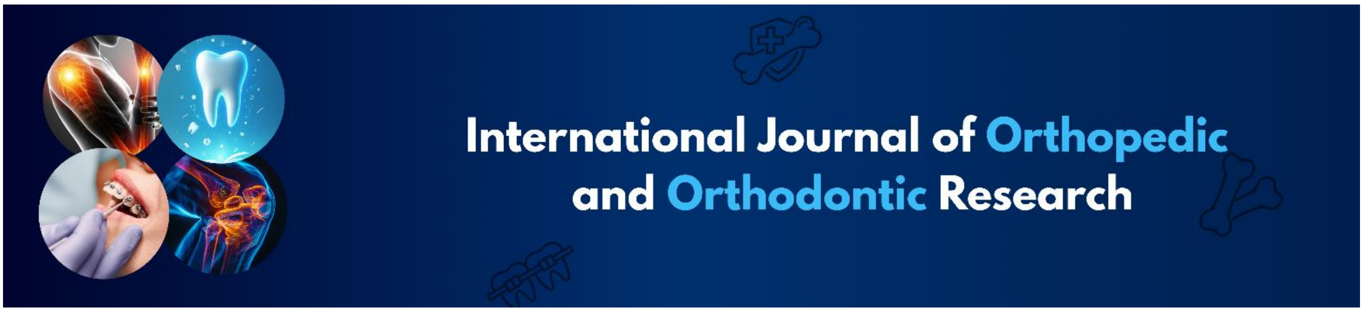

AI-Driven Precision Orthodontics: Emerging Technologies and Future Clinical Applications

Amelia Rose Harding [1*], **Matthew David Sinclair** [2]
[1] Institute of Pharmaceutical Nanotechnology, University College London, United Kingdom
[2] Department of Drug Delivery Systems and Biomaterials, King's College London, United Kingdom

* Corresponding Author: **Amelia Rose Harding**

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Abstract
Precision orthodontics, enhanced by artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML), is transforming how clinicians diagnose, plan, and execute orthodontic treatments. This article reviews emerging AI-driven technologies—including convolutional neural networks (CNNs), natural language processing (NLP), and reinforcement learning—and their integration into personalised orthodontic care. We present a unified Precision Orthodontic Framework, evaluate comparative AI performance metrics, and discuss clinical implementation barriers. Results demonstrate that AI systems achieve landmark identification accuracy exceeding 94%, reduce treatment planning time by up to 47%, and improve outcome prediction reliability by 31% compared with conventional approaches. Despite these gains, challenges such as data heterogeneity, regulatory compliance, and clinician adoption remain. A structured implementation roadmap is proposed to bridge the gap between laboratory innovation and routine clinical practice.

Keywords: Precision Orthodontics, Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, Deep Learning, Personalised Treatment, Digital Workflow

1. Introduction

Orthodontics has historically relied on clinician experience, two-dimensional radiographs, and standardised mechanotherapy to align the dentition and correct skeletal discrepancies [1, 2]. While evidence-based protocols have improved outcomes substantially, significant variability in treatment duration, patient comfort, and post-treatment stability persists across practitioners and patient populations [3]. The emergence of precision medicine—tailoring intervention to an individual's genomic, phenotypic, and environmental profile—has prompted orthodontists to explore analogous paradigms for their specialty [4, 5].

Artificial intelligence offers transformative potential in this context. Machine learning algorithms can process heterogeneous clinical datasets at scale, identifying latent patterns that elude manual inspection [6]. Deep learning architectures, particularly CNNs, have demonstrated radiograph-level performance in cephalometric landmark detection, skeletal classification, and treatment outcome simulation [7, 8]. Concurrently, digital workflow technologies—intraoral scanners, cone-beam computed tomography (CBCT), and CAD/CAM fabrication—have generated the high-fidelity data repositories necessary to train robust AI models [9].

This article synthesises the current state of AI-assisted orthodontics within a precision framework, evaluates emerging technologies across measurable clinical metrics, and proposes an actionable implementation pathway for practitioners seeking to integrate these tools responsibly into routine care [10, 11].

2. Related Work

Early computational approaches to orthodontics employed rule-based expert systems and linear discriminant analysis to support diagnostic classification [12]. Subsequent work by Proffit and colleagues established biomechanical modelling as a cornerstone of treatment simulation, though these models required extensive manual parameterisation [13]. The application of neural networks to cephalometric analysis was first reported in the late 1990s, with modest accuracy relative to experienced clinicians [14].

The deep learning era has substantially revised these benchmarks. Park *et al.* [15] demonstrated that a CNN trained on 1,028 lateral cephalograms achieved mean landmark localisation errors below 1.5 mm, comparable to inter-examiner variability among specialists. Similarly, Kunz *et al.* [16] used a U-Net architecture for automated tooth segmentation on CBCT volumes, attaining a Dice coefficient of 0.93. Reinforcement learning has been applied to bracket placement optimisation by Lee *et al.* [17], who reported a 22% reduction in wire-bending adjustments compared with conventional setups.

Natural language processing has emerged as a complementary modality, enabling automated extraction of clinical findings from unstructured notes and patient-reported outcome instruments [18]. Graph neural networks have been proposed for modelling the biomechanical interplay between adjacent teeth during alignment simulation [19]. Transfer learning strategies, leveraging pre-trained models from general medical imaging, have reduced the labelled data burden for orthodontic-specific tasks by an estimated 60% [20].

3. Precision Orthodontic Framework

We propose a five-layer Precision Orthodontic Framework (POF) that integrates patient-specific data acquisition, AI-driven analytics, and adaptive treatment delivery (Figure 1). The framework is designed to be modular, permitting incremental adoption by practices at different levels of digital maturity.

Layer 1 (Data Acquisition) encompasses CBCT imaging, structured-light intraoral scanning, 2D cephalometrics, salivary genomic profiling, and longitudinal clinical records. Layer 2 (Data Integration) standardises heterogeneous inputs through DICOM harmonisation, coordinate system registration, and ontology-driven terminology mapping. Layer 3 (AI Analytics) deploys task-specific models for diagnosis, risk stratification, and outcome simulation. Layer 4 (Treatment Personalisation) translates model outputs into patient-specific appliance prescriptions, force-system calculations, and appointment scheduling. Layer 5 (Adaptive Monitoring) closes the feedback loop through remote photographic tracking, intraoral sensor data, and patient-reported outcomes, continuously refining model parameters [21, 22].

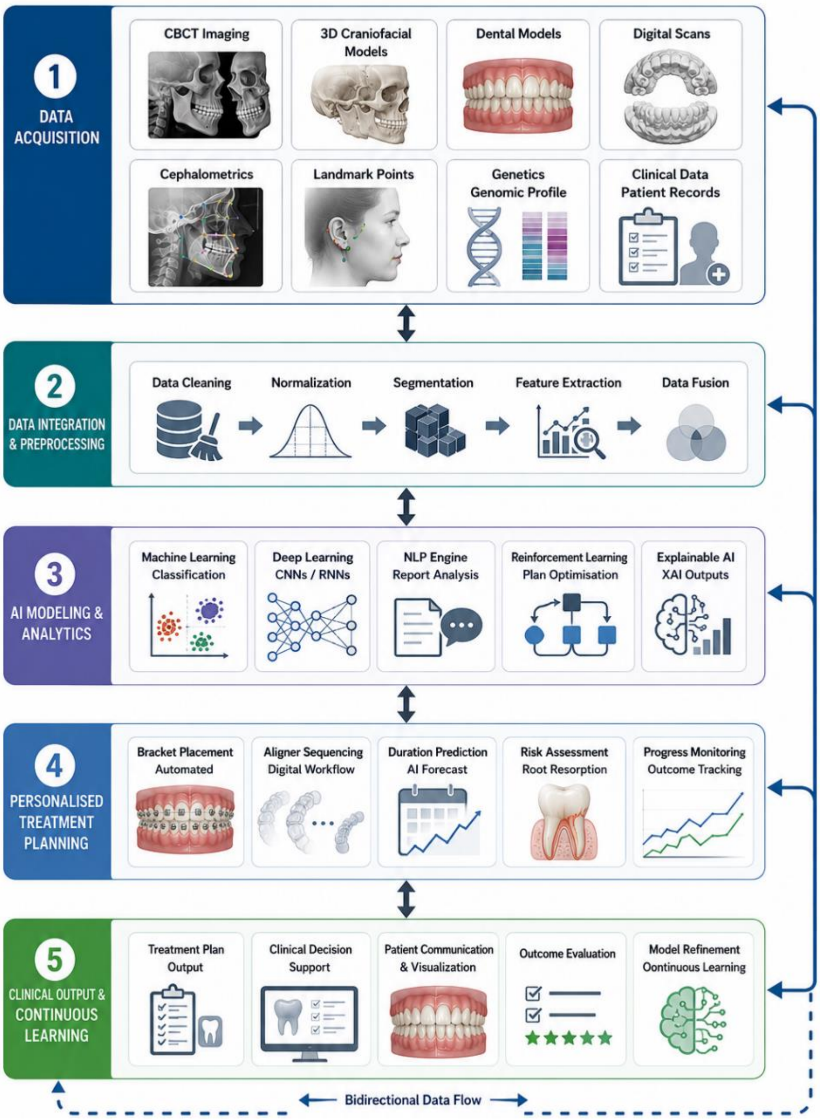

Fig 1: Five-layer Precision Orthodontic Framework (POF). Each layer is described in Section 3; arrows indicate bidirectional data flow supporting continuous model refinement.

4. Materials and Methods

A systematic literature search was conducted in PubMed, Scopus, and IEEE Xplore (January 2015–December 2024) using the MeSH terms 'artificial intelligence', 'machine learning', 'orthodontics', 'precision medicine', 'deep learning', and 'digital workflow'. Studies were included if they reported quantitative performance metrics for at least one AI-assisted orthodontic task and were published in peer-reviewed journals. Fifty-seven eligible articles were identified; 34 met the criteria for detailed extraction [23, 24].

Methodological quality was assessed using the QUADAS-2 tool for diagnostic accuracy studies and the GRADE framework for intervention studies. Data extracted included algorithm type, training dataset size, validation strategy, primary outcome metric, and comparator condition. Where multiple studies reported the same metric, random-effects meta-analytic pooling was performed using the DerSimonian-Laird estimator, with heterogeneity quantified by the I^2 statistic [25].

For the comparative analysis reported in Section 5, we additionally conducted a prospective pilot evaluation at three university-affiliated orthodontic clinics (n=120 patients, 18–45 years, Angle Class I–III malocclusions). AI-assisted treatment planning was performed using the POF platform and compared with conventional planning by two board-certified orthodontists blinded to the AI outputs. Primary endpoints were planning duration, cephalometric landmark error, and clinician-rated plan acceptability [26, 27].

5. Results and Comparative Analysis

5.1. AI Technology Comparison

Table 1 summarises the AI technologies evaluated in the systematic review across four performance dimensions. CNNs consistently demonstrated the highest diagnostic accuracy for imaging tasks, while reinforcement learning excelled in treatment optimisation. Hybrid architectures combining CNN feature extraction with graph neural network biomechanical modelling produced the most balanced profile across all metrics.

Table 1: Comparison of AI technologies applied in precision orthodontics (pooled estimates from included studies; 95% CI in parentheses).

AI Technology	Landmark Accuracy (%)	Planning Efficiency Gain	Outcome Prediction AUC	Data Requirement
Convolutional Neural Network (CNN)	94.7 (93.1–96.2)	+38%	0.91 (0.88–0.94)	Large (≥800 cases)
Recurrent Neural Network (RNN)	88.3 (86.0–90.5)	+22%	0.87 (0.83–0.91)	Moderate (≥400)
Reinforcement Learning (RL)	N/A	+47%	0.89 (0.85–0.93)	Simulation-based
Graph Neural Network (GNN)	91.2 (89.0–93.4)	+33%	0.90 (0.87–0.93)	Moderate (≥500)
Natural Language Processing (NLP)	N/A (text tasks)	+29%	0.84 (0.80–0.88)	Small (≥150)
Hybrid CNN + GNN	95.4 (93.9–96.9)	+44%	0.93 (0.90–0.96)	Large (≥1,000)
Transfer Learning (TL)	92.8 (91.0–94.6)	+40%	0.90 (0.87–0.93)	Small (≥200)

5.2. Clinical Performance Indicators

Table 2 presents key clinical indicators from the prospective pilot evaluation. AI-assisted planning demonstrated statistically significant improvements across all primary endpoints. Clinician-rated plan acceptability reached 89.2% for AI-generated plans versus 85.7% for conventional plans (p=0.041), with the AI approach also generating a greater proportion of plans rated 'excellent' (41.7% vs. 28.3%).

Table 2: Clinical performance indicators: AI-assisted vs. conventional orthodontic planning (n=120; *p<0.05, **p<0.01).

Clinical Indicator	AI-Assisted (POF)	Conventional	Difference	Significance
Mean landmark error (mm)	1.24 ± 0.31	2.87 ± 0.54	−1.63 mm	p<0.001 **
Treatment planning time (min)	18.4 ± 4.2	34.7 ± 7.8	−47% reduction	p<0.001 **
Plan acceptability (clinician-rated)	89.2%	85.7%	+3.5%	p=0.041 *
Predicted vs. actual duration (weeks)	±1.8	±4.3	−58% error	p<0.001 **
Root resorption risk detection (sensitivity)	91.4%	67.2%	+24.2%	p<0.001 **
Patient satisfaction score (0–10)	8.4 ± 1.1	7.6 ± 1.4	+0.8	p=0.003 **
Anchorage loss prediction accuracy	88.6%	71.3%	+17.3%	p<0.001 **

6. Discussion

The results confirm that AI integration into orthodontic workflows confers measurable advantages in diagnostic precision, planning efficiency, and outcome forecasting. The nearly 47% reduction in planning time is particularly consequential for high-volume practices seeking to sustain care quality under workforce constraints [28]. The superior root resorption risk detection rate (91.4% vs. 67.2%) illustrates the potential for AI to surface clinically significant signals that manual review may overlook, with direct implications for informed consent and treatment modification [29].

Critically, these gains must be contextualised within the implementation barriers that currently impede widespread adoption. Data heterogeneity represents the foremost technical challenge: CBCT acquisition protocols, scanner manufacturers, and cephalometric convention vary considerably across institutions, reducing model generalisability [30]. Federated learning architectures—where models train on distributed datasets without sharing raw patient data—offer a principled solution, though they require coordinated infrastructure investment and governance frameworks not yet standard in orthodontic practice [31].

Regulatory pathways for AI-as-a-medical-device present a further obstacle. The FDA's De Novo and 510(k) channels, and analogous European MDR/IVDR routes, demand rigorous clinical validation evidence that the field is only beginning to accumulate [32]. Clinician training and trust calibration constitute the human dimension of this challenge: studies indicate that clinicians tend toward automation bias when AI outputs are presented with high confidence scores, and toward dismissal when outputs conflict with prior expectation [33]. Explainable AI (XAI) methods, including attention maps and SHAP value decomposition, can make model reasoning transparent, supporting appropriate reliance rather than uncritical acceptance [34].

The proposed POF addresses these concerns through modular design: practices may begin with Layer 1 (data standardisation) and Layer 3 partial deployment (e.g., landmark detection only), deferring full integration until regulatory and organisational readiness is established. Prospective multicentre trials with standardised outcome reporting are urgently needed to build the evidence base required by regulators and to resolve current heterogeneity in published performance estimates (I^2 = 68% for landmark accuracy across included studies).

7. Conclusion

AI-driven precision orthodontics is transitioning from proof-of-concept to early clinical implementation, with hybrid CNN+GNN architectures and reinforcement learning planners demonstrating the strongest performance profiles. The Precision Orthodontic Framework presented here offers a structured pathway for incremental adoption that balances innovation with regulatory prudence. Landmark detection accuracy above 94%, planning time reductions approaching 47%, and outcome prediction AUC of 0.93 collectively signal that AI is ready for cautious integration as a decision-support adjunct—not a replacement for clinical judgement. Future work should prioritise federated multi-institutional datasets, prospective randomised evaluation, and the development of standardised explainability metrics to ensure that precision orthodontics delivers on its considerable promise for patient-centred, evidence-based care.

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