

Deep Learning MRI Reconstruction

M229 Advanced Topics in MRI

Shu-Fu Shih, Ph.D.

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Outline

- (1) General deep learning concepts
- (2) Introduction to classic convolutional neural networks
- (3) Considerations for applying deep learning in MRI reconstruction
- (4) Challenges of deep learning MRI reconstruction
- (5) Deep learning MRI applications beyond reconstruction

Part 1: General deep learning concepts

MRI reconstruction tasks

- Scan acceleration and obtaining high quality images are two main reasons why new MRI reconstruction methods are being developed.
- Different MRI reconstruction tasks:
 - (1) Reconstruction from undersampled data
 - To recover images from sub-Nyquist sampled measurements (e.g., from uniform undersampling, variable density undersampling, k-t undersampling)
 - (2) Image enhancement
 - To reduce noise in the images or improve image sharpness
 - (3) Image super-resolution
 - To increase image resolutions
 - (4) Artifacts reduction
 - To reduce specific types of artifacts from hardware imperfections, MRI physics or physiological constraints (e.g., EPI artifacts, motion artifacts)

MRI reconstruction tasks

- Conventionally, these reconstruction tasks are carried out with a “**hand-crafted**” **model** (either by observations, experiments or assumptions)
- Example 1:
 - Observe redundancy in multi-coil data -> Construct a model to for the under-determined inverse problem -> Develop parallel imaging reconstruction algorithms
- Example 2:
 - Make assumptions on the underlying noise model in the MRI images -> Construct a signal model that includes the noise term -> Develop algorithms to suppress the noise

MRI reconstruction models

- MRI image acquisition model: $y = FSx + n$
 - y : the acquired data in the sensor domain (e.g., k-space in MRI)
 - x : the underlying image
 - n : additive noise
 - S : coil sensitivity information
 - F : Fourier operator
 - For fully sampled Cartesian MRI: A is Fourier transform
 - For undersampled Cartesian MRI: A includes subsampling and Fourier transform
 - For non-Cartesian MRI: A is non-uniform Fourier transform

MRI reconstruction models

- To solve an under-determined inverse problem (e.g., in the case of undersampled MRI), constrained reconstruction methods have been popular

Image model

$$y = UFSx + n$$

argmin_x

Constrained reconstruction
optimization problem

$$\left\| UFSx - y \right\|_2^2 + \lambda \left\| Wx \right\|_1$$

Consistency with
k-space data

Regularization term that
integrates prior information

Move beyond model-based reconstructions

- Although being very successful, model-based MRI image reconstruction can have certain limitations:
 - (1) **Computational efficiency** (for iterative methods): Constrained reconstruction (e.g., compressed sensing) methods usually involve iterative processing
 - (2) **Limited representation power**: Hand-crafted regularization terms may not be suitable in certain applications
 - (3) **No data-driven priors**: Some types of information such as anatomical structure and variability is challenging to capture using explicit models.

Deep learning (DL)

- Deep learning is a branch of machine learning that relies on artificial neural networks composed of **multiple interconnected layers**, enabling the system to **automatically learn and represent intricate patterns and relationships** within large and complex datasets.

Deep learning (DL)

Need a lot of layers and trainable parameters

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It can “learn” without a lot of manual intervention

Data have inherent structures or patterns

Usually require a lot of data for training

Deep learning (DL)

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Data have inherent structures or patterns

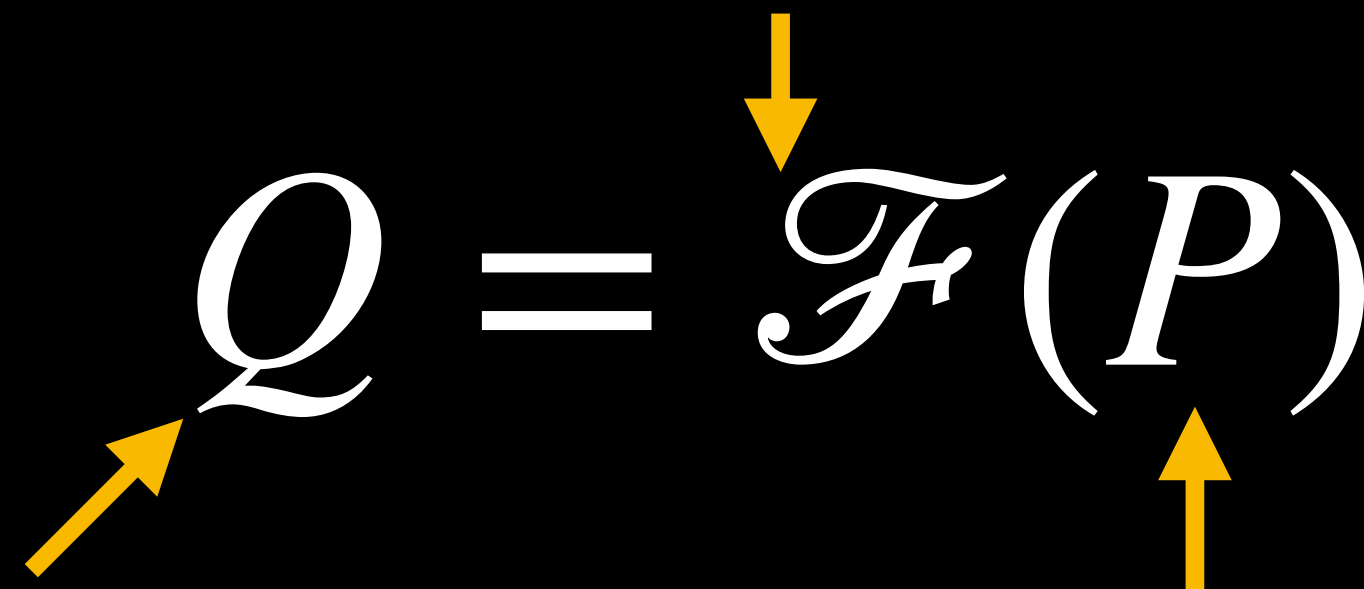
Usually require a lot of data for training

- Factors that led to the success of deep learning since 2010s
 - (1) Advances in high-performance computational power, especially GPUs
 - (2) Availability of large public datasets for training
 - (3) Improved network architecture designs and training strategies
 - (4) Accessibility of code and toolboxes for training deep neural networks

How DL can help MRI reconstruction?

- Instead of using an explicit image reconstruction model, we may use deep learning to learn a non-linear mapping to transform low-quality images (e.g., images from sub-Nyquist measurements or images with artifacts) to high-quality images through training with a large dataset.

Non-linear neural network

$$Q = \mathcal{F}(P)$$
The diagram illustrates the mathematical relationship between the input and output of the neural network. The equation $Q = \mathcal{F}(P)$ is centered. A yellow arrow points from the text 'Non-linear neural network' down to the function symbol \mathcal{F} . Another yellow arrow points from the text 'Images or k-space data from undersampled measurements' up to the input variable P . A third yellow arrow points from the text 'Images with reduced artifacts or fully sampled images/k-space data' up to the output variable Q .

Images with reduced artifacts or fully sampled images/k-space data

Images or k-space data from undersampled measurements

DL MRI reconstruction

- It's impossible to cover all aspects of deep learning-based MRI reconstruction because it's an active and rapid-changing research field.
- There are a lot of online resources and UCLA lectures on deep learning. We will only briefly introduce the classic convolutional neural networks.
- In this lecture, we will focus on:
 - **Special considerations** of MRI reconstruction compared to other computer vision tasks
 - **Popular approaches** for deep learning MRI reconstruction
 - **Challenges** of deep learning MRI reconstruction

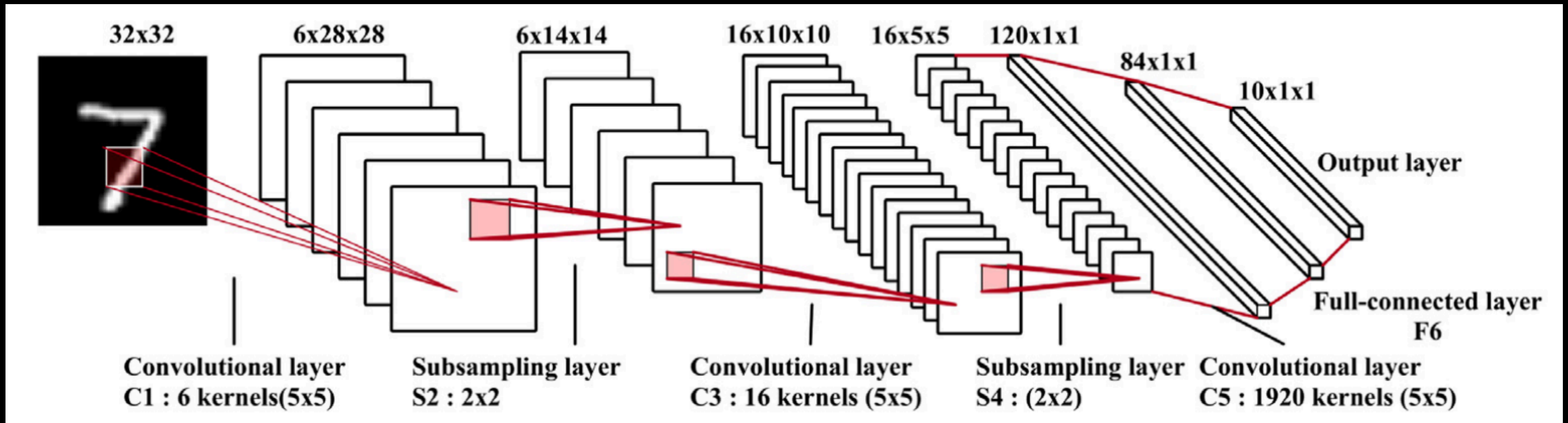
Part 2: Introduction to classic convolutional neural networks

Convolution Neural Networks (ConvNet)

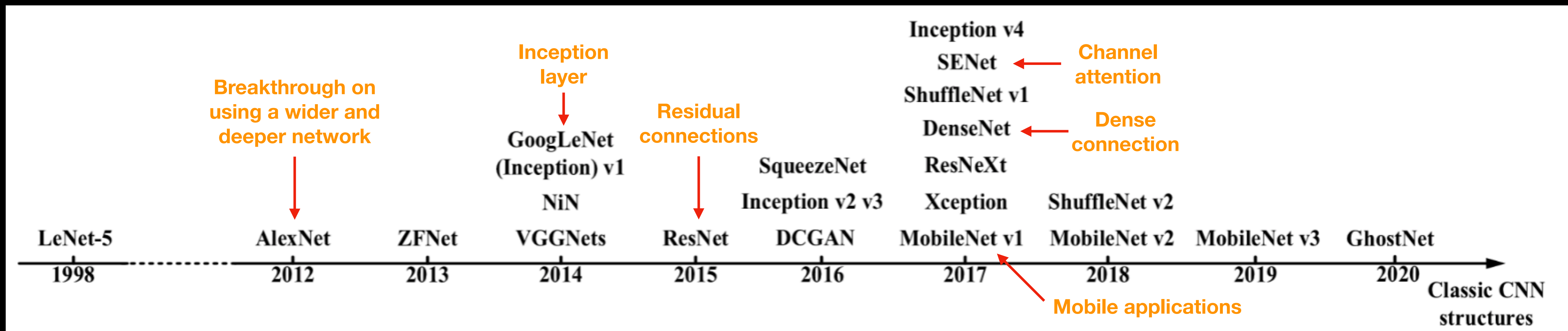
- ConvNet is one of the most popular deep learning networks for imaging tasks
- We will introduce several key components in ConvNet and show how ConvNet can be trained
 - Convolution layer
 - Pooling layer
 - Activation function
 - Loss function
 - Optimizer
 - Regularization
 - Batch normalization
 - ...

Where it all started...

- LeNet-5¹: one of the very first ConvNet architectures with back-propagation for handwritten digit recognition



A glimpse of popular ConvNet models

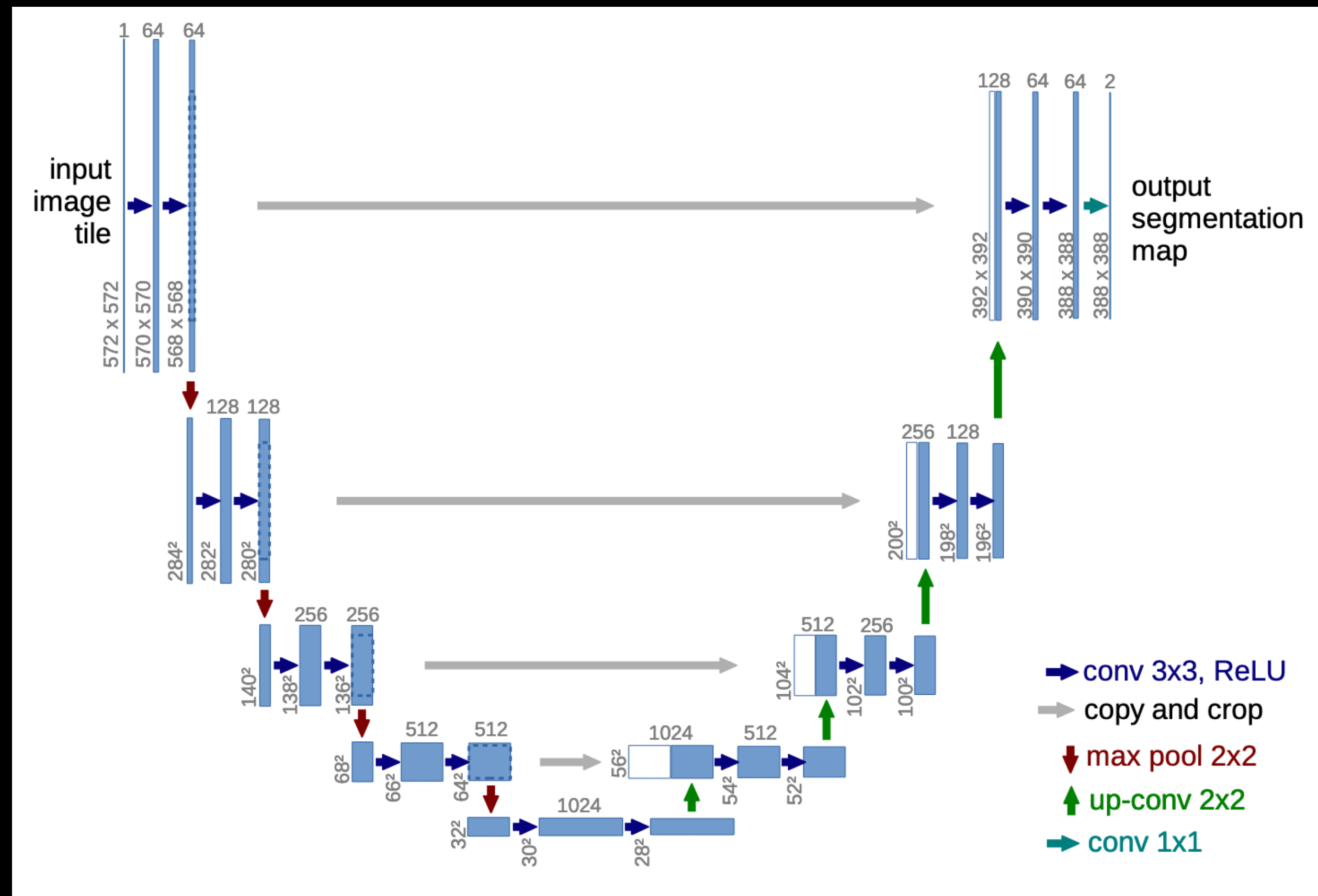


* Many of these ConvNet were first used in natural images (not medical images) and in a variety of tasks (e.g., classification, segmentation...)

(Figure from: Li et al., IEEE Trans Neural Netw Learn Syst 2022)

Popular ConvNet: U-Net

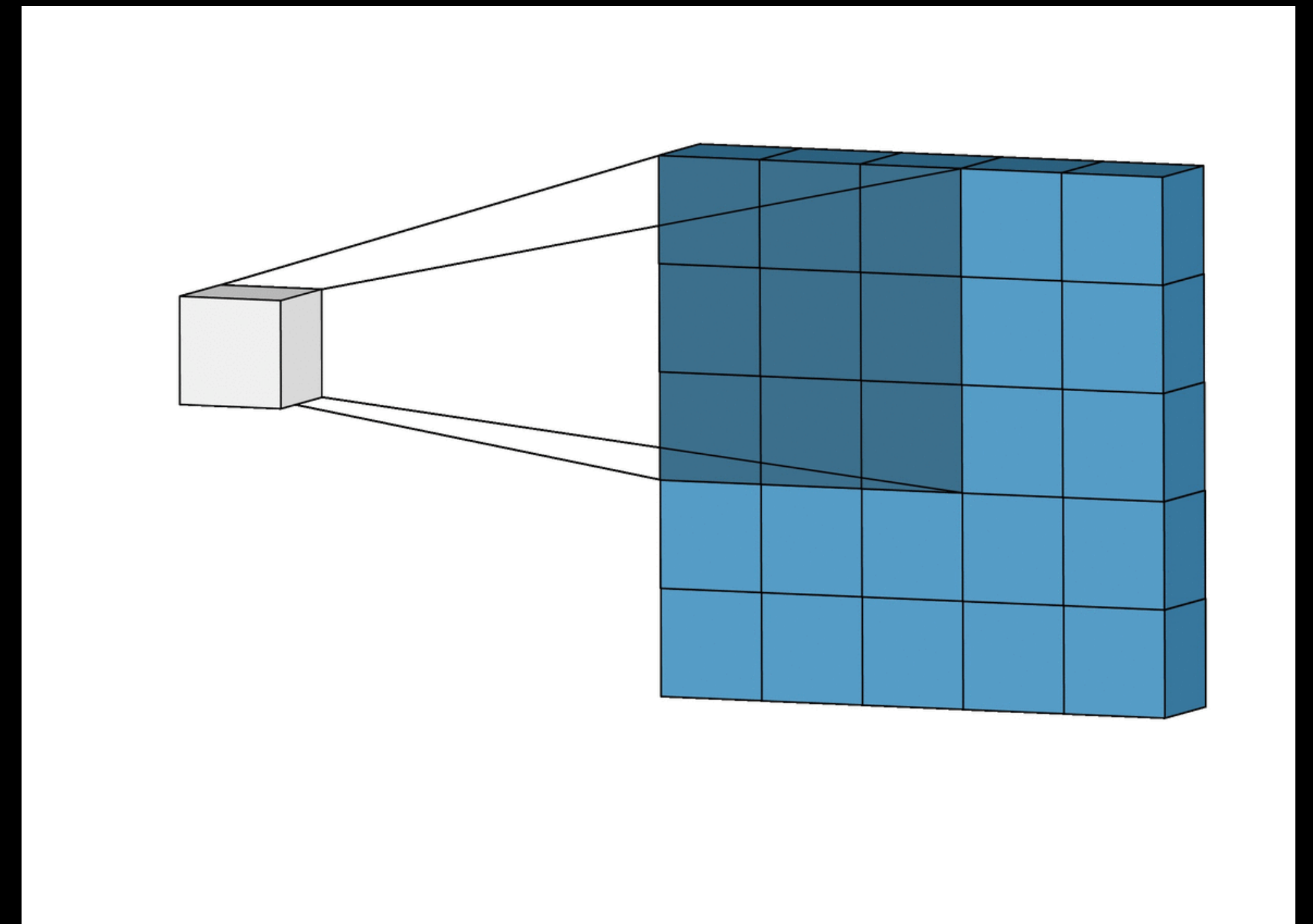
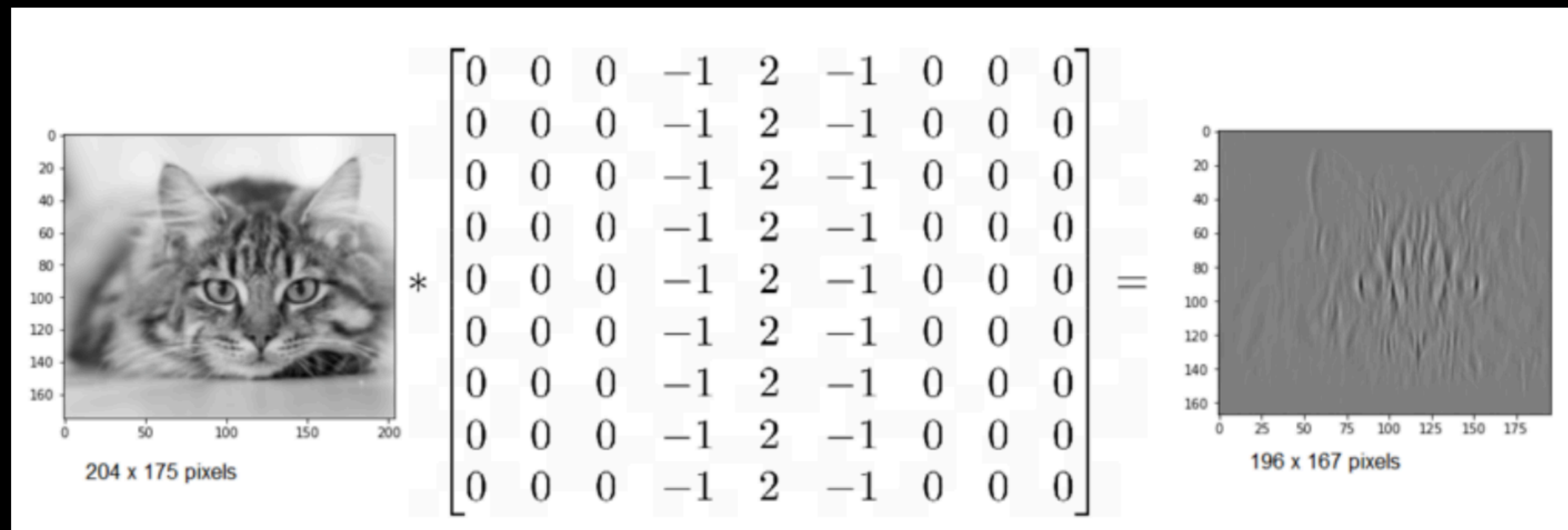
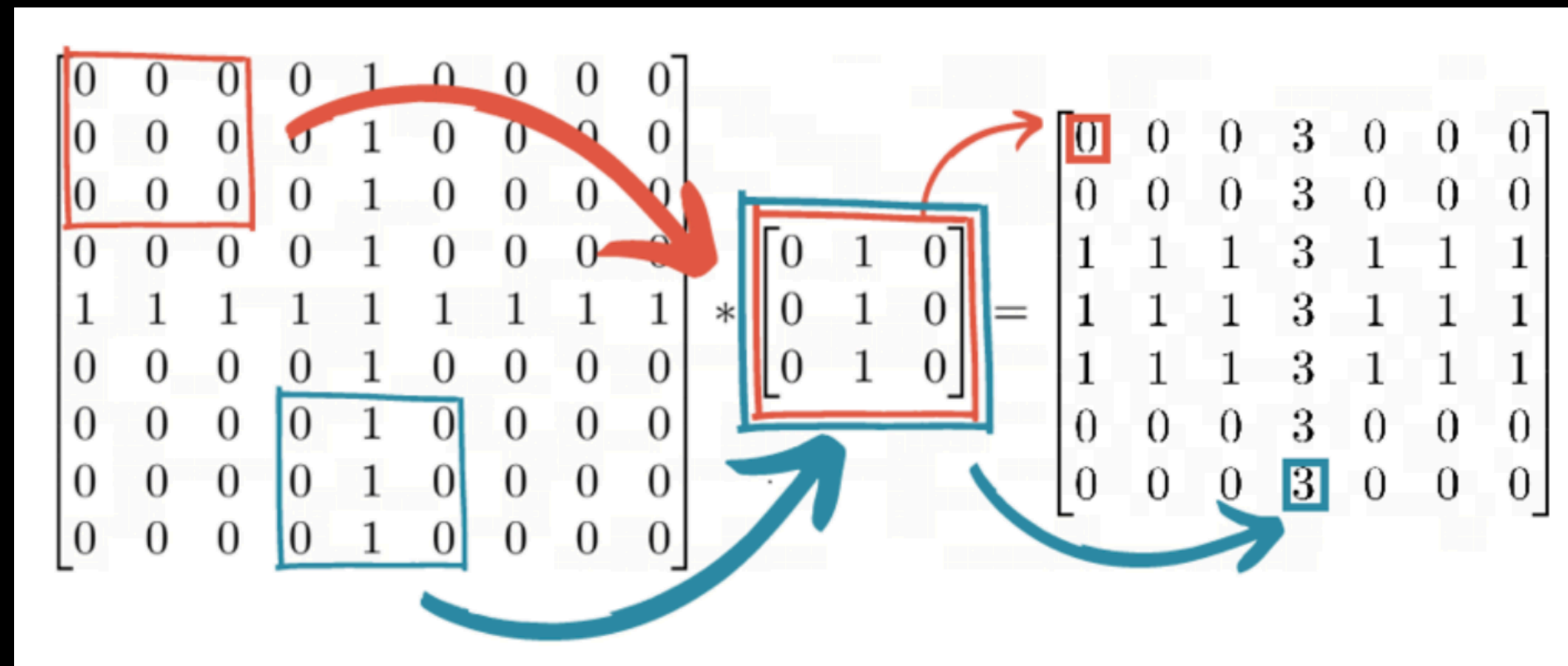
- The original U-Net was designed for medical image segmentation.
- It has been modified and applied in many DL-based MRI reconstruction tasks.



- Convolution at different levels
- Pooling layers
- Contracting and expansive paths
- Skipped connections

Convolutional layer

- Convolution operation: use a shared kernel to convolve with the entire image

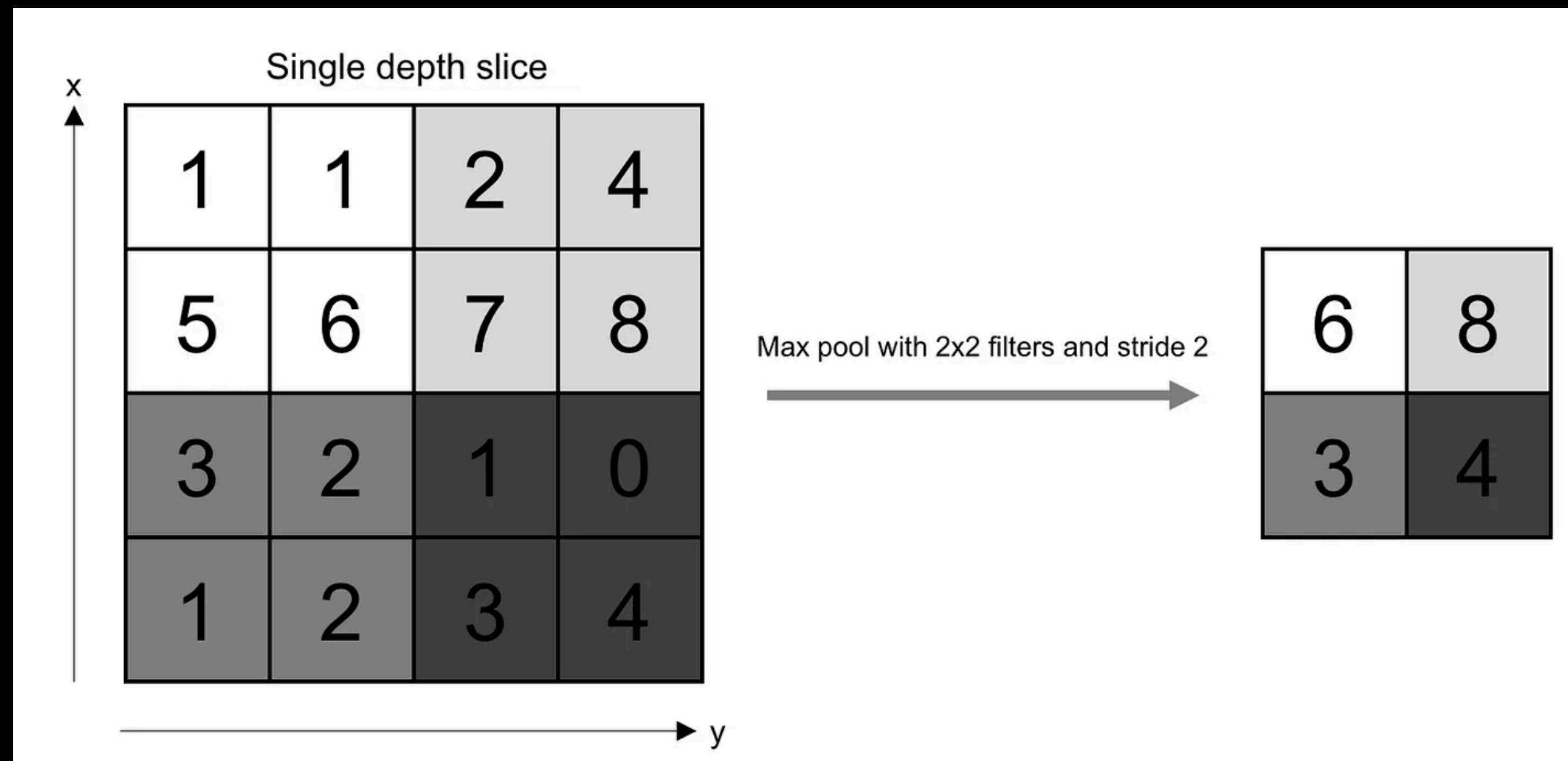


Convolutional layer

- Motivation of using convolutional layers
 - (1) **Sparse interaction**
 - Each pixel interacts with the kernel instead of all the other pixels.
 - (2) **Translational invariance**
 - Some features are shared across the entire image.
 - The features do not change if the input is shifted.

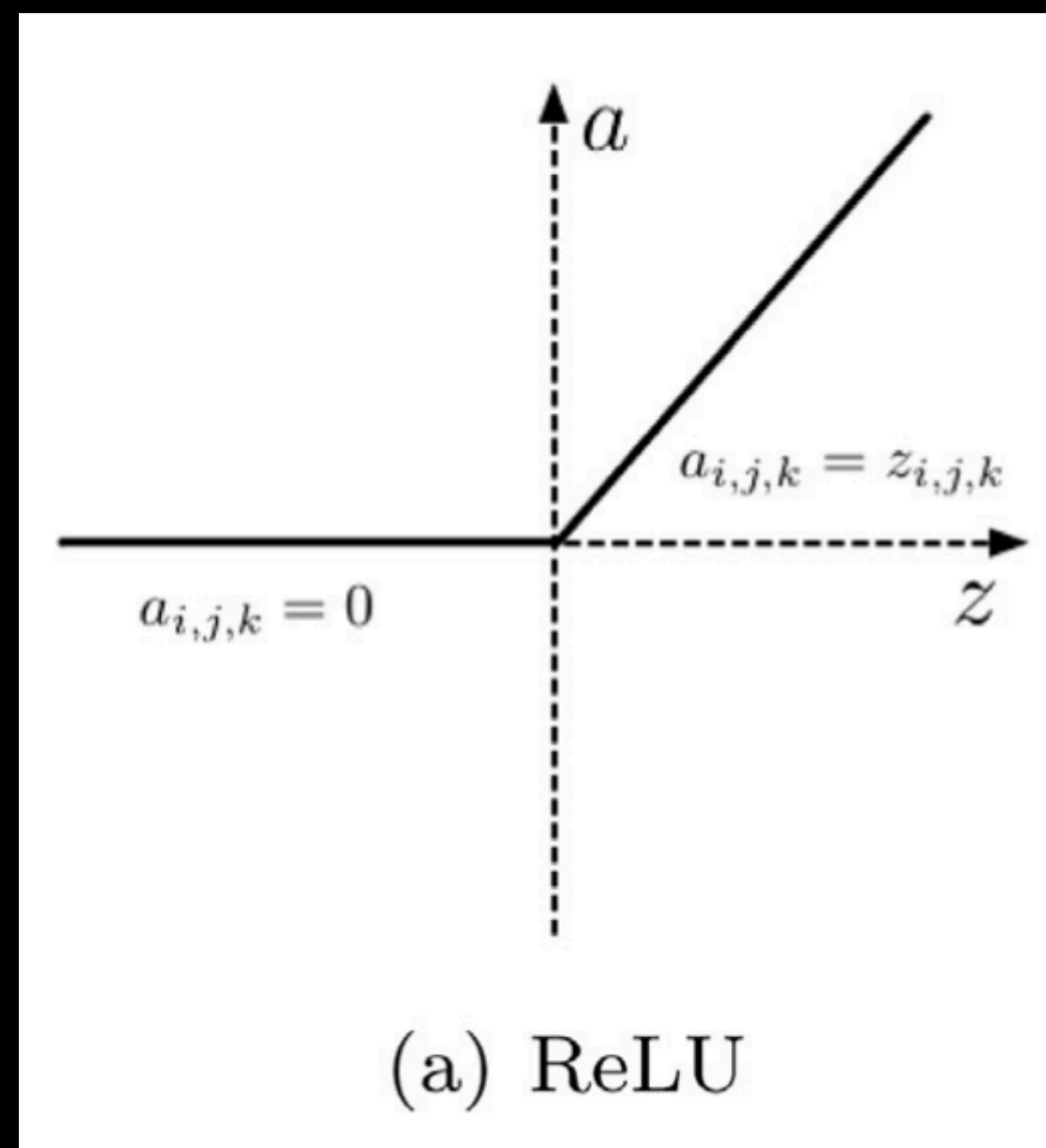
Pooling layer

- Generate a summary of statistics with a reduced number of weights
 - Stride: the number of pixel shift for the next pooling operation



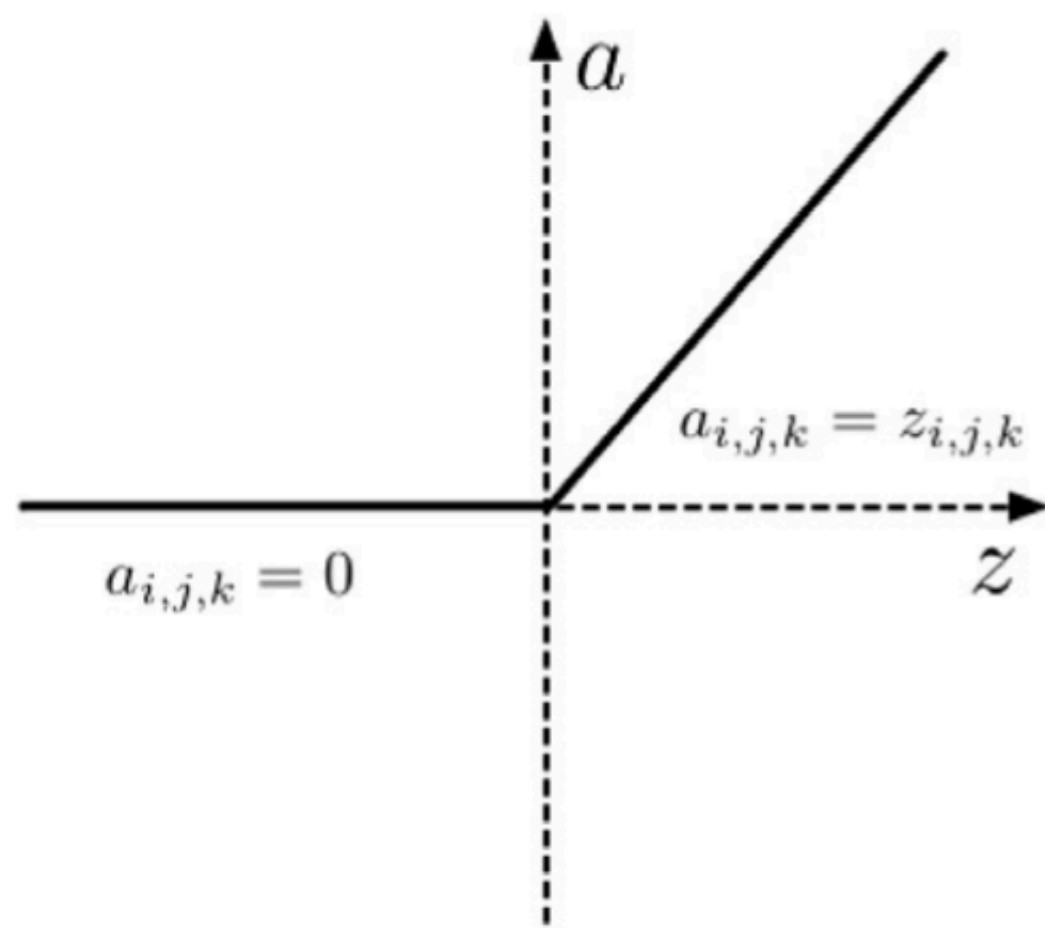
Activation function

- Convolution operation is linear. A stack of convolutional layers only generates a linear mapping process.
- Activation functions are used to **introduce non-linearity** to the network.
- A popular activation function:
 - ReLU (rectified linear unit): $f(a) = \max(0, a)$

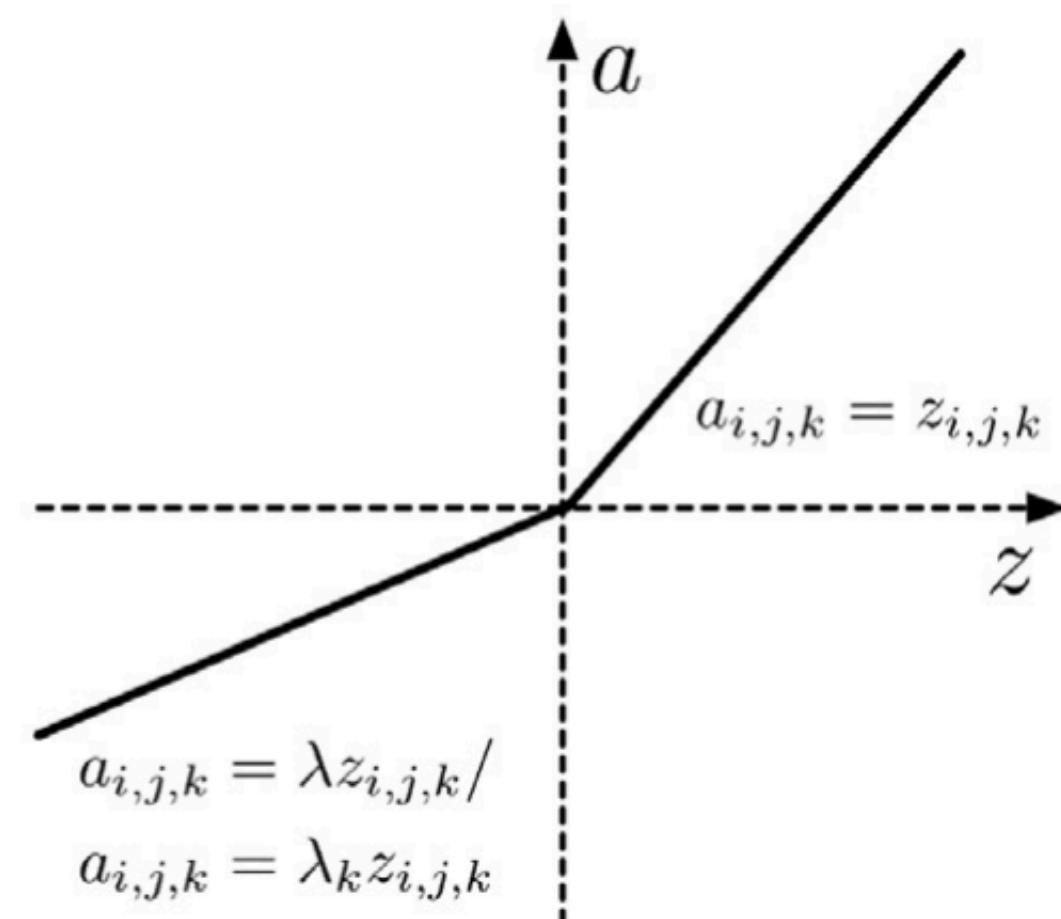


Improvements on activation functions

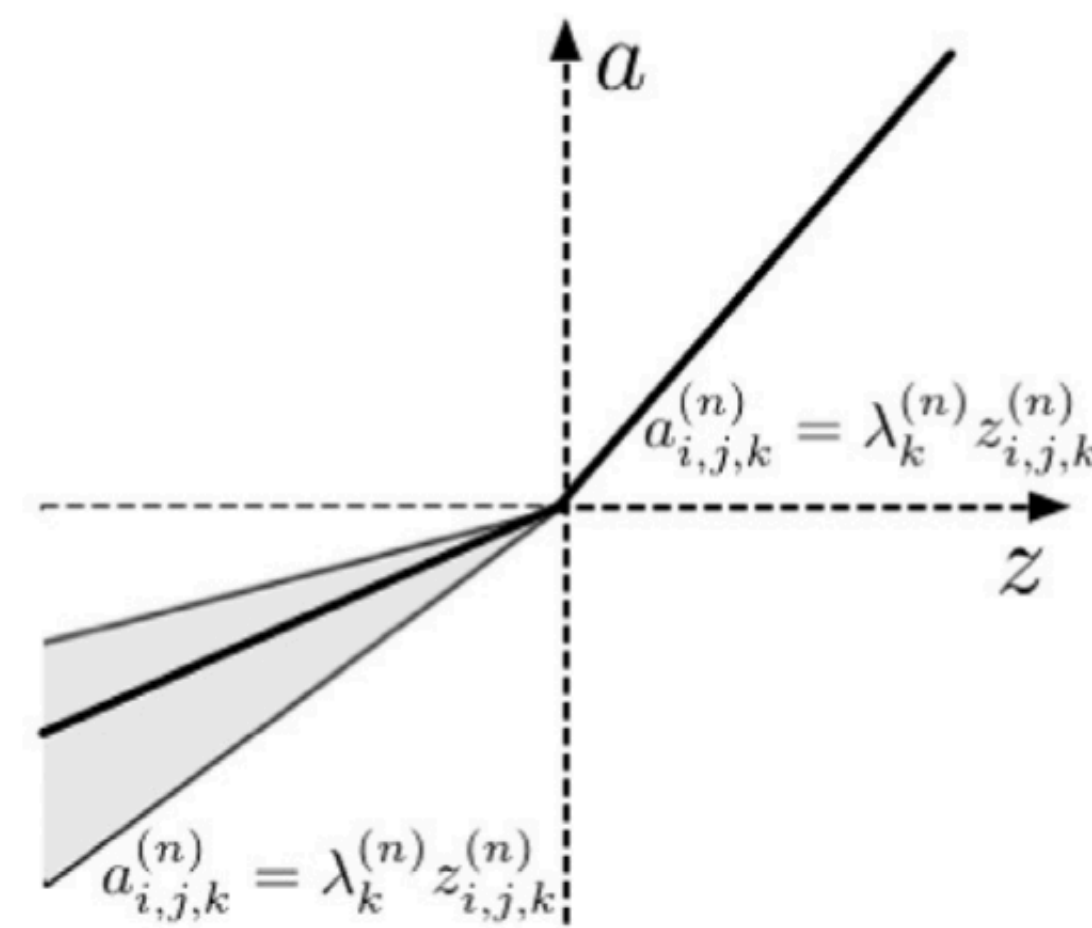
- ReLU has zero gradient when the node is not active
 - Different activation functions have been proposed to alleviate the problem



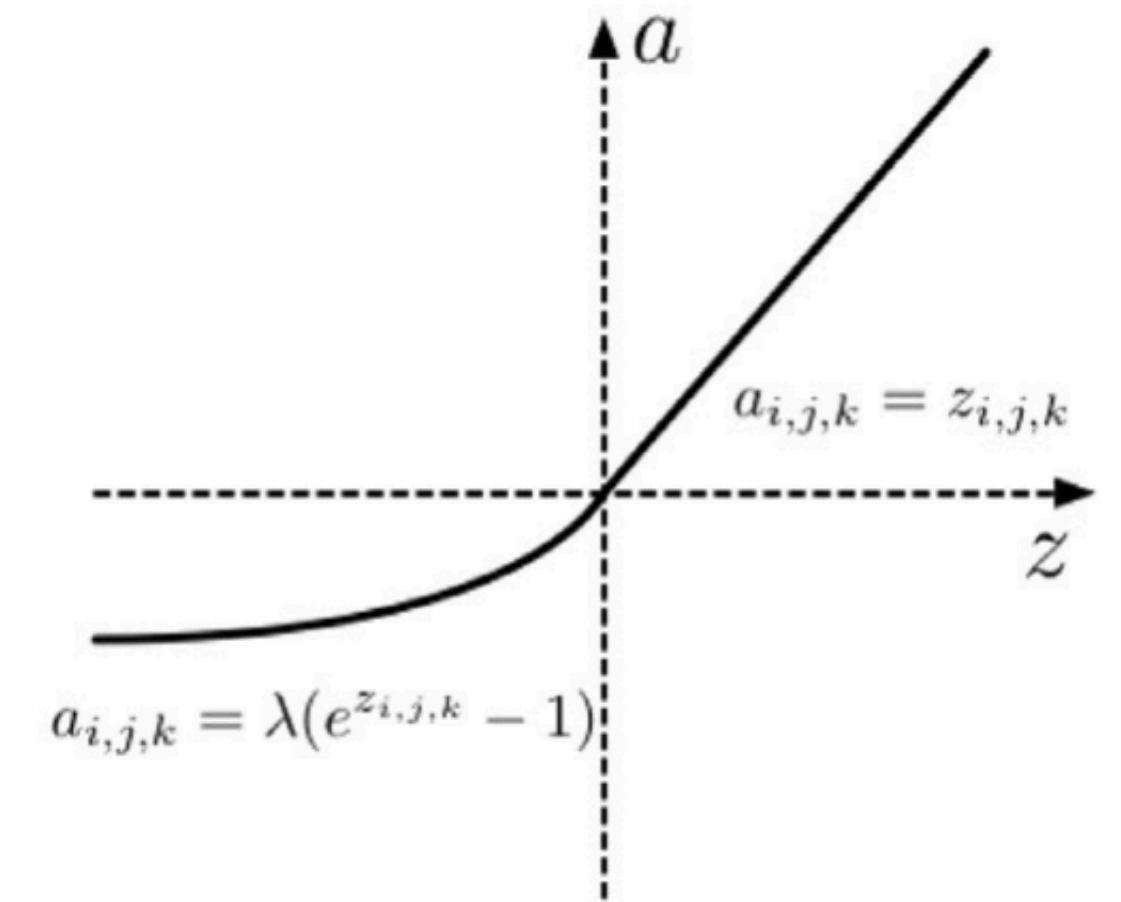
(a) ReLU



(b) LReLU/PPReLU



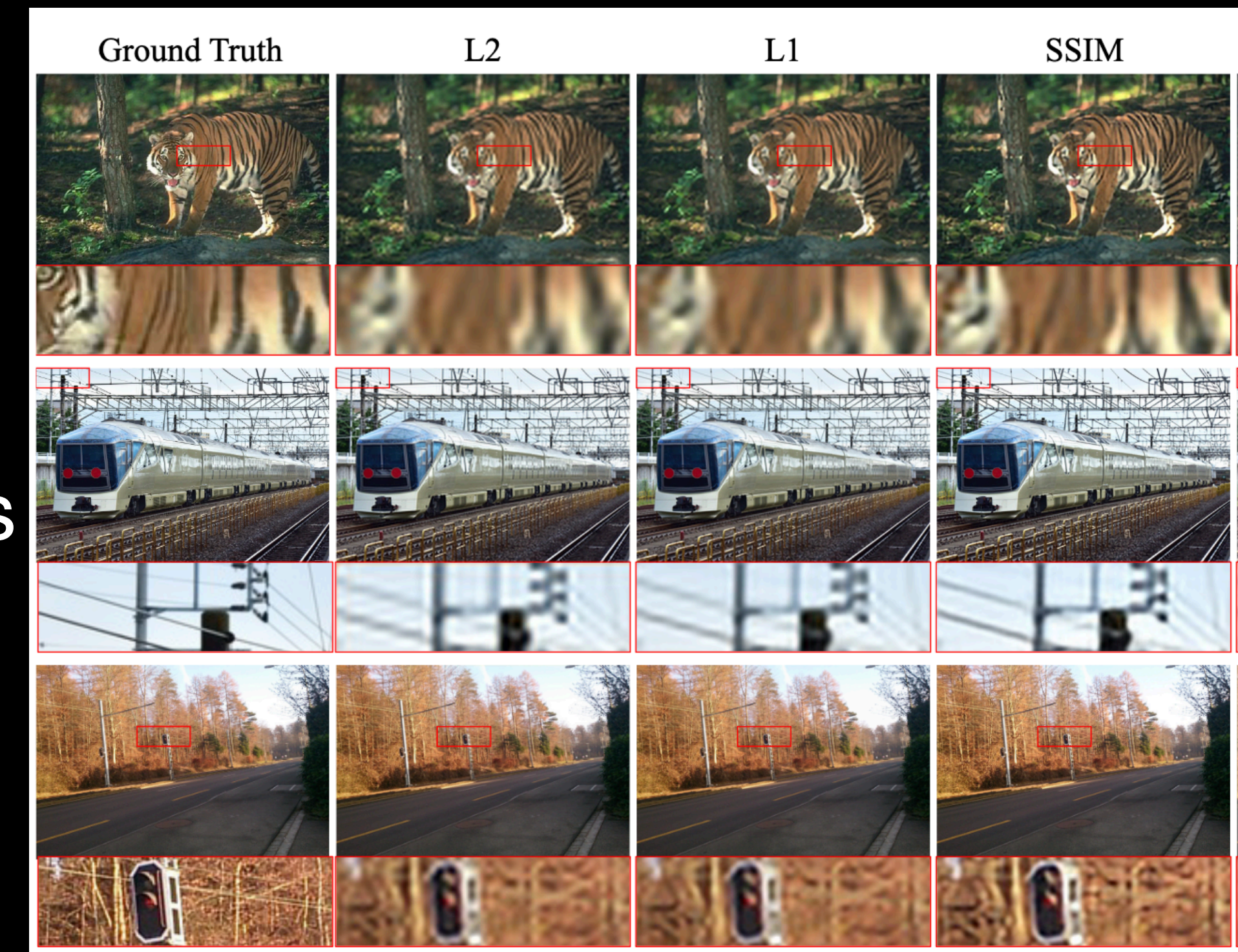
(c) RReLU



(d) ELU

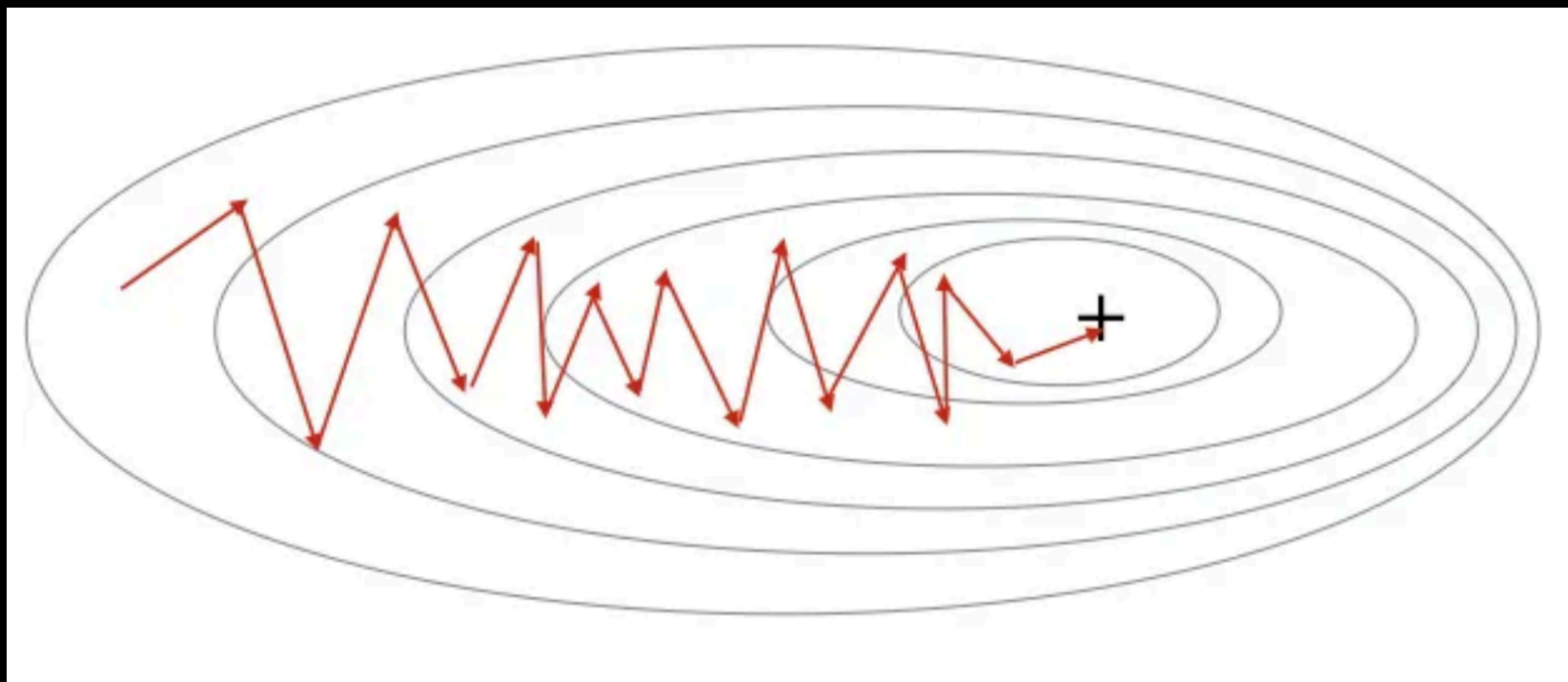
Loss function

- We need an objective criteria to tell the network how well it performs.
- The overall network is trained to minimize the loss function.
- Loss functions for image reconstruction:
 - MSE loss / L2 loss
 - L1 loss
 - SSIM (structural similarity index measure) loss
 - perceptual loss
 - GAN (generative adversarial network) loss
 - ...



Optimizer

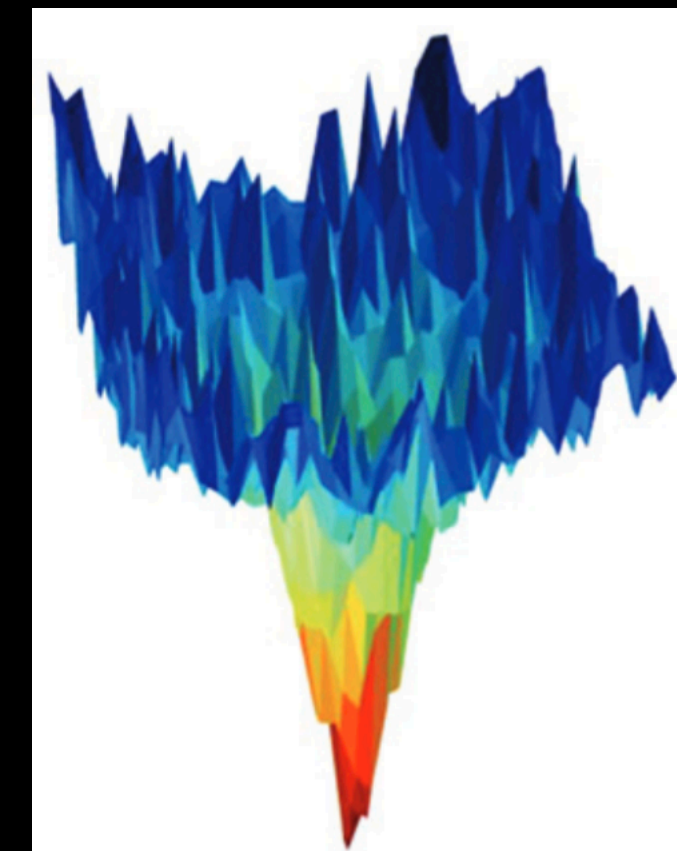
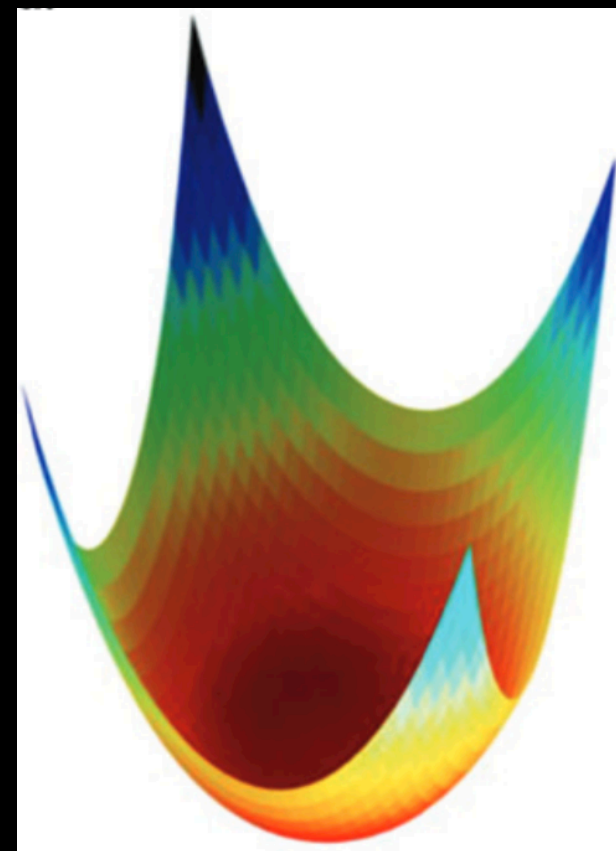
- Algorithms used to update network parameters for loss minimization
 - Gradient descent
 - Stochastic gradient descent
 - Replace the actual gradient calculation from the entire dataset by using a randomly selected subset
 - “Batch size” can be used to refer to the number of training samples in one forward/backward pass



Stochastic gradient descent

Optimizer

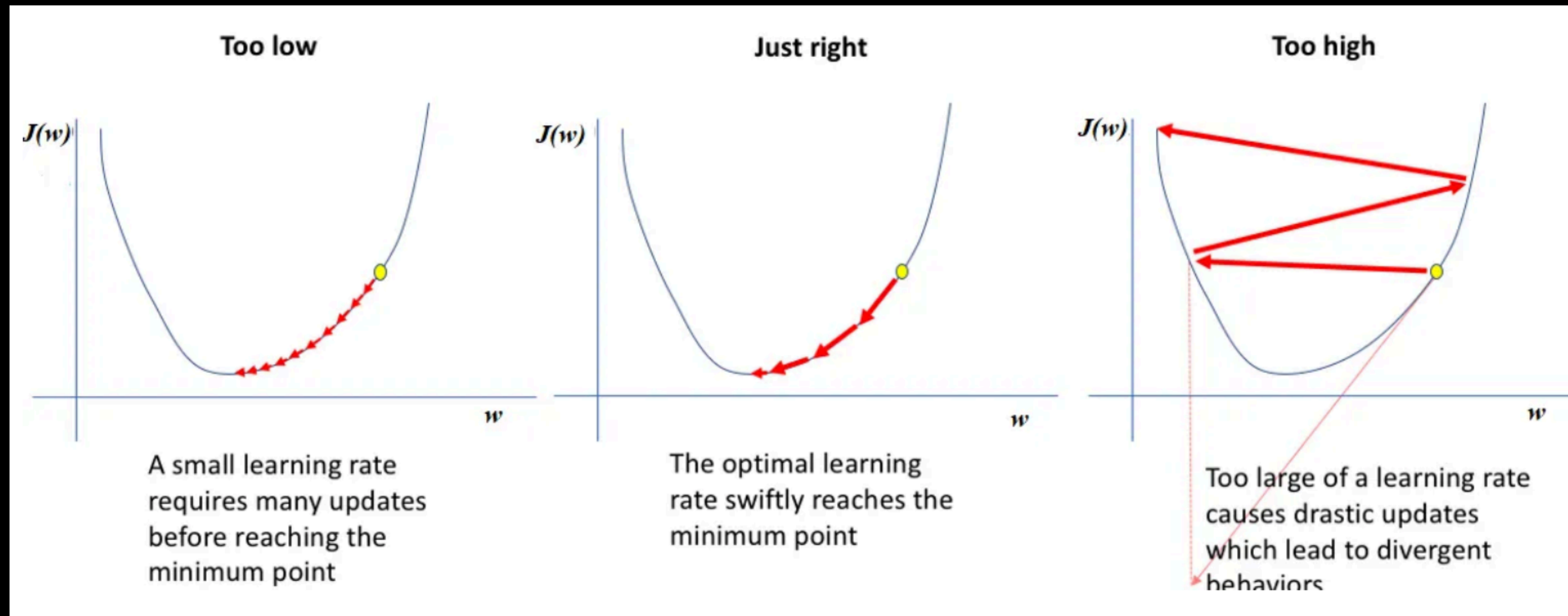
- To avoid local minimum problems, there are more adaptive optimizers that incorporate a “momentum” idea that use previous gradient information
 - Adagrad
 - RMSProp
 - Adam
 - ...



- Luckily, there are many optimizers already implemented in popular deep learning frameworks (PyTorch, TensorFlow...)

Optimizer

- Find a suitable learning rate

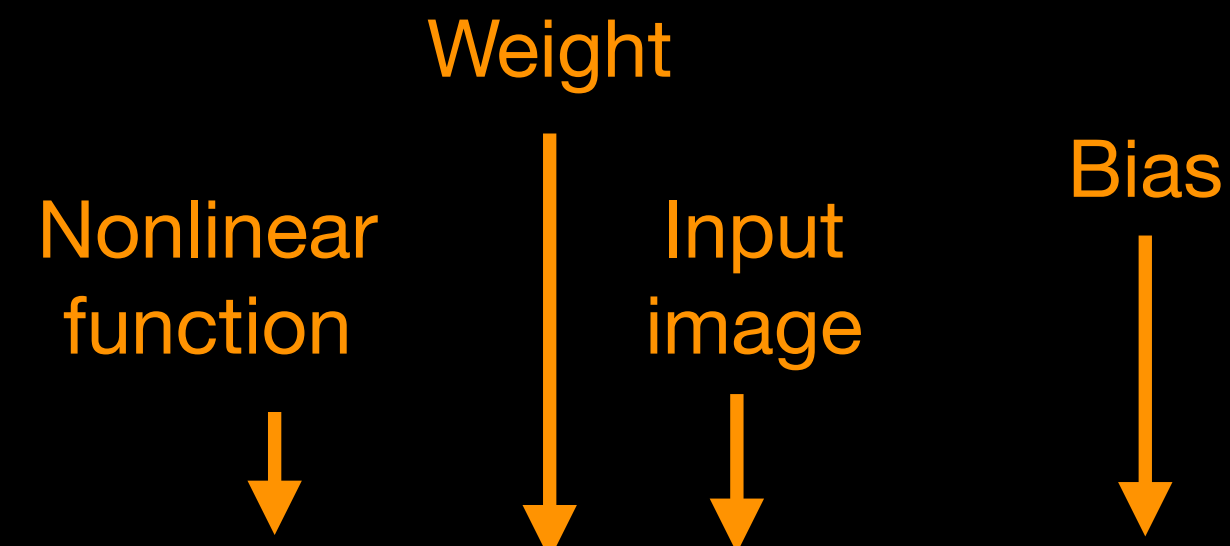


Back-propagation

- Once we know about the gradient, back-propagation is usually used as an efficient way to update the network's trainable parameters.

Back-propagation

One layer:


$$Q = \phi(wP + b)$$

Network with deep layers:

$$Q = \mathcal{F}(P) = \phi(w_n \dots \underbrace{\phi(w_2 \phi(w_1 P + b_1) + b_2) \dots + b_n}_{\text{First layer}} \dots + b_n)$$

Second layer

Using chain rule
To calculate derivatives

$$Q = \mathcal{F}(g(P)) \longrightarrow \frac{\partial Q}{\partial P} = \frac{\partial \mathcal{F}(P)}{\partial P} = \mathcal{F}'(g(x)) \cdot g'(x)$$

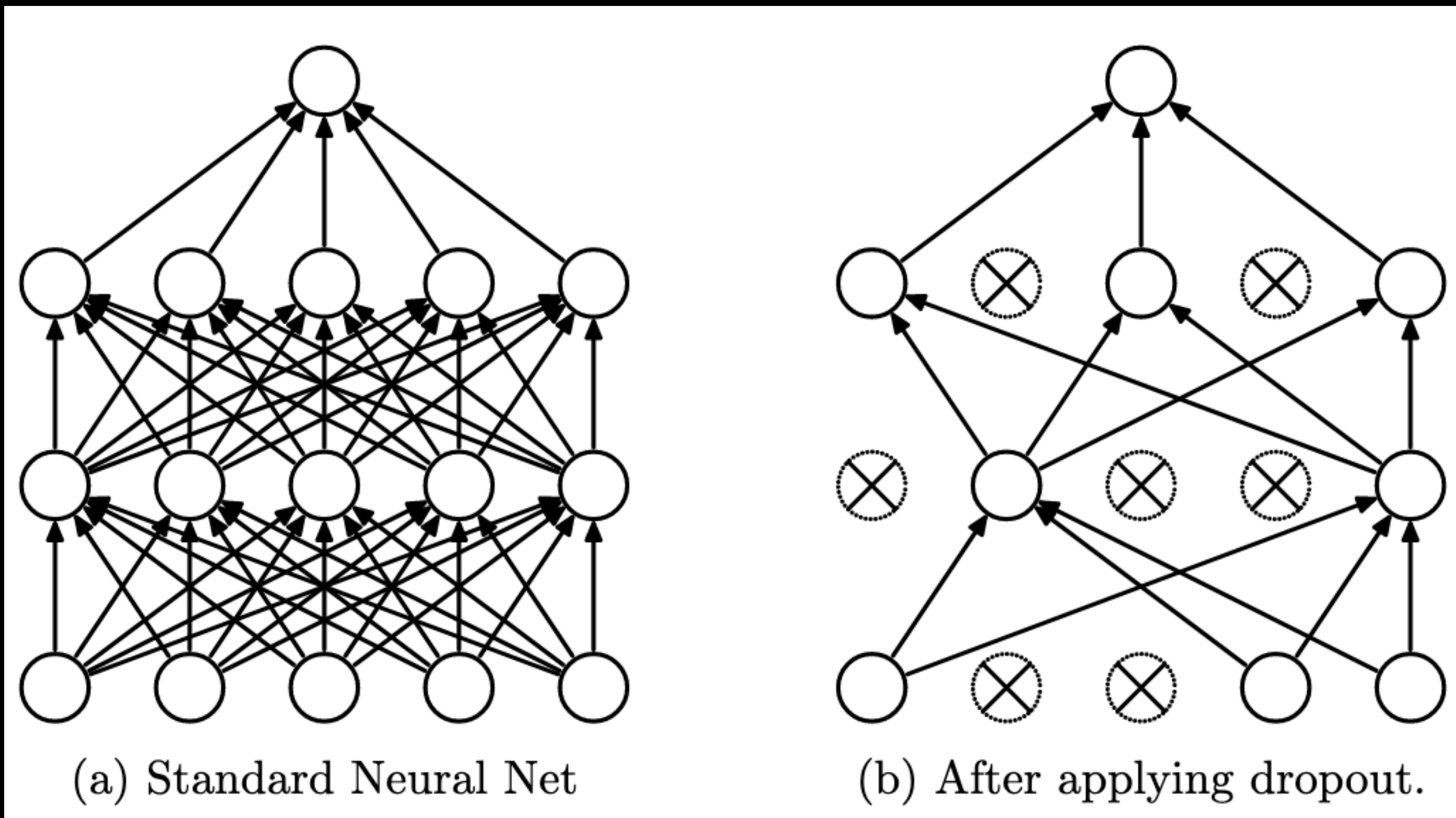
- Luckily, back-propagation can be done easily using popular deep learning frameworks (PyTorch, TensorFlow...)

Regularization

- Regularization is any modification we make to a learning algorithm that is intended to reduce its generalization error but not its training error¹.
- Examples:
 - Include prior knowledge
 - Apply some constraints on the parameters in the loss function
 - Data augmentation: image flipping, rotation...
 - Dropout
 - ...

Regularization

- Dropout¹
 - Randomly “turn off” some of the weights during the training process.



Batch normalization

- Internal covariance shift¹
 - The distribution of the inputs in each layer changes as learning occurs in previous layers.
- Batch normalization¹ normalizes output of the previous layer by subtracting the batch mean, and then dividing by the batch's standard deviation (i.e., normalizing the previous output)

Data stratification

- A proper data stratification ensures that training and evaluation data is representative of the distributions in the population.
- Things to consider in MRI applications:
 - Subject demographics (sex, age,...)
 - Patients/Healthy volunteers
 - Different diseases
 - Sequence acquisition parameters
 - ...

Validation

- Different validation methods
 - Train/test split
 - k-Fold cross validation
 - Leave-one-out cross validation
 - ...

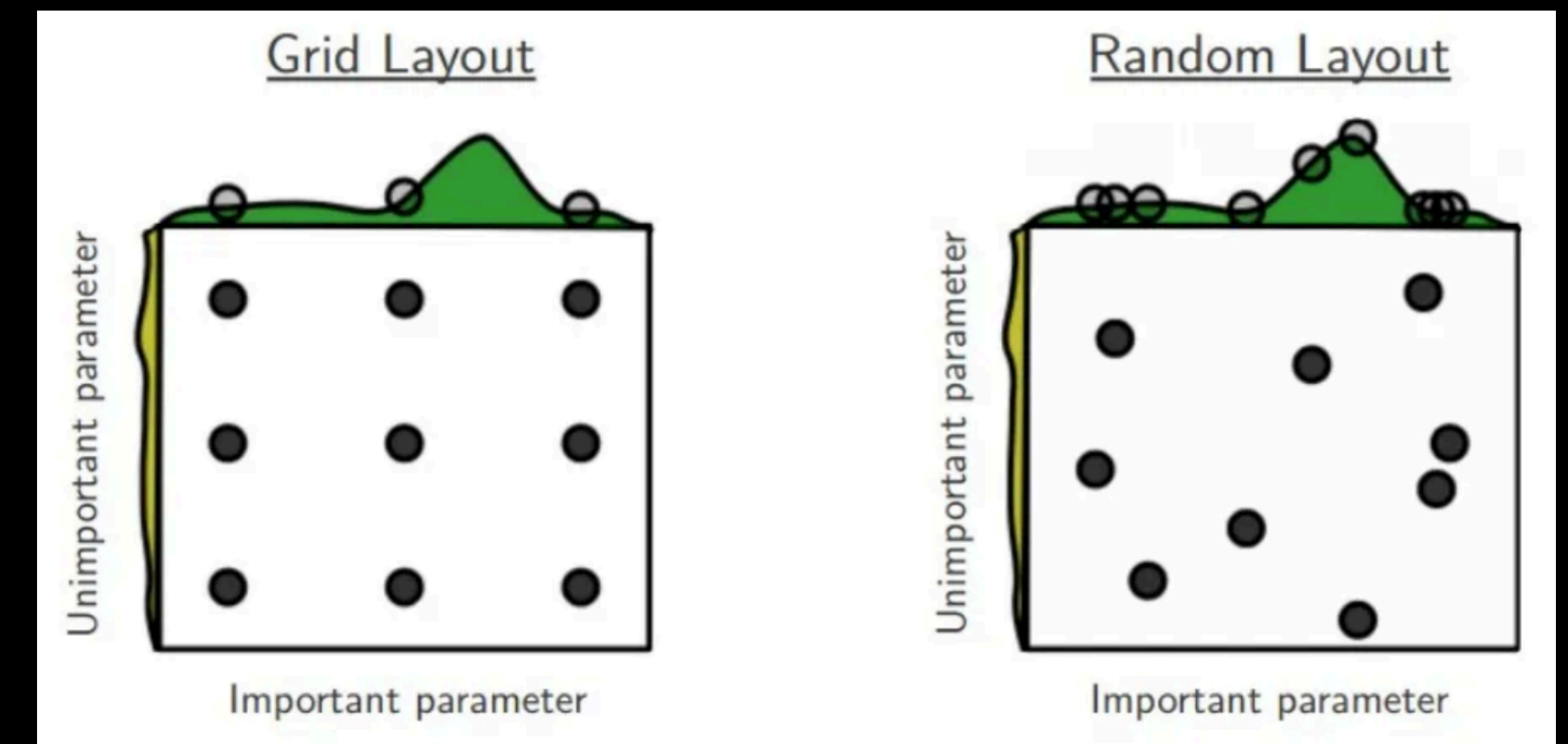
Validation

- k-fold cross validation



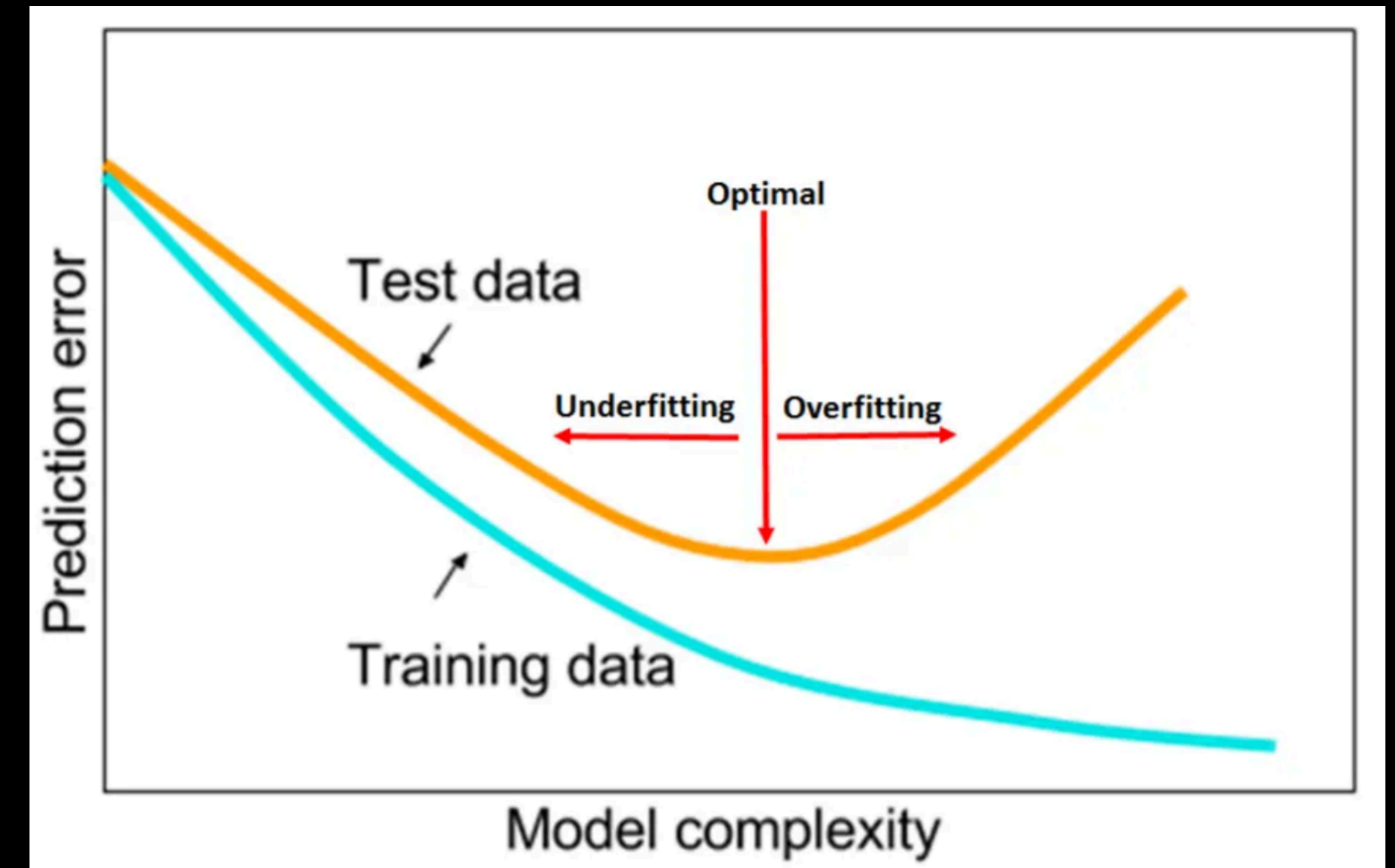
Hyperparameter tuning

- There are many hyperparameters in deep learning networks
 - Learning rate
 - Batch size
 - Architecture design: number of layers, numbers of channels
 - ...
- Approaches for hyperparameter tuning
 - Grid search
 - Random search



Hyperparameter tuning

- Monitor validation loss for hyperparameter tuning
- Pay attention to signs of underfitting and overfitting



Ablation study

- Ablation study investigates the performance of a neural network by removing one or several components at a time to understand the contribution from each component to the entire network.

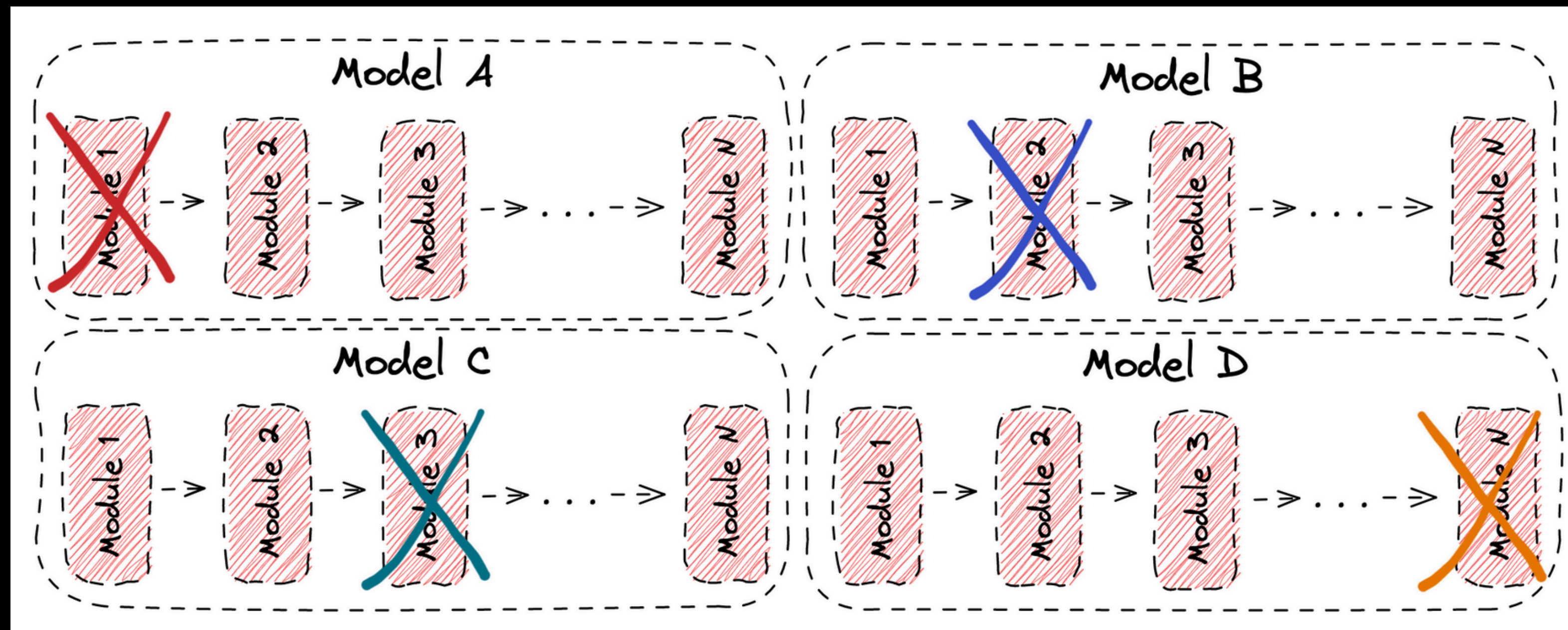


Image quality evaluation

- Quantitative image quality metrics
 - NRMSE, PSNR, SSIM...
- (For medical imaging applications) Radiology scoring
 - Experienced radiologists review and rate the image quality
- Statistical analysis

Part 3: Considerations for applying deep learning in MRI reconstructions

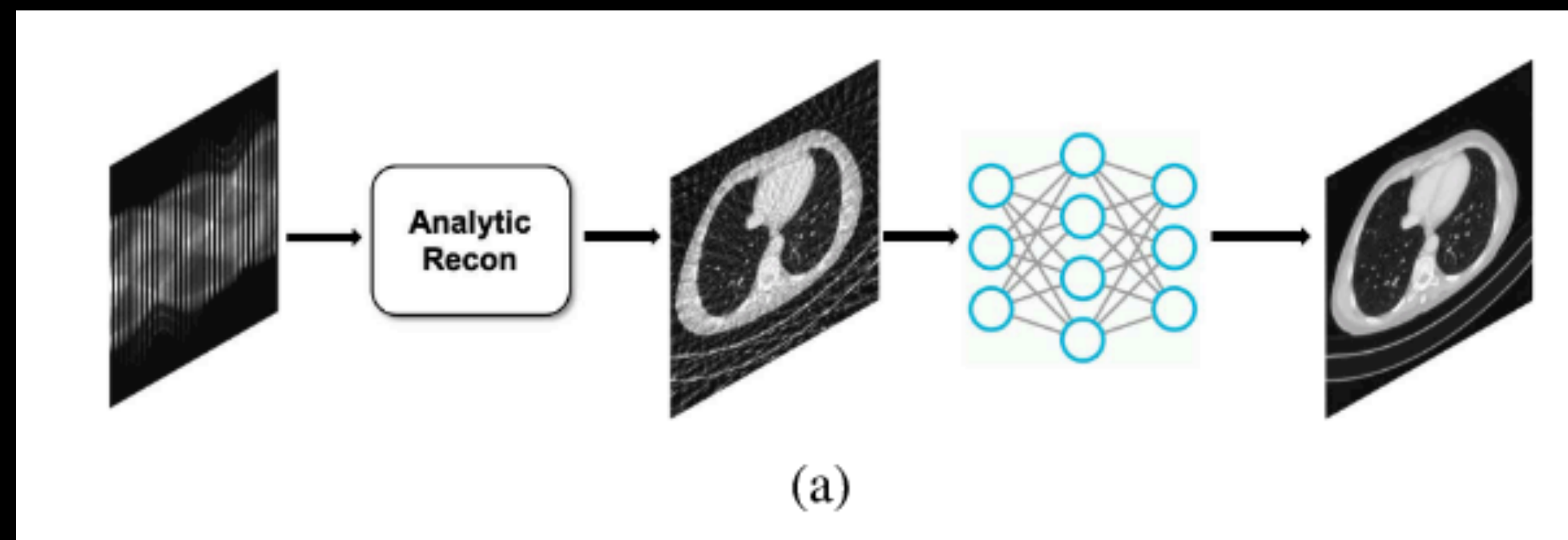
Considerations for MRI DL reconstruction

- Distinct differences between MRI recon versus other computer vision tasks:
 - (1) **Data acquisition**: MRI data acquired in the k-space domain, not in the image domain, and are inherently complex-valued.
 - (2) **MRI physics**: There is MRI physics behind the formation of the images.
 - (3) **Availability of multi-contrast images**: There can be multiple contrasts (e.g., different coils, different T1/T2 weightings) in the MRI dataset.
 - (4) **Clinical workflow compatibility**: Developing DL applications in MRI needs to consider whether it can be compatible with the clinical workflow.
- Let's see how MRI researchers apply deep learning with considerations of MRI data characteristics...

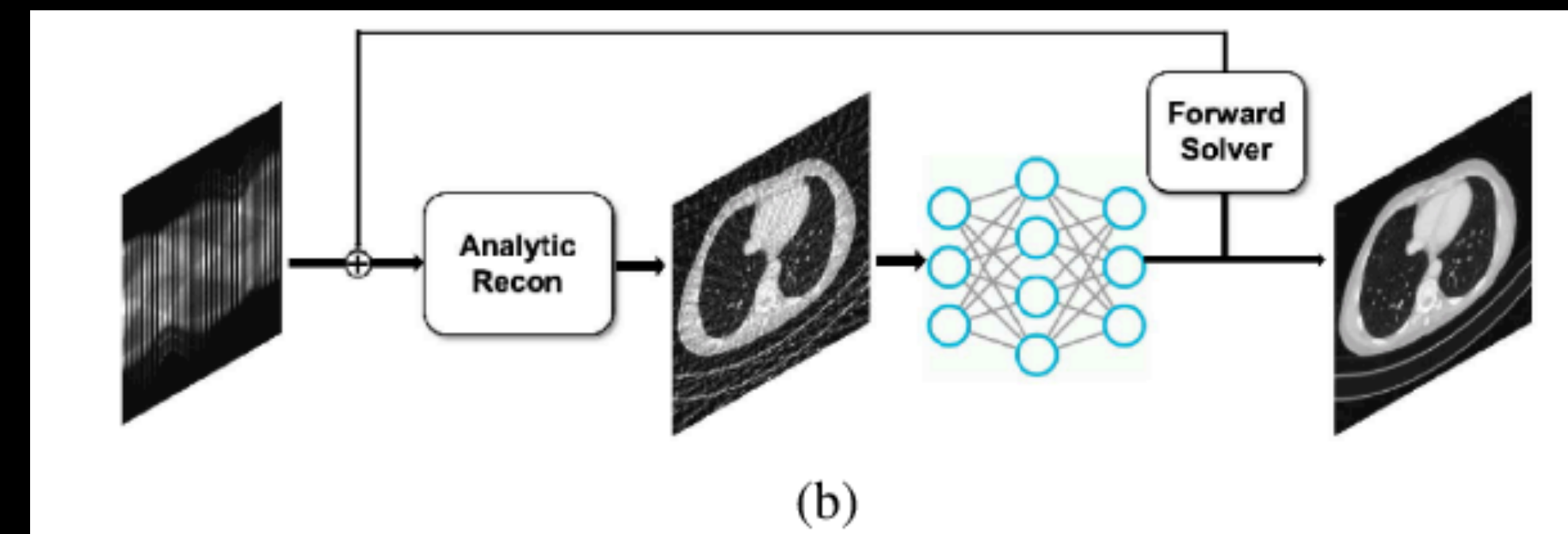
Different training schemes

- Different approaches:

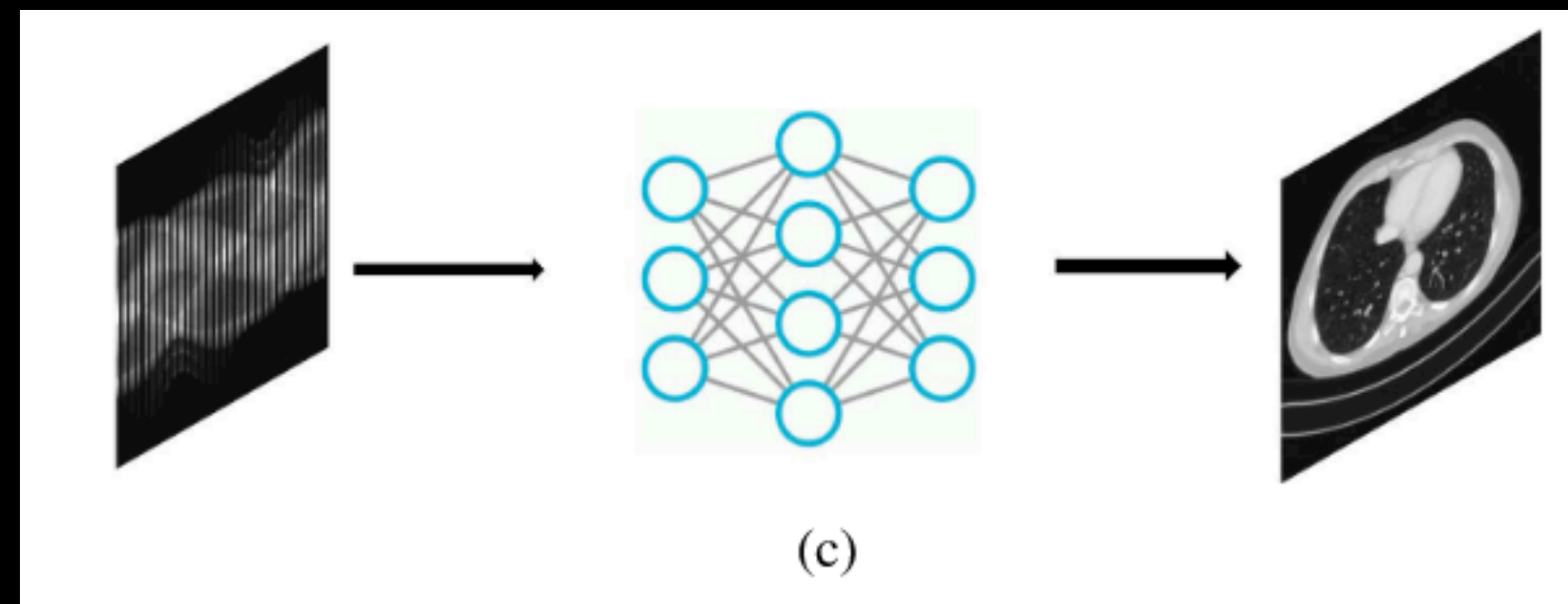
Image-domain learning



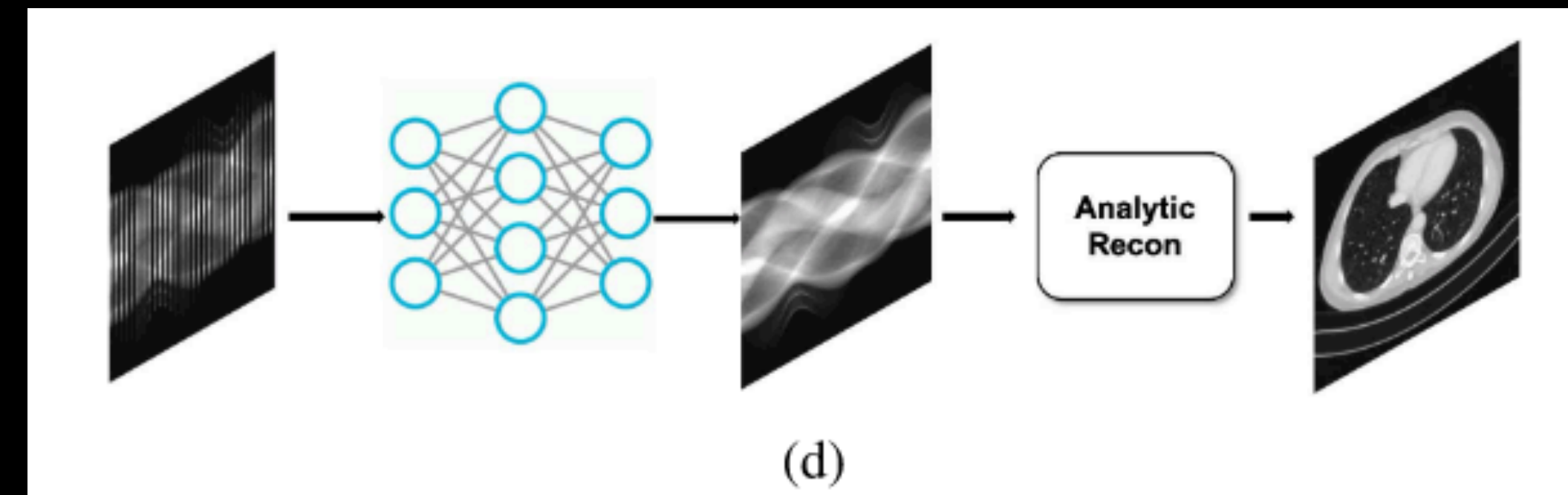
Hybrid-domain learning



Mapping between k-space domain and image domain



k-space domain learning



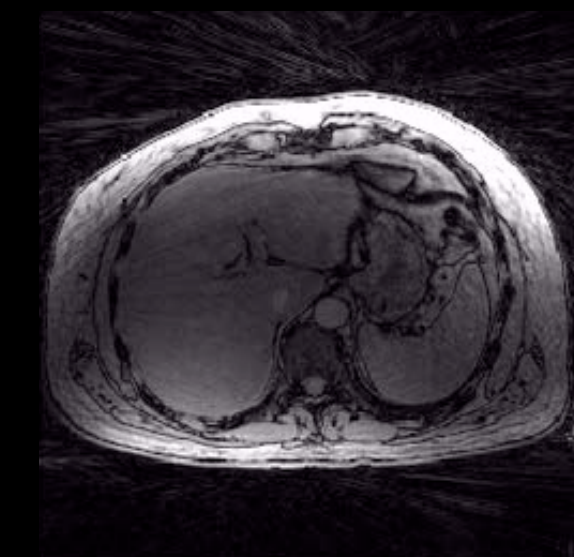
Different training schemes

- **Image-domain training** was popular in the early development of deep learning MRI reconstruction
 - Images are easier to access compared to raw k-space data
 - Popular network designs and training strategies in computer vision tasks are developed based on images, not k-space data
 - It can be more prone to image hallucinations if there is no k-space consistency term
- **Hybrid-domain training** or **dual-domain training** gained more popularity recently
 - More robust reconstruction results with the k-space consistency constraints
 - Features from both domains can be complementary
 - Transforming data between both domains or iterative processing can lead to longer inference time

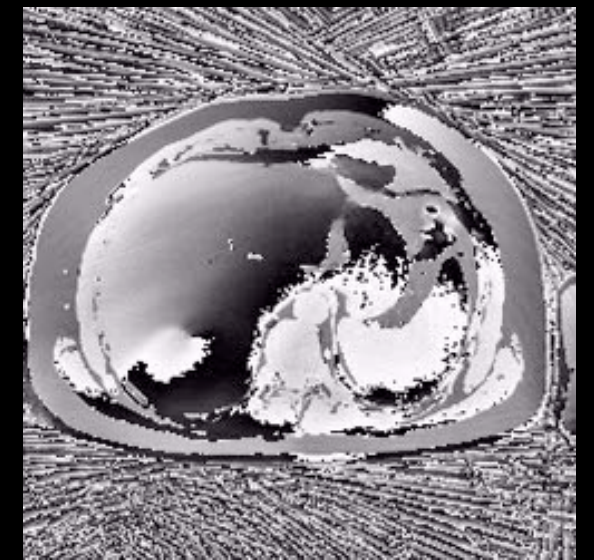
How to handle complex-valued signals

- Different approaches to process complex-valued images
 - (1) Use magnitude and phase images as two inputs
 - (2) Use real and imaginary parts as two channels
 - (3) Use complex-valued operations (including convolutions, pooling, activation functions...) in the deep learning network

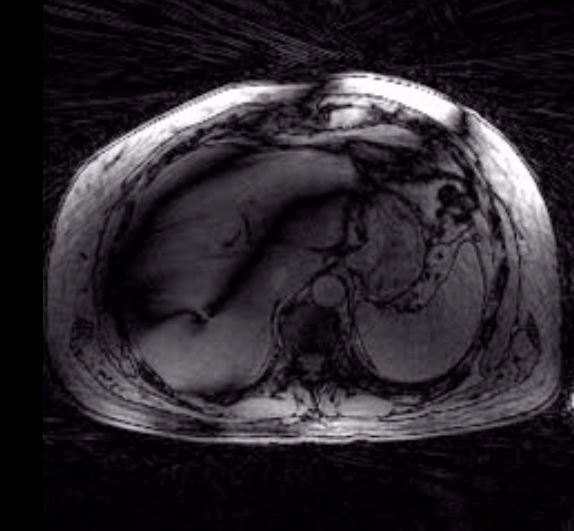
Magnitude



Phase



Real

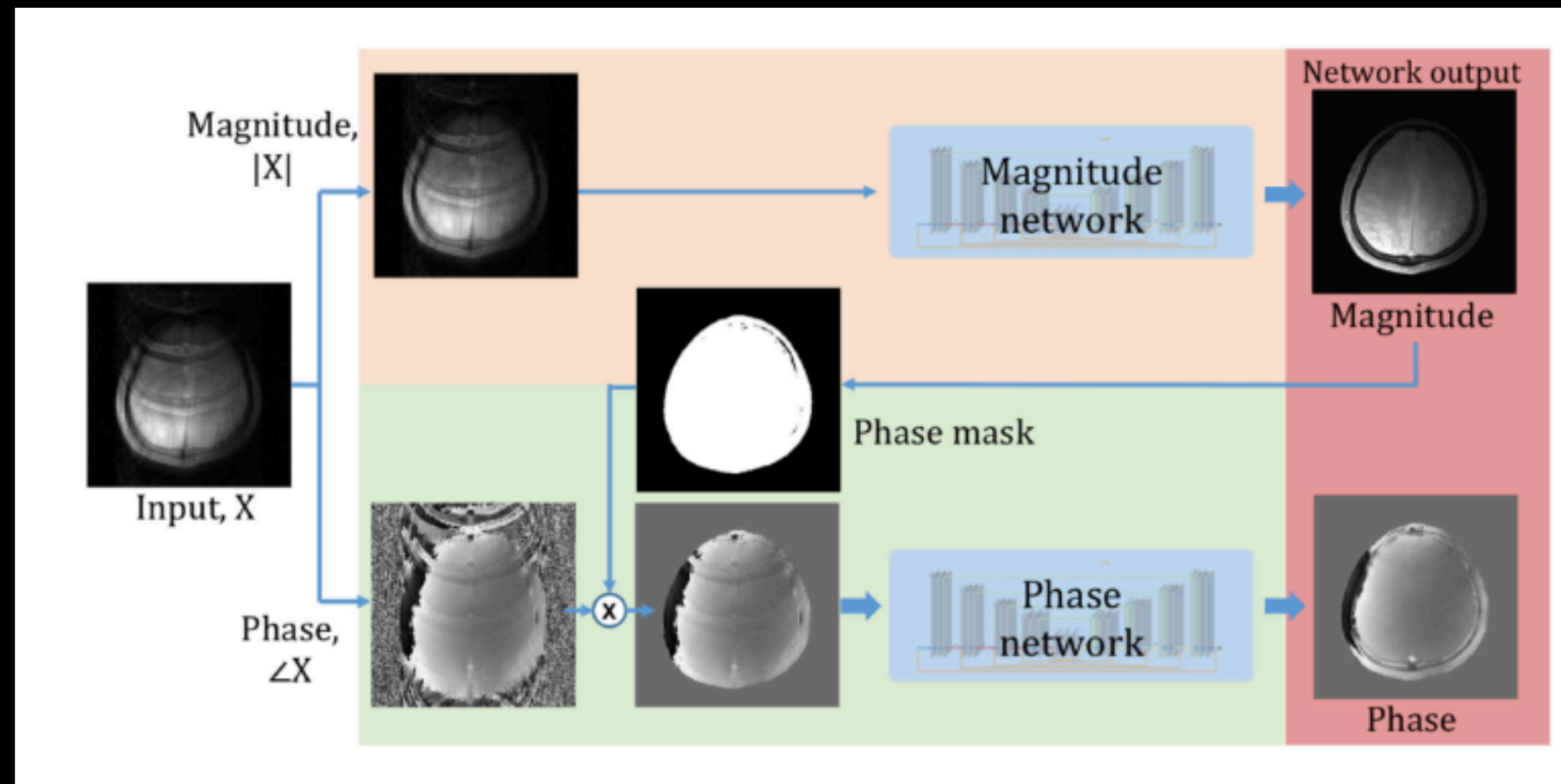


Imaginary



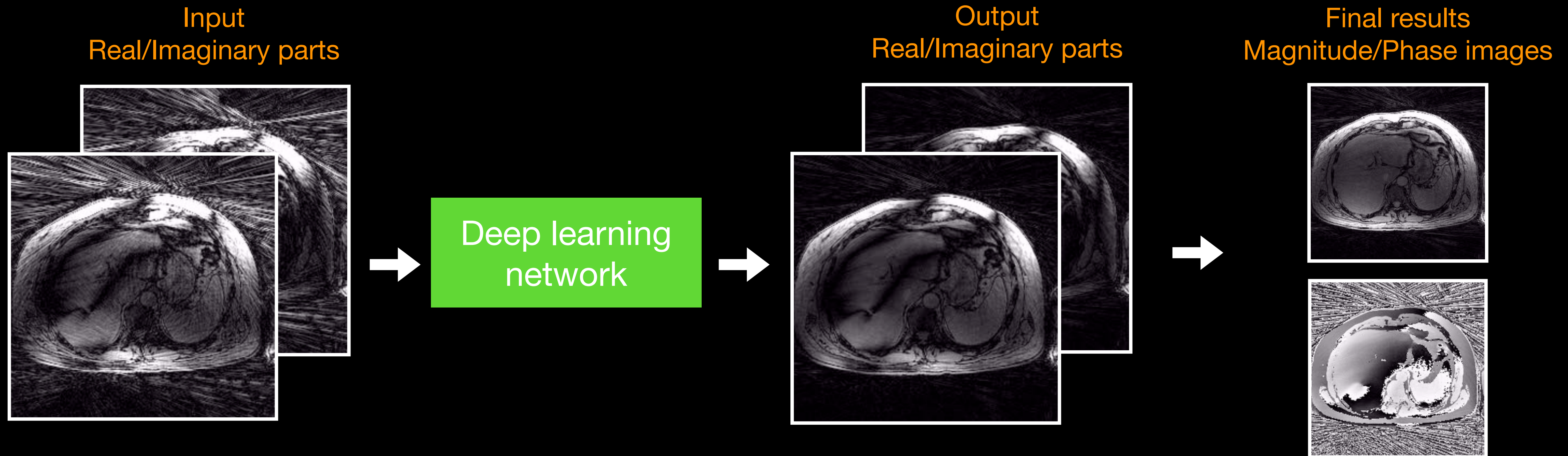
How to handle complex-valued signals

- Separate magnitude and phase networks¹ can be trained to reconstruct images from undersampled data



How to handle complex-valued signals

- Using real and imaginary parts as two separate channels and letting the kernels learn their relationships is probably the most popular approach.



How to handle complex-valued signals

- We can use complex-valued operations instead of real-valued operations in the neural network¹.

Complex convolution

$$W * d = (X + iY) * (a + ib) = (X * a - Y * b) + i(Y * a + X * b)$$

Complex activation function

$$\text{modReLU}(d) = \text{ReLU}(|d| + b) e^{i\theta_d}$$

$$\mathbb{C}\text{ReLU}(d) = \text{ReLU}(\text{Re}\{d\}) + i\text{ReLU}(\text{Im}\{d\})$$

Incorporating the single acquisition model

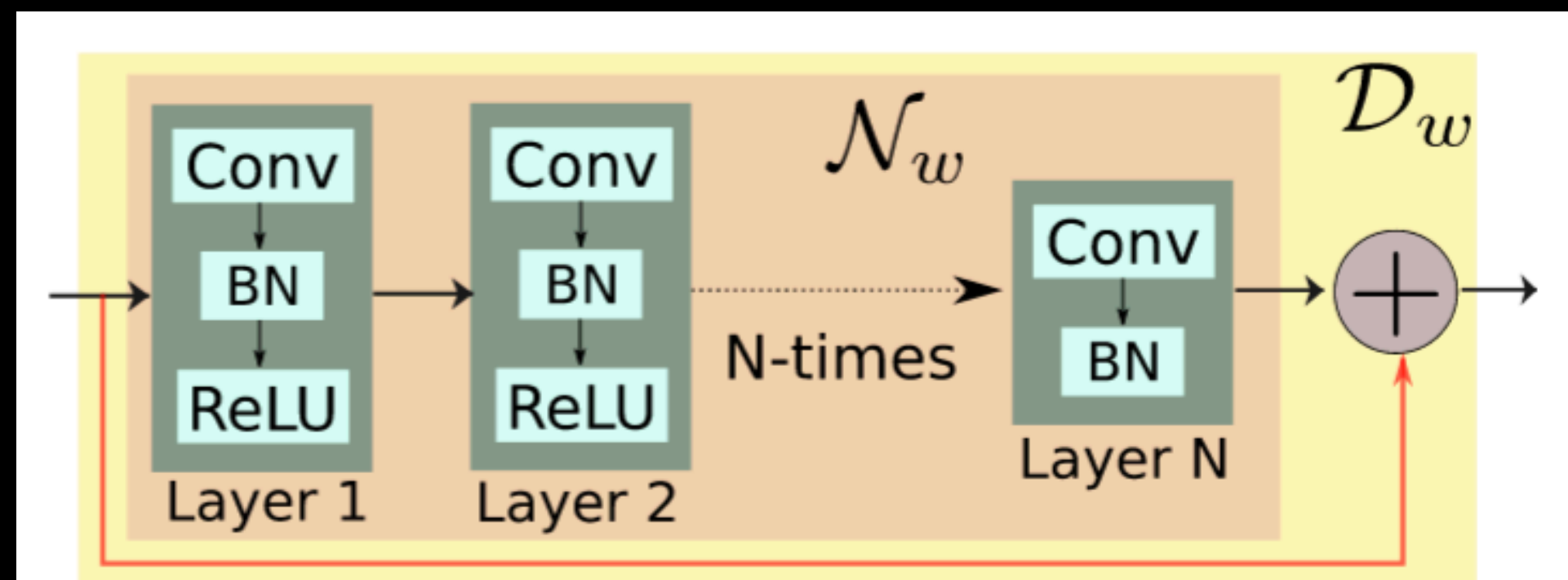
- We can incorporate the “k-space consistency term” into the DL network
- MoDL (Model-based Deep Learning architecture for inverse problem)
 - Replace sparsity constraints (in CS formulation) with a deep learning network

Formulate as an optimization problem

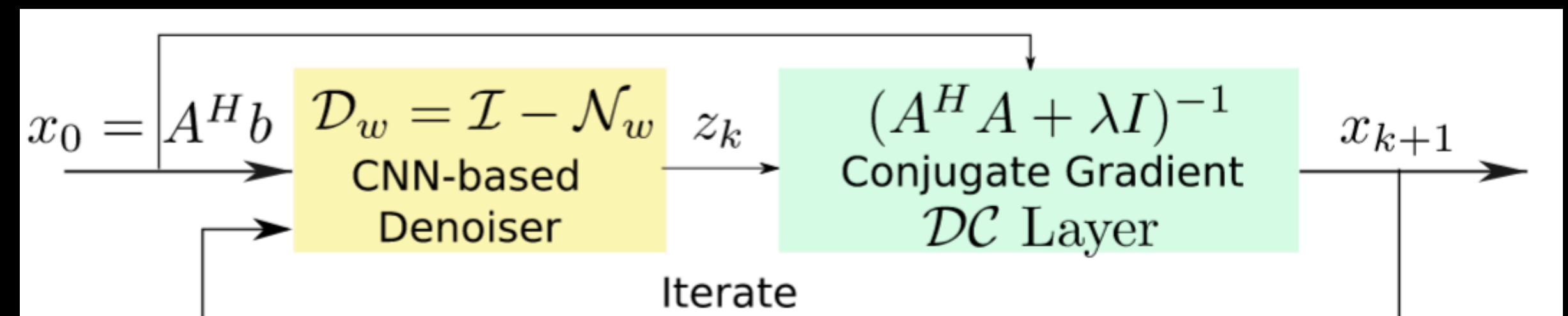
$$x_{recon} = \operatorname{argmin}_x \left\| UFx - y \right\|_2^2 + \lambda \left\| x - \operatorname{ConvNet}(x) \right\|_2^2$$

An unrolled network with two main blocks

- (1) A ConvNet to reduce artifacts / improve image quality
- (2) A data consistency layer for k-space data consistency



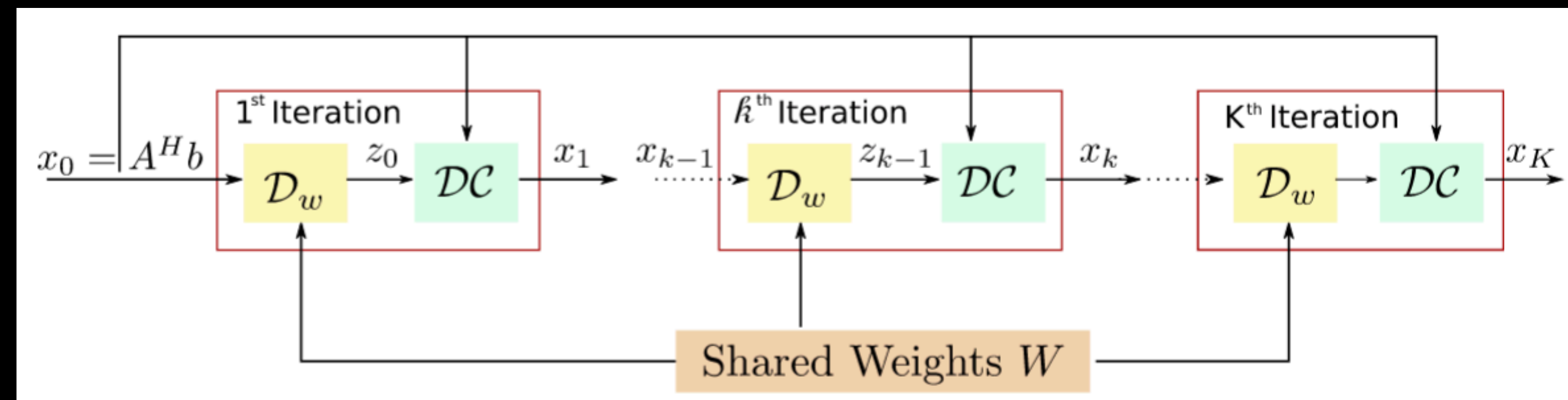
(a) The Residual learning based denoiser



(b) Proposed Model-based Deep Learning (MoDL) architecture

MoDL

Overall MoDL architecture



k-space sampling pattern

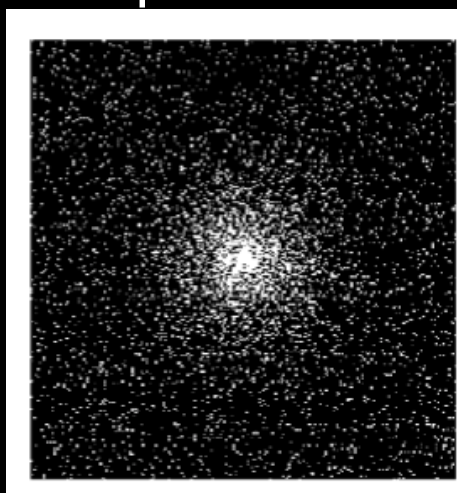
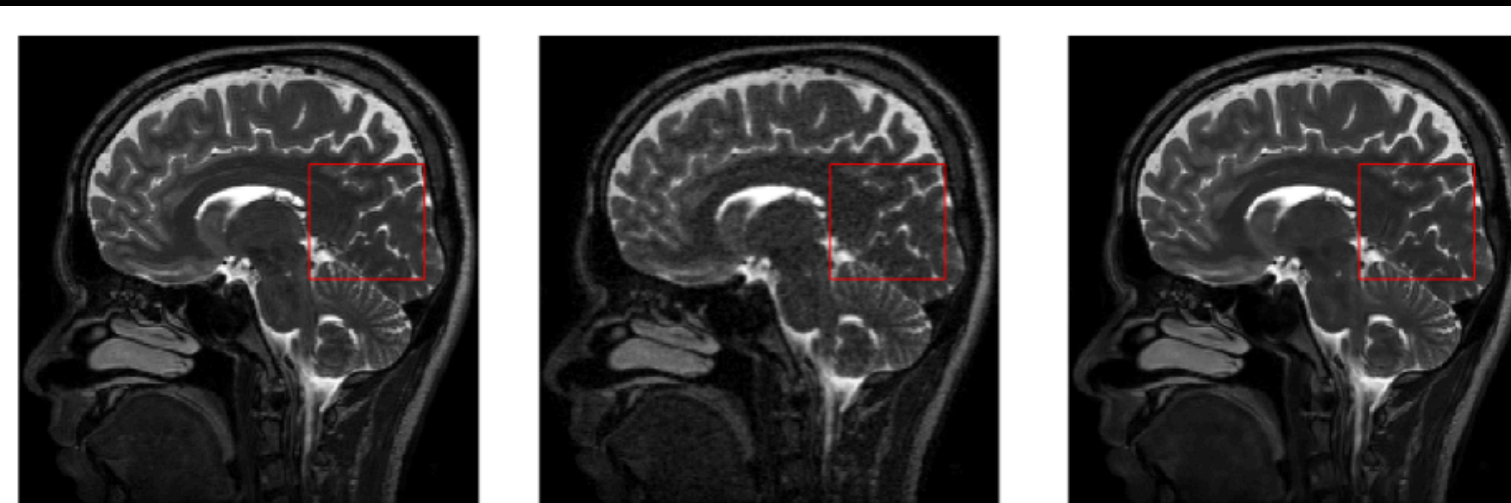


Image results

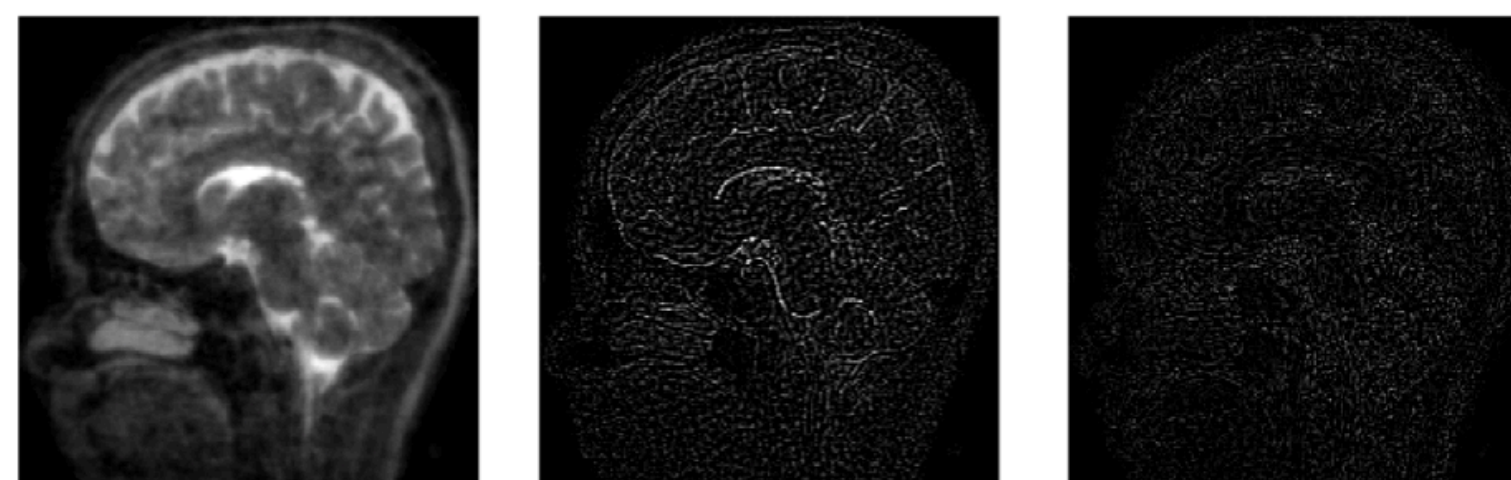
Zero-padding

Compressed sensing

MoDL



Error



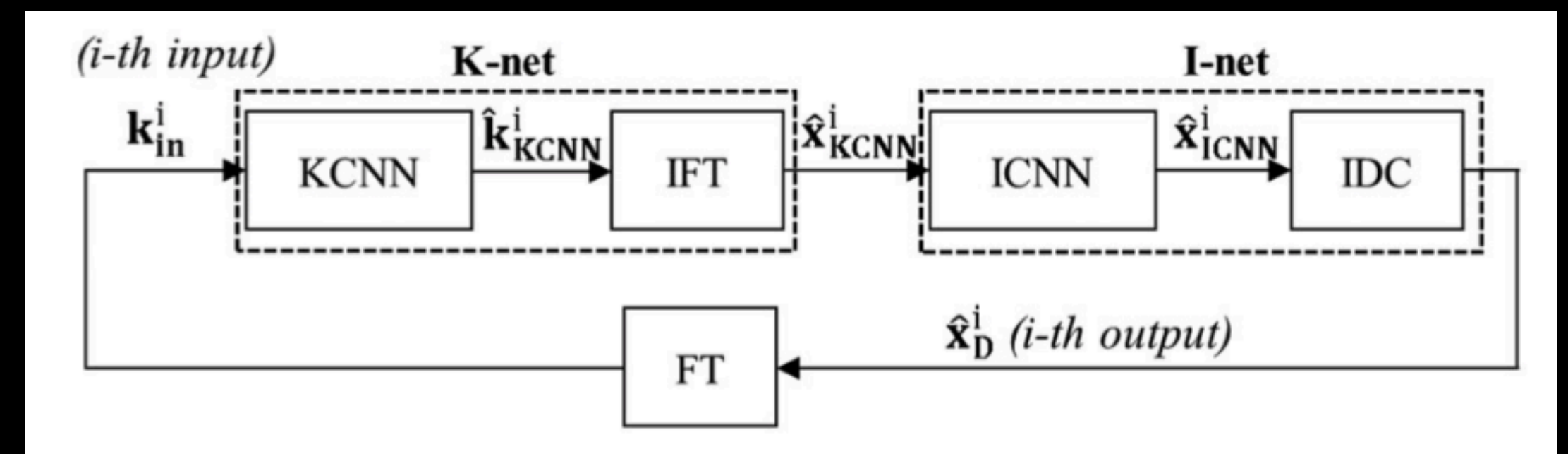
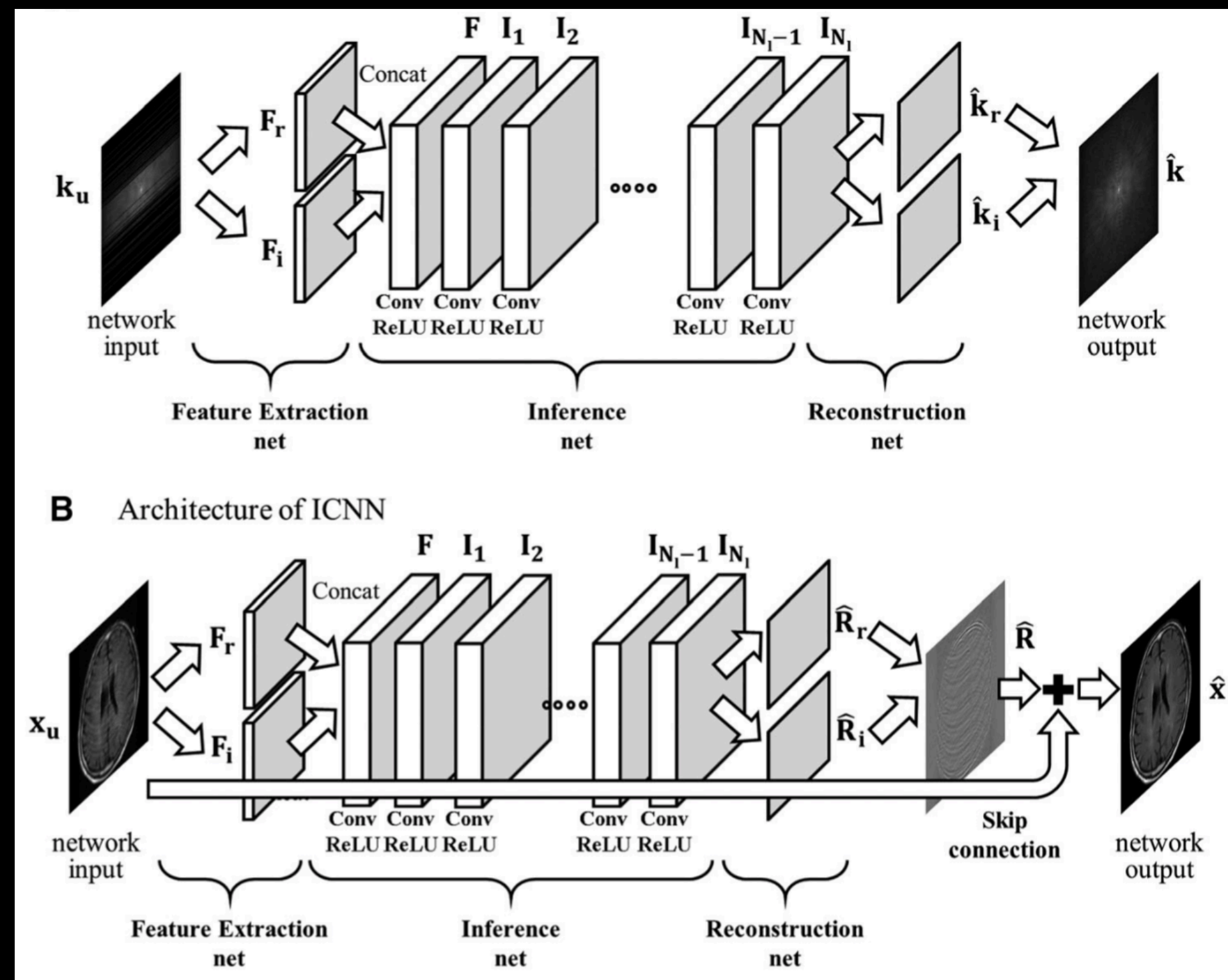
(Figures from: Aggarwal et al., IEEE TMI 2019)

Unrolled networks

- Unrolled networks are one of the most popular frameworks for DL MRI reconstruction as it integrates the strengths of **traditional iterative optimization methods** with the **learning power of deep neural networks**.
- This approach may offer better interpretability and theoretical guarantees of convergence.

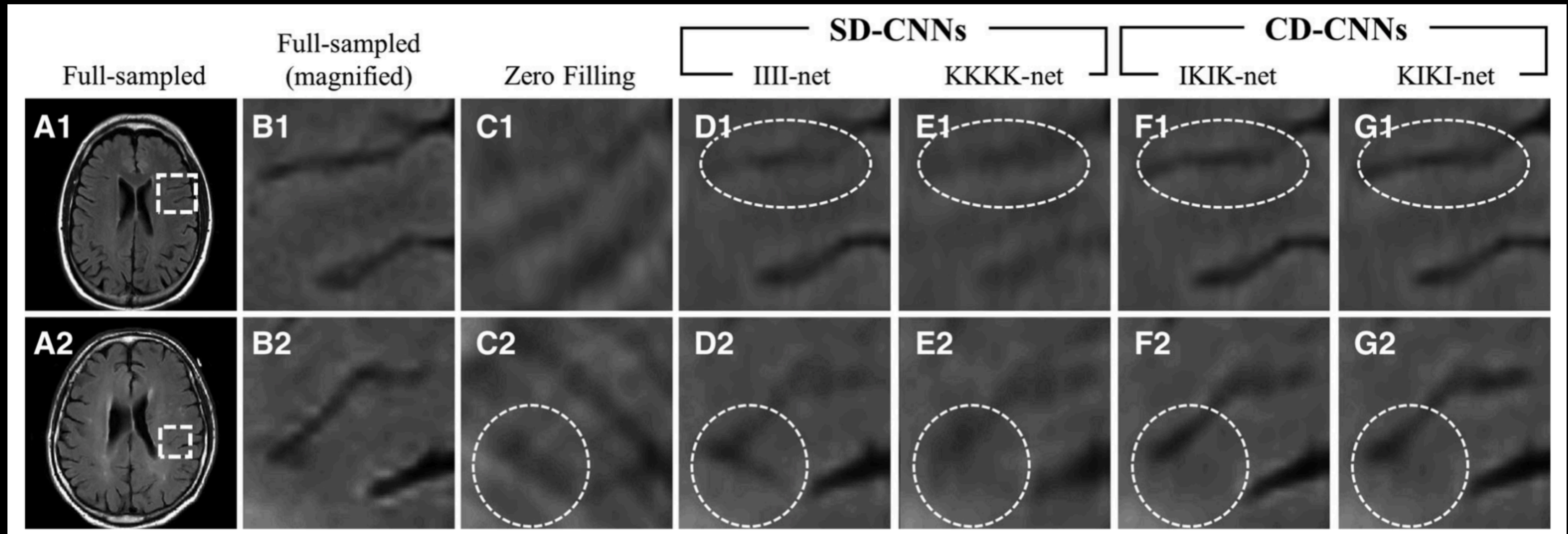
Training in dual domains

- KIKI-net¹: Use cross-domain ConvNets for image reconstruction
 - One sub-network for k-space completion
 - One sub-network for image restoration



Training in dual domains

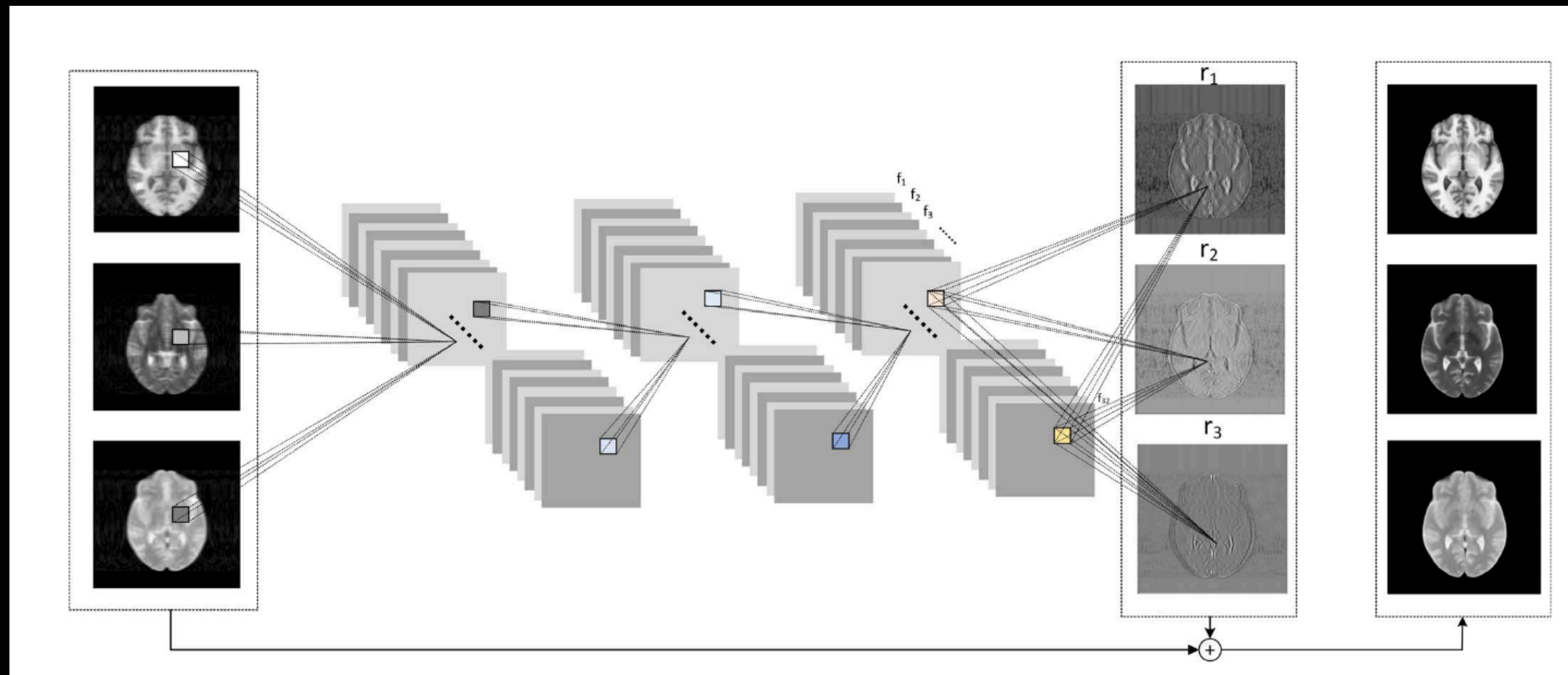
Results from **single-domain CNN** vs. **cross-domain CNN**
(undersampled factor R=4)



(Figure from: Eo et al., MRM 2018)

Utilizing the information from multi-contrast images

- MRI dataset sometimes involves images with multiple contrasts. Using this information shared across different contrasts may improve reconstruction accuracy.



(Figures from: Sun et al., IEEE TIP 2019)

Clinical workflow considerations

- Eventually, if you want to make your DL applications useful and compatible with the clinical workflow, you may need to consider...
- (1) Integration with existing systems: PACS compatibility, DICOM compliance, seamless integration
- (2) Reconstruction speed: low latency, hardware efficiency
- (3) Robustness and generalizability: to be applied in different sequences, different scan setups

Short summary

- Directly transplanting network architectures or training strategies from other computer vision tasks to MRI reconstruction may already give you reasonable results.
- However, incorporating information regarding MRI physics (e.g., k-space consistency, images with multiple contrasts) may lead to a more robust MRI reconstruction network with higher fidelity.

Part 4: Challenges of deep learning MRI reconstruction

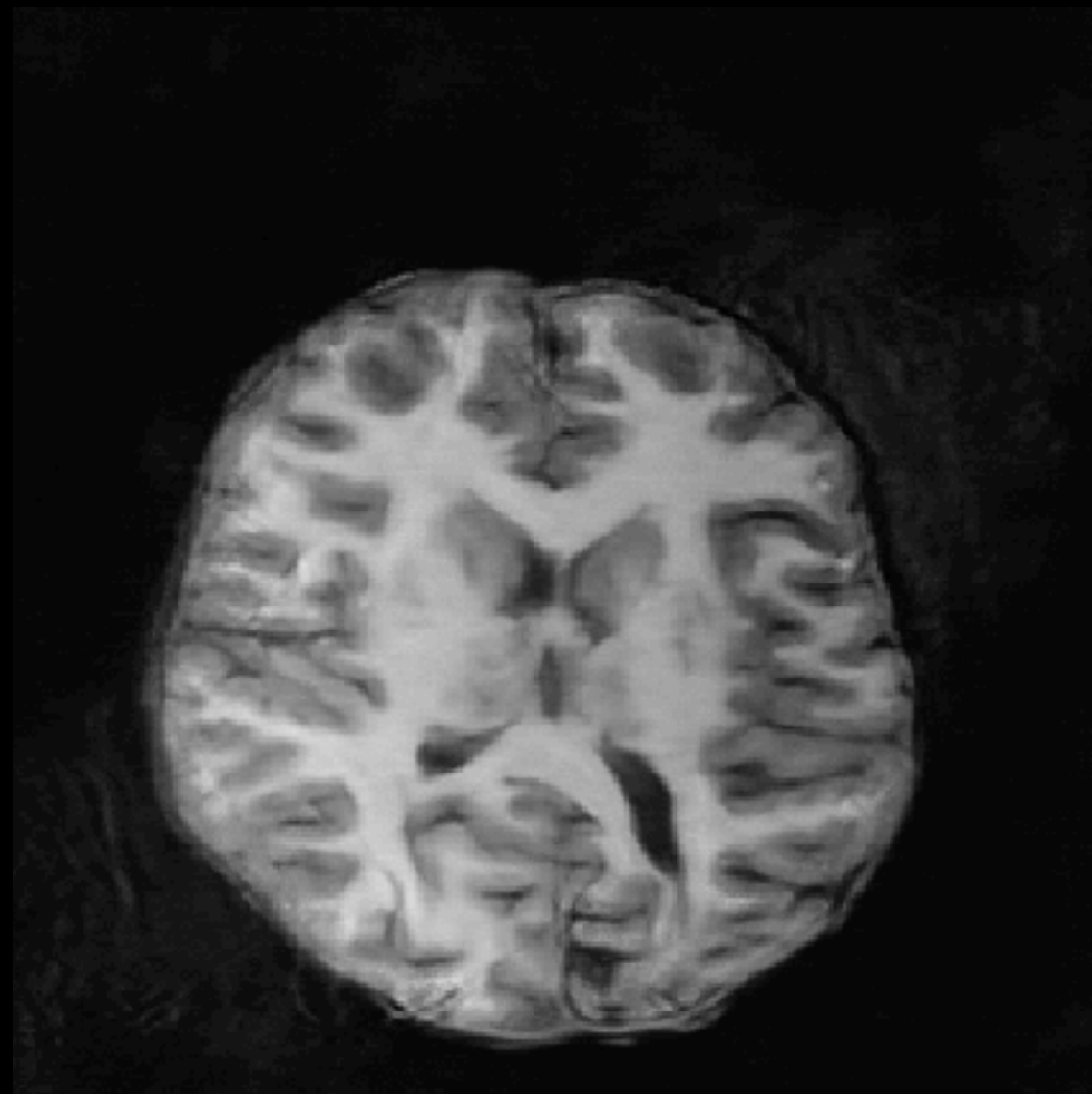
Challenges of DL MRI reconstruction

- (1) **Hallucinations**
 - Realistic-looking image features, which are not actually in the acquired data, may appear on the reconstructed images
- (2) **Data scarcity**
 - Healthcare data are more sensitive and public datasets are less available than other computer vision tasks
 - Fully-sampled high-quality data may not be available due to physics limitations
- (3) **Generalizability**
 - Some DL models will be dataset dependent and may not generalize well to all sequences or body parts
- (4) **Interpretability**
 - The “failure mode” for DL recon is sometimes not clear, compared to conventional model-based approaches
- Let's see how these problems can be (partially) mitigated

Hallucinations

- Hallucinations (remove essential features or adding unrealistic features) can have serious implications for clinical decisions.
- Can you spot the hallucination?

This is a DL reconstructed image

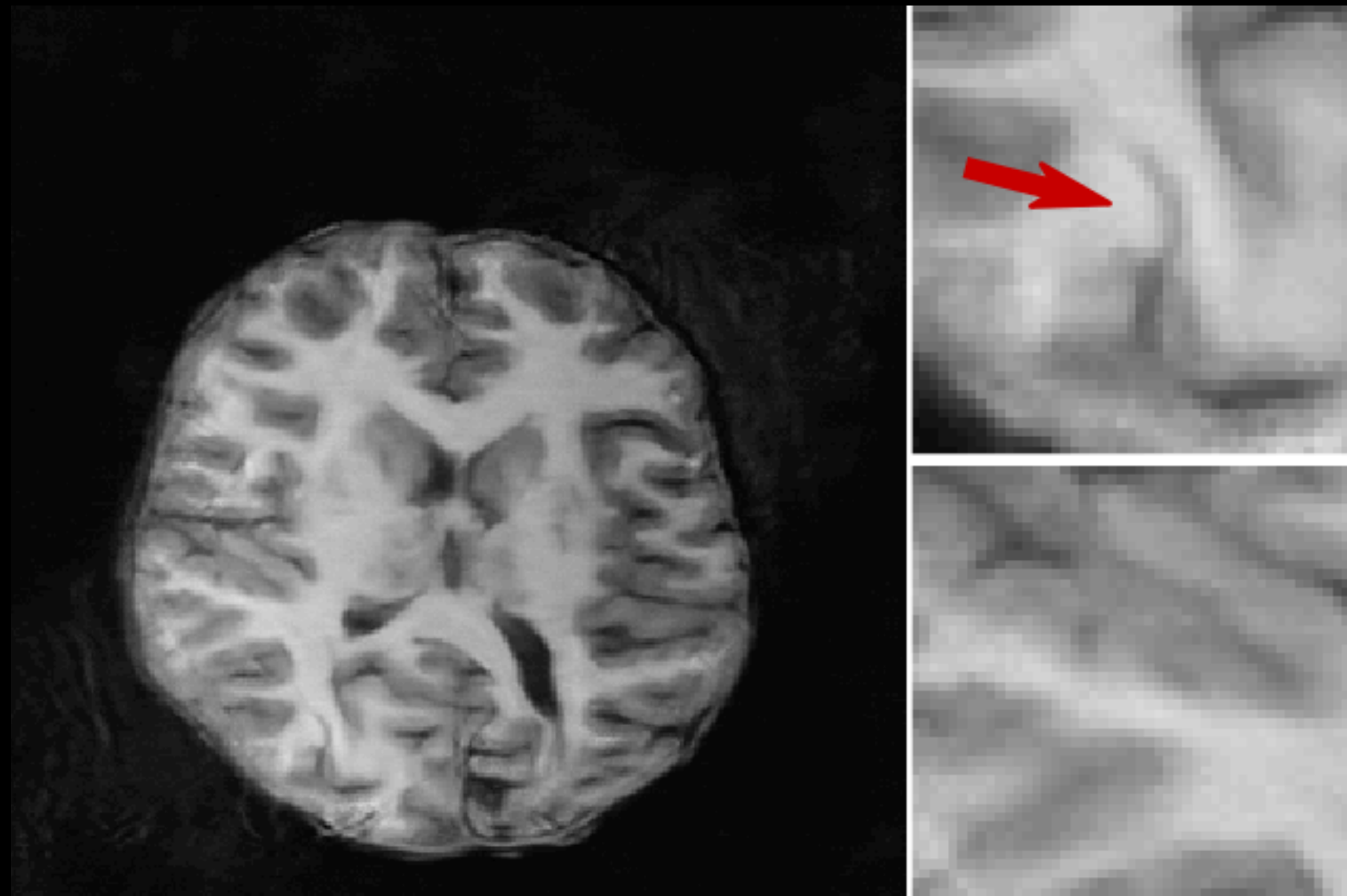


(Figures from: Bhadra et al., IEEE TMI 2021)

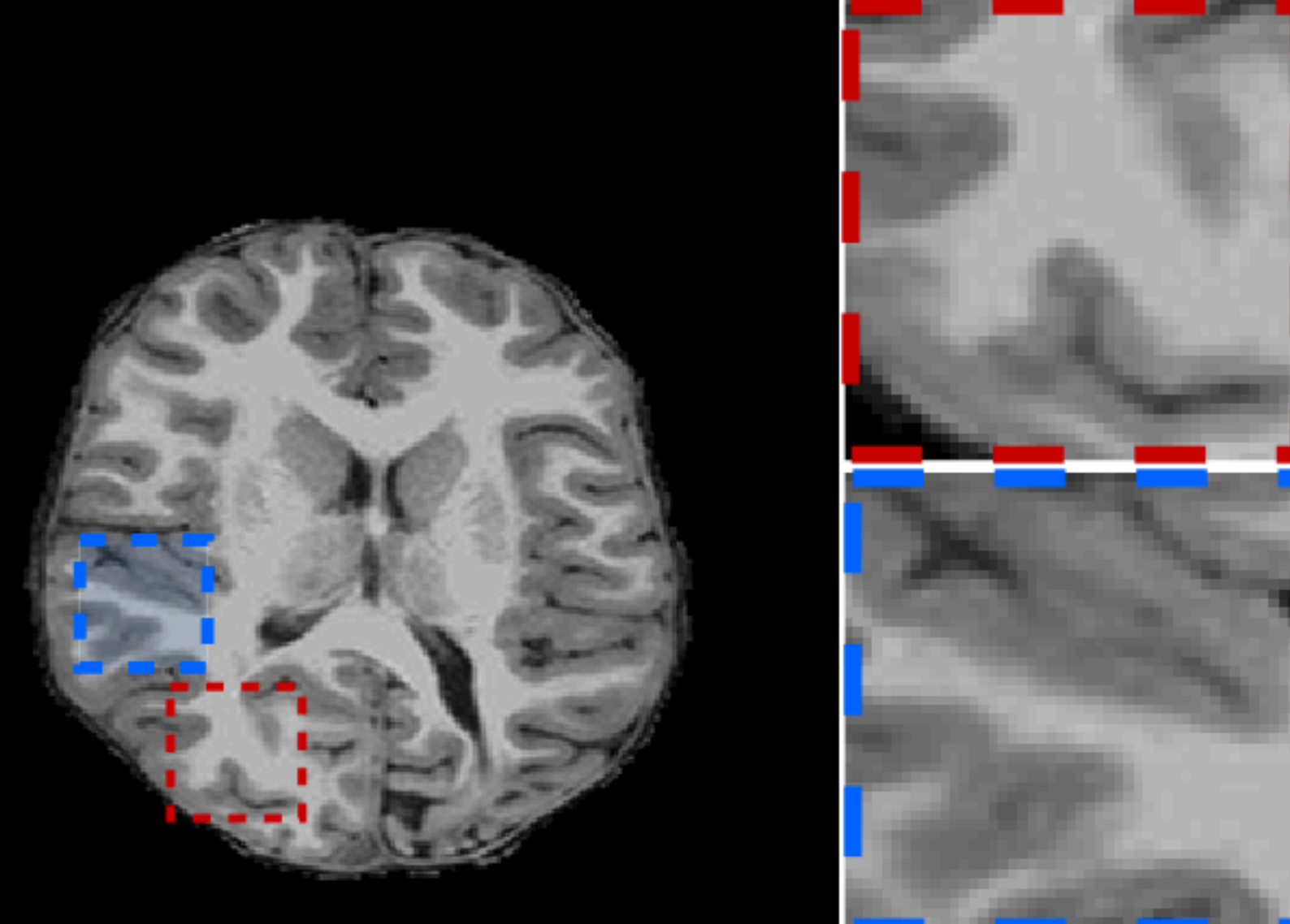
Hallucinations

- Hallucinations (remove essential features or adding unrealistic features) can have serious implications for clinical decisions.
- Can you spot the hallucination?

This is a DL reconstructed image



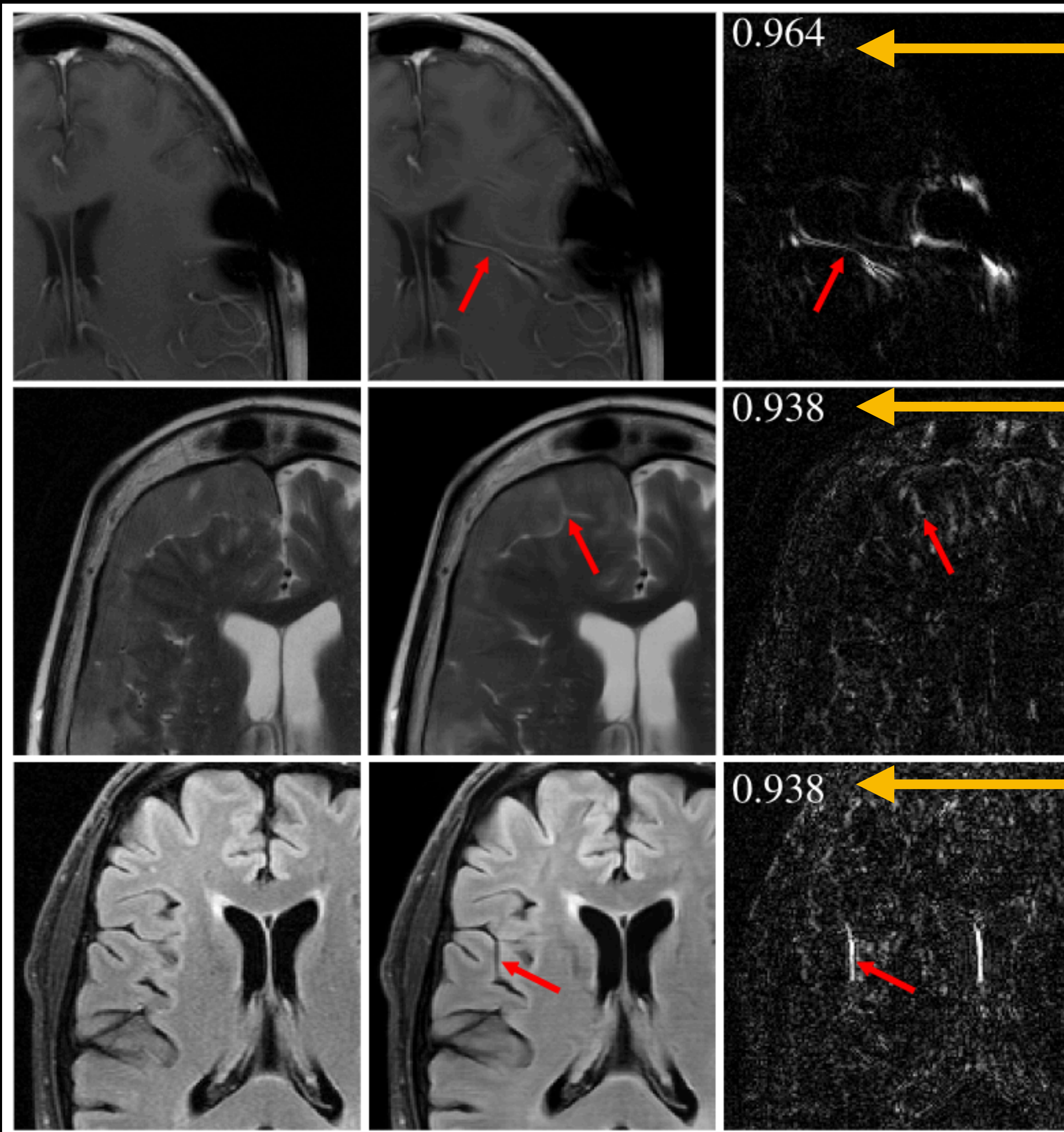
Reference image



(Figures from: Bhadra et al., IEEE TMI 2021)

Hallucinations

Reference DL recon Difference



Generating a false vessel

Generating bright signal mimicking a cleft of cerebrospinal fluid

Generating a false sulcus or prominent vessel

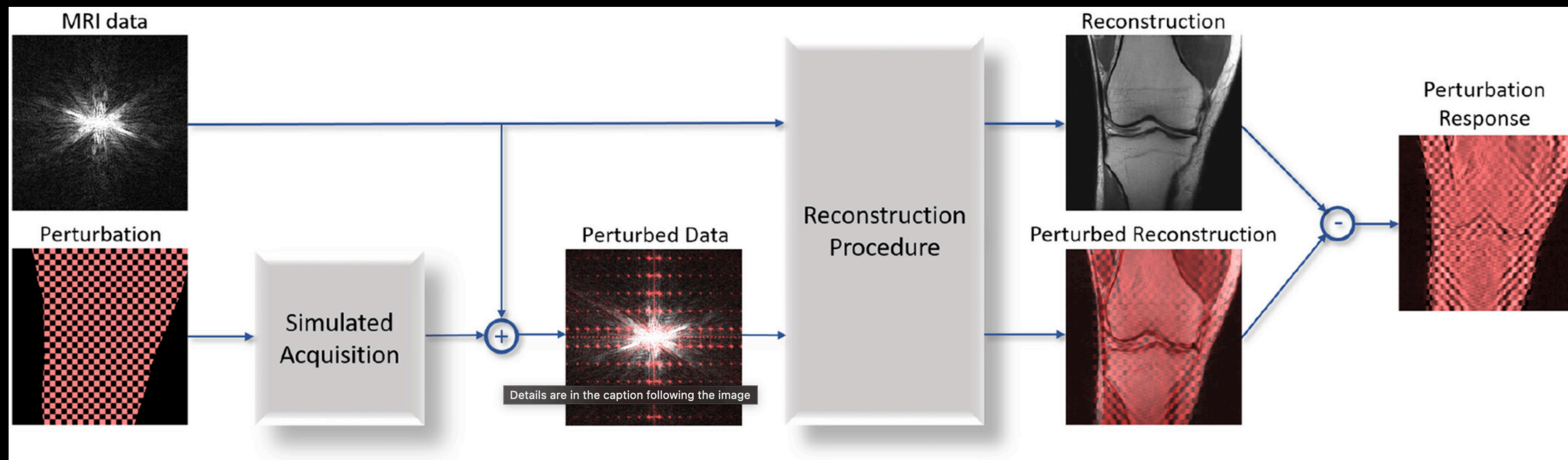
SSIM scores are relatively high. But it does not mean there is no hallucination.

These three examples are from top-performing models in 2020 fastMRI reconstruction challenge.

(Figures from: Muckley et al., IEEE TMI 2021)

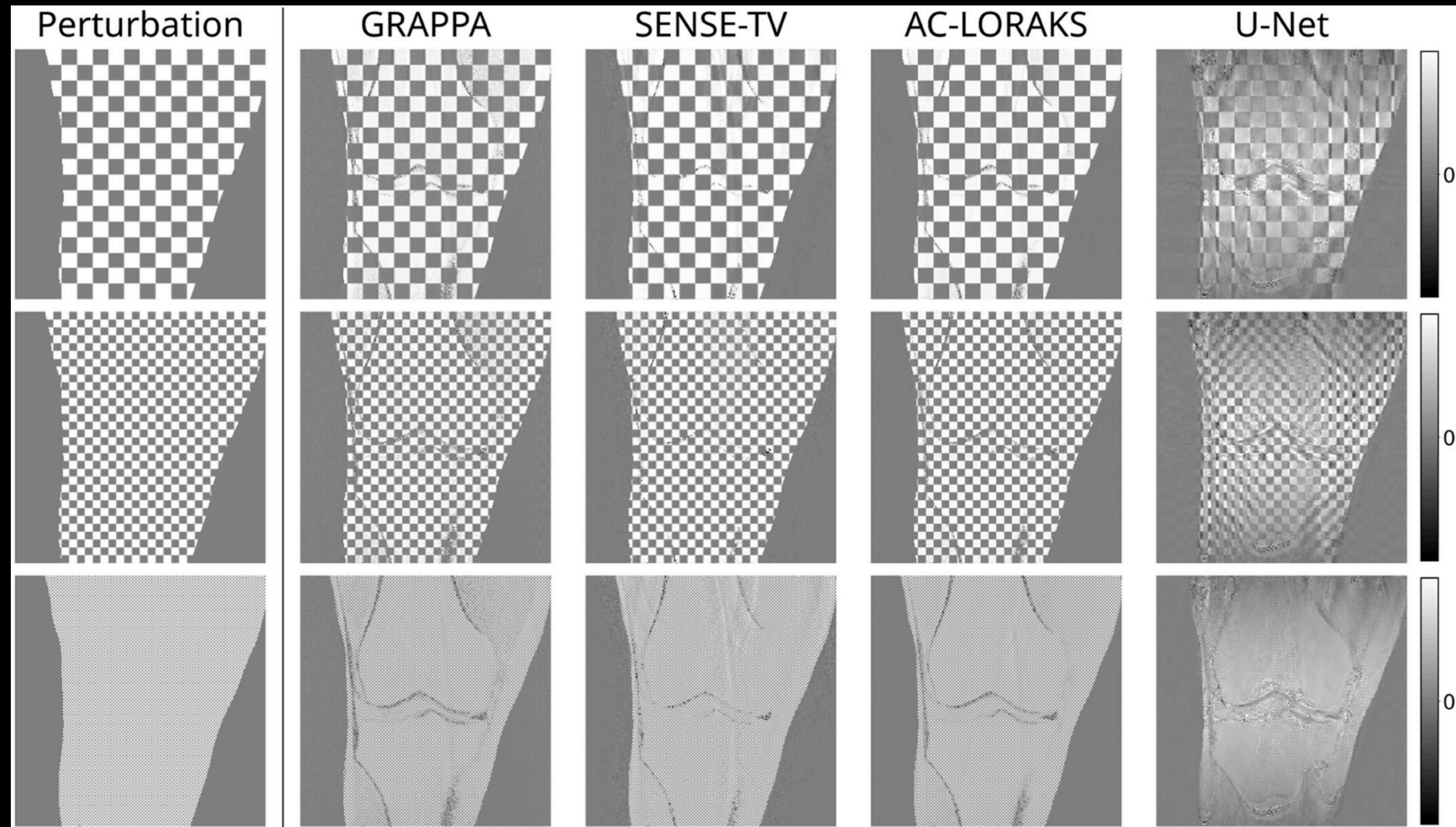
Can we reduce the occurrence of hallucinations?

- This effect may be reduced through training with a large datasets and better training strategies.
- Furthermore, we can perform “perturbation analysis” to investigate how a trained network model distorts the images.



(Figures from: Chang et al., MRM 2021)

Perturbation analysis



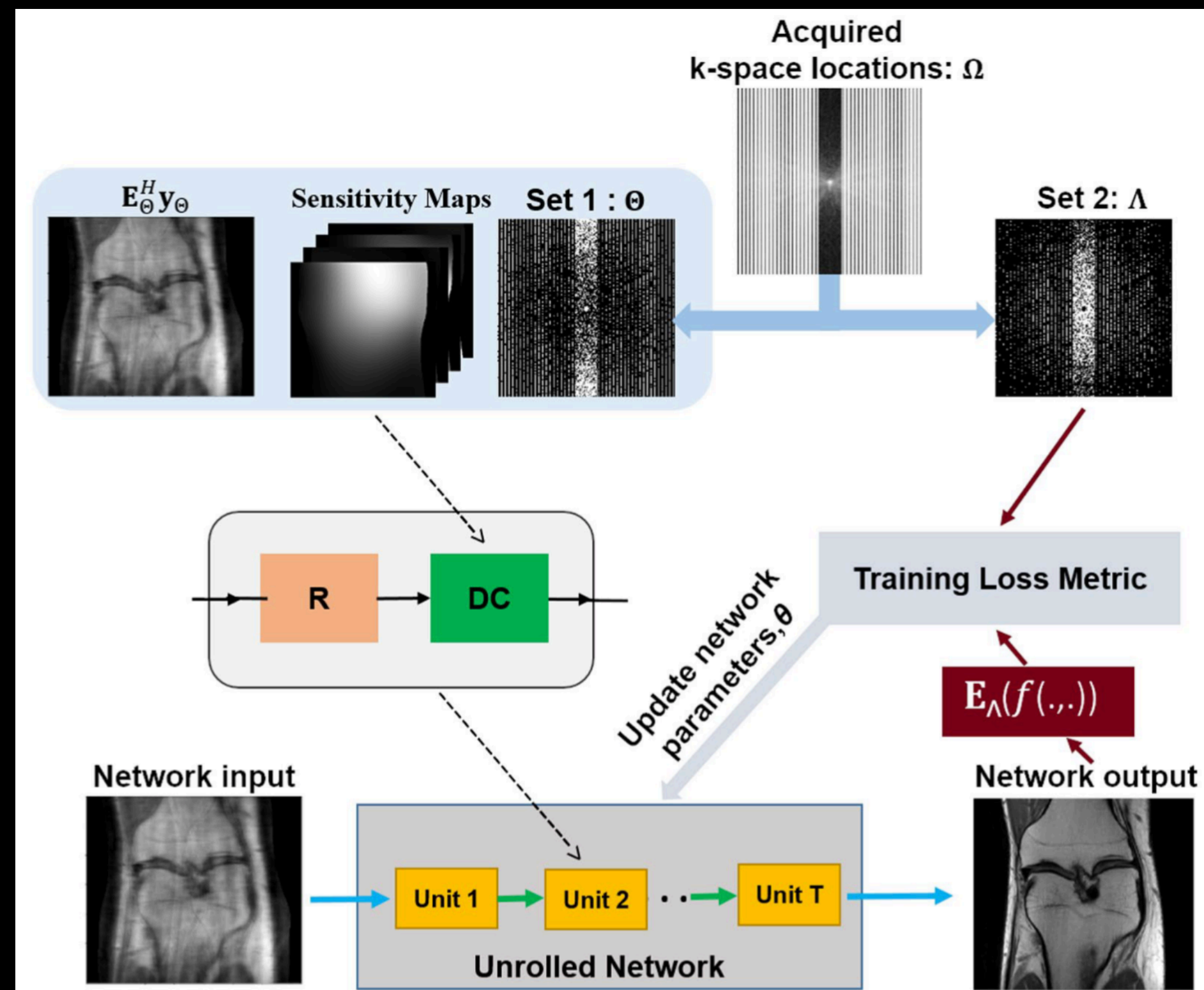
(Figures from: Chang et al., MRM 2021)

Scenarios when reference data not available

- Fully-sampled high-quality MRI data are not always available because of limitations on MRI physics.
 - For example:
 - (1) High temporal resolution cardiac cine images
 - (2) High SNR, high resolution 3D images
 - (3) Liver imaging but the acquisition time is far beyond one breath-hold

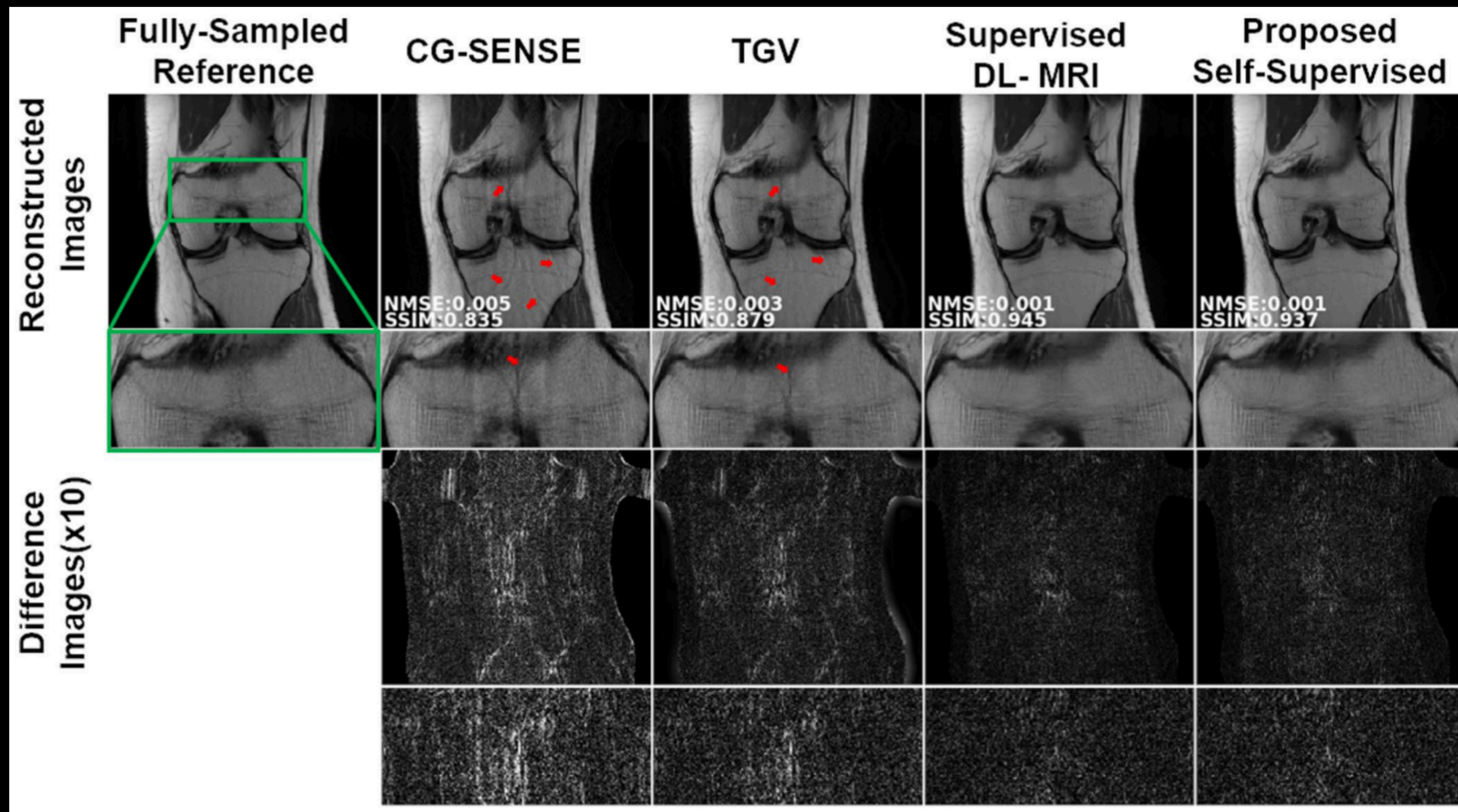
Self-supervised training with limited data

- Self-supervised physics-guided reconstruction¹
 - Deep learning reconstruction without fully-sampled reference dataset
 - Acquired k-space was split into 2 disjoint sets for self-supervision during training.



Self-supervised training with limited data

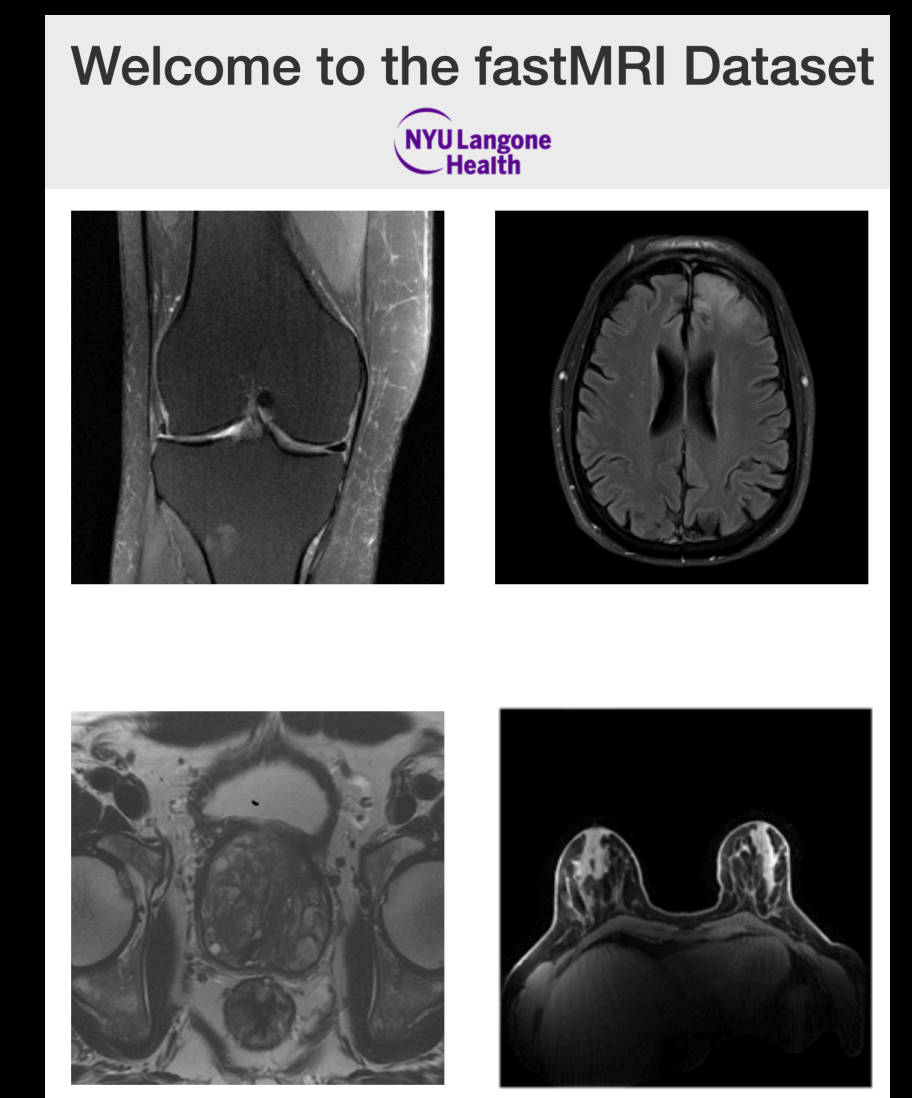
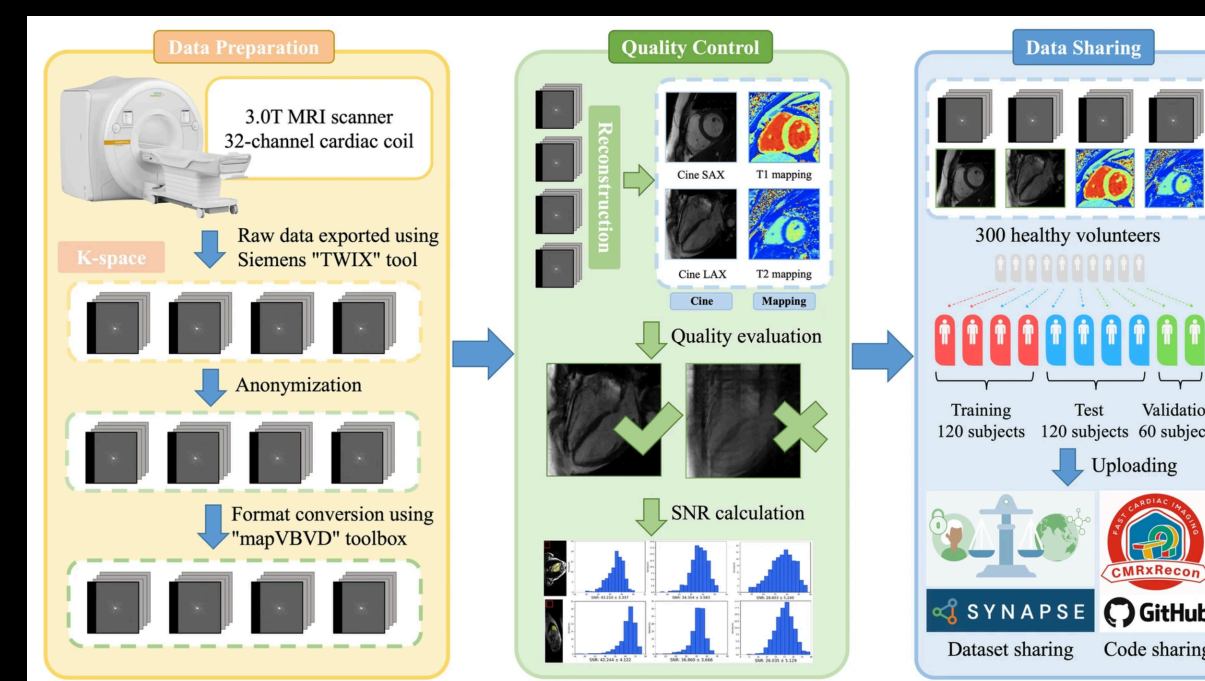
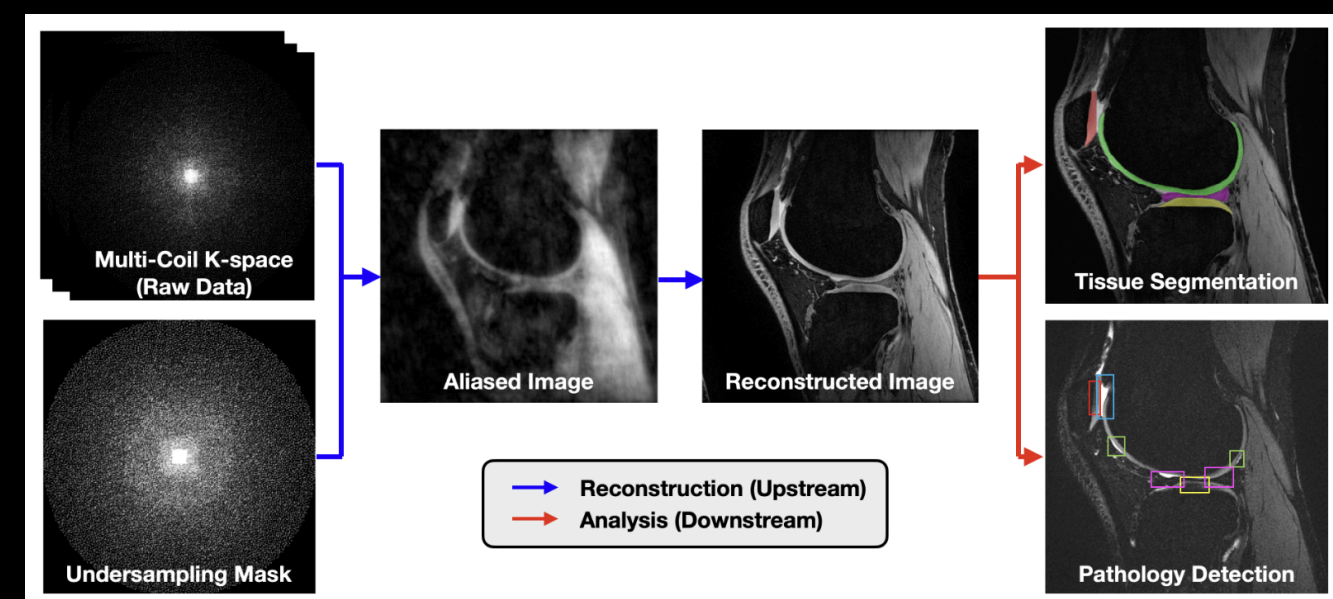
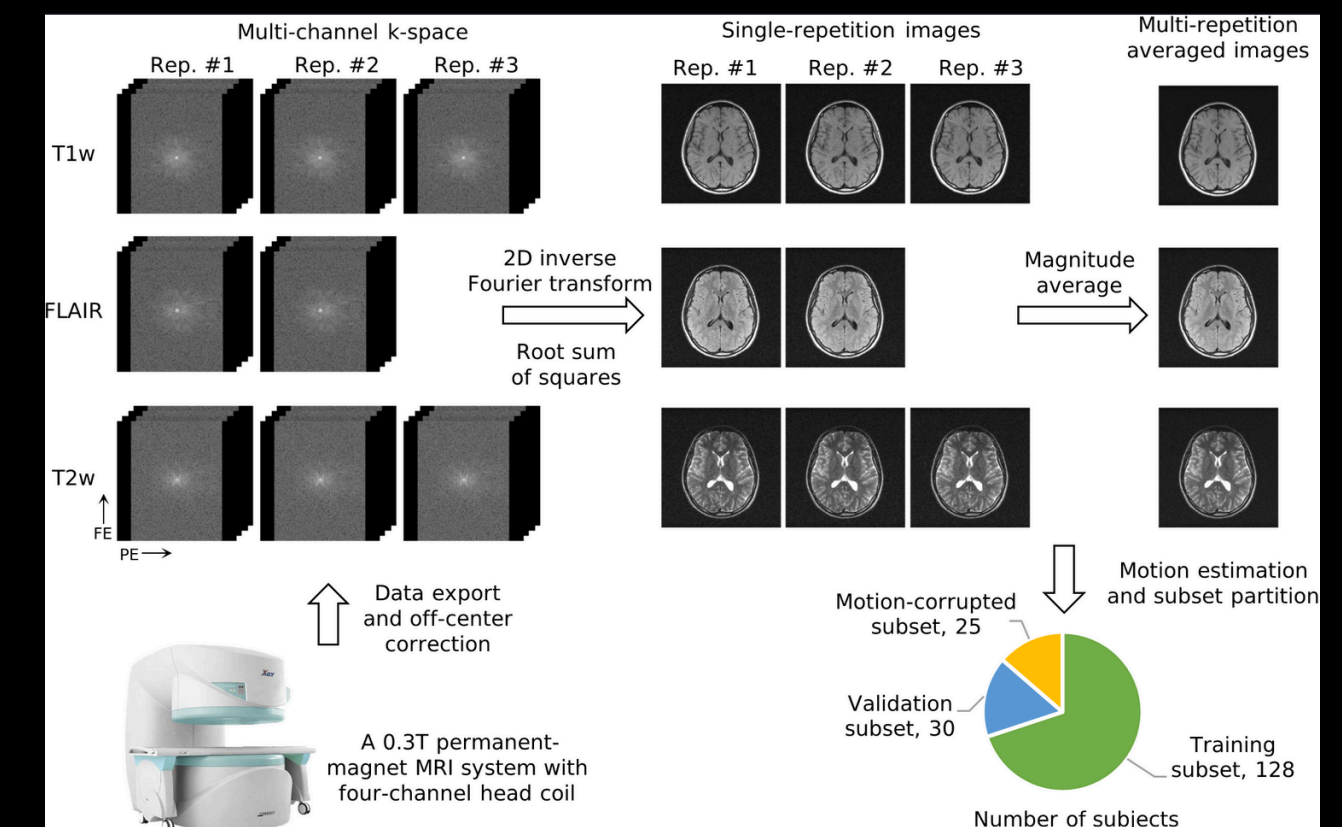
- Image from self-supervised learning show similar performance compared to the supervised method.



(Figure from: Yaman et al., MRM 2020)

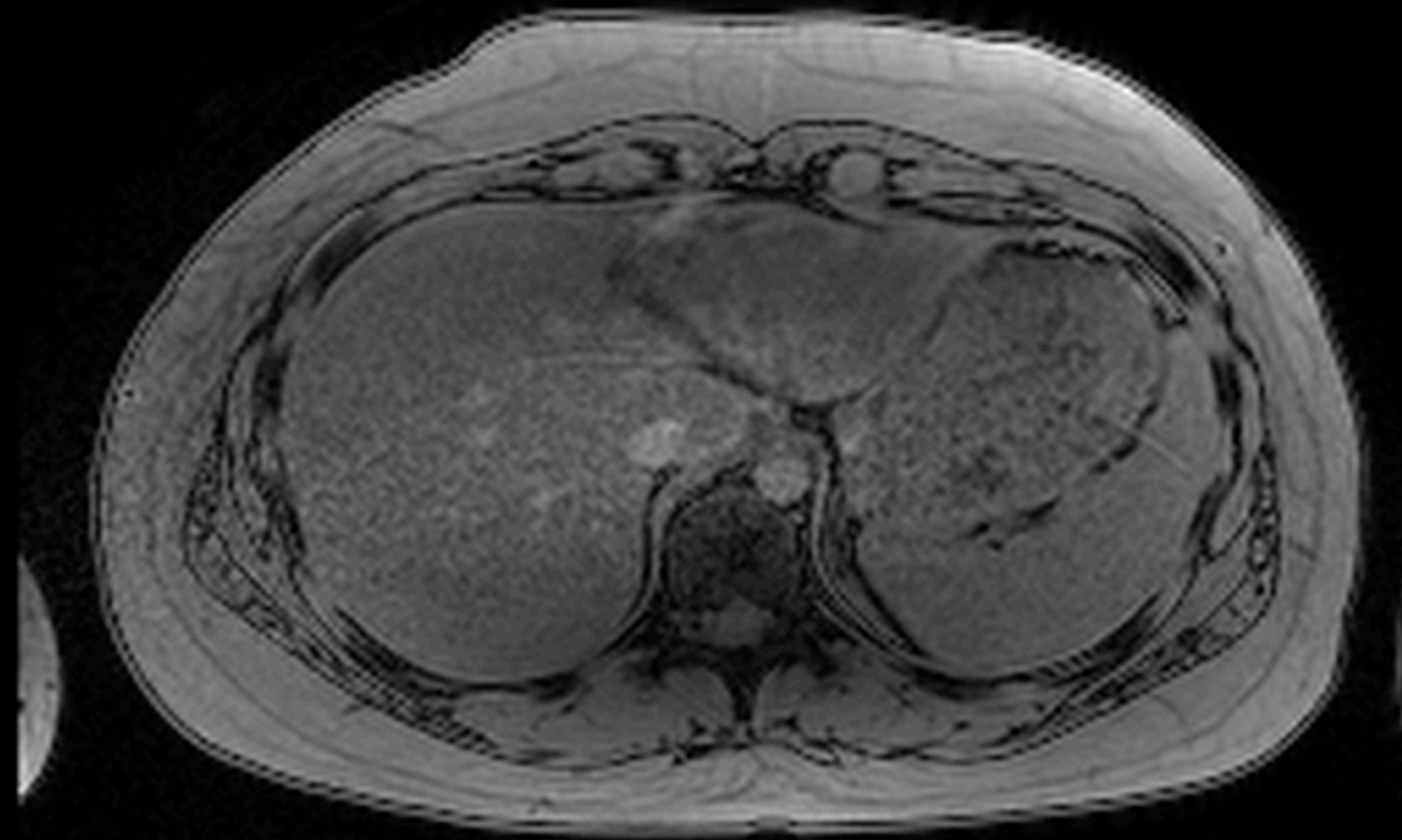
Publicly available MRI k-space datasets

- fastMRI (<https://github.com/facebookresearch/fastMRI>)
 - Knee, brain, prostate and breast MRI
- SKM-TEA (<https://github.com/StanfordMIMI/skm-tea>)
 - Quantitative knee MRI with tissue segmentation
- M4Raw (<https://github.com/mylyu/M4Raw>)
 - Multi-contrast multi-repetition 0.3 T brain MRI
- CMRxRecon (<https://github.com/CmrXRecon/CMRxRecon-SciData>)
 - Cardiac Cine MRI and cardiac quantitative MRI



“Failure mode” of MRI reconstruction

- Below image is reconstructed using parallel imaging...where are the artifacts?



“Failure mode” of MRI reconstruction

- Below image is reconstructed using parallel imaging...where are the artifacts?

Duplicate copies (motion artifacts)



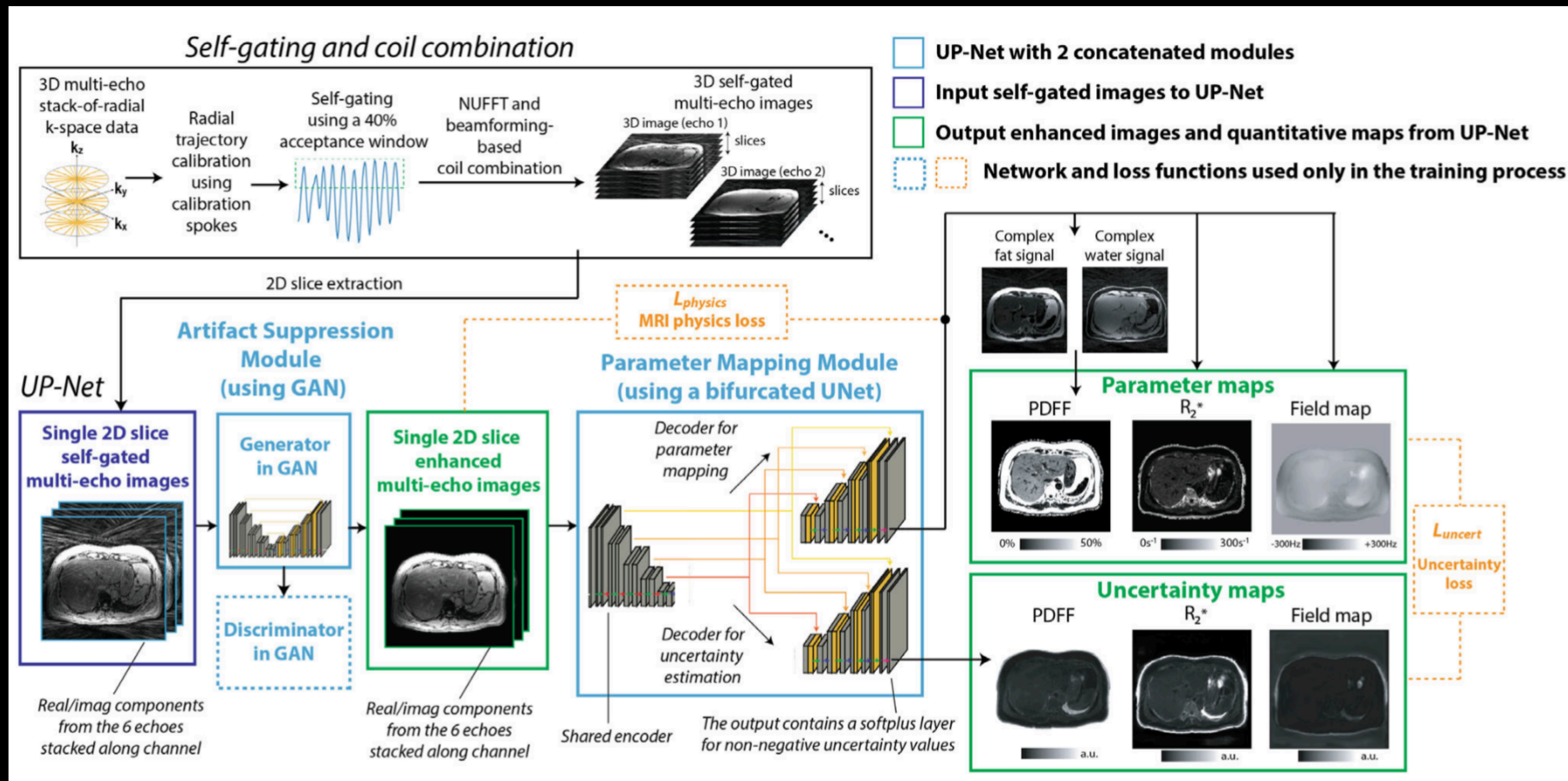
Noise amplification (parallel imaging artifacts)

Failure mode of DL recon is not always clear

- “Failure mode” of parallel imaging techniques, such as noise amplification, is pretty well-known. Radiologists may “read through” those artifacts.
- However, when and how DL recon can fail is not clearly known...

Uncertainty quantification in DL MRI reconstruction

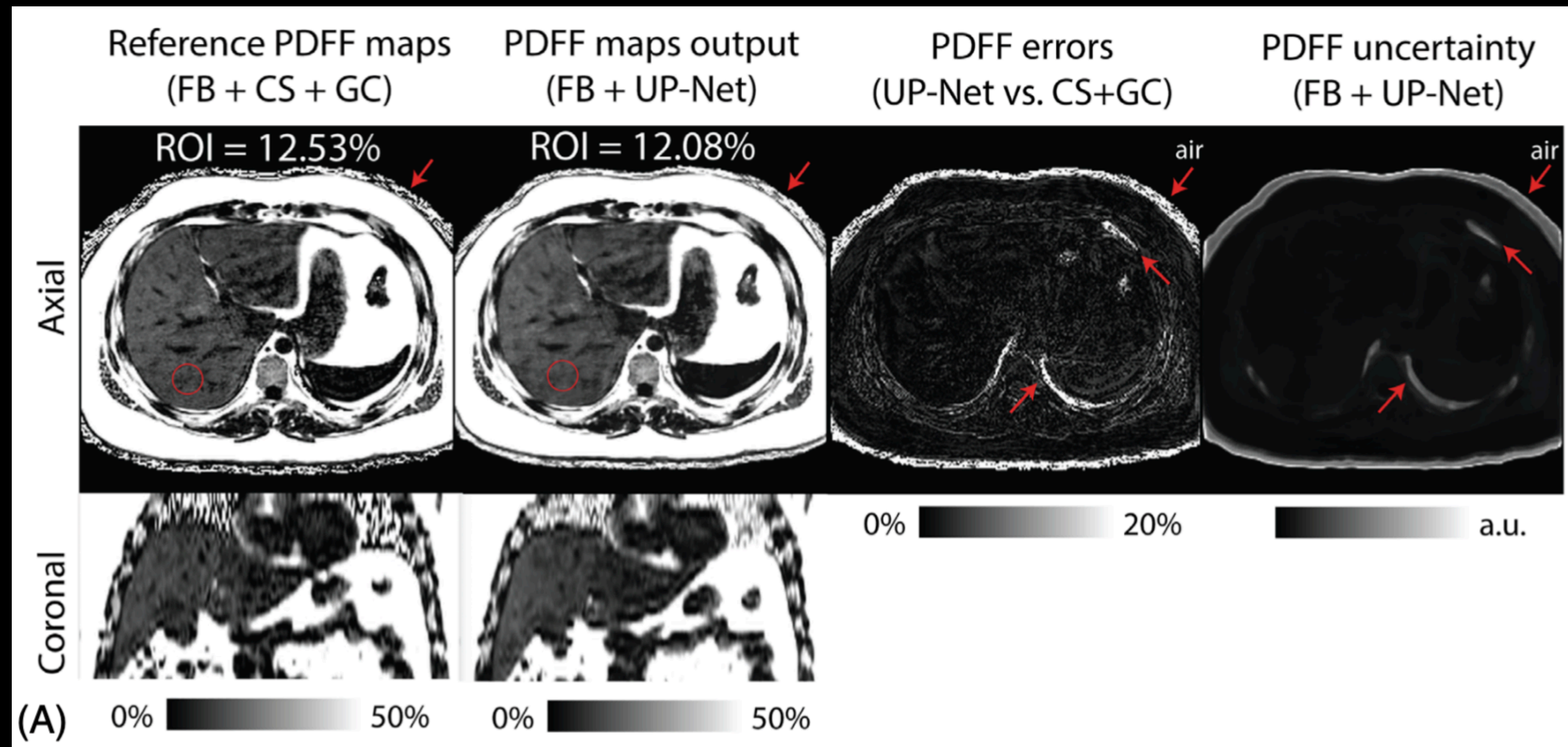
- UP-Net (Uncertainty-aware Physics-driven deep learning network)
 - Uncertainty information incorporated into deep learning-based artifact suppression and parameter mapping



$$L_{uncert} = \frac{\|\hat{p} - p\|_1}{\hat{u}} + \log(\hat{u}).$$

UP-Net

- Additional uncertainty map provided by the deep learning network can be used to estimate errors in the deep learning results



Part 5: Deep learning MRI applications beyond reconstruction

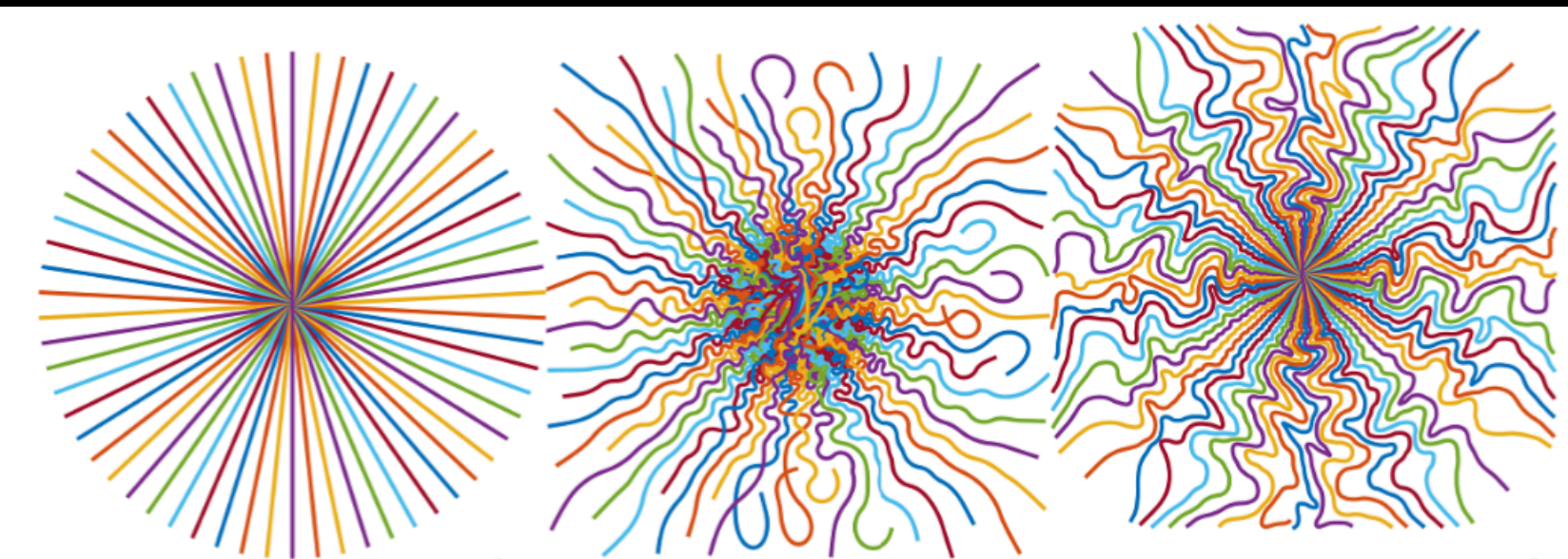
DL MRI applications beyond reconstruction

- There are many applications where deep learning can be a helpful tool
 - (1) MRI trajectory design
 - (2) Automatic image plane prescription
 - (3) Motion vector field estimation
 - (4) Combination of reconstruction and downstream tasks (segmentation, classification)
 - ... and much more

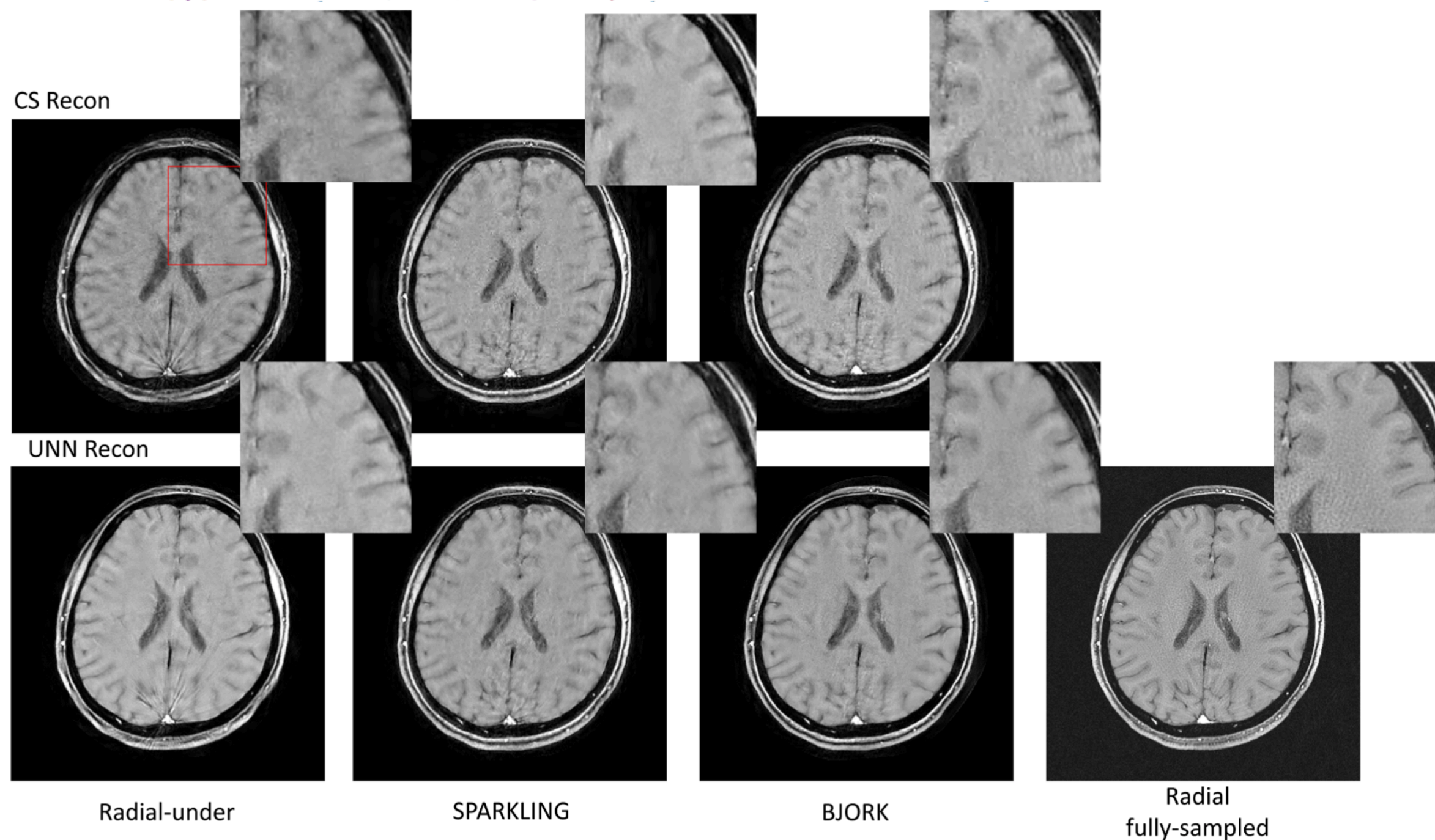
MRI trajectory design

- Deep learning can help design or uncover new sampling trajectories with improved efficiency or reduced artifacts¹.

Radial MRI and
learned trajectory



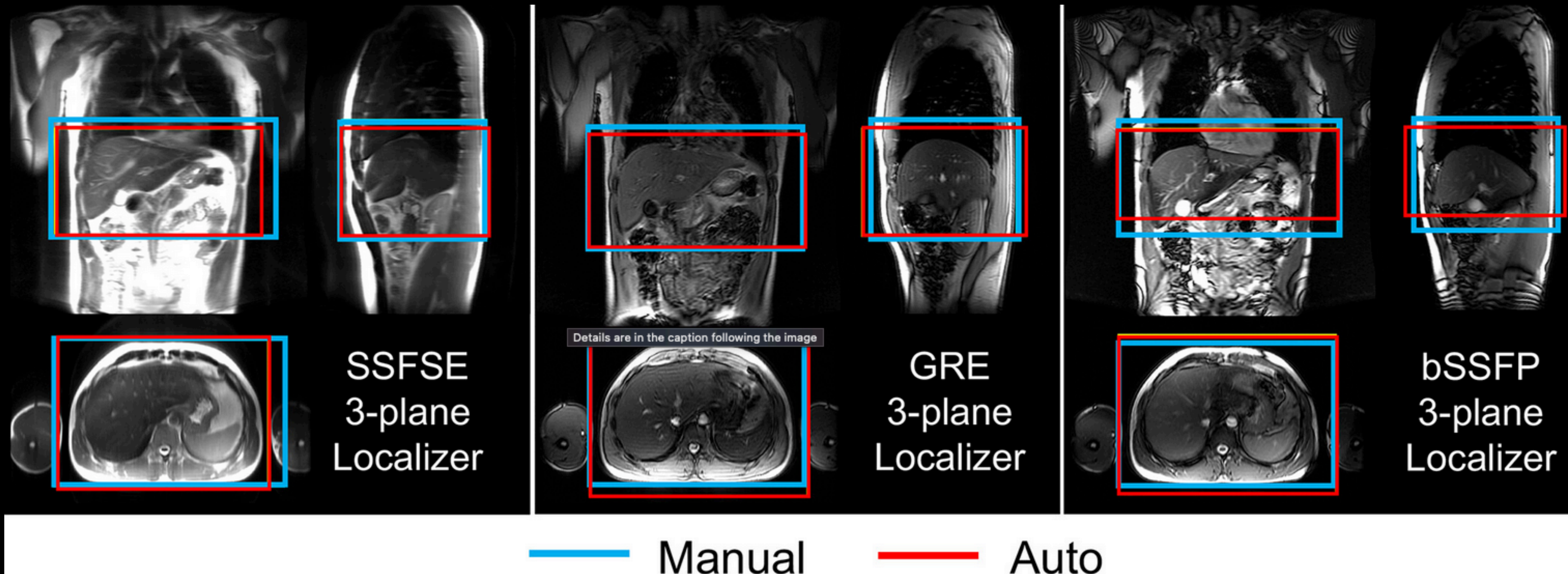
CS reconstruction



DL reconstruction

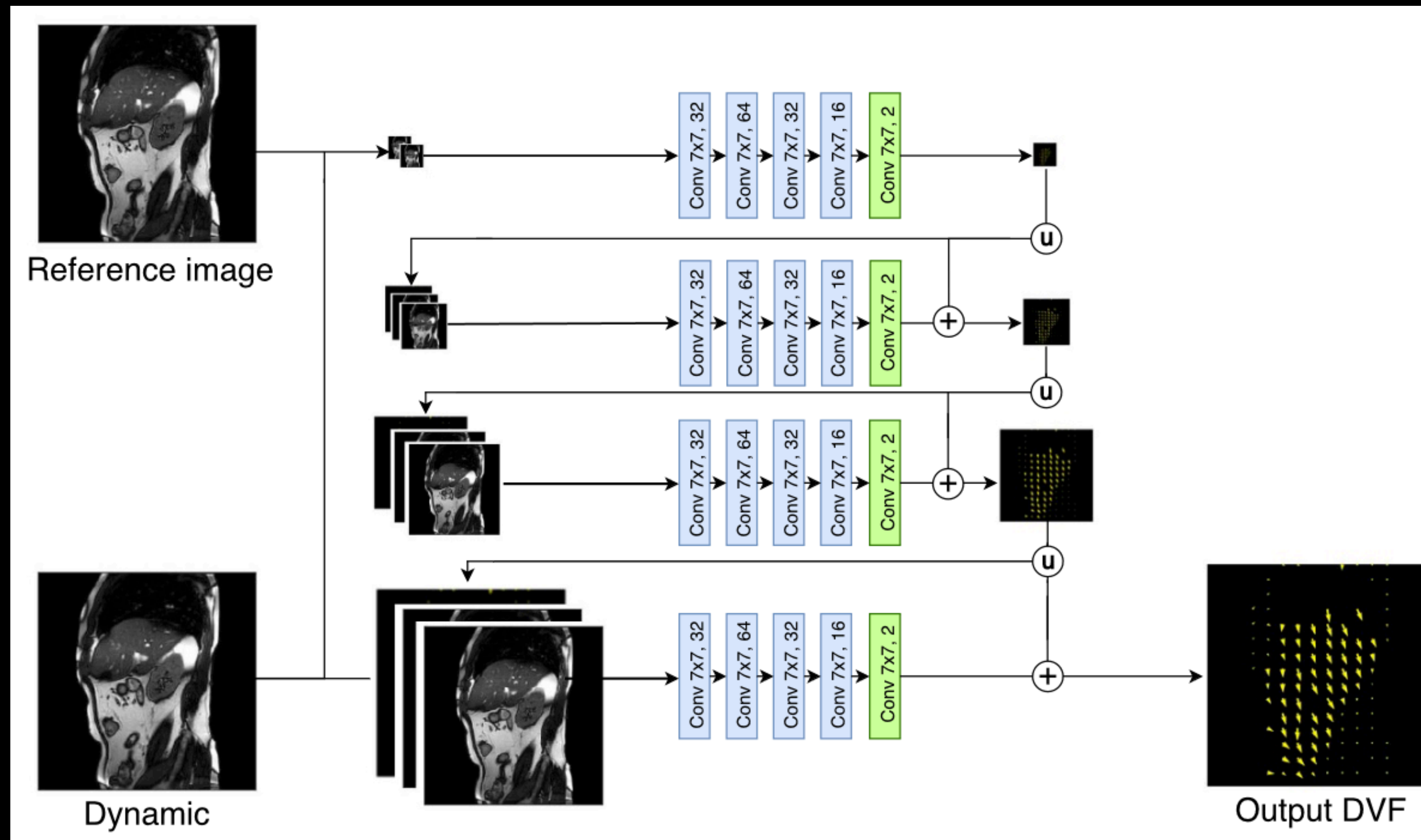
Automatic image plane prescription

- Use deep learning to help automatic selection of imaging plane for improved efficiency¹.



Motion vector field estimation

- Deep learning can help estimation motion fields between images from different motion states¹.



Part 6: Discussion

Commercial DL recon products

- Major MRI vendors have started to provide deep learning reconstruction products that can reduce scan time or reduce image noise.
- The products may still be limited to certain sequences or body parts.

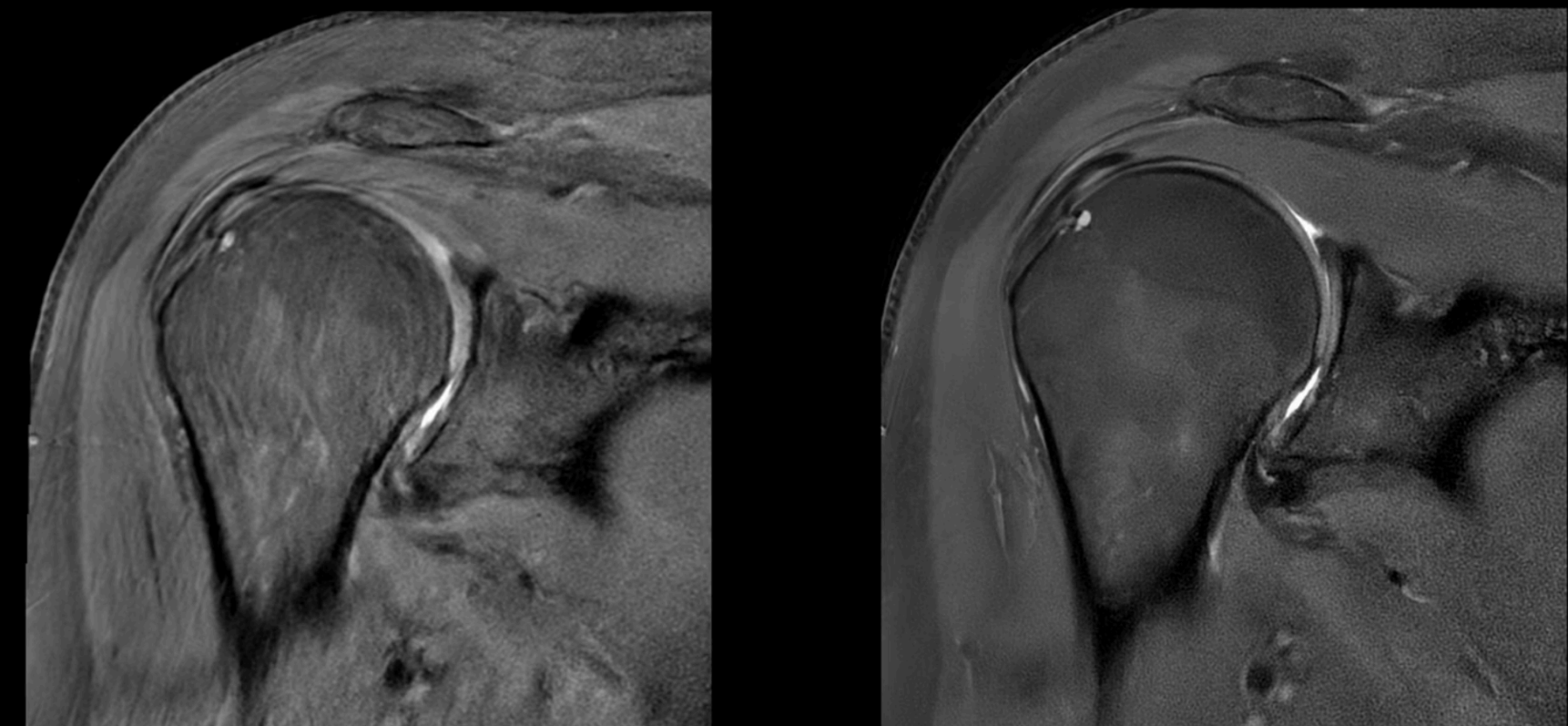
Siemens - Deep Resolve



Conventional
MAGNETOM Vida
PAT 1, TA 2:12 min
28 slices, 0.4x0.4x4.0 mm³

Deep Resolve
MAGNETOM Vida
PAT 4, TA 0:36 min
28 slices, 0.2x0.2x4.0 mm³

GE - AIR Recon DL

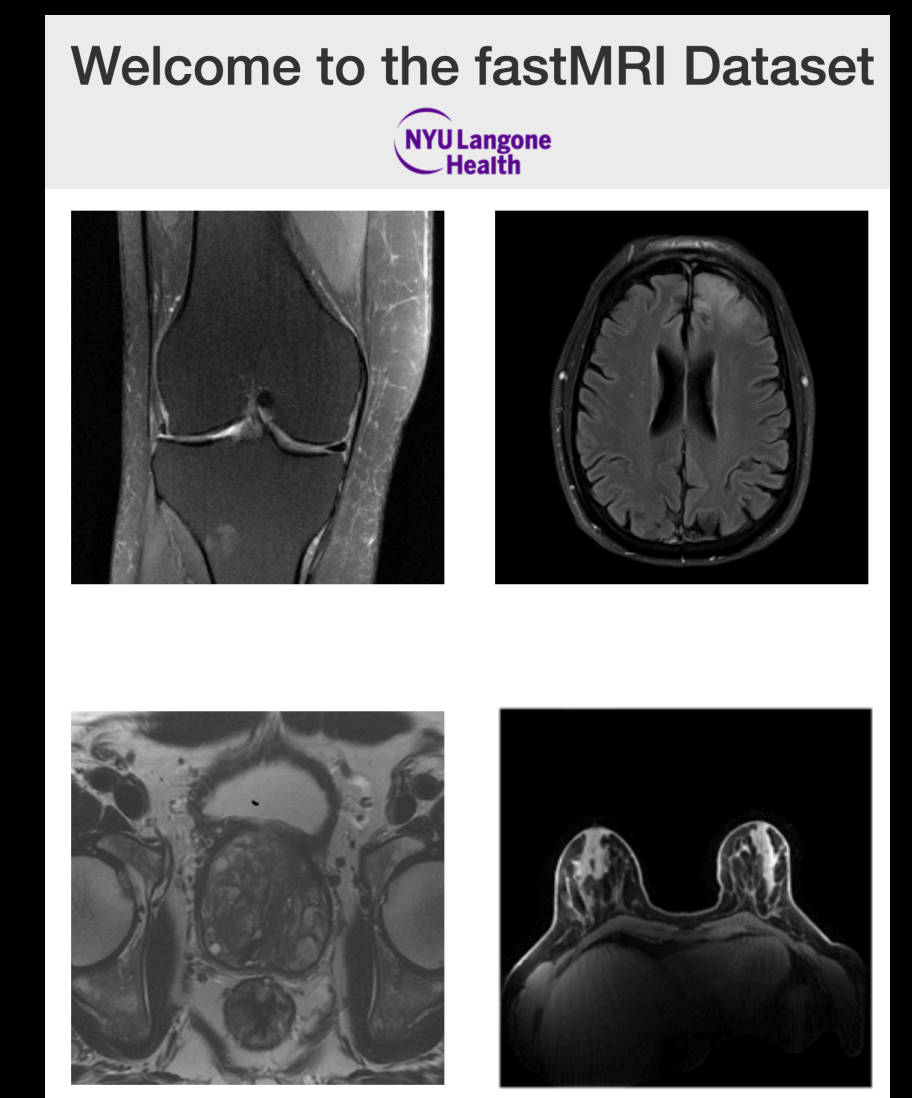
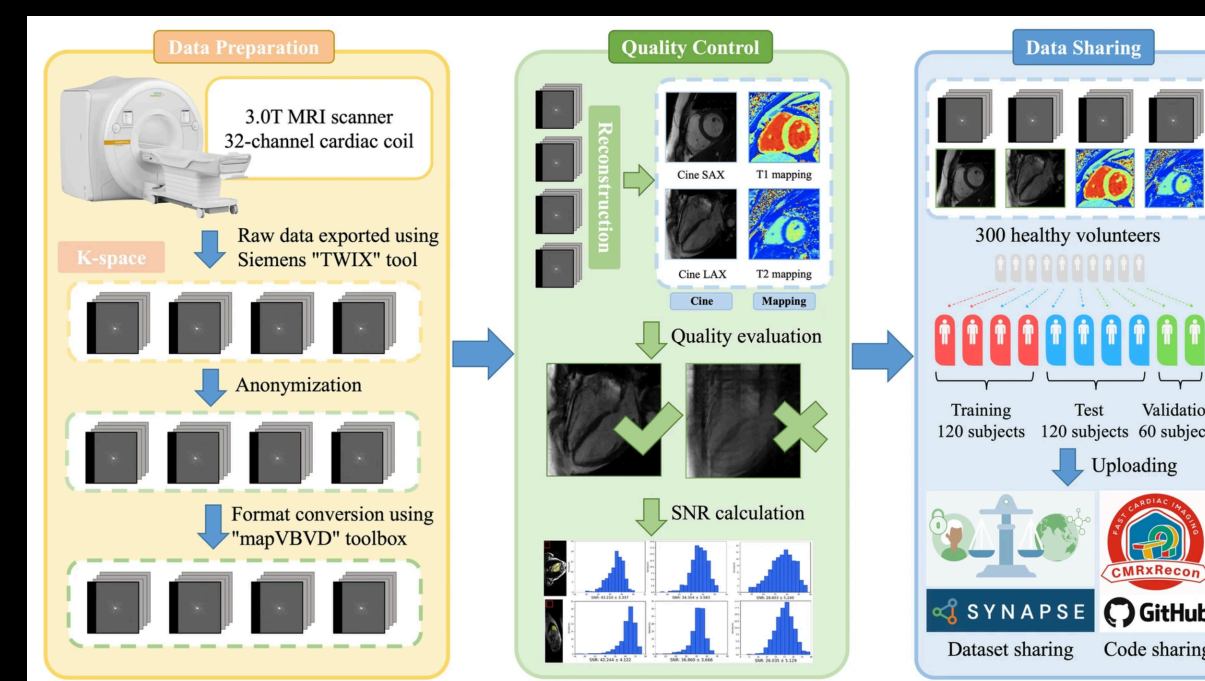
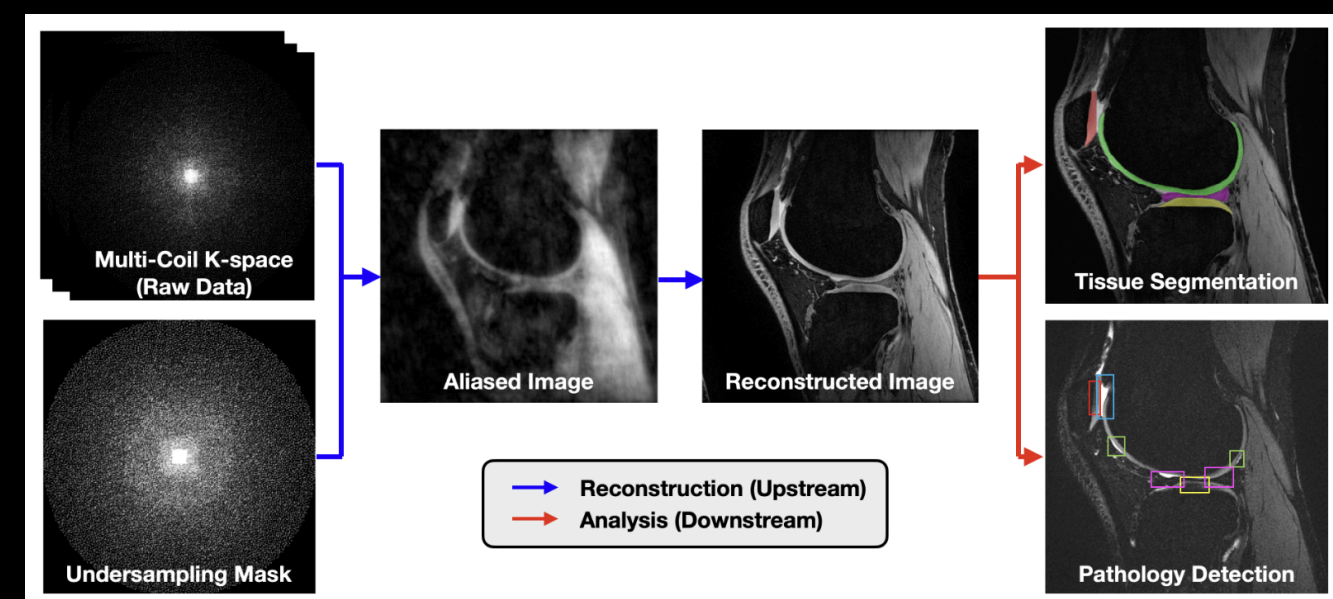
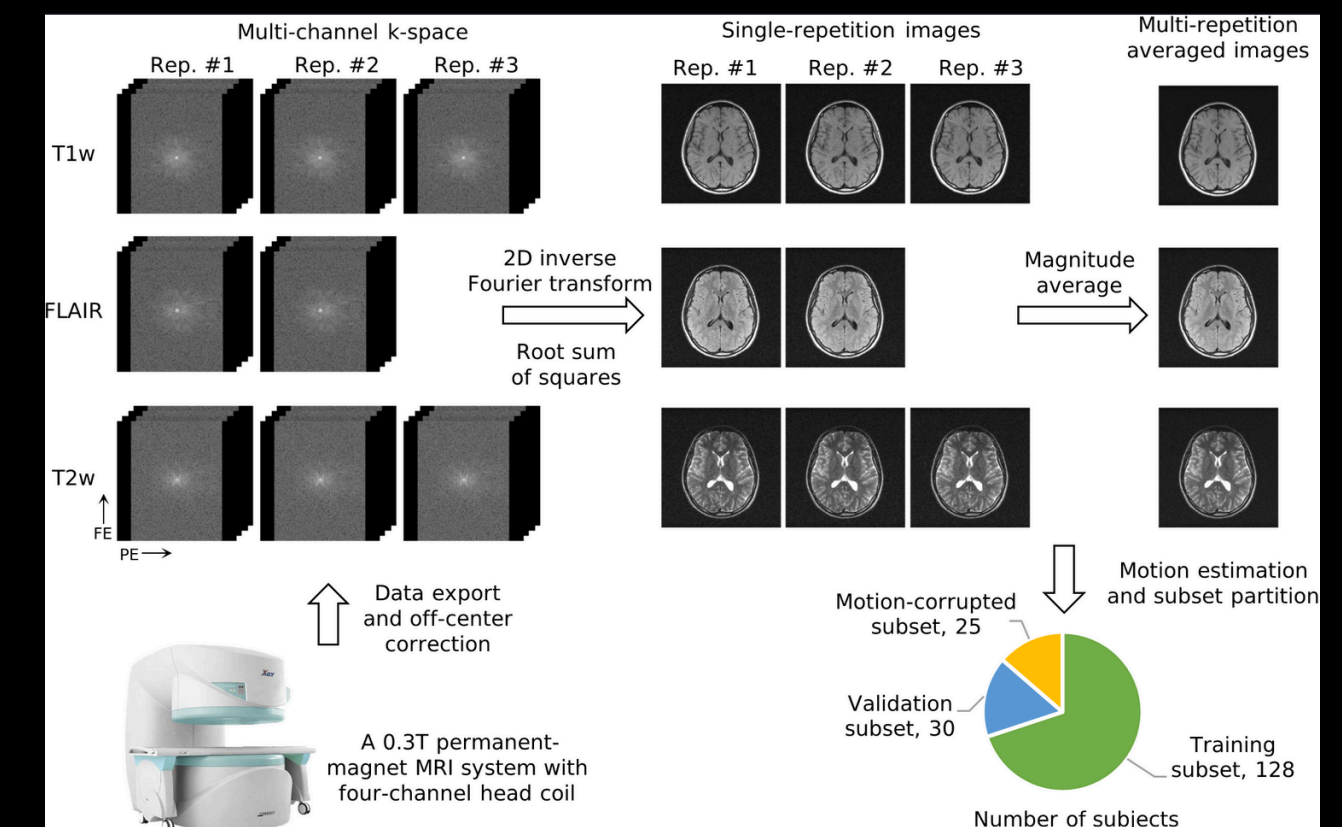


Left: Conventional
Coronal PD FatSat FSE,
0.3 x 0.4 x 3 mm, 2:13 min.

Right: AIR™ Recon DL
Coronal PD FatSat PROPELLER
0.3 x 0.3 x 3 mm, 2:57 min.

Publicly available k-space datasets

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- SKM-TEA (<https://github.com/StanfordMIMI/skm-tea>)
 - Quantitative knee MRI with tissue segmentation
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 - Cardiac Cine MRI and cardiac quantitative MRI



Remaining challenges

- There are many opportunities, but there are also many open questions.
- What are the remaining challenges for deep learning-based MRI reconstruction?
 - Let's ask ChatGPT...

What are the remaining challenges for deep learning-based MRI reconstruction?



Remaining challenges

- Limitations of deep learning-based MRI reconstruction
 - Insufficient training data
 - Even though there are more public large datasets in recent years, obtaining diverse and representative datasets is still challenging.
 - Lack of interpretability / “Failure mode” not clear
 - The black-box nature of deep learning can be problematic for clinical acceptance and trust.
 - Uncertainty quantification or theory to explain deep learning are being investigated
 - Generalization to different acquisition parameters
 - Potential solution would be including large datasets with all different acquisition parameters or including sequence parameters as inputs.
 - Computational complexity
 - The hardware keeps advancing and it can still be expensive.

If you want to do DL MRI reconstruction...

- Focus on the problem you want to solve (*to improve image quality? to allow higher undersampling factors? to train without fully-sampled data?...*).
- Have a good understanding on the deep learning tools you have. Choose or develop methods or architectures that can solve the problem.
- Understand your data and be aware of the MRI signal model and the acquisition process. There can be constraints or there can be some prior information to utilize.
- Don't get lost in numbers! Don't forget the clinical problem.

Thanks!

- To provide feedback for the lectures:



Questions?

Contact: Shu-Fu Shih

Email: sshih@mednet.ucla.edu