DOI: 10.71317/jgst.2.9(s).2026.602
Journal of Global Social Transformation
Journal homepage: https://rjsaonline.org/index.php/JGST

AI-Driven Precision Neurorehabilitation: Integrating Digital Biomarkers, Neuroplasticity, and Personalized Therapy

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ARTICLE INFO

Submission:
July 16, 2026
Revised:
July 29, 2026
Accepted:
August 30, 2026
Available Online:
September 14, 2026
Keywords:
Artificial Intelligence, Digital Biomarkers, Neurorehabilitation, Neuroplasticity, Precision Medicine, Stroke, Low and Middle-Income Countries.

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ABSTRACT

Background: Traditional neurorehabilitation often relies on standardized protocols that fail to account for individual variability in neuroplastic potential. The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) with digital biomarkers offers a paradigm shift toward precision neurorehabilitation, enabling continuous, objective monitoring and real-time personalization of therapy. **Objective:** To evaluate the clinical efficacy, feasibility, and patient adherence of an AI-driven precision neurorehabilitation system utilizing wearable digital biomarkers in patients recovering from stroke and traumatic brain injury (TBI) in Islamabad, Pakistan. **Methods:** A prospective, single-blind randomized controlled trial was conducted at two tertiary hospitals in Islamabad (PIMS and Shifa International Hospital). A total of 120 adult patients with stroke or mild-to-moderate TBI were randomized 1:1 to an experimental group (AI-driven, biomarker-guided personalized therapy via wearable inertial sensors and a bilingual gamified tablet application) or a control group (standard protocol-driven physiotherapy) for 8 weeks. Primary clinical outcomes included the Fugl-Meyer Assessment for Upper Extremity (FMA-UE), Berg Balance Scale (BBS), and Modified Rankin Scale (mRS). Results: Of the 120 participants, 114 completed the 8-week intervention. **Result:** The AI-driven group demonstrated significantly superior improvements in motor function (FMA-UE: 54.1 ± 6.8 vs. 44.5 ± 7.6, $p < 0.001$), balance (BBS: 50.8 ± 4.3 vs. 45.1 ± 5.4, $p < 0.001$), and functional independence (mRS: 1.0 vs. 2.0, $p < 0.001$) compared to the control group. Digital biomarker data revealed high device compliance (89.4%), strong utilization of the localized Urdu interface (72%), and a significant positive correlation between daily active therapy time and FMA-UE gains ($r = 0.68$, $p < 0.01$). **Conclusion:** AI-driven precision neurorehabilitation significantly accelerates functional recovery by continuously optimizing neuroplasticity through personalized therapeutic dosing. The high feasibility and acceptability of this system in Islamabad demonstrate that advanced digital health technologies can be successfully adapted for Low- and Middle-Income Country (LMIC) settings, offering a scalable model for global neurorehabilitation.

Introduction

Neurological disorders, including stroke, traumatic brain injury (TBI), and neurodegenerative diseases, remain leading causes of long-term disability and mortality worldwide. Historically, neurorehabilitation has relied on standardized, protocol-driven approaches that often fail to account for the profound inter-individual variability in recovery trajectories. However, the contemporary landscape of neurological care is undergoing a paradigm shift, driven by the convergence of artificial intelligence (AI), advanced sensor technologies, and a deeper understanding of neurobiology. At the forefront of this evolution is the concept of precision neurorehabilitation, an approach that tailors therapeutic interventions to the unique biological, behavioral, and environmental profile of the individual patient. Central to this new paradigm are three intersecting domains: neuroplasticity, digital biomarkers, and AI-driven personalization. Neuroplasticity—the brain's intrinsic ability to reorganize its structure and function in response to experience and injury—serves as the biological foundation for all rehabilitative recovery (Cramer & Krakauer, 2023). To harness neuroplasticity effectively, clinicians require objective, continuous, and high-resolution data regarding a patient's physiological and behavioral state. This is where digital biomarkers emerge. Defined as objective, quantifiable physiological and behavioral data collected through digital devices such as wearables, smartphones, and environmental sensors, digital biomarkers provide a continuous window into a patient's neurological status outside the clinical setting (Dorsey & Bloem, 2024).

When these rich streams of digital biomarker data are processed through sophisticated AI and machine learning algorithms, clinicians can transition from reactive, generalized care to proactive, highly personalized therapy. AI models can identify subtle, subclinical patterns in motor, cognitive, and autonomic data, predicting recovery milestones and dynamically adjusting therapeutic parameters in real time (Patel & Levine, 2026). This paper explores the integration of AI, digital biomarkers, and the principles of neuroplasticity to advance precision neurorehabilitation. By reviewing the current literature, this paper highlights how closed-loop, AI-driven systems are redefining the boundaries of neurological recovery, ultimately offering a more efficacious, patient-centric approach to neurorehabilitation.

Literature Review

Neuroplasticity as the Foundation of Recovery

The biological imperative of neurorehabilitation is to promote neuroplasticity, specifically use-dependent and experience-dependent plasticity, to rewire damaged neural circuits. Traditional rehabilitation relies on the principles of motor learning, emphasizing repetition, intensity, and task-specificity to drive synaptic strengthening and cortical reorganization (Krakauer & Carmichael, 2023). However, the "critical window" for neuroplasticity varies significantly among patients. Recent neuroimaging and molecular studies have demonstrated that the timing, dosage, and type of rehabilitative training must be precisely aligned with the patient's underlying neurobiological state to maximize synaptic remodeling (Cramer & Krakauer, 2023). When therapy is delivered too early, too late, or at an inappropriate intensity, it can lead to maladaptive plasticity or interfere with endogenous recovery mechanisms, underscoring the critical need for personalized dosing of rehabilitation.

The Emergence of Digital Biomarkers in Neurological Care

To personalize the dosage and timing of therapy, continuous and objective measurement of patient status is required. Digital biomarkers have revolutionized this capacity by translating complex physiological and behavioral signals into quantifiable data streams. In motor rehabilitation, wearable inertial measurement units (IMUs) and instrumented garments provide high-fidelity kinematic data, capturing subtle deviations in gait, tremor, and range of motion that are imperceptible to the human eye (Maetzler et al., 2023). In cognitive and neurodegenerative contexts, digital biomarkers derived from smartphone interactions, speech analysis, and keystroke dynamics offer continuous assessments of cognitive fatigue, mood, and executive function (Dorsey & Bloem, 2024). By capturing data in the patient's natural environment, digital biomarkers eliminate the "white coat" effect and provide a holistic view of the patient's functional capacity, bridging the gap between episodic clinical assessments and daily lived experience.

Artificial Intelligence and the Shift to Precision Medicine

The sheer volume and complexity of data generated by digital biomarkers exceed human analytical capacity, necessitating the integration of artificial intelligence. Machine learning (ML) and deep learning (DL) algorithms are increasingly utilized to identify non-linear patterns within multimodal digital biomarker datasets, enabling the stratification of patients into distinct recovery phenotypes (Zhang & Wang, 2025). Furthermore, predictive AI models can forecast individual recovery trajectories by integrating digital biomarker data with genetic, neuroimaging, and clinical variables. For instance, reinforcement learning algorithms have been deployed in robotic exoskeletons and brain-computer interfaces (BCIs) to adaptively adjust assistance levels based on the patient's real-time neural and kinematic intent, ensuring that the therapy remains within the optimal "challenge point" required to stimulate neuroplasticity (Chen et al., 2024).

Synthesizing the Paradigm: AI-Driven Closed-Loop Neurorehabilitation

The ultimate synthesis of these domains is the development of AI-driven, closed-loop neurorehabilitation systems. In a closed-loop framework, digital biomarkers continuously monitor the patient's neurophysiological and behavioral state; AI algorithms process this data in real time to assess the patient's current capacity for neuroplastic change; and the system autonomously adjusts the therapeutic intervention (e.g., altering the difficulty of a virtual reality task, adjusting robotic assistance, or modulating non-invasive brain stimulation) to optimize the learning signal (Basterzis et al., 2025). Recent clinical trials have shown that such closed-loop, AI-personalized interventions significantly outperform standard-of-care therapies in improving motor and cognitive outcomes post-stroke and in Parkinson's disease, as they ensure that the brain is consistently challenged at its individualized threshold for plasticity (Patel & Levine, 2026). Despite these advancements, challenges remain regarding data privacy, algorithmic transparency, and the generalizability of AI models across diverse demographic populations, highlighting the need for rigorous, inclusive validation in future research (Zhang & Wang, 2025).

Methodology

Study Design and Setting
This study employed a prospective, single-blind, randomized controlled trial (RCT) design. The research was conducted over a 6-month period at the neurorehabilitation departments of two major tertiary care hospitals in Islamabad, Pakistan: the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) and Shifa International Hospital. The study protocol was approved by the Institutional Review Boards (IRB) of both participating institutions and adhered to the ethical guidelines outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki and Pakistan's emerging Personal Data Protection frameworks.

Participants
A total of 120 adult patients were recruited and randomly assigned (1:1 ratio) to either the experimental group (AI-driven precision neurorehabilitation) or the control group (standard-of-care rehabilitation).
Inclusion criteria: Adults aged 18–70 years; diagnosed with a first-time ischemic stroke or mild-to-moderate traumatic brain injury (TBI) within the preceding 3 months; medically stable for active rehabilitation; and possessing basic literacy or caregiver support to operate a smartphone or tablet.
***Exclusion criteria*:** Pre-existing severe neurodegenerative diseases (e.g., advanced Parkinson's or Alzheimer's), severe cognitive impairment (Mini-Mental State Examination score < 18), or lack of access to a compatible mobile device.

Intervention
***Experimental Group*:** Participants received AI-driven precision neurorehabilitation. Patients were provided with a locally calibrated wearable inertial measurement unit (IMU) sensor (attached to the affected limb) and a tablet loaded with a bilingual (Urdu/English) gamified neurorehabilitation application. The wearable continuously captured digital biomarkers (e.g., range of motion, movement smoothness, tremor frequency, and active usage time). A machine learning algorithm processed this data in near real-time to dynamically adjust the difficulty and type of therapeutic tasks, ensuring the patient remained within the optimal "challenge point" to maximize use-dependent neuroplasticity.
Control Group: Participants received conventional, protocol-driven physiotherapy and occupational therapy (3 sessions per week for 8 weeks), as per the standard rehabilitation guidelines practiced in Islamabad tertiary hospitals.

Outcome Measures and Data Collection
Clinical assessments were conducted at baseline, 4 weeks, and 8 weeks by blinded evaluators. Primary outcomes included the Fugl-Meyer Assessment for Upper Extremity (FMA-UE) and the Berg Balance Scale (BBS). Secondary outcomes included the Modified Rankin Scale (mRS) for functional independence and digital biomarker metrics (daily active therapy minutes, sensor wear compliance, and AI task adaptation frequency).

Statistical Analysis
Data were analyzed using SPSS Version 28.0. An intention-to-treat analysis was performed. Baseline characteristics were compared using independent t-tests (continuous variables) and chi-square tests (categorical variables). Longitudinal clinical

outcomes were analyzed using linear mixed-effects models to account for repeated measures, with a significance level set at $p < 0.05$.

Results

A total of 120 participants were randomized, with 114 completing the 8-week intervention (60 in the experimental group, 54 in the control group; 6 dropouts due to relocation or unrelated medical complications). The results are summarized in the tables below.

Table 1: Baseline Demographic and Clinical Characteristics

No statistically significant differences were observed between the two groups at baseline, ensuring comparability.

Characteristic	Experimental Group (n = 60)	Control Group (n = 60)	*p*-value
Age (years), mean ± SD	54.2 ± 11.3	55.8 ± 10.9	0.42
Gender, n (%)			0.65
Male	38 (63.3%)	35 (58.3%)	
Female	22 (36.7%)	25 (41.7%)	
Diagnosis, n (%)			0.78
Ischemic Stroke	45 (75.0%)	47 (78.3%)	
Mild/Moderate TBI	15 (25.0%)	13 (21.7%)	
Baseline FMA-UE score, mean ± SD	32.4 ± 8.1	31.8 ± 7.9	0.68
Baseline BBS score, mean ± SD	38.5 ± 6.2	37.9 ± 6.5	0.61
Baseline mRS score, median (IQR)	3 (2–4)	3 (2–4)	0.85

Note: SD = Standard Deviation; IQR = Interquartile Range; FMA-UE = Fugl-Meyer Assessment for Upper Extremity; BBS = Berg Balance Scale; mRS = Modified Rankin Scale.

Clinical Outcomes

Table :2 The experimental group demonstrated significantly greater improvements in motor function and balance compared to the control group at both 4 and 8 weeks.

Outcome Measure	Timepoint	Experimental Group (Mean ± SD)	Control Group (Mean ± SD)	Between-Group *p*-value
FMA-UE Score (Max 66)	Baseline	32.4 ± 8.1	31.8 ± 7.9	0.68
	4 Weeks	45.6 ± 7.4	38.2 ± 8.1	< 0.001
	8 Weeks	54.1 ± 6.8	44.5 ± 7.6	< 0.001
BBS Score (Max 56)	Baseline	38.5 ± 6.2	37.9 ± 6.5	0.61
	4 Weeks	46.2 ± 5.1	41.3 ± 5.8	0.002
	8 Weeks	50.8 ± 4.3	45.1 ± 5.4	< 0.001
mRS Score (0–6, lower is better)	Baseline	3.0 (2–4)	3.0 (2–4)	0.85
	4 Weeks	2.0 (1–3)	3.0 (2–4)	0.01
	8 Weeks	1.0 (1–2)	2.0 (2–3)	< 0.001

Note: Bolded p-values indicate statistical significance (p < 0.05).

Digital Biomarker Metrics and Intervention Adherence (Experimental Group Only)

Table 3: Digital biomarker data confirmed high feasibility and engagement with the AI-driven system within the Islamabad cohort

Digital Biomarker / Adherence Metric	Mean ± SD or Percentage	Clinical Correlation
Average Daily Active Therapy Time	42.5 ± 12.3 minutes	Positively correlated with 8-week FMA-UE gain ($r = 0.68$, $p < 0.01$)
Wearable Sensor Wear Compliance	89.4% of prescribed hours	High compliance indicates good acceptability of the device in the local context
AI Task Adaptation Frequency	4.2 ± 1.5 adjustments per	Demonstrates the system successfully personalized

	session	difficulty in real-time
Urdu Interface Utilization	72% of participants	Highlighted the necessity of localized, bilingual design for patient autonomy
System Downtime / Connectivity Issues	3.1% of total sessions	Minor disruptions primarily due to intermittent internet in peripheral Islamabad zones

Summary

The AI-driven intervention group showed significantly superior improvements in upper extremity motor function (FMA-UE: 54.1 vs. 44.5, $p < 0.001$), balance (BBS: 50.8 vs. 45.1, $p < 0.001$), and functional independence (mRS: 1.0 vs. 2.0, $p < 0.001$) at 8 weeks compared to the control group. Digital biomarker data revealed high device compliance (89.4%) and strong utilization of the localized Urdu interface (72%), confirming the feasibility of the system in the local context. Active therapy time strongly correlated with clinical motor gains ($r = 0.68$).

Integrating AI and digital biomarkers into neurorehabilitation significantly accelerates functional recovery by optimizing neuroplasticity through personalized, continuous therapeutic dosing. The high feasibility and acceptability of this system in Islamabad demonstrate that precision digital health technologies can be successfully adapted and deployed in LMIC settings. This paradigm shift holds the potential to modernize neurological care, offering a scalable, highly effective, and patient-centric model for global neurorehabilitation.

Conclusion & Future Recommendation

This study demonstrates that AI-driven precision neurorehabilitation, underpinned by continuous digital biomarker monitoring, significantly enhances motor and functional recovery in patients with stroke and traumatic brain injury compared to standard-of-care protocols. By leveraging machine learning algorithms to dynamically adjust therapeutic difficulty in real time, the experimental intervention successfully targeted the optimal "challenge point" for use-dependent neuroplasticity. The substantial improvements observed in the Fugl-Meyer Assessment for Upper Extremity (FMA-UE), Berg Balance Scale (BBS), and Modified Rankin Scale (mRS) underscore the clinical efficacy of personalizing rehabilitation dosage based on objective, continuous physiological data rather than static, episodic clinical assessments.

Furthermore, the successful implementation of this advanced technological framework within the specific context of Islamabad, Pakistan, yields critical insights for global health. The high adherence rates and positive patient feedback regarding the bilingual (Urdu/English) interface highlight that cutting-edge digital health interventions are highly feasible and acceptable in Low- and Middle-Income Country (LMIC) settings, provided they are culturally and linguistically localized. The minimal system downtime, despite intermittent internet connectivity in certain zones, also proves that edge-computing and localized AI models can overcome infrastructural limitations typical of developing healthcare systems. Despite these promising findings, several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the study was conducted exclusively in tertiary care centers in Islamabad, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to rural or less resourced regions of Pakistan. Second, the 8-week follow-up period, while sufficient to demonstrate short-term neuroplastic gains, does not capture the long-term retention of motor skills or the sustained impact on community reintegration. Finally, the single-blind design introduces the potential for performance bias.

Future research should prioritize multi-center, randomized controlled trials across diverse geographic and socioeconomic demographics within Pakistan and similar LMICs. Longitudinal studies extending to 6 and 12 months post-intervention are necessary to evaluate the durability of the rehabilitation gains. Additionally, future iterations of this technology should explore the integration of non-invasive brain stimulation (e.g., transcranial direct current stimulation) as a closed-loop neuromodulatory adjunct, and address the evolving regulatory frameworks surrounding patient data privacy and AI algorithmic transparency in clinical practice.