

FRAMEWORK FOR MACHINE LEARNING ARTEFACT REMOVAL AND
EMPIRICAL MODE DECOMPOSITION FOR CAPNOGRAM-BASED ASTHMA
DETECTION

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my father, who taught me that the best kind of knowledge to have is that which is learned for its own sake. It is also dedicated to my mother, who taught me that even the largest task can be accomplished if it is done one step at a time.

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ABSTRACT

Capnography has received considerable attention owing to its important applications in assessing asthma and other pulmonary diseases. Monitoring abnormal changes in the recorded carbon dioxide waveform (i.e., capnogram signal) allows for detecting respiratory malfunctioning and thereby averting potential asthma attacks. Detecting asthma based on the non-stationary capnogram signal remains an open research problem. In this thesis, an automatic computational framework is proposed to detect asthma. The presented framework includes two main stages. The first stage is responsible for discarding the distorted segments of the recorded capnogram signals. This task was performed in previous studies either manually by visual inspection, using threshold-based or template matching methods. In the current work, a machine learning-based approach is presented to automatically classify artefact-free and distorted capnogram segments. For this purpose, different time- and frequency-domain features are proposed. The time-domain features include energy, variance, skewness, kurtosis, Hjorth parameters and mean absolute deviation (MAD). The frequency-domain features include the area under the magnitude Fourier spectrum in addition to the number of relatively high spectral peaks for a particular frequency range. Different classifiers are trained and tested using the most relevant features: Hjorth activity and MAD. These classification models include Support Vector Machine (SVM), Random Forest (RF), Decision Tree (DT) and Naive Bayes (NB) classifiers. The results showed that the SVM classifier can provide classification accuracy, specificity, sensitivity and precision of 89%, 91%, 87% and 92.1%, respectively. In addition, a multiple classifiers voting approach is proposed for this classification task. Using this cooperative classification, the specificity is increased from 91% to 94%. The second stage accepts the clean capnogram segments from the first stage and carries out the classification of healthy and asthmatic capnograms. The proposed features are based on Empirical Mode Decomposition (EMD) which is suitable for analyzing the non-stationary capnogram signal in addition to the variance of the raw signal. Unlike the traditional features, the proposed features are extracted from the frequency-domain representation of the signal's first Intrinsic Mode Function (IMF). The results showed that the NB classifier can provide classification accuracy, specificity, sensitivity and precision of 96.5%, 97%, 96% and 97.18%, respectively.

ABSTRAK

Capnography telah mendapat perhatian besar kerana peranannya yang penting dalam menilai asma dan penyakit paru-paru yang lain. Di dalam thesis ini, rangka kerja pengiraan automatik dicadangkan bagi mengesan asma berdasarkan analisis isyarat capnogram. Rangka kerja yang dibentangkan merangkumi dua peringkat utama. Peringkat pertama berperanan menyingkirkan segmen terherot bagi isyarat capnogram yang dirakam. Langkah ini telah diamalkan dalam kajian terdahulu sama ada secara manual melalui pemeriksaan visual, menggunakan kaedah berasaskan ambang, atau pepadanan templat. Dalam kajian semasa, pendekatan berasaskan pembelajaran mesin dipamerkan bagi mengklasifikasikan secara automatik segmen bebas artifak dan capnogram terherot. Bagi tujuan ini, ciri domain masa dan domain frekuensi dicadangkan. Ciri domain masa termasuk tenaga, varians, kecondongan, kurtosis, parameter Hjorth dan sisihan mutlak min (MAD). Ciri domain frekuensi pula termasuk kawasan di bawah magnitud spektrum Fourier sebagai pelengkap kepada bilangan puncak spektrum yang tinggi untuk julat frekuensi tertentu. Pengelas yang berbeza termasuk Mesin Sokongan Vektor (SVM), Hutan Rawak (RF), Pohon Keputusan (DT) dan pengelas Naive Bayes (NB) dilatih dan diuji menggunakan ciri yang paling relevan. Keputusan menunjukkan bahawa pengelas SVM boleh memberikan ketepatan pengelasan, kekhususan, kepekaan dan ketepatan masing-masing sebanyak 89%, 91%, 87% dan 92.1%. Di samping itu, pendekatan berdasarkan pengundian berbilang pengelas dicadangkan untuk tugas pengelasan ini. Menggunakan klasifikasi yang digabungkan ini, kekhususan ditingkatkan daripada 91% kepada 94%. Peringkat kedua menerima segmen capnogram bersih dari peringkat pertama dan melaksanakan klasifikasi capnogram antara sihat dan asma. Ciri-ciri yang dicadangkan adalah berdasarkan Penguraian Mod Empirik (EMD) di mana ianya sesuai untuk menganalisis isyarat capnogram yang tidak pegun. Berlainan dengan ciri tradisional yang diekstrak daripada perwakilan domain frekuensi bagi isyarat capnogram mentah, ciri yang dicadangkan diekstrak daripada perwakilan domain frekuensi bagi isyarat pertama Fungsi Mod Intrinsik (IMF). Keputusan menunjukkan bahawa pengelas NB mampu memberikan ketepatan pengelasan, kekhususan, kepekaan dan kejituan masing-masing sebanyak 96.5%, 97%, 96% dan 97.18%.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABG	-	Arterial Blood Gas
ANN	-	Artificial Neural Network
AR	-	Auto Regressive
AUC	-	Area Under ROC Curve
BCI	-	Brain-Computer Interface
CHF	-	Congestive Heart Failure
CO ₂	-	Carbon dioxide
COPD	-	Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease
COVID	-	Coronavirus Diseases
CPR	-	Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation
CWD	-	Choi-William Distribution
DFT	-	Discrete Fourier Transform
DSP	-	Digital Signal Processing
DT	-	Decision Tree
EEG	-	Electroencephalogram
EMD	-	Empirical Mode Decomposition
EMG	-	Electromyography
ERD	-	Event-Related Desynchronization
EtCO ₂	-	End-tidal Carbon dioxide
FAST	-	Feature Assessment by Sliding Thresholds
FEV ₁	-	Forced Expiratory Volume in the first second
FEV ₆	-	Forced Expiratory Volume in the first six seconds
FFT	-	Fast Fourier Transform
FIRS	-	Forum of International Respiratory Societies
FNR	-	False Negative Rate
FPR	-	False Positive Rate

FVC	-	Forced Vital Capacity
GMM	-	Gaussian Mixture Model
GINA	-	Global Initiative for Asthma
ICO ₂	-	Inspired Carbon dioxide
IMF	-	Intrinsic Mode Function
IPCRG	-	International Primary Care Respiratory Group
IR	-	Infra Red
LLN	-	Lower Limits of Normal
LPC	-	Linear Predictive Coding
MAD	-	Mean Absolute Deviation
MBD	-	Modified-B Distribution
MFCCs	-	Mel Frequency Cepstral Coefficients
NAEPP	-	National Asthma Education and Prevention Program
NB	-	Naive Bayes
O ₂	-	Oxygen
PaCO ₂	-	Arterial Partial Pressure of Carbon Dioxide
PEFR	-	Peak Expiratory Flow Rate
PFT	-	Pulmonary Function Test
PSD	-	Power Spectral Density
QDA	-	Quadratic Discriminant Analysis
RBF	-	Radial Basis Function
RF	-	Random Forest
RIP	-	Respiratory Inductive Plethysmography
ROC	-	Receiver Operating Characteristics
RR	-	Respiratory Rate
SMI	-	Sustained Maximal Inspiration
SR	-	Slope Ratio
STFT	-	Short-time Fourier Transform
SVM	-	Support Vector Machine

TFD	-	Time-Frequency Distribution
TMR	-	Transparency Market Research
TNR	-	True Negative Rate
TPR	-	True Positive Rate
UTM	-	Universiti Teknologi Malaysia
VAE	-	Venous Air Embolism
WHO	-	World Health Organization
WVD	-	Wigner-Ville Distribution

LIST OF SYMBOLS

A_{f_o}	-	Area under magnitude spectrum for $0 < f \leq f_o$ Hz
$c(n)$	-	Normalized capnogram segment
$c'(n)$	-	First derivative of a capnogram segment
$c''(n)$	-	Second derivative of a capnogram segment
d	-	Binary classification decision from a single classifier
D_f	-	Final global decision from multiple classifiers
E_c	-	Energy of a capnogram segment
$e_l(n)$	-	Lower envelope
$e_u(n)$	-	Upper envelope
F	-	Feature vector
f_o	-	End frequency of a frequency range
f_s	-	Sampling frequency
IMF_i	-	i^{th} Intrinsic Mode Function
L	-	Target class labels vector
M	-	Length of class labels vector
N	-	Length of a capnogram segment
P	-	Number of high spectral peaks
$r(n)$	-	Residue signal
T_s	-	Sampling time interval
$x(n)$	-	Zero-mean capnogram segment
$X(k)$	-	Discrete Fourier transform of $x(n)$
$Y(k)$	-	Binary vector counting the number of high spectral peaks
ρ	-	Pearson's correlation coefficient
σ_c	-	Standard deviation of a capnogram segment
σ_c^2	-	Variance of a capnogram segment
μ_c	-	Mean value of a capnogram segment

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

Hundreds of millions of people worldwide suffer from chronic respiratory diseases, which are considered among the leading causes of morbidity and mortality [1, 2], especially with the broad spread of novel coronavirus disease (COVID) as healthy lungs are capable of fighting it better [3]. According to the statistical data reported by the world health organization (WHO) in 2019, respiratory illnesses represented 30% of the most prominent causes of death around the world [4]. Different environmental circumstances, such as dust, air pollution and tobacco smoke exposure, and other pathological and genetic risk factors are responsible for accelerating the prevalence of these ill-health conditions [5]. Consequently, the health and economic costs of these life-threatening respiratory conditions are dramatically high due to their pervasiveness and severity. The latest report released by the Forum of International Respiratory Societies (FIRS) identified asthma in addition to other four distress conditions: chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), acute lower respiratory tract infection, tuberculosis and lung cancer, as the most contributing to the global burden of pulmonary (respiratory) disorders [6].

Asthma is a remarkably common and serious obstructive respiratory disease that represents a global burden due to the alarming morbidity and mortality rates caused by this disease as reported by GINA [7]. The symptoms of this chronic disease, which affects millions of people around the world, include shortness of breath, wheeze, cough and chest tightness. The respiratory airways of an asthmatic patient are swollen and inflamed, as shown in Figure 1.1. During an asthma attack (also called an asthma exacerbation), the muscles around the airways contract causing the bronchial tubes to become even narrower. In addition, the narrowing of the airways is increased due to

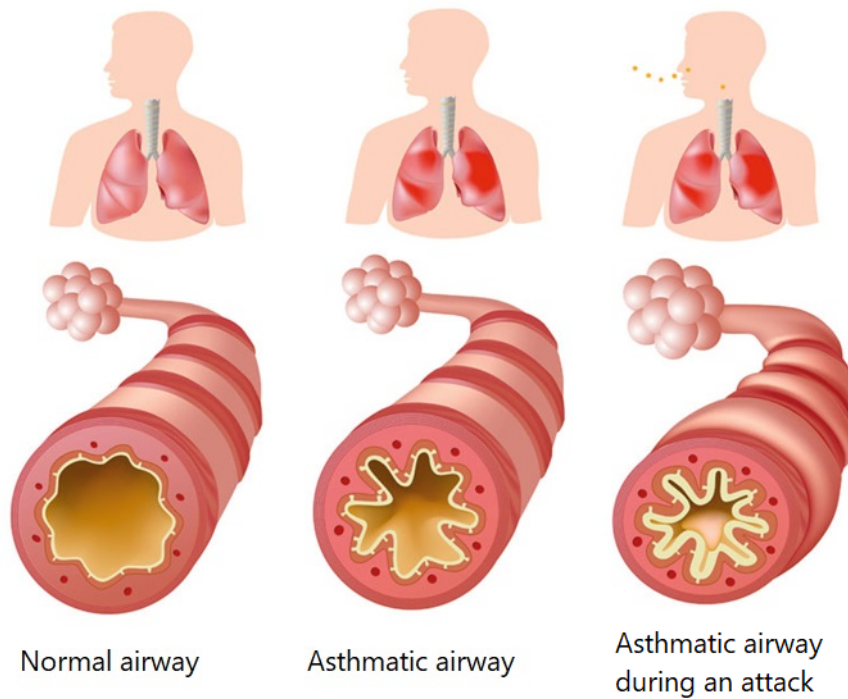


Figure 1.1 Respiratory airway shape in case of normal and asthmatic subjects.

the extra produced mucus and thereby the patient experiences tough trouble breathing and acute chest tightness.

With the recent spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is recommended for people with asthma to take the vaccination especially if they are not allergic to the vaccine ingredients [8]. However, regular assessment is still needed in order to manage asthma attacks and avoid their harmful consequences through determining the suitable dose of treatment. The diagnosis and assessment of asthma is performed by pulmonologists based on the history of the symptoms pattern besides the measures obtained from the PFTs [9]. Other traditional clinical examination methods, such as chest and tracheal auscultation, are also used to detect the presence of inspiratory and/or expiratory wheezing and other potential changes in lung sounds [10].

1.1.1 Capnograph-based respiratory assessment

Capnograph is a medical device recommended by different healthcare societies for performing evaluations of respiratory conditions [11–13]. Being non-invasive and effort-independent, capnograph has the preference in medical diagnostics over traditional respiratory assessment methods described in the previous subsection. Capnograph also showed significance in other situations, besides the follow-up of patients with pulmonary diseases, where a patient's level of consciousness, ventilation, oxygenation or perfusion is deranged. For instance, using capnography in intensive care environments to monitor the respiratory status during sedation is needed to avoid sudden depression in the patient's ventilation [14]. Capnography is also used during neurosurgery to detect any abrupt decrease in the maximum exhaled CO₂ pressure which indicates the incidence of venous air embolism (VAE) [15]. Other clinical studies showed that capnography is helpful in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) during cardiac arrest [16]. In CPR, capnography is utilized in monitoring chest compressions and checking the accurate placement of the endotracheal tube in addition to observing the ventilation rate for the purpose of preventing inadvertent hyperventilation [17–19].

A capnography device measures the partial pressure of CO₂ gas in the real-time pulmonary airflow in human airways during inspiration and expiration and displays on its monitor a waveform, namely the capnogram signal [20, 21]. Typically, the CO₂ gas represents around 0.04% and 6% of the inhaled and exhaled air, respectively [22]. With reference to these standard levels, monitoring abnormal changes in the recorded capnographic wave (i.e., capnogram signal) allows for detecting respiratory malfunctioning and thereby averting potential harmful consequences. Other associated assessment parameters, including respiratory rate (RR), inspired CO₂ (ICO₂) and end-tidal CO₂ (EtCO₂), are also computed and displayed on the capnograph monitor. Capnography devices are either time-based, in which a capnogram waveform shows the respiratory CO₂ partial pressure variations in millimeters of mercury (mmHg) as a function of time, or volumetric, in which a capnogram signal is recorded and plotted versus expired volume [23–25]. The main idea of capnography technology is founded on the fact that infrared (IR) radiation of a specific wavelength is absorbed by CO₂ molecules. Hence, the calculation of the CO₂ concentration in the inspired and

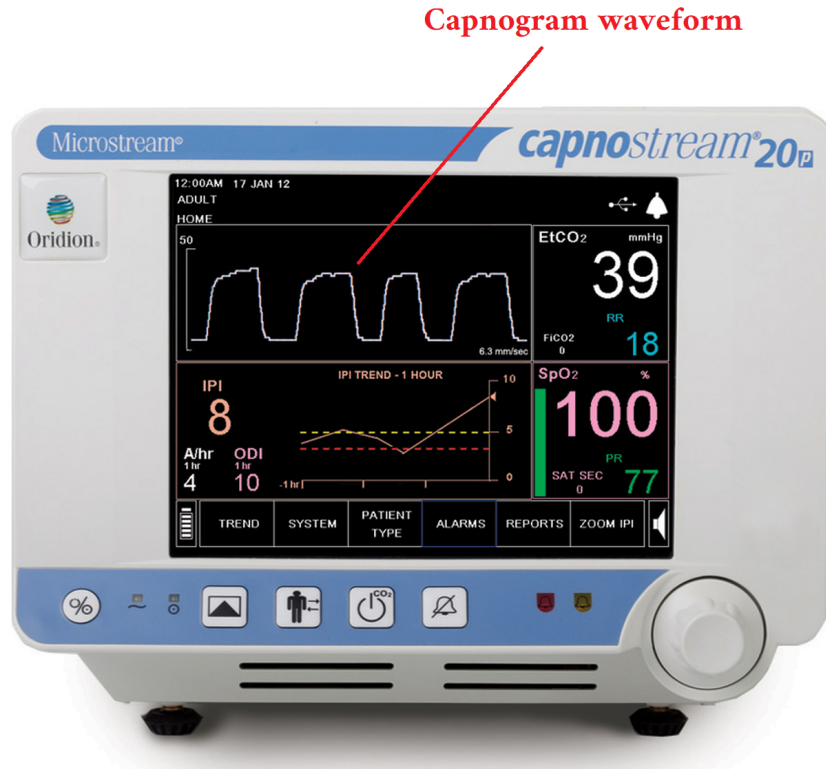


Figure 1.2 Capnostream™ 20p capnography monitor.

expired gases is carried out via detecting the changes in IR radiation levels by means of sensitive photo-detectors [21, 26]. Accordingly, a CO₂ sensor is a principal component of a capnography system in addition to a gas sampling tube, through which the CO₂ signal is acquired from the subject, and a unit for signal acquisition and processing [21].

Two main techniques are available for the CO₂ measurement in capnography devices: main- and side-stream techniques [27, 28]. In the main-stream technique, the CO₂ sensor is located close to the subject, particularly between the processing unit and the face mask that is used to attach the subject to the device. Thereby, neither a sampling tube nor a pump is needed in a main-stream capnography device. On the other hand, the CO₂ sensor in the side-stream technique is placed inside the main processing unit away from the subject who is attached to the device through a nasal cannula. During breathing, a mini pump aspirates the detected CO₂ samples from the sampling tube at a rate ranging from 50 to 200 millilitre per minute (ml/min). The main-stream capnograph has a simple mechanism and rapid signal acquisition, however

the temperature of its CO₂ sensor increases above 40°C which may harm the subject's skin. The side-stream capnograph is easier to sterilize and can be used flexibly for both adults and children who are sometimes in unusual positions during measurement. In this thesis, the Capnostream™ 20p capnographic monitoring device, shown in Figure 1.2, that is based on the side-stream technique is employed. This device records time-based capnogram waveforms and has the option of saving these CO₂ signals for further processing and analysis.

1.1.2 Capnogram signal analysis

In respiratory care, recognizing capnogram changes can provide better care for pulmonary patients by alerting the healthcare providers to critical situations where the airflow is restricted. Pulmonary physicians rely on their visual inspection of the recorded capnogram signal during a subjective clinical assessment of respiratory disorders, such as asthma and COPD [25, 29]. However, the automatic objective assessment and monitoring of such respiratory diseases are highly beneficial in clinical and home environments [20, 30, 31]. Hence, researchers have been incentivized to introduce different signal processing-based algorithms for capnogram signal analysis. The ultimate goal of these algorithms is airway management through the interpretation of capnogram features which reflect the functional performance of human respiratory system. For example, the authors in [32] performed a quantitative analysis of the capnogram signals acquired from patients suffering from COPD and congestive heart failure (CHF). In this study, different time-domain features extracted from the capnogram waveform morphology, such as the slope of the alveolar plateau phase, were employed together with quadratic discriminant analysis (QDA) to distinguish between normal subjects and patients with COPD or CHF.

Other studies [33, 34] investigated the significance of time-domain and statistical features of capnogram signals in detecting asthmatic conditions. The suggested features in these studies included signal shape descriptive indices, such as the gradients of different capnogram phases and the angles between these phases, in addition to the Hjorth parameters [35]. Besides, different frequency-domain features of capnograms

were also proposed in [36] to differentiate normal pulmonary function from asthma. The fast Fourier transform (FFT) and autoregressive (AR) modelling were utilized to compute the power spectral density (PSD) of a CO₂ signal. Subsequently, the magnitudes and positions of the spectral peaks were employed as discriminating features between normal and asthmatic capnograms, and the artificial neural network (ANN) was used to carry out the classification task. A broad overview of capnogram signal analysis and feature extraction methods can be found in [37].

Although capnogram signal analysis showed significance in detecting different respiratory distress conditions, our focus in this thesis is mainly on asthma disease due to its rising prevalence in Malaysia and other Asia-Pacific countries. Being a tropical country, Malaysia's environmental risk factors such as high humidity, mould and dampness contribute to the wide spread of asthma [38–40]. Furthermore, CO₂ emissions from the burning of fossil fuels in Malaysia reached 262.2 million tons in 2020 [41] and so this growing level of air pollution increases the susceptibility to asthma infection. According to the global initiative for asthma (GINA) guidelines, asthmatic patients are divided into three categories based on the level of control of symptoms: well-controlled, partly-controlled and uncontrolled [42]. In Malaysia, only 6% of patients suffering from asthma are well-controlled, while more than 90% are partly- and uncontrolled, which reflects the alarming burden imposed by this chronic non-communicable disease [43].

1.2 Problem statement

Asthma is considered one of the top causes of death worldwide and thereby detecting this serious disease through the analysis of capnogram signal is an issue of great significance in medical technology. Hence, researchers proposed a number of methods to analyze the CO₂ waveform using digital signal processing (DSP) techniques. However, accurate and automatic detection of asthma using a computerized program remains an open research problem, especially for long-term monitoring with the aim of an early detection of an asthma attack. This is also encouraged by the ongoing research on developing portable capnography devices for home monitoring purpose.

Previous studies on capnogram signal analysis have employed different features extracted from time- and frequency-domain for automatic asthma detection. However, the non-stationary nature of capnogram signals implies that their statistical characteristics and frequency contents are time-varying. Thus, traditional time-domain and frequency-domain methods are not reliable analysis tools to detect asthmatic conditions for their limited accuracy. In addition, the quantitative features of a capnogram signal should be quantified from selected clean (i.e., artefact-free) segments of the capnogram waveform. However, the automatization of this selection step using machine learning techniques has not yet received the attention it deserves in the literature. In previous work, selection of clean capnogram segments were performed manually by visual inspection, by template matching or using threshold-based methods. That being the case, this thesis is concerned with conducting research on these issues.

1.3 Research aim

The main aim of the current research is to introduce a fully automated computerized framework for automatic capnogram-based asthma detection. This framework is intended to process the input capnogram signal, which may include deformed parts, and give a final classification decision regarding the pulmonary status of the subject. This framework can be integrated with capnography devices for monitoring purposes to automatically give an alarm before an expected asthma attack.

1.4 Research Objectives

Limitations of previous work motivated the current study to achieve the research aim through setting the following objectives:

1. To propose a Machine Learning algorithm for classifying clean and deformed capnogram segments, with Hjorth activity and mean absolute deviation features.
2. To propose an Empirical Mode Decomposition based algorithm for classifying control and asthmatic capnogram segments.

3. To evaluate the classification performance of the above research objectives in terms of accuracy, specificity, sensitivity and precision, on real capnogram segments.

1.5 Scope of research

The scope of research of this thesis includes the following:

- Real capnogram signals are recorded from adult healthy subjects and asthmatic patients admitted to Universiti Teknologi Malaysisa (UTM) healthcare center after getting the ethical approval.
- Two capnogram datasets are prepared: the first one includes 100 artefact-free (regular) and 100 distorted (irregular) capnogram segments, while the second one includes 200 regular capnogram segments (100 healthy and 100 asthmatic).
- MATLAB is used for simulation purpose to process and analyze the capnogram datasets using empirical mode decomposition and machine learning algorithms with the aim of achieving the research objectives. The MATLAB version is (R2015a) run on a computer with Intel®Core™ i7 processor, 2.5 GHz speed and 16 GB RAM.
- The classification performance is evaluated in terms of accuracy, specificity, sensitivity and precision.

1.6 Thesis outline

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the thesis in addition to traditional and recent respiratory assessment methods. In this chapter, the problem statement along with the research objectives and scope are presented.

Chapter 2 gives the biological background needed to present the existing capnogram-based asthma detection methods in the literature. Asthma detection using other physiological signals, rather than capnogram, is also presented.

Chapter 3 details out the currently proposed method for capnogram-based asthma detection using empirical mode decomposition (EMD), in addition to the proposed machine learning approach for classifying clean and deformed capnogram segments.

Chapter 4 presents the results of the proposed methods accompanied by a comparison with the lately proposed methods using the available capnogram dataset.

Finally, Chapter 5 concludes the thesis and suggests future research directions.

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