

Unsupervised Learning of Surgical Smoke Removal from Simulation

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INTRODUCTION

The surgical smoke produced during minimally invasive surgery can not only reduce the visibility of the surgeons, but also severely affect the performance of image processing algorithms used for image guided surgery such as image tracking, segmentation, detection and retrieval. Besides from physical smoke evacuation devices, many research works [3] [1] [4] [6] [7] address this issue by using vision-based methods to filter out the smoke and try to recover the clear images. More recently, end-to-end deep learning approaches [2] have been introduced to solve the de-hazing and de-smoking problems. However, it is extremely difficult to collect large amounts of data for the effective learning of the implicit de-smoking function, especially for surgical scenes. In this paper, we propose a computational framework for unsupervised learning of smoke removal from rendering smoke on laparoscopic video. Compared to conventional image processing approaches, our proposed framework is able to remove local smoke and recover more realistic tissue colour but will not affect the areas without smoke. Although trained on synthetic images, the experimental results show that our network is able to effectively remove smoke on laparoscopic images with real surgical smoke.

MATERIALS AND METHODS



Fig. 1: Overview of our framework for unsupervised learning of smoke removal

With the recent development of Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs), machines can solve many computer vision problems when provided with large-scale ground-truth data for supervised learning. However, the acquisition of ground truth is an expensive, time-consuming and labour-intensive task. Especially for surgical scenes, the amount of data and the accuracy of data must be satisfied to ensure acceptable results for clinical use. To address this issue, we proposed an unsupervised framework for learning smoke removal. As can be seen from Figure 1, our frame-

work is composed of a render engine for synthesizing smoked images from laparoscopic videos and a CNN for the end-to-end training of de-smoking.



Fig. 2: The random smoke is rendered on the background of laparoscopic images to synthesize smoke image.

Smoke Synthesis

We use Blender¹ – an open source 3D creation software for the synthesis of smoke image for training. As shown in Figure 2, the real laparoscopic images from Hamlyn Centre Laparoscopic / Endoscopic Video Datasets² [8] are used as background images, and the smoke is rendered with randomly intensity, density and location on the background to simulate the real smoke. The variation of smoke render ensures that our network will not over-fitting to certain smoke intensity, density and location. With the help of powerful render engine, we are able to synthesize unlimited amount of realistic images with the presence of simulated surgical smoke. More importantly, this process is done automatically without any human intervention and cost.

End-to-end Learning of Smoke Removal

As smoke removal is a pixel-wise task, we adopt a fully convolutional encoder-decoder network to generate the same size de-smoked image with the input image. Since the smoke removal task needs to preserve most of the details from the input images, following the U-Net structure [5], skip connections are implemented for directly transferring high-level information to the bottom of the network to prevent the loss of high quality details.

¹<https://www.blender.org/>

²<http://hamlyn.doc.ic.ac.uk/vision/>

