



# Pancreas image mining: a systematic review of radiomics

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## Abstract

**Objectives** To systematically review published studies on the use of radiomics of the pancreas.

**Methods** The search was conducted in the MEDLINE database. Human studies that investigated the applications of radiomics in diseases of the pancreas were included. The radiomics quality score was calculated for each included study.

**Results** A total of 72 studies encompassing 8863 participants were included. Of them, 66 investigated focal pancreatic lesions (pancreatic cancer, precancerous lesions, or benign lesions); 4, pancreatitis; and 2, diabetes mellitus. The principal applications of radiomics were differential diagnosis between various types of focal pancreatic lesions ( $n = 19$ ), classification of pancreatic diseases ( $n = 23$ ), and prediction of prognosis or treatment response ( $n = 30$ ). Second-order texture features were most useful for the purpose of differential diagnosis of diseases of the pancreas (with 100% of studies investigating them found a statistically significant feature), whereas filtered image features were most useful for the purpose of classification of diseases of the pancreas and prediction of diseases of the pancreas (with 100% of studies investigating them found a statistically significant feature). The median radiomics quality score of the included studies was 28%, with the interquartile range of 22% to 36%. The radiomics quality score was significantly correlated with the number of extracted radiomics features ( $r = 0.52$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and the study sample size ( $r = 0.34$ ,  $p = 0.003$ ).

**Conclusions** Radiomics of the pancreas holds promise as a quantitative imaging biomarker of both focal pancreatic lesions and diffuse changes of the pancreas. The usefulness of radiomics features may vary depending on the purpose of their application. Standardisation of image acquisition protocols and image pre-processing is warranted prior to considering the use of radiomics of the pancreas in routine clinical practice.

## Key Points

- Methodologically sound studies on radiomics of the pancreas are characterised by a large sample size and a large number of extracted features.
- Optimisation of the radiomics pipeline will increase the clinical utility of mineable pancreas imaging data.
- Radiomics of the pancreas is a promising personalised medicine tool in diseases of the pancreas.

**Keywords** Pancreas · Radiomics · Magnetic resonance imaging

## Abbreviations

RQS Radiomics quality score

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## Introduction

Diseases of the pancreas are complex (with a wide array of genetic, environmental, and behavioural factors affecting them) and often lie on a continuum. Acute pancreatitis (AP) is the most common disease of the exocrine pancreas with the global incidence of 33.7 per 100,000 individuals per year [1]. One-fifth of individuals after first episode of AP develop recurrent acute pancreatitis (RAP), and 36% of those with RAP progress to chronic pancreatitis (CP) [2]. Pancreatic cancer is the most lethal disease of the pancreas with the global incidence and mortality of 8.1 and 6.9 per 100,000 general population per year, respectively [1]. Its common risk factors include familial pancreatic cancer kindred and deleterious germline mutations in pancreatic cancer susceptibility genes [3]. Also, several focal pancreatic lesions (pancreatic intraepithelial neoplasms-grade 3

(PanIN-3), intraductal papillary mucinous neoplasms, and mucinous cystic neoplasms) are considered precancerous [4]. Both pancreatitis and pancreatic cancer often lead to new-onset diabetes, termed ‘diabetes of the exocrine pancreas’—the second most common type of new-onset diabetes in adults [5].

Imaging modalities (such as computed tomography (CT), magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), endoscopic ultrasonography, and positron emission tomography) are frequently used in management of diseases of the pancreas [6, 7]. Traditionally, their use predominantly includes subjective assessment of a handful of generic qualitative features that describe the underlying pathology of the pancreas. However, images of the pancreas contain an innumerable amount of objective data specific to each patient that could be harnessed to provide personalised management of patients [8, 9]. The field of quantitative image analysis has evolved in recent years and automatically extracted features can now be analysed. The process of high-throughput extraction of image features from radiological images has been termed ‘radiomics’ [10]. Organ-specific radiomics promises to be a cornerstone of personalised medicine in the future. The use of radiomics in lung, liver, prostate, breast, kidney, rectum, and central nervous system diseases has been reviewed [11–17]. However, to date, there has been no systematic review on the use of radiomics in diseases of the pancreas.

The aim was to systematically benchmark published studies on radiomics of the pancreas and to determine their quality as well as the factors that are associated with it.

## Methods

### Search strategy

The search strategy was conducted in consultation with an experienced subject librarian to identify all relevant studies that reported on the use of radiomics of the pancreas in humans. A systematic literature search was conducted to identify all studies published from January 1, 2000 to April 15, 2020, using the MEDLINE database. No language restrictions were applied. The PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines were followed. The initial screening was done through the review of titles and abstracts. Full-text articles of potentially relevant studies were retrieved and assessed for eligibility. Relevant articles were also identified through reference lists of the retrieved full-text articles.

### Eligibility criteria

Eligible studies had to investigate the applications of image analysis in pancreatic benign or precancerous lesions, pancreatic cancer, pancreatitis, or diabetes mellitus through

extracting quantitative imaging features (i.e. radiomics). All imaging modalities were eligible. Studies were excluded if they were conducted not in humans; qualitative imaging features alone were reported; machine learning (e.g. convolutional neural network) was used to recognise image patterns without extracting quantitative features; they focused on technical (e.g. image pre-processing or image acquisition parameters) or patient-related parameters and their effect on the stability and reproducibility of extracted features; and they focused on a complication of pancreatic surgery (e.g. pancreatic fistula). Publications other than original articles (e.g. reviews, book chapters, editorials) were not considered.

### Data extraction

The following data were extracted from the included studies, if available: authors, year of publication, country, cohort size, goal(s) of the study, type of imaging modality, parameters of imaging (e.g. slice thickness, imaging phase, MRI sequence), method of segmentation, type of feature extraction software, type of extracted features (i.e. quantitative radiomics only or semantic), type and number of extracted quantitative features, number of statistically significant quantitative features, and method of feature reduction and classification.

The included studies were grouped into three main categories based on the main goal of each study. The first category was differential diagnosis of diseases of the pancreas (e.g. differentiation between healthy pancreas and chronic pancreatitis or pancreatic cancer). The second category was classification of diseases of the pancreas, where more than two subtypes of the same disease of the pancreas were studied (e.g. classification of subtypes of pancreatitis or classification of histologic grades of pancreatic cancer). The third category was prediction of diseases of the pancreas (e.g. prediction of survival in patients with unresectable pancreatic cancer or prediction of patient response to a certain treatment). Within each category, all radiomics features were categorised into three main groups (at least one significant feature reported, no significant feature reported, and non-investigated feature) with the view to determining a clinically useful pattern.

### Radiomics quality score

The radiomics quality score (RQS) was calculated for each individual study. In brief, the RQS assessed the quality of radiomics study in terms of robustness and reproducibility through assigning points based on 16 criteria [18]. The number of points depended on the importance of the respective criterion, with 36 points (100%) being the maximum number.

### Statistical analysis

The associations of the RQS with number of extracted features and cohort size were investigated using Pearson correlation coefficient. The association between the RQS and the type of imaging modality was investigated using linear regression analysis (with CT set as the reference). Statistical analysis was performed using SPSS software (version 24). A *p* value of <0.05 was considered statistically significant.

## Results

### Characteristics of the included studies

The total number of retrieved publications was 120 (Fig. 1). Seventy-two studies met the eligibility criteria and were included in the systematic literature review [19–90]. These studies encompassed a total of 8863 individuals. The sample size varied between 17 and 690 individuals, with a median of 100 individuals. Fifty-four studies (75.0%) employed CT [23, 24, 26–43, 45–49, 51, 52, 55–57, 59, 61–65, 68–71, 74–77, 80–83, 85–90]; nine studies (12.5%), MRI [44,

50, 53, 54, 58, 60, 66, 67, 78]; three studies (4.2%), endoscopic ultrasound [19–21]; and six studies (8.3%), positron emission tomography [22, 25, 72, 73, 79, 84]. Forty-four studies (61.1%) were conducted in Asia [19–21, 33, 35–38, 41–44, 48–52, 56–61, 63, 64, 66–74, 76, 77, 79, 80, 83, 84, 87–90], 20 studies (27.8%) in North America [22–32, 39, 40, 45, 55, 62, 65, 75, 82, 85], and eight studies (11.1%) in Europe [34, 46, 47, 53, 54, 78, 81, 86]. Other details are presented in Table 1.

Sixty-six (91.7%) studies applied manual segmentation of the pancreas, whereas six studies used semi-automated segmentation [24, 25, 29, 46, 56, 84]. Twenty-seven studies (37.5%) extracted only quantitative radiomics features, whereas 45 studies combined both radiomics and semantic features. The semantic features in the 45 studies were clinical features (e.g. age, gender, body mass index (*n* = 45), histopathological features (e.g. tumour grades, mitotic index) (*n* = 15), blood biomarkers (e.g. cancer antigen 19-9, carcinoembryonic antigen) (*n* = 14), and genetic signatures (e.g. HMG2 and c-Myc genes, miRNA genomic classifier) (*n* = 2). Out of the 45 studies, 20 studies reported that the performance of combined model (i.e. significant radiomics features plus semantic features) is higher than the per-

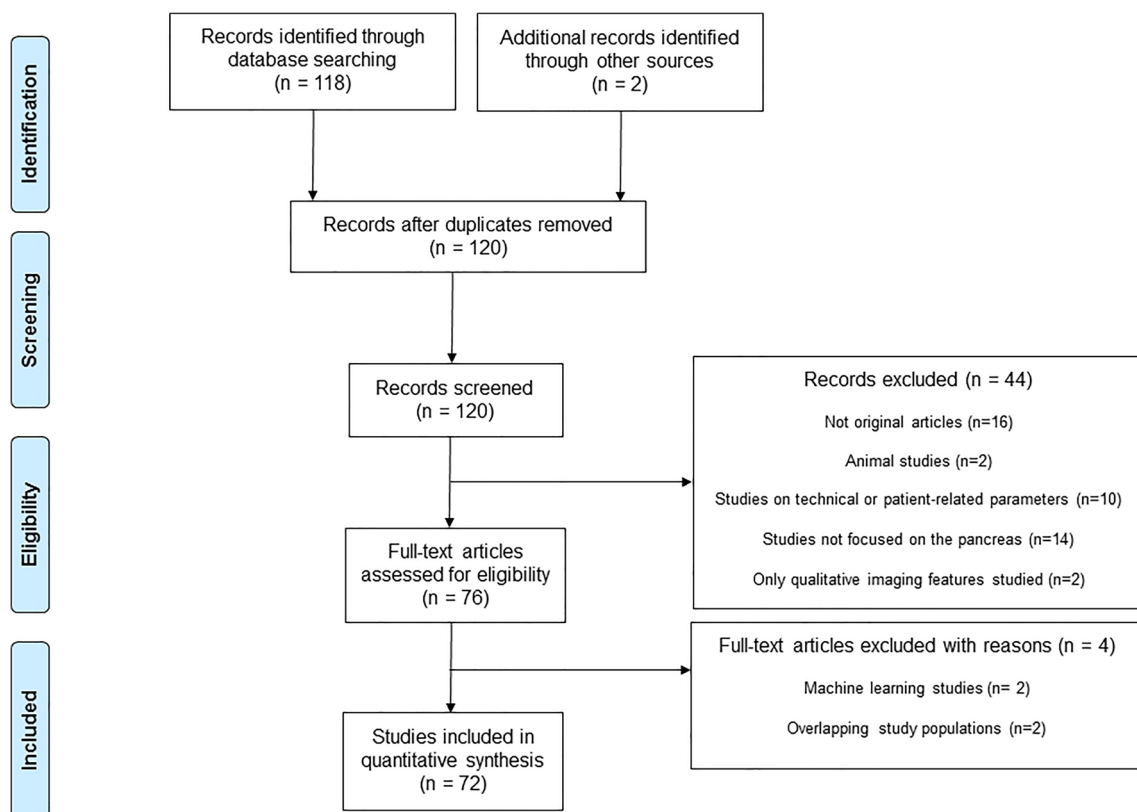


Fig. 1 Flowchart of the study selection process

**Table 1** Characteristics of the included studies

Study ID	Year	Country	Sample size	Goal(s)	Imaging modality	Segmentation method	Feature type	Imaging phase (slice thickness)	Feature extraction software	% RQS (points)
Zhang et al [19]	2010	China	216	Differentiation of pancreatic cancer from healthy pancreas	EUS	Manual	Q only	–	MATLAB 7.1	19% (7)
Xu et al [20]	2013	China	25	Prediction of prognosis of unresectable pancreatic cancer <sup>a</sup>	EUS	Manual	Q only	–	C++ program	19% (7)
Zhu et al [21]	2013	China	388	Differentiation of pancreatic cancer from CP	EUS	Manual	Q only	–	MATLAB R2010a	22% (8)
Cui et al [22]	2016	USA	139	Prediction of prognosis of unresectable pancreatic cancer <sup>b</sup>	PET	Manual	Q only	–	In-house developed software	36% (13)
Hanania et al [23]	2016	USA	52	Classification of grades of IPMN	CECT	Manual	Q only	PAP	IBEX	31% (11)
Permeth et al [24]	2016	USA	38	Classification of grades of IPMN	CECT	Semi-automated	Q and S	PVP (3 mm)	In-house developed software	42% (15)
Yue et al [25]	2016	USA	25	Prediction of treatment response in PDAC <sup>c</sup>	PET	Semi-automated	Q and S	–	3D kernel-based approach	25% (9)
Canellas et al [26]	2017	USA	101	- Classification of grades of PNET - Prediction of prognosis of PNET <sup>d</sup>	CECT	Manual	Q and S	PVP (5 mm)	TexRAD	25% (9)
Cassinotto et al [27]	2017	Canada	99	Prediction of prognosis of resectable PDAC <sup>e</sup>	CECT	Manual	Q and S	PVP (2.5 mm)	TexRAD	14% (5)
Chen et al [28]	2017	USA	20	Prediction of treatment response in pancreatic cancer <sup>f</sup>	CT	Manual	Q only	–	In-house developed software	14% (5)
Dmitriev et al [29]	2017	USA	134	Classification of subtypes of pancreatic cyst	CECT	Semi-automated	Q and S	– (0.75 mm)	In-house developed software	14% (5)
Eilaghi et al [30]	2017	Canada	30	Prediction of prognosis of resectable PDAC <sup>g</sup>	CECT	Manual	Q only	PVP	In-house developed software	19% (7)
Atiyeh et al [31]	2018	USA	161	Prediction of prognosis of resectable PDAC <sup>h</sup>	CECT	Manual	Q and S	Multiphase (2.5 mm)	MATLAB R2015a	31% (11)
Chakraborty et al [32]	2018	USA	103	Prediction of risk of IPMN <sup>i</sup>	CECT	Manual	Q and S	PVP (2.5 mm)	MATLAB R2015a	33% (12)
Choi et al [33]	2018	South Korea	66	Classification of grades of PNET	CECT	Manual	Q and S	PAP and PVP (2.5–3.2 mm)	In-house developed software	17% (6)
Ciaravino et al [34]	2018	Italy	17	Prediction of treatment response in PDAC <sup>j</sup>	CECT	Manual	Q only	PAP (2 mm)	Mazda	17% (6)
Guo et al [35]	2018	China	42	Differentiation of PDAC from PNET <sup>k</sup>	CECT	Manual	Q and S	PAP and PVP (3 mm)	MATLAB R2014b	25% (9)
Li et al [36]	2018	China	127	Differentiation of PDAC from PNET <sup>l</sup>	CECT	Manual	Q and S	PVP (0.625 mm)	In-house developed software	17% (6)
Lin et al [37]	2018	China	34	Differentiation of PNET from IPAS <sup>m</sup>	CECT	Manual	Q and S	PAP and PVP (3–5 mm)	MATLAB R2014a	19% (7)
Yun et al [38]	2018	South Korea	88	Prediction of prognosis of resectable pancreatic cancer <sup>n</sup>	CECT	Manual	Q only	PAP (4 mm)	In-house developed software	28% (10)
Atiyeh et al [39]	2019	USA	103	Classification of grades of IPMN <sup>o</sup>	CECT	Manual	Q and S	PVP (2.5 mm)	In-house developed software	35% (12)
Atiyeh et al [40]	2019	USA	35	- Classification of mutation status in PDAC <sup>p</sup> - Classification of stromal content in PDAC	CECT	Manual	Q only	PVP (2.5 mm)	MATLAB R2015a	28% (10)
Bian et al [41]	2019	China	225	Prediction of risk of PDAC	CECT	Manual	Q only	PAP (0.5 mm)	Pyradiomics	28% (10)
Chen et al [42]	2019	China	389	Prediction of recurrence of AP	CECT	Manual	Q and S	PAP and PVP (5 mm)	IBEX	44% (16)
Cheng et al	2019	China	41	Prediction of prognosis of unresectable PDAC <sup>q</sup>	CECT	Manual	Q and S	PVP	TexRAD	19% (7)

**Table 1** (continued)

Study ID	Year	Country	Sample size	Goal(s)	Imaging modality	Segmentation method	Feature type	Imaging phase (slice thickness)	Feature extraction software	% RQS (points)
[43]	2019	South Korea	66	Prediction of prognosis of resectable PDAC <sup>c</sup>	MRI	Manual	Q and S	(5 mm)	TexRAD	(7)
[44]	2019	USA	380	Differentiation of PDAC from healthy pancreas	CECT	Manual	Q only	T2WI (6 mm)	In-house developed software	19% (7)
[45]	2019	Italy	100	Prediction of prognosis of unresectable pancreatic cancer <sup>b</sup>	CT	Semi-automated	Q and S	PVP (0.75 mm)	LJFEx	36% (13)
[46]	2019	Italy	100	Classification of grades of PNET	CECT	Manual	Q and S	–	MazZda	28% (10)
[47]	2019	China	138	Classification of grades of PNET	CECT	Manual	Q and S	PAP (5 mm)	Pyradiomics	17% (6)
[48]	2019	China	37	Classification of grades of PNET	CECT	Manual	Q and S	PAP and PVP (0.5–5 mm)	MATLAB R2014a	44% (16)
[49]	2019	China	77	Classification of grades of PNET	MRI	Manual	Q and S	PAP (3 mm)	Omni-Kinetics software	25% (9)
[50]	2019	China	147	Differentiation of PDAC from PNET <sup>b</sup>	CECT	Manual	Q and S	T2WI and DWI (5 mm)	Pyradiomics	25% (9)
[51]	2019	China	45	Differentiation of PDAC from PL	CECT	Manual	Q and S	PAP (5 mm)	MazZda	42% (15)
[52]	2019	Germany	132	- Classification of subtypes of PDAC - Prediction of prognosis of PDAC <sup>u</sup>	MRI	Manual	Q only	PAP and PVP (3 mm)	Pyradiomics	28% (10)
[53]	2019	Germany	55	- Classification of subtypes of PDAC - Prediction of treatment response in PDAC <sup>v</sup>	CECT	Manual	Q and S	DWI and ADC map	Pyradiomics	36% (13)
[54]	2019	Canada	98	Prediction of prognosis of resectable PDAC <sup>s</sup>	CECT	Manual	Q and S	DWI and ADC map <sup>v</sup>	Pyradiomics	36% (13)
[55]	2019	South Korea	116	Prediction of prognosis of resectable pancreatic cancer <sup>v</sup>	CECT	Semi-automated	Q only	PVP (2–5 mm)	In-house developed software	44% (16)
[56]	2019	China	111	- Classification of gene expression in PDAC - Prediction of prognosis of PDAC <sup>z</sup>	CECT	Manual	Q only	PAP (3 mm)	MATLAB R2016b	22% (8)
[57]	2019	China	119	Differentiation of PNET from SPN <sup>uu</sup>	MRI	Manual	Q and S	DCE-MRI <sup>bb</sup>	MATLAB R2016b	33% (12)
[58]	2019	China	137	Classification of grades of PNET	CECT	Manual	Q and S	DCE-MRI <sup>cc</sup>	MazZda	28% (10)
[59]	2019	China	259	Prediction of severity of AP	MRI	Manual	Q and S	PAP (3–5 mm)	MATLAB R2016a	44% (16)
[60]	2019	China	690	- Prediction of incidence of DM type 2 - Early diagnosis of DM type 2	CT	Manual	Q and S	DCE-MRI <sup>cc</sup>	IBEX	42% (15)
[61]	2019	USA	90	Prediction of treatment response in pancreatic cancer <sup>dd</sup>	CT	Manual	Q only	– (4.93–4.98 mm)	In-house developed software	33% (12)
[62]	2019	China	56	Classification of grades of PDAC	CECT	Manual	Q and S	– (3 mm)	IBEX	33% (12)
[63]	2019	China	109	Differentiation of PDAC from MFP	CECT	Manual	Q and S	PVP (2–6 mm)	In-house developed software	31% (11)
[64]	2019	USA	60	Prediction of prognosis of unresectable pancreatic cancer <sup>ee</sup>	CECT	Manual	Q only	PAP and PVP (3 mm)	AnalysisKit	28% (10)
[65]	2019	China	303	Prediction of prognosis of resectable pancreatic cancer <sup>ff</sup>	MRI	Manual	Q and S	PVP (4–5 mm)	TexRAD	28% (10)
[66]	2019	China	50	Differentiation of PDAC from PNET	MRI	Manual	Q and S	–	A.K. software	53% (19)
Wang et al	2019	China	50	Differentiation of PDAC from PNET	MRI	Manual	Q and S	DWI	Image J	19%

**Table 1** (continued)

Study ID	Year	Country	Sample size	Goal(s)	Imaging modality	Segmentation method	Feature type	Imaging phase (slice thickness)	Feature extraction software	% RQS (points)
[67]	2019	China	87	Classification of gene expression in PCN <sup>hh</sup>	CECT	Manual	Q and S	(6 mm) PVP	MATLAB R2015b	(7) 33%
[68]	2019	China	260	Differentiation of SCN from non-SCN	CECT	Manual	Q and S	PVP (1–3 mm)	In-house developed software	(12) 36%
[69]	2019	China	78	Differentiation of SCN from MCN	CECT	Manual	Q only	PVP (2 or 5 mm)	LIFEx	(13) 33%
[70]	2019	China	120	Differentiation of PDAC from PNET <sup>ii</sup>	CECT	Manual	Q and S	PAP and PVP (1–7 mm)	A.K. software	(12) 25%
[71]	2019	China	111	Differentiation of PDAC from AIP	PET/CT	Manual	Q only	0.98 mm	In-house developed software	(9) 36%
[72]	2019	China	111	Differentiation of PDAC from AIP	PET/CT	Manual	Q and S	–	MATLAB R2017b	(13) 42%
[73]	2019	China	106	- Prediction of prognosis of unresectable pancreatic cancer <sup>jj</sup> - Prediction of risk of unresectable pancreatic cancer	CECT	Manual	Q and S	(0.6 mm) PAP and PVP (5 mm)	MATLAB R2018a	(15) 42%
[74]	2020	USA	39	Prediction of treatment response and prognosis of PDAC <sup>kk</sup>	CECT	Manual	Q and S	PAP (2.5 mm)	TexRAD	(15) 6%
[75]	2020	China	301	Classification of grades of PDAC	CECT	Manual	Q and S	PAP (1–3 mm)	IBEX	(2) 39%
[76]	2020	China	155	Prediction of metastasis of PDAC <sup>ll</sup>	CECT	Manual	Q only	PAP and PVP (1.25–5 mm)	MaZda	(14) 28%
[77]	2020	Denmark	99	Differentiation of CP from healthy pancreas <sup>mm</sup>	MRI	Manual	Q only	DWJ <sup>nn</sup> (2.6 mm)	Pyradiomics	(10) 22%
[78]	2020	China	17	Prediction of metastasis of PDAC <sup>oo</sup>	PET/MRI	Manual	Q and S	(2.6 mm)	LIFEx	(8) 33%
[79]	2020	South Korea	51	- Prediction of incidence of DM - Classification of subtypes of DM	CECT	Manual	Q only	PVP (4–6 mm)	In-house developed software	(12) 28%
[80]	2020	Germany	207	Classification of subtypes of PDAC <sup>pp</sup>	CECT	Manual	Q only	PVP (2.5–5.0 mm)	Pyradiomics	(10) 39%
[81]	2020	Canada	131	Prediction of resection margin status of PDAC <sup>qq</sup>	CECT	Manual	Q only	PVP (2.5 mm)	LIFEx	(14) 17%
[82]	2020	China	118	Prediction of metastasis of PDAC <sup>rr</sup>	CECT	Manual	Q and S	PVP (1 mm)	Pyradiomics	(6) 50%
[83]	2020	South Korea	48	Classification of mutation status in PDAC <sup>ss</sup>	PET	Semi-automated	Q only	–	CGITA	(18) 22%
[84]	2020	USA	56	Classification of subtypes of pancreatitis <sup>tt</sup>	CECT	Manual	Q only	PVP (3 mm)	In-house MATLAB program	(8) 28%
[85]	2020	Germany	95	- Differentiation of PDAC from PNET - Classification of grades of PNET	CECT	Manual	Q and S	PVP (1 mm)	Pyradiomics	(10) 31%
[86]	2020	China	164	Classification of subtypes of PCN <sup>uu</sup>	CECT	Manual	Q and S	PAP (3–5 mm)	MATLAB R2017b	(11) 39%
[87]	2020	China	57	Differentiation of SCN from MCN	CECT	Manual	Q and S	PVP (3 mm)	MATLAB R2017a	(14) 28%
[88]	2020	China	220	Prediction of prognosis of resectable PDAC <sup>vv</sup>	CT	Manual	Q and S	–	NM	(10) 53%
[89]	2020	China	59	Classification of grades of PNET <sup>ww</sup>	CECT	Manual	Q and S	3 mm Non-enhanced and PVP (0.8 mm)	In-house developed software	(19) 44%
[90]	2020	China	59	Classification of grades of PNET <sup>ww</sup>	CECT	Manual	Q and S	3 mm Non-enhanced and PVP (0.8 mm)	In-house developed software	(16) 44%

**Abbreviations:** *A.K.*, artificial intelligence kit software; *ADC*, apparent diffusion coefficient; *AIP*, autoimmune pancreatitis; *AP*, acute pancreatitis; *CECT*, contrast-enhanced computed tomography; *CGITA*, Chang Gung Image Texture Analysis; *CP*, chronic pancreatitis; *CT*, computed tomography; *DCE*, dynamic contrast enhancement; *DM*, diabetes mellitus; *DWI*, diffusion-weighted image; *EUS*, endoscopic ultrasound; *IBEX*, imaging biomarker explorer; *IPAS*, intrapancreatic accessory spleen; *IPMN*, Intraductal papillary mucinous neoplasm; *LIFEx*, local image features extraction; *MCM*, mucinous cystic neoplasm; *MFP*, mass forming pancreatitis; *MRI*, magnetic resonance imaging; *MM*, not mentioned; *PAP*, pancreatic arterial phase; *PCN*, pancreatic cystic neoplasm; *PDAC*, pancreatic ductal adenocarcinoma; *PET*, positron emission tomography; *PL*, pancreatic lymphoma; *PNET*, pancreatic neuroendocrine tumour; *PVP*, portal venous phase; *Q*, quantitative; *RQS*, radiomics quality score; *S*, semantic; *SCN*, serous cystic neoplasm; *SPN*, solid-pseudopapillary neoplasm; *TexRAD*, texture radiology software

<sup>a</sup> Overall survival

<sup>b</sup> Locally advanced pancreatic cancer

<sup>c</sup> Radio-chemotherapy response

<sup>d</sup> Progression-free survival

<sup>e</sup> Disease-free survival in PDAC

<sup>f</sup> Radio-chemotherapy response

<sup>g</sup> Overall survival in pancreatic ductal adenocarcinoma

<sup>h</sup> Pre- and post-operative survival in PDAC

<sup>i</sup> Branch duct IPMN

<sup>j</sup> Radio-chemotherapy response

<sup>k</sup> PNEC grade 3

<sup>l</sup> Atypical PNET

<sup>m</sup> Hypervascular PNET

<sup>n</sup> Disease-free survival in pancreatic head cancer

<sup>o</sup> Branch duct IPMN

<sup>p</sup> SMAD4 mutation

<sup>q</sup> Overall survival and progression-free survival

<sup>r</sup> Recurrence free survival and overall survival

<sup>s</sup> Overall survival and local control for locally advanced pancreatic cancer

<sup>t</sup> Atypical non-functioning PNET

<sup>u</sup> Tumour subtypes and overall survival

<sup>v</sup> Molecular subtypes and chemotherapy response

<sup>w</sup> *Ai b* value = 600 s/mm<sup>2</sup> with EPI

<sup>x</sup> Overall survival

<sup>y</sup> Recurrence free survival

<sup>z</sup> *c-Myc* and *HMG2A* genes as well as overall survival

<sup>aa</sup> Non-functioning PNET

<sup>bb</sup> *DWI*, *ADC* map, *T2*-weighted image fat saturated, and *T1*-weighted image fat saturated at different contrast enhancement phases

<sup>cc</sup> *TIWI* FS at different contrast enhancement phases

<sup>dd</sup> Radio-chemotherapy response

<sup>ee</sup> Overall survival

<sup>ff</sup> Early recurrence

<sup>gg</sup> *T1*-weighted image and *T2*-weighted image at different contrast enhancement phases

<sup>hh</sup> Ki67 index in IPMN and MCN

<sup>ii</sup> Non-hypervascular PNET

<sup>jj</sup> Three months restenosis-free survival

<sup>kk</sup> Disease-free survival in resectable PDAC

<sup>ll</sup> Lymph node metastasis in resectable PDAC

<sup>mmm</sup> Beside classification of CP based on two risk factors and two complications

<sup>nn</sup> At  $b$  value = 0 s/mm<sup>2</sup>

<sup>oo</sup> Distant metastases

<sup>pp</sup> Quasi-mesenchymal and non-quasi-mesenchymal subtypes

<sup>qq</sup> Beside prediction of risk features including nodal status, tumour grades, lymphovascular invasion, and perineural invasion

<sup>rr</sup> Lymph node metastasis

<sup>ss</sup> KRAS, SMAD4, TP53, and CDKN2A mutations

<sup>tt</sup> Functional abdominal pain, recurrent AP, and CP

<sup>uu</sup> Including SCN, MCN, and IPMN

<sup>vv</sup> Disease-free survival and overall survival

<sup>www</sup> Non-functional PNET

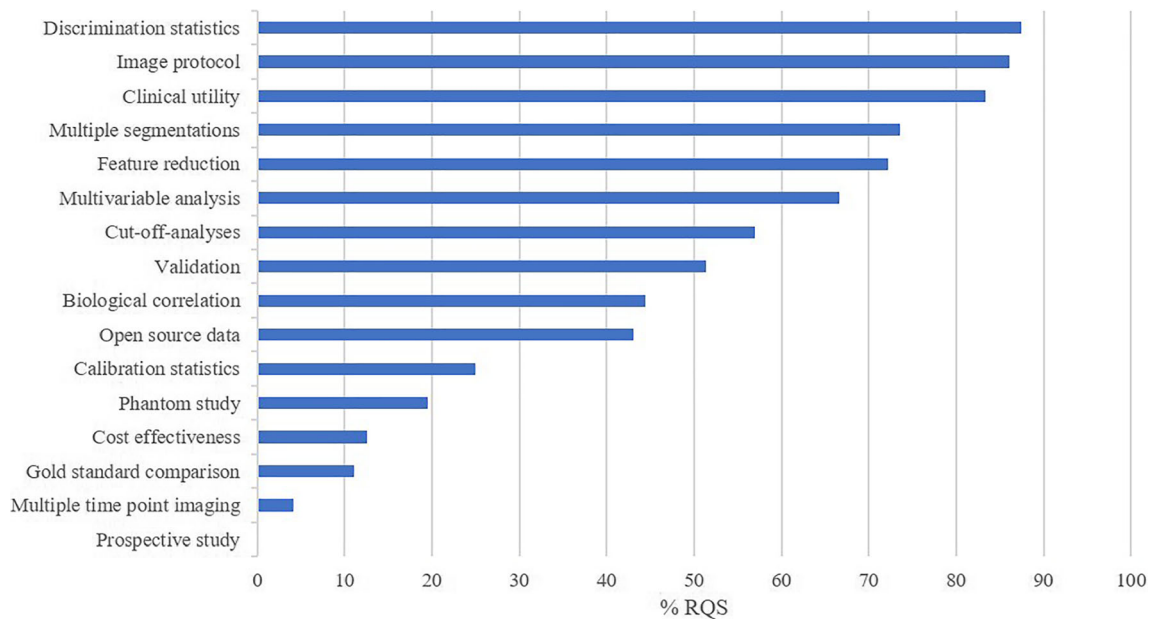
formance of radiomics model alone. The superiority of combined model was confirmed statistically in eight studies [22, 24, 31, 46, 48, 51, 59, 88].

Various approaches to dimensionality reduction were applied in the included studies in order to select the most useful radiomics feature and reduce the effect of overfitting. These approaches included univariate filter technique ( $n = 17$ ), multivariate filter technique ( $n = 20$ ), least absolute shrinkage and selection operator regression ( $n = 18$ ), as well as principle component analysis ( $n = 2$ ). The useful features were used as an input for training and validating classification model. Out of the 72 included studies, 36 studies applied supervised machine learning techniques (including random forest in nine studies); 14 studies, support vector machine; and 22 studies, logistic regression. The median RQS of the included studies was 28% (interquartile range 22–36%). The three most frequently observed RQS characteristics were discrimination statistics and applying resampling techniques, employing well-documented imaging protocol, and clinical usefulness of the model (Fig. 2). The three least frequently observed RQS characteristics were prospective study design, imaging at different time points, and comparing radiomics model with current gold standard method (Fig. 2). Fourteen studies (19.5%) analysed feature robustness through detecting inter-scanner differences and vendor-dependent features [33, 38, 42, 48, 55, 58, 61–63, 69, 71, 73, 82, 86].

## Applications of radiomics of the pancreas

The median number of extracted radiomics features in the included studies was 166 (interquartile range 14–416). Eighteen studies (25%) used in-house developed software [22, 24, 28–30, 33, 36, 38, 39, 45, 56, 61, 63, 69, 72, 80, 85, 90], whereas the remaining studies used open source or commercial software. The types and number of extracted features in individual studies are presented in Table 2. The significant radiomics features in individual studies are presented in Tables 3, 4, and 5 (stratified by the primary goal of using radiomics). The main focus of radiomics in 56 studies (77.8%) was pancreatic cancer; four studies (5.6%), pancreatic precancerous lesions [23, 24, 32, 39]; six studies (8.4%), pancreatic benign lesions [29, 68–70, 87, 88]; four studies (5.6%), pancreatitis [42, 60, 78, 85]; and two studies (2.8%), diabetes mellitus [61, 80]. Nineteen studies (26.4%) primarily applied radiomics for differentiation between various diseases of the pancreas, 23 studies (32.0%) for classification of subtypes/histologic grades, and 30 studies (41.7%) for prediction of prognosis/treatment response (Fig. 3). Out of the 72 included studies, 28 studies extracted radiomics features and patterns with the use of different filters (including wavelet, square, square root, exponential, logarithm, gradient,





**Fig. 2** Radiomics quality score of the included studies

Laws, local binary pattern, Laplacian of Gaussian, and fractal dimension filters).

### Factors that affect radiomics quality score

Supplementary Table 1 details the RQS of individual studies. Overall, the RQS was significantly correlated with the number of extracted features ( $r=0.529$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) as well as with the cohort size ( $r=0.343$ ,  $p=0.003$ ). In its turn, the number of extracted features and the cohort size were significantly correlated with the number of statistically significant features ( $r=0.437$ ,  $p<0.001$ ; and  $r=0.437$ ,  $p<0.001$ , correspondingly). Using CT as the reference, radiomics features extracted from MRI images resulted in an increase in the RQS by 1 point ( $p=0.732$ ); extracted from positron emission tomography images, in an increase in the RQS by 2 points ( $p=0.570$ ); extracted from endoscopic ultrasonography images, in a decrease in the RQS by 10 points ( $p=0.102$ ). Using CT as the reference, radiomics features extracted from MRI images resulted in 5 more statistically significant features ( $p=0.134$ ); extracted from endoscopic ultrasonography images, in 3 more statistically significant features ( $p=0.495$ ); extracted from positron emission tomography images, in 1 less statistically significant feature ( $p=0.680$ ).

### Discussion

This is the first systematic review to investigate the use of radiomics of the pancreas and the factors that affect

quantitative imaging features of the pancreas. A total of 72 studies that enrolled more than eight thousand participants were included, with the median sample size of 100 participants. The median number of investigated radiomics features in the included studies was 166, ranging from 4 to 2041 features. These features could be grouped into five main categories: shape features, first-order texture features, second-order texture features, filtered image features, and customised features [91]. Filtered image features appeared to be the most frequently observed significant radiomics features in the studies that employed them for classification (Table 4) and prediction (Table 5) of diseases of the pancreas. However, only 39% of studies (28 out of 72) used these features and more research is needed to confirm their usefulness in diseases of the pancreas. Future research also needs to determine the optimal filters as the included studies used a total of 10 different filters (including wavelet, square, square root, exponential, logarithm, gradient, Laws, local binary pattern, Laplacian of Gaussian, and fractal dimension filters). Second-order texture features were used in 94% of studies (68 out of 72) and they appeared to be the most frequently observed significant radiomics features in the studies focused on differential diagnosis of diseases of the pancreas (Table 3). The superiority of this group of features is likely explained by the fact that they capture the spatial arrangement and distribution of intensities within the pancreas using different types of matrices (e.g. grey level co-occurrence matrix, grey level run length matrix). Making use of large number of matrices may be required as the pancreas is a complex glandular organ

**Table 2** Radiomics features investigated in the included studies

Study ID	Type of extracted features	Number of extracted features	Number of statistically significant features	Feature reduction and classification method
Zhang et al [19]	First-order texture features Second-order texture features	67	20	Leave one out, Bayes, and SFS algorithms for selection; SVM for classification
Xu et al [20]	Filtered image features First-order texture features	22	22 <sup>xx</sup>	SFS and fuzzy classification algorithms
Zhu et al [21]	Second-order texture features First-order texture features Second-order texture features	105	16	Distance between class and SFS algorithms for selection; SVM for classification
Cui et al [22]	Filtered image features Shape features First-order texture features Second-order texture features	173	7	Elastic net and ICC > 0.8 for selection; Cox regression model for classification
Hanania et al [23]	Filtered image features Shape features First-order texture features Second-order texture features	360	10	ROC and FDR for selection; Logistic regression for classification
Permuth et al [24]	Shape features Second-order texture features First-order texture features Second-order texture features	112	14	Pearson correlation for selection; PCA and logistic regression for classification
Yue et al [25]	Second-order texture features Filtered image features Second-order texture features	12	3	Elastic net and LASSO regression for selection; Multivariate Cox regression model for classification
Canellas et al [26]	First-order texture features Second-order texture features Filtered image features Filtered image features	36	1	Independent sample <i>t</i> test for selection; Binary logistic regression for classification
Cassinotto et al [27]	Filtered image features	7 <sup>yy</sup>	1	Univariate and multivariate Cox regression model
Chen et al [28]	First-order texture features	8	4	Generalised estimating equation model
Dmitriev et al [29]	Shape features First-order texture features	14	0 <sup>zz</sup>	RF and convolution neural network
Eilaghi et al [30]	Second-order texture features	5	2	Cox regression model
Atiyeh et al [31]	First-order texture features Second-order texture features	255	0 <sup>aaa</sup>	Univariate and multivariate Cox regression model
Chakraborty et al [32]	Second-order texture features Customised features <sup>bbb</sup>	135	17	Univariate and multivariate logistic regression model, Wilcoxon rank sum test, and ensemble model for selection; SVM and RF for classification
Choi et al [33]	Shape features First-order texture features	16	7 <sup>ccc</sup>	Multivariate logistic regression analysis
Ciaravino et al [34]	First-order texture features	5	1	Wilcoxon correlation test
Guo et al [35]	First-order texture features Filtered image features	4	2	NA
Li et al [36]	First-order texture features	10	2	NA

**Table 2** (continued)

Study ID	Type of extracted features	Number of extracted features	Number of statistically significant features	Feature reduction and classification method
Lin et al [37]	Filtered image features	4	2	NA
Yun et al [38]	First-order texture features Second-order texture features	8	4	Multivariate Cox regression model
Atiyeh et al [39]	Filtered image features First-order texture features Second-order texture features <sup>ddd</sup>	255	0	Univariate analysis and RF
Atiyeh et al [40]	Customised features First-order texture features Second-order texture features	255	28 <sup>eee</sup>	Univariate analysis and fuzzy MRM for selection; MDS and linear regression model for classification
Bian et al [41]	Shape features First-order texture features Second-order texture features	1029	12	Spearman correlation, variance, and LASSO regression for selection; Multivariate logistic regression for classification
Chen et al [42]	Filtered image features Shape features First-order texture features Second-order texture features	412	10	Independent sample <i>t</i> test, LASSO regression, and Spearman correlation for selection;
Cheng et al [43]	First-order texture features Second-order texture features	6 <sup>fff</sup>	1 <sup>ggg</sup>	Multivariate logistic regression and SVM for classification
Choi et al [44]	Filtered image features First-order texture features Second-order texture features	36 <sup>hhh</sup>	1 <sup>iii</sup>	Multivariate Cox regression model
Chu et al [45]	Shape features First-order texture features Second-order texture features	478	40	MRMR and RF
Cozzi et al [46]	Filtered image features Shape features First-order texture features Second-order texture features	41	12 <sup>jjj</sup>	Pearson correlation and elastic net regression for selection; Multivariate Cox regression model for classification
D'Onofrio et al [47]	First-order texture features	5	2	Mann-Whitney correlation test
Gu et al [48]	Shape features First-order texture features Second-order texture features	853	25	MRMR and RF
Guo et al [49]	Filtered image features Filtered image features	5	2	Multivariate logistic regression
Guo et al [50]	First-order texture features Second-order texture features	68	9 <sup>kkk</sup>	Logistic regression analysis
He et al [51]	Shape features First-order texture features Second-order texture features	637	7	LASSO, SVM, and RF
Huang et al [52]	Filtered image features First-order texture features Second-order texture features	279	1	LASSO and multivariate logistic regression model
Kaissis et al	Filtered image features Shape features	1688	8	ICC and RF

Table 2 (continued)

Study ID	Type of extracted features	Number of extracted features	Number of statistically significant features	Feature reduction and classification method
[53]	First-order texture features Second-order texture features Filtered image features			
Kaissis et al [54]	Shape features First-order texture features Second-order texture features Filtered image features	1606	13	Spearman correlation and ICC for selection; Decision tree and regression models for classification
Khalvati et al [55]	Shape features First-order texture features Second-order texture features Filtered image features	410	2	ICC, LASSO, and Cox regression models
Kim et al [56]	Second-order texture features	4	1 <sup>III</sup>	Cox proportional hazards regression method
Li et al [57]	Filtered image features	326	6	K-folds cross-validation and SVM
Li et al [58]	Customised features <sup>mm</sup> First-order texture features Second-order texture features Filtered image features	300	30	RDA, LDA, NDA, and PCA
Liang et al [59]	First-order texture features Second-order texture features Filtered image features	467	8	Mann-Whitney <i>U</i> test and LASSO regression model for selection;
Lin et al [60]	Shape features	353	11	Multivariate logistic regression model for classification Independent sample <i>t</i> test and Boruta algorithm for selection; SVM for classification
Lu et al [61]	First-order texture features Second-order texture features Filtered image features	160	5	LASSO and multivariate logistic regression models
Nasief et al [62]	Shape features First-order texture features Second-order texture features Customised features <sup>mn</sup>	1300	13	Spearman correlation, <i>t</i> test, linear regression, and mixed effect models for selection; Bayesian-regularisation-neural-network for classification
Qiu et al [63]	First-order texture features Second-order texture features	29	18	Logistic regression analysis for selection; SVM for classification
Ren et al [64]	Shape features First-order texture features Second-order texture features Filtered image features	396	9 <sup>ooo</sup>	MRMR for selection; Multivariate logistic regression analysis for classification
Sandrasegaran et al [65]	Second-order texture features First-order texture features Filtered image features	4 <sup>ppp</sup>	1 <sup>qqq</sup>	Multivariate Cox regression model
Tang et al [66]	Shape features First-order texture features Second-order texture features	1312	10	LASSO regression for selection; Multivariate logistic analysis for classification
Wang et al [67]	Second-order texture features	5	5	Binary logistic regression analysis
Wei et al [68]	Shape features Second-order texture features Filtered image features	409	20	LASSO regression for selection; SVM for classification

**Table 2** (continued)

Study ID	Type of extracted features	Number of extracted features	Number of statistically significant features	Feature reduction and classification method
Wei et al [69]	First-order texture features Second-order texture features Filtered image features	409	22	LASSO regression and SVM
Yang et al [70]	Shape features First-order texture features Second-order texture features	28	9	LASSO regression and RF
Yu et al [71]	Second-order texture features	385	5	Multivariate logistic regression
Zhang et al [72]	First-order texture features Second-order texture features Filtered image features	418	8	Fisher's criterion > 0.01 and SFS for selection; SVM for classification
Zhang et al [73]	Shape features First-order texture features Second-order texture features	251	10	Spearman correlation, MRRM, and SVM for selection <sup>rr</sup> ; RF, adaptive boosting, and SVM for classification <sup>sss</sup>
Zhou et al [74]	Shape features First-order texture features Second-order texture features	620	14	Pearson correlation, LASSO regression and ICC analysis for selection; Cox regression model for classification
Borhani et al [75]	Filtered image features First-order texture features Filtered image features	6 <sup>tt</sup>	4	Mann-Whitney test, chi-square analysis, and multivariate logistic regression;
Chang et al [76]	Shape features First-order texture features Second-order texture features	1452	10	Kaplan-Meier survival analysis and Cox model SVM-RFE for selection;
Fang et al [77]	First-order texture features Second-order texture features Filtered image features	300	17	LASSO regression for classification Fisher's coefficient, POE with ACC, and MI for selection; Spearman's correlation coefficients for classification
Frøkjær et al [78]	Shape features First-order texture features Second-order texture features Filtered image features	851	5 <sup>uu</sup>	Tenfold cross-validation forward selection procedure, Naive Bayes classifier
Gao et al [79]	Filtered image features First-order texture features Second-order texture features	37	4 <sup>vv</sup>	Logistic regression analysis
Jang et al [80]	Shape features First-order texture features Second-order texture features	17	4 <sup>www</sup>	Multivariate logistic regression
Kaissis et al [81]	Shape features First-order texture features Second-order texture features Filtered image features	1474	20	Gini impurity for feature selection; RF for classification
Kulkarni et al [82]	First-order texture features Second-order texture features	9	2 <sup>xxx</sup>	Logistic regression analysis
Li et al [83]	Shape features First-order texture features Second-order texture features Filtered image features	2041	15	LASSO for selection; multivariable logistic regression for classification

Table 2 (continued)

Study ID	Type of extracted features	Number of extracted features	Number of statistically significant features	Feature reduction and classification method
Lim et al [84]	Shape features First-order texture features Second-order texture features	35	9 <sup>yy</sup>	Based on the Mann-Whitney <i>U</i> test
Mashayekhi et al [85]	Shape features First-order texture features Second-order texture features	54	11	Wilcoxon rank-sum for selection; Isomap and SVM for classification
Reinert et al [86]	First-order texture features Second-order texture features	92	8 <sup>zz</sup>	Binary logistic regression analysis
Shen et al [87]	Second-order texture features Filtered image features	547	5	ICC > 0.75, Pearson's correlation coefficient > 0.75, and Boruta method for selection; SVM, RF, and ANN for classification
Xie et al [88]	First-order texture features Second-order texture features	1942	18	Multivariable logistic regression analysis
Xie et al [89]	First-order texture features Second-order texture features	300	5	ICC > 0.75 and LASSO regression for selection; Multivariate Cox regression model for classification
Zhao et al [90]	Filtered image features First-order texture features Second-order texture features	585	6	MRMR for selection. SVM-RBF for classification

**Abbreviations:** ACC, average correlation coefficients; ANN, artificial neural network; FDR, false discovery rate; ICC, interclass correlation coefficient; LASSO, least absolute shrinkage and selection operator; LDA, linear discriminate analysis; MDS, multidimensional scaling; MI, mutual information; MRMR, minimum redundancy maximum relevant; NA, not applicable; NDA, non-linear discriminate analysis; PCA, principle component analysis; POE, classification error probability; RDA, raw data analysis; RF, random forest; ROC, receiver operating characteristic curve; SFS, sequential forward selection; SVM, support vector machine; SVM-RBF, support vector machine-radial basis function; SVM-RFE, support vector machine-recursive feature elimination

<sup>xx</sup> Based on fuzzy classification score

<sup>yy</sup> At different filtration scales

<sup>zz</sup> All the 14 extracted radiomics features were used to build classification model

<sup>aaa</sup> All the 255 extracted radiomics features were used to build predictive model

<sup>bbb</sup> Novel radiological features

<sup>ccc</sup> Three at arterial phase and four at venous phase

<sup>ddd</sup> The ratio of the area of the largest connected enhanced region and the area of the cyst region

<sup>eee</sup> For the main goal of the study (i.e. classification of mutation status)

<sup>fff</sup> At different filtration scales

<sup>ggg</sup> At different filtration scales

<sup>hhh</sup> At six different spatial filtration scales

<sup>iii</sup> Entropy at medium spatial filtration scale

<sup>jjj</sup> Four features for local control and eight features for overall survival analysis

<sup>kkk</sup> Four features from T2 weighted image and five from diffusion weighted image

<sup>lll</sup> Grey-level non-uniformity at angle of 135°

<sup>mmmm</sup> Deep learning features

- <sup>mm</sup> Normalised entropy to standard deviation feature
- <sup>ooo</sup> Five from arterial phase and four from portal phase
- <sup>ppp</sup> At different filtration scales
- <sup>qqq</sup> At medium scaling filter
- <sup>rrr</sup> SVM with recursive feature elimination
- <sup>sss</sup> SVM with both Gaussian radial basis function and linear kernel function
- <sup>ttt</sup> At different spatial band filtration scales
- <sup>uuu</sup> For differentiation between healthy pancreas and chronic pancreatitis
- <sup>vvv</sup> One feature from positron emission tomography and three from apparent diffusion coefficient map
- <sup>www</sup> In subgroup analysis, only surface area was significant predictor for type 2 diabetes mellitus
- <sup>xxx</sup> Only for predicting the resection margin status of pancreatic head adenocarcinoma
- <sup>yyy</sup> Based on gradient-based edge segmentation method
- <sup>zzz</sup> For the main goal of the study

of a relatively small size, located deeply in the retroperitoneal space, and composed of different types of cells (i.e. acinar, ductal, endocrine)—each with different functions [92]. The exocrine part constitutes around 95% of the pancreas with two main types of cells being acinar cells and ductal cells. The endocrine part (i.e. islets of Langerhans) constitutes less than 5% of the pancreas, with five major types of cells being alpha cells, beta cells, delta cells, epsilon cells, and pancreatic polypeptide cells. Besides, the size of the pancreas may change during consumption of food [93–95]. These physical and physiological characteristics of the pancreas make radiomics investigation of the pancreas quite challenging and justify the extraction of large number of radiomics features that could describe the pancreas comprehensively. Further, extracting large number of features likely captures variabilities in genetic, environmental, and behavioural factors that cause diseases of the pancreas, hence enabling characterisation of each patient individually and ultimately resulting in personalised management [1]. In the future, the performance of radiomics models may, in principle, be enhanced by considering certain semantic features (e.g. demographics, blood biomarkers, genomics). However, it is a long way to go as, out of the 45 studies that reported on combined models, only 8 studies (18%) demonstrated a statistically significant superiority of combining radiomics and semantic features.

The other notable finding of the present systematic review was that the RQS had a significant positive correlation with the number of extracted features and the cohort size. However, the RQS in all the included studies altogether was rather low, with a median of 28%. The top three most consistently reported criteria were reporting discrimination statistics, applying well-documented imaging protocol, and studying the clinical utility of the extracted biomarker. By contrast, the three least frequently reported criteria were prospective study design, applying the delta radiomics (i.e. extracting features at different imaging time points), and comparing the results with gold standard. Worryingly, none of the included studies were prospective. Therefore, future radiomics studies of the pancreas should be conducted in a prospective fashion. The second least frequently observed criterion was the use of delta radiomics, where multiple images were obtained at different time points in order to test the reproducibility and stability of extracted radiomics features over a specific period of time. Out of the 72 included studies, only three studies met this criterion. Therefore, future studies on radiomics of the pancreas should extract and test radiomics features at multiple time points. The third common omission was the lack of comparison of radiomics findings with gold

**Table 3** Radiomics features in the studies focused on differential diagnosis of diseases of the pancreas

Investigated features		Colour key					
		At least one significant feature reported					No significant feature reported
Non-investigated features							
Diseases of the pancreas		Study ID	Customised features	Second-order texture features	Shape features	First-order texture features	Filtered image features
Chronic pancreatitis from	Healthy pancreas	Froekjaer et al. (78)					
	Pancreatic cancer	Zhu et al. (21)					
SCN from	Non-SCN	Wei et al. (69)					
	MCN	Yang et al. (70)					
		Xie et al. (88)					
PDAC from	PL	Huang et al. (52)					
	AIP	Zhang et al. (72)					
		Zhang et al. (73)					
	MFP	Ren et al. (64)					
	Healthy pancreas	Chu et al. (45)					
Zhang et al. (19)							
PNET	PNET	He et al. (51)					
		Wang et al. (67)					
		Yu et al. (71)					
		Reinert et al. (86)					
		Guo et al. (35)					
		Li et al. (36)					
		Lin et al. (37)					
PNET from	IPAS	Lin et al. (37)					
	SPN	Li et al. (58)					

standard. For example, results of many studies on the use of radiomics of the pancreas to determine prognosis

of patients with pancreatic cancer were not compared with the well-established gold standards (tumour node

**Table 4** Radiomics features in the studies focused on classification of diseases of the pancreas

Investigated features		Colour key					
		At least one significant feature reported					No significant feature reported
Non-investigated features							
Subtypes	Pancreatic cyst	Dmitriev et al. (29)					
		Shen et al. (87)					
	Pancreatitis	PDAC	Mashayekhi et al. (85)				
			Kaissis et al. (53)				
			Kaissis et al. (81)				
Mutation status	PDAC	Attiyeh et al. (40)					
		Lim et al. (84)					
Histologic grades	PDAC	Chang et al. (76)					
		Qu et al. (63)					
		Guo et al. (50)					
	PNET	PNET	Gu et al. (48)				
			Permuth et al. (24)				
			Choi et al. (33)				
			D'Onofrio et al. (47)				
			Zhao et al. (90)				
			Guo et al. (49)				
			Liang et al. (59)				
			Hanania et al. (23)				
Gene expression	PCN	Wei et al. (68)					
	PDAC	Li et al. (57)					



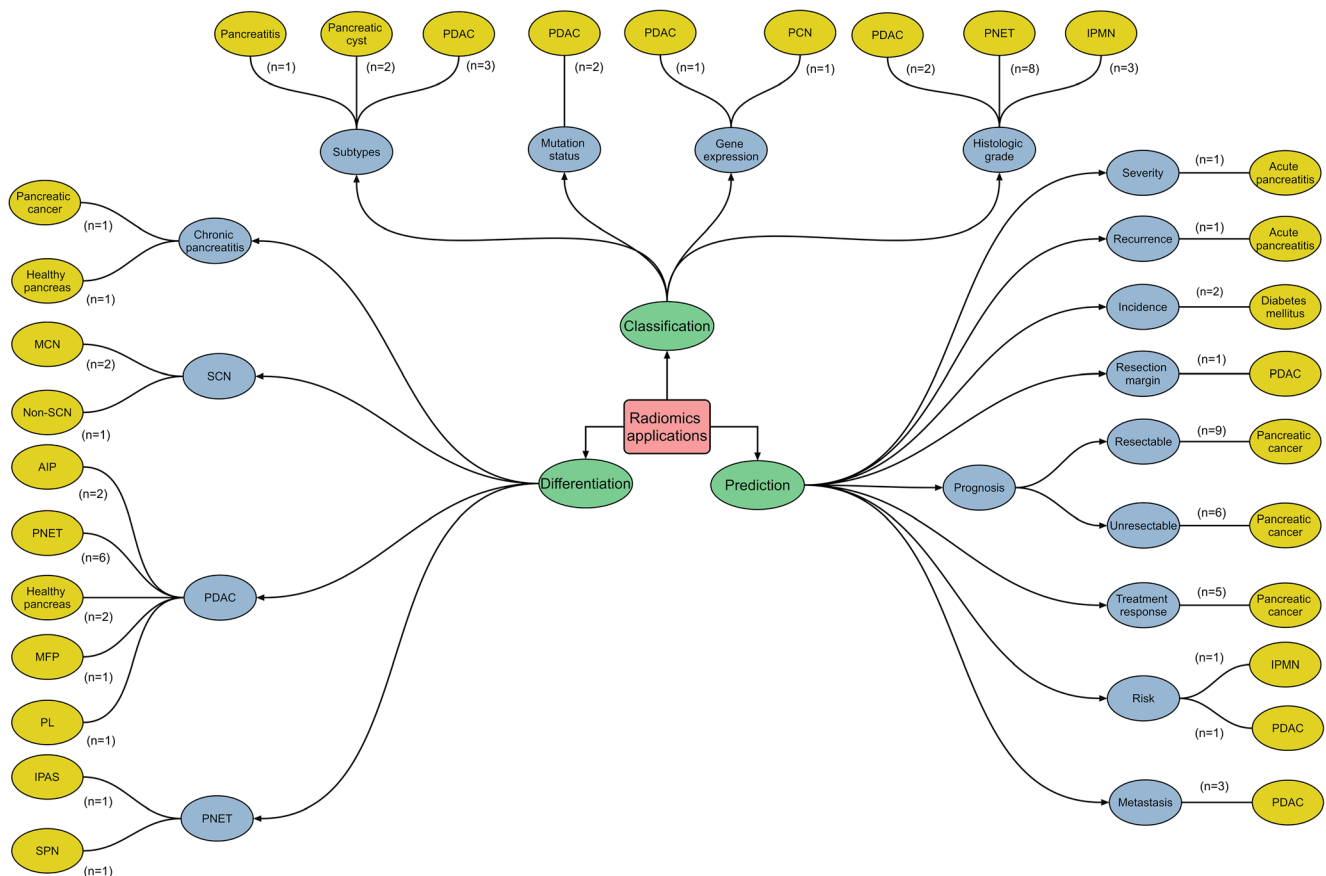
**Table 5** Radiomics features in the studies focused on prediction of diseases of the pancreas

Investigated features		Colour key					
		At least one significant feature reported		No significant feature reported			
Non-investigated features							
Diseases of the pancreas		Study ID	Customised features	Filtered image features	Second-order texture features	First-order texture features	Shape features
Resection margin	PDAC	Kulkarni et al. (82)					
Recurrence	Acute pancreatitis	Chen et al. (42)					
Prognosis and unresectable	Resectable and unresectable	Pancreatic cancer	Tang et al. (66)				
			Cozzi et al. (46)				
			Attiyeh et al. (31)				
			Xu et al. (20)				
			Xie et al. (89)				
			Yun et al. (38)				
			Eilaghi et al. (30)				
			Kim et al. (56)				
			Cassinotto et al. (27)				
			Choi et al. (44)				
			Khalvati et al. (55)				
			Severity	Acute pancreatitis		Zhou et al. (74)	
Sandrasegaran et al. (65)							
Cheng et al. (43)							
Cui et al. (22)							
Metastasis	PDAC		Lin et al. (60)				
			Fang et al. (77)				
			Gao et al. (79)				
Incidence	Diabetes mellitus		Li et al. (83)				
			Lu et al. (61)				
Risk	PDAC		Jang et al. (80)				
	IPMN	Bian et al. (41)					
Treatment response	Pancreatic cancer		Chakraborty et al. (32)				
			Nasief et al. (62)				
			Borhani et al. (75)				
			Chen et al. (28)				
			Ciaravino et al. (34)				
Yue et al. (25)							

metastasis (TNM) staging system and MD-Anderson pre-treatment classification) [96]. It is also worth noting that, while histology is the gold standard for diagnosing focal pancreatic lesions, only 15 included studies used it (although it may not be ethical to use it in patients with benign lesions). Further, all the 6 radiomics studies on pancreatic benign lesions (such as serous cystadenoma) used CT only, which is considered suboptimal as accurate diagnosing of these benign lesions is quite challenging without the use of MRI (especially if lesions are of small size). Careful selection of gold standard in future studies on radiomics of the pancreas is encouraged.

There are several limitations that need to be acknowledged when interpreting the findings of the present review. First, there was a heterogeneity between the included studies in terms of image acquisition protocols. For example, different phases of CT and MRI sequences were employed in the primary studies. This brings to the fore the need to standardise image acquisition protocols in future radiomics studies of the pancreas.

Second, the included studies used a range of software packages that not infrequently offer different algorithms for defining the same radiomics features. This highlights the need to standardise the definitions of imaging features. The Image Biomarker Standardisation Initiative aspires to standardise the extraction of imaging biomarkers from acquired imaging for the purpose of high-throughput quantitative image analysis [97]. This initiative needs to be taken into account in radiomics of the pancreas research. Third, the included studies disproportionately focused on focal pancreatic lesions. Only six studies investigated benign diseases that are characterised by diffuse changes of the pancreas (i.e. pancreatitis and diabetes mellitus) and high-quality radiomics studies in these diseases are now warranted [98]. Fourth, we designed the present systematic review to include only studies that applied handcrafted radiomics as the main method for extracting quantitative imaging features from radiological images. However, it is also possible to use machine learning to extract some features. For example, one study extracted 256 deep



**Fig. 3** Applications of radiomics of the pancreas. Only primary goals of individual studies are depicted. The complete list of goals of the individual studies is presented in Table 1. *Abbreviations:* *AIP*, autoimmune pancreatitis; *IPAS*, intrapancreatic accessory spleen; *IPMN*, intraductal papillary mucinous neoplasm; *MCN*, mucinous cystic

neoplasm; *MFP*, mass forming pancreatitis; *PCN*, pancreatic cystic neoplasm; *PDAC*, pancreatic ductal adenocarcinoma; *PL*, pancreatic lymphoma; *PNET*, pancreatic neuroendocrine tumour; *SCN*, serous cystic neoplasm; *SPN*, solid pseudopapillary neoplasm

learning features from the first three layers of convolutional neural network model, in addition to the radiomics features [57]. Last, building predictive model is one of the promising applications of radiomics in diseases of the pancreas. Thirty studies applied radiomics for building predictive models; however, none of them appeared to follow the TRIPOD (Transparent Reporting of multivariable prediction model for Individual Prognosis or Diagnosis) guidelines [99].

In conclusion, the present systematic review demonstrated that radiomics of the pancreas emerges as a promising tool that could be used for personalised management of patients with diseases of the pancreas. To maximise the benefits of radiomics of the pancreas, future studies are best to have a large sample size (more than 100 participants), use standardised software packages that offer a large number of radiomics features (especially second-order texture features and filtered image features), investigate radiomics in prospective fashion, compare radiomics results with an appropriate gold standard, and apply delta radiomics.

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### Compliance with ethical standards

**Guarantor** The scientific guarantor of this publication is Associate Professor Max Petrov, MD, MPH, PhD.

**Conflict of interest** The authors of this manuscript declare no relationships with any companies, whose products or services may be related to the subject matter of the article.

**Statistics and biometry** No complex statistical methods were necessary for this paper.

**Informed consent** Institutional Review Board approval was not required because the study was a secondary analysis of the literature.

**Ethical approval** Written informed consent was not required for this study because it was a secondary analysis of the literature.

## Methodology

- retrospective
- diagnostic or prognostic study
- performed at one institution

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