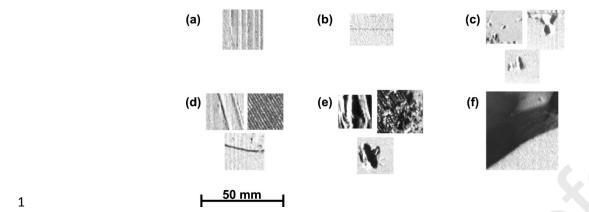


Figure 13. For detecting anomalies during laser powder bed additive manufacturing, an algorithm was trained on pixels containing one of six anomalies presented in figures (a-f) [232].

Building advanced modalities into application of *in situ* monitoring results in cutting-edge 3DP applications. One case was demonstrated by Zhu et al. (2020), where ML was leveraged to print directly on live organs [234]. A schematic of the process is illustrated in **Figure 14**. The challenge of 3DP on live organs is that the surface is non-planar and dynamic, which is in contrast to 3DP on build-plates that have a flat surface and the movement thereof is encoded and known via the .gcode (i.e. the command code for the printer). The study recognised these issues for printing on porcine lungs, and exploited ML to predict tissue surface deformation occurring during the lung breathing. The potential primary advantages of ML-guided *in situ* 3DP, like robotic surgery, include higher precision, better safety profiles, and a reduction in invasiveness [235]. In the context of pharmaceutics, *in situ* printing can be exploited to fabricate intricate drug-eluting devices or sensors for therapeutic drug monitoring inside the body [236, 237].

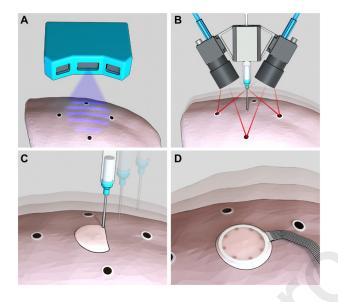


Figure 14. Schematic depicting the steps of printing hydrogels on lungs. The process begins by (A) scanning the lung surface, combined with (B) live tracking of the lung breathing. This allows the printer to predict the changes in lung deformation and (C) print accordingly. (D) Depicts the final print, which was an electrical impedance tomography sensor [234].

5.3 Machine Learning in the Post-Printing Stage

Building machine intelligence into the post-printing phase of pharmaceutical 3DP would facilitate the timely release of medicines to patients. ML has been used after printing as a quality control (QC) measure for 3DP drug products, which irrespective of the fabrication technique, is an important issue [238, 239]. ML can be leveraged to support process analytical technology (PAT), a mechanism designed to control the quality production of pharmaceuticals. PAT has been widely implemented by the pharmaceutical industry, motivated by regulatory guidelines such as the FDA *Pharmaceutical Quality for the 21st Century Initiative* [240]. Such guidelines were proposed to achieve maximum efficiency, flexibility, and agile pharmaceutical manufacturing that reliably produces high-quality medicines without extensive regulatory oversight [241]. In pharmaceutical 3DP, intelligent PAT systems could be employed as a QC measure to enable real-time approval of 3DP medicines, facilitating pharmaceutical 3DP's transition to widespread clinical use. For such applications, non-destructive analysers are required, due to their ability to preserve the integrity of the final product, as well as requiring minimal sample preparation. Widely used non-destructive tools are vibrational spectroscopy technologies, such as Raman or near-infrared (NIR) spectroscopy. Vibrational spectroscopy spectra can be processed using

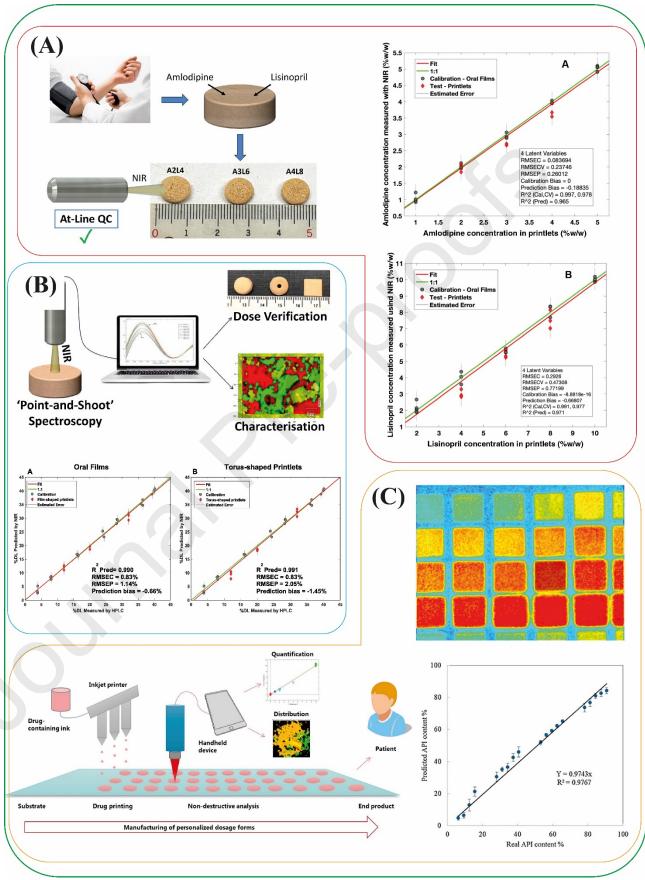
multivariate analysis to build a predictive model relating the spectra with different parameters e.g. the concentration of drugs [242]. In other words, vibrational spectroscopy and multivariate analysis can be combined to quantify the drug concentration in formulations.

A popular ML technique used for multivariate analysis is partial least square (PLS), a supervised learning technique [243]. Similar to PCA, PLS is a dimension reduction method that first identifies the latent variables from the explanatory data, then fits a linear model using least squares. In contrast to PCA, PLS determines these new features in a supervised manner, as well as computing the covariance between variables [243]. The use of NIR with PLS was recently exploited for dose verification of two separate drugs in a single SLS-printed product (*Figure 15* (A)) [244]. The authors noted that the QC measure was able to provide rapid dose prediction in 10 seconds per tablet. In a separate study by the same research group, a portable NIR device was used to predict drug concentration in tablets across a range of 4 to 40 w/w% (*Figure 15* (B)) [245]. The model developed, again using PLS, was able to achieve high accuracies for tablets of different geometries and formulation type. Drug concentration detected by the portable NIR was compared to that obtained by high performance liquid chromatography, where a paired *t*-test showed there was no significant difference between the two methods. PLS has also been used to predicted the crystallinity of lopinavir in SLS-printed products, providing valuable insight into the potential solubility of a drug [246].

Hyperspectral imaging, also referred to as chemical imaging, is another vibrational spectroscopy-based technique with applications in pharmaceutical 3DP QC [247]. The advantage of this technique is that it combines both spectral and spatial information, whereby materials invisible to the naked eye are made evident. Images mapping product drug concentration or distribution are produced by generating a spectrum for each pixel from a basic original image. This results in a 3D array for each sample, where the x- and y-coordinates represent the spatial coordinates, and the z-coordinate reflects wavenumbers [248]. Thus, hyperspectral images are multivariate in nature, and can be overwhelming to interpret in their raw form. Fortunately, ML can be used to analyse this type of data, including cutting edge deep learning [249, 250].

Hyperspectral imaging has been used to reveal the distribution of drugs in polymeric matrices, also elucidating the state of the drug (e.g. molecularly dispersed) [251]. PCA can be utilised to eliminate noise in the data and identify patterns of spectral data, facilitating rapid interpretation of hyperspectral images [252]. As an example, PCA has been used to colour-code the concentration of drug on images of tablets, with the colour shade signifying PCA score: reflecting drug concentration [253]. To date,

- 1 hyperspectral imaging paired with PCA has been used to visualise the concentration of theophylline in
- 2 IJP-printed products [254] (Figure 15 (C)), clindamycin palmitate hydrochloride in SLS tablets [255], and
- 3 indomethacin in FDM printed products [251]. Such research demonstrates the use of ML in providing
- 4 pharmaceutical insight at a microstructural level, aiding understanding of the performance of a printed
- 5 product. The benefits of this approach will be further realised as more complex formulations are subject
- 6 to ML QC, such as multi-drug polyprints.



- Figure 15. Applications of ML post-print. (A) PLS, a supervised learner, was combined with NIR
- spectroscopy for non-destructive verification of a Printlet™ with two drugs [244]. (B) Example
- of PLS-NIR spectroscopy used for dose verification in Printlets™ with varying geometries [245].
- 4 (C) NIR-chemical imaging combined with PCA, an unsupervised learner, used for qualitatively
- 5 visualising the distribution of drug and excipient [254].

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6 Machine Learning vs. Non-ML Techniques

- 8 Numerous industrial sectors have come to rely on traditional optimisation techniques (such as DoE,
- 9 mechanistic modelling, pharmacokinetics (PK) modelling, and FEA), so are ML techniques really
- 10 favourable for adoption in pharmaceutical 3DP? In short, ML is the future of process optimisation, and
- will likely combine with elements of traditional tools or supersede them entirely [206, 256, 257].
- 12 Whereas traditional techniques are often limited by their scope of use (e.g., PK modelling focuses on in
- 13 vivo drug behaviour), ML can cover the breadth of existing non-Al tools combined. For example, one
- goal of ML is to develop end-to-end application, where the end product can be predicted from the start;
- in the context of 3DP pharmaceuticals, the goal would be to predict PK behaviour, for example, using
- the composition of the formulation. This is because ML algorithms do not need to be pre-coded with
- 17 'rules' on a system, instead they are coded to learn rules autonomously. As such, ML techniques can be
- 18 trained to learn patterns within any dataset and thus solve problems across all subjects. This is useful for
- 19 pharmaceutical 3DP, as the field inherently contains numerous disciplines: chemistry, mechanical
- 20 engineering, pharmacokinetics, and pharmaceutics, to name a few. ML can be applied to consider how
- 21 all of these factors interplay in the pharmaceutical 3DP pipeline.

Whilst DoE can also be applied to a breadth of fields, its low data capacity limits its utility in pharmaceutical 3DP. ML algorithms can seamlessly handle datasets with thousands of entries; this would entirely overwhelm DoE and would demand an infeasible number of manual experiments. Due to the large number of options within the pharmaceutical 3DP process, DoE models would be too narrow to model complex processes with many interacting factors. Another drawback of DoE compared to ML is that it often requires operators to perform experiments that they know will be unsuccessful, yet DoE demands the unsuccessful results to build its model. For example, researchers may know in advance that combinations of variables in a factorial design will not result in an optimal process outcome, however they must waste time and resources performing the permutation anyway to satisfy the model's

statistical methods. In comparison, ML does not set rigid boundaries on how input data should be organised within a parameter search space. This is clearly an advantage where researchers have large volumes of data that was not collected with DoE in mind; with ML, it can still be used and interpreted [154]. On the other hand, without specialist human input some ML models (such as reinforcement techniques) may suggest parameters that are not feasible in a specific setting (e.g., very slow printing speeds in an emergency medical unit). Thus, it is prudent that specialists still check ML decisions, especially when outputs will directly affect patient care.

ML can be combined with DoE, FEA, and mechanistic models to form hybrid models, which are yet to be thoroughly explored in 3DP [257-260]. For example, the optimisation cycle in FEA can become both costly and time-intensive, and ML has been used to address this issue [261, 262]. A further drawback to FEA is that specialised knowledge is required. Take for example FEA applied to tableting, where domain expertise in particle physics is needed to understand the deformation particles are subjected to [263]. Whereas ML does not require in-depth knowledge, provided a sufficient amount of data is available. Moreover, ML provides the opportunity for continuous processes, which has the potential to achieve intelligent 3DP automation [264, 265]. Nevertheless, there is an opportunity for existing DoE, FEA and mechanistic modellers to exploit ML to further enrich their research.

Just as 3DP can be integrated with other technologies (e.g., medical imaging) so can ML, resulting in a closed-loop system suitable for IoT. Here, *in situ* sensors will indeed play a crucial part in maintaining autonomy, in addition to computer vision techniques. An enabling aspect of ML is the ability to process different data formats, such as images, videos, and other data formats, which the non-Al techniques discussed herein are unable to do. Regarding the implementation of ML, open-source programming languages like Python, R, and Java can be used to construct ML models. **Table 2** provides a summary of the unique benefits and drawbacks for all the discussed techniques.

Table 2. Summary of the advantages and drawbacks of each optimisation technique. All techniques do provide benefits, however comparing the advantages with respect to one another helps to highlight ML's strengths.

Technique	Benefits	Limitations
DoE	In common use by	Commercial software is expensive
	pharmaceutical industry	 Restricted to small datasets

	Not subject specific	Restricted data formats
		Additional experiments needed
FEA	Physical phenomenon	Computationally demanding
	extrapolates well to new designs	 Additional experiments needed
		Restricted data formats
Mechanistic	'White box' effect	Expertise in physical phenomenon
Modelling	No commercial software	needed
	required	Complex experiments needed
	PK modelling is widely used in	Restricted data formats
	the pharmaceutical industry	
	PK modelling can reduce the	
	number of animal experiments	
ML	Can process both linear and	'Black box' effect
	non-linear relationships	 Requires deep mathematical
	Can process high-dimensional	knowledge to model and interpret
	datasets	results
	 Processes various data formats 	 Pre-processing data can be time-
	No commercial software	consuming with unstructured data
	required	 Processing videos can be
	 Instantaneous predictions 	computationally demanding
	 Continuous learning 	• Still subject to bias if input data is
	• Facilitates in situ predictions	not managed correctly
	Models can be developed for	
	end-to-end applications	
	Compatible with 'Internet of	
	Things'	

One salient drawback of ML that should be considered is the 'black box' effect. As ML models deal with more and more complex datasets, their decision processes typically follow suite. Complex decision processes within algorithms can become difficult for humans to interpret and importantly, sense check. Transparency in ML techniques' methods are paramount in clinical settings, where

clinicians and patients need to trust algorithm outputs [266]. This therefore applies to pharmaceutical 3DP, where ML algorithms could be autonomously controlling the personalised production of medicines [267]. A number of steps can be taken to avoid the 'black box' effect [268]. Firstly, developers should verify the quality of the data being fed to ML algorithms. The axiom 'garbage in equals garbage out' still rings true in the age of AI. The quality of an algorithm's output is defined substantially by the quality of the data fed to it. ML does not yet offer a bypass for meticulous data collection. When implementing ML in pharmaceutical 3DP, it should be assured that data is accurate and fully descriptive of a wide variety of 3DP techniques and patient populations. There has recently been a drive to ensure that AI data is fully inclusive across genders, ethnicities, socioeconomic statuses, and cultures; without recognition of diversity AI is not suitable for mainstream use [269, 270]. ML algorithms can be adapted to be more transparent. For example, models can output relationships they have found between data features and produce graphics that outline decision processes [271, 272]. Ultimately, transparency is key if AI is to be successful combined with 3DP in healthcare settings. Policy makers must be sure that technology is enhancing patient care, rather than mystifying it. Al systems within 3DP must also ensure data security, especially when dealing with sensitive patient data. Such data will require secure Cloud storage and protection from hacking. Decisions made by algorithms will require stringent record keeping for audit and regulatory purposes. Blockchain, a digital tamper-proof ledger, will be ideally suited to this purpose, allowing end-to-end traceability of AI activity throughout the pharmaceutical 3DP pipeline [273].

7 Internet of Things for Pharmaceutical 3D Printing

loT technology will be transformative for many processes within medicine and manufacturing, offering significant utility in the 3DP of medicines [274]. At present, the pharmaceutical 3DP pipeline contains multiple separate processes that require human interaction: formulation design, formulation compounding, 3DP, potential post-processing, and finally QC and medicine release. As demonstrated in this review, ML can facilitate each stage of the pipeline. Additionally, an interconnected network of devices and robots could remove the need for human hands to carry out tasks and move materials between development stages. Moreover, an intelligent and interconnected network of devices and robots could even obviate the need for human brainpower: realising the vision of fully autonomous production of personalised 3DP medicines. This is the future of Industry 4.0. When IoT and AI are combined, they result in a cyber-physical system [275]. As pharmaceutical 3DP itself is already a digitalised process, it is perfectly aligned for incorporation into a cyber-physical system. Though once the upfront cost of sensors, robots, and other hardware would prohibit complete digitalisation of the

- 1 pharmaceutical 3DP pipeline, these elements are consistently becoming cheaper and more accessible
- 2 [237]. Essentially, ML would provide actionable insight from data, to which 3DP will execute. Whilst
- 3 building a pharmaceutical 3DP cyber-physical system may still present relatively large upfront costs, the
- 4 resultant obviation of human labour will dramatically reduce expenditure in the medium to long term.
- 5 Moreover, machines and AI algorithms can work 24/7 at full capacity without increasing error or the
- 6 need for rest; hence facilitating high throughput production of patient-centred medicines at all hours of
- 7 the day, every day of the year. **Figure 16** is an illustration depicting stages of the 3DP workflow that can
- 8 be interconnected with IoT and AI.

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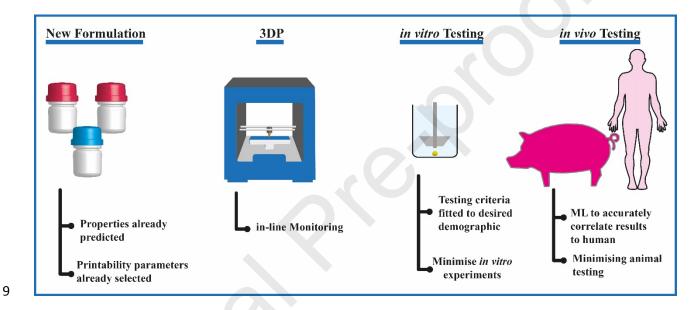


Figure 16. Stages of pharmaceutical 3DP that can be interconnected with IoT and AI, facilitating a fully autonomous pipeline.

8 Pharmaceutical 3D Printing's Intelligent Trajectory

It is only a matter of time until AI plays an integral role in the development and manufacture of medicines. Compared to other industries, such as the entertainment and financial sectors, the pharmaceutical industry sits well behind the adoption of AI curve. At this time, it would be wise for the pharmaceutical industry to combine its current cutting-edge techniques with AI-guided 3DP, because 3DP is already digital and aligned with personalised medicine. This move would drive the pharmaceutical industry forward to fully harness modern technological capabilities. Adopting AI-guided 3DP now will accelerate the translation of 3DP medicines into healthcare settings, upgrading patient care to a personalised model sooner. The majority of ML studies in 3DP medicines has been applied to oral-

- formulations, and further research needs to explore the feasibility of ML in fabricating other delivery
- 2 devices [276]. A concerted effort is being made to address the current challenges of combining AI with
- 3 pharmaceutical 3DP; such as lack of AI skillset, algorithm decision-making transparency, and production
- 4 of ML techniques that provide high performances even with small datasets [8, 277]. These issues are
- 5 universally felt across both academia and industry, irrespective of the research field, thus driving a
- 6 collective impetus. There are also challenges specific to pharmaceutical 3DP that can be resolved. For
- 7 instance, consideration should be given to producing a unified database relevant to pharmaceutical 3DP
- 8 that will facilitate data mining. As progress continues, it will become increasingly tiresome to data-mine
- 9 directly from individual published articles or produce data in house. A structured database will readily
- 10 allow the extraction of ML-friendly relevant data for use by all, which could be achieved through a
- strategic and unified approach to data collection. These efforts will ultimately aid policymakers in
- 12 assessing Al's contribution to pharmaceutical 3DP, expediting clinical translation.

13 9 Conclusion

- 14 In this review we have highlighted how AI can be combined with pharmaceutical 3DP pipeline. It is
- 15 paramount that medicine moves away from its longstanding 'one size fits all' paradigm of
- 16 pharmaceutical provision and embraces administration of personalised medicines. Pharmaceutical 3DP
- 17 can provide the supply of personalised medicines in the clinic, but currently requires the presence and
- 18 expertise of experienced 3DP practitioners. Multiple methods of traditional process optimisation
- 19 techniques, such as FEA, mechanistic modelling, and DoE, exist; however none are equipped to fully
- 20 optimise the multiple stages of pharmaceutical 3DP. In comparison, ML can provide intelligent
- 21 optimisation of each stage of 3DP medicines' production. This will eventually remove the need for
- 22 constant expert input into 3DP medicine development, thus removing barriers to clinical adoption of the
- 23 technology. Moreover, each stage of the pharmaceutical 3DP pipeline can be built into an intelligent IoT,
- 24 in which smart hardware can handle every stage of development: from formulation design to final
- 25 product release. Such an outcome would remove the need for human labour in the pharmaceutical 3DP
- 26 entirely: granting patients 24/7 supply of bespoke, personalised medicines.

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