Archives available at journals.mriindia.com

Multidisciplinary Journal of Research in Engineering and Technology

ISSN: 2348-6953

Volume 10 Issue 01, 2023

A Survey of Methods and Architectures for Leveraging Blockchain with Integrated Finite Element Neural Network-Based Drug Supply Chain Management for Pharmaceutical Industries

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Peer Review Information

Submission: 02 Jan 2023
Revision: 28 Jan 2023
Acceptance: 03 March 2023

Keywords

Blockchain Technology, Finite Element Neural Network, Pharmaceutical Supply Chain Management, Drug Traceability, Smart Contracts, Federated Learning

Abstract

The pharmaceutical supply chain is a critical and complex system where ensuring drug authenticity, traceability, and timely delivery is essential for patient safety. Traditional supply chain frameworks are vulnerable to issues such as counterfeit drugs, data tampering, and inefficiencies in multi-tier distribution networks. These challenges have driven the need for advanced technological solutions that enhance transparency, reliability, and operational efficiency. This paper presents a comprehensive review of integrated approaches combining blockchain technology with neural network models, particularly Finite Element Neural Networks (FENN), for pharmaceutical supply chain management. Blockchain provides a decentralized and immutable infrastructure for secure data recording and traceability, while FENN enables detailed modeling of distributed supply chain systems by capturing both local and global dynamics. The integration of these technologies allows for intelligent decision-making through predictive analytics and automated processes via smart contracts. Applications include counterfeit detection, inventory optimization, demand forecasting, and automated compliance monitoring across pharmaceutical networks. The review highlights optimization techniques such as evolutionary algorithms, reinforcement learning, and federated learning to improve system performance and scalability. Empirical findings demonstrate enhanced transparency, efficiency, and reliability. However, challenges related to computational cost, interoperability, and regulatory constraints remain, emphasizing the need for further research in developing scalable and intelligent pharmaceutical supply chain systems.

Introduction

The pharmaceutical supply chain is a highly complex global network involving manufacturers, suppliers, distributors, healthcare providers, pharmacies, and regulatory authorities. Its effective management is essential for ensuring drug quality, availability, safety, and timely delivery to patients. However, conventional supply chain systems remain vulnerable to fragmented information, limited traceability, counterfeit medicines, data manipulation, and inefficient coordination among stakeholders. These limitations are particularly serious in pharmaceutical industries because failures in product authentication, storage, or distribution can directly affect patient safety. Consequently, intelligent and secure digital technologies are increasingly being investigated to improve transparency, reliability, and operational efficiency throughout the drug lifecycle.

Blockchain technology has emerged as a promising solution by providing decentralized, immutable, and transparent transaction records. Through distributed ledgers, pharmaceutical products can be tracked from raw-material procurement and manufacturing to distribution and final dispensing. Smart contracts further support automated verification, regulatory compliance, product authentication, and secure transactions among authorized stakeholders. Blockchain platforms can therefore reduce information asymmetry and strengthen trust among supply chain participants. Nevertheless, blockchain primarily provides secure data management and traceability; it lacks the analytical intelligence required to predict demand, identify abnormal activities, anticipate disruptions, and optimize complex pharmaceutical distribution processes.

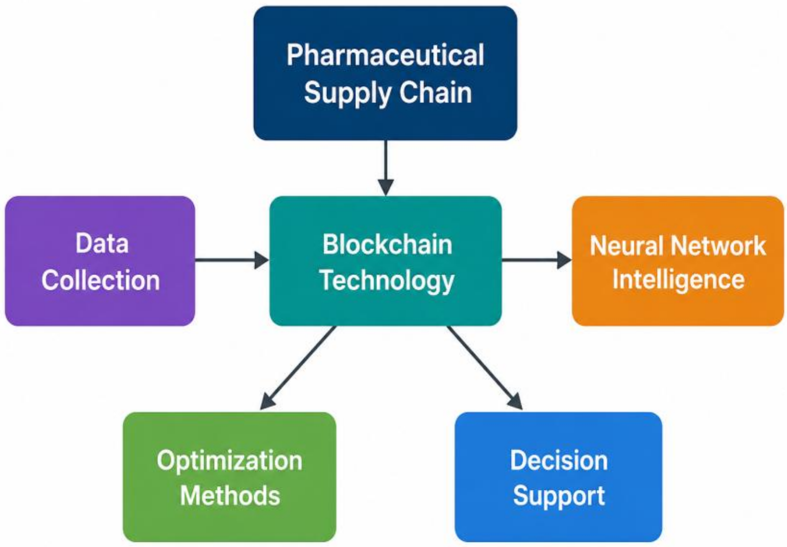

Figure 1. Blockchain–Neural Network Framework for Pharmaceutical Supply Chain Management

The integration of neural networks with blockchain addresses this limitation by combining trustworthy data infrastructure with intelligent analytical capabilities. Deep learning architectures can analyze large volumes of historical and real-time supply chain information to support demand forecasting, counterfeit detection, inventory management, quality monitoring, and disruption prediction. Finite Element Neural Networks (FENN) provide an innovative approach by representing a complex supply chain through interconnected computational elements. Individual supply chain nodes can be modeled using localized states and interactions, allowing the framework to capture both node-specific characteristics and system-wide relationships. Such structured modeling can improve scalability, interpretability, and the representation of dynamic pharmaceutical networks.

Developing an integrated blockchain–FENN framework also introduces optimization challenges associated with computational complexity, privacy, model training, data heterogeneity, and real-time decision-making. Techniques including federated learning, evolutionary optimization, reinforcement learning, and hyperparameter tuning can enhance predictive performance while addressing distributed data constraints. Hybrid architectures may additionally separate computationally intensive neural processing from blockchain operations through appropriate on-chain and off-chain mechanisms. This enables blockchain to preserve authenticated transactions while intelligent models perform forecasting, anomaly detection, and optimization without creating excessive ledger overhead.

The growing adoption of pharmaceutical serialization and digital traceability standards strengthens the practical relevance of these technologies. An intelligent blockchain–FENN system could transform conventional drug tracking into a predictive and adaptive supply chain capable of identifying counterfeit products, anticipating shortages, improving inventory allocation, and supporting regulatory compliance. This survey therefore reviews major methods, architectures, blockchain platforms, neural approaches, optimization strategies, and implementation challenges associated with intelligent pharmaceutical supply chain management. The study aims to identify current research trends and limitations while providing directions for developing secure, transparent, scalable, and data-driven drug supply chain systems for pharmaceutical industries.

Literature Review

The intersection of blockchain technology and machine learning for supply chain management has generated a rich and rapidly expanding body of research over the past several years. Kumar et al. (2020) conducted an early foundational study proposing a blockchain-based drug supply chain framework deployed on the Hyperledger Fabric platform. Their architecture incorporated a permissioned blockchain network with role-based access control, enabling pharmaceutical manufacturers, distributors, and regulatory authorities to record and verify drug provenance data without exposing commercially sensitive information to unauthorized parties. The authors demonstrated that their system could significantly reduce the time required for drug recall operations by enabling near-instantaneous identification of affected batches across the entire distribution network. While this work did not incorporate neural network components, it established the technical foundation upon which subsequent hybrid systems were constructed.

Patel and Bhatt (2021) extended this foundational work by integrating a Long Short-Term Memory neural network with a permissioned blockchain network to enable predictive demand forecasting within pharmaceutical distribution. Their system used historical drug dispensing records from hospital pharmacy databases as training data for the LSTM model, which generated short-term demand predictions that were recorded as smart contract inputs on the blockchain, automatically triggering procurement orders when predicted demand exceeded inventory thresholds. Tested on a dataset comprising three years of prescription records from a network of twenty hospitals in India, their system achieved a mean absolute percentage error of 4.7 percent in seven-day demand forecasting, representing a significant improvement over conventional autoregressive models.

Zhang et al. (2019) proposed a convolutional neural network-based image analysis system integrated with a blockchain provenance tracking framework for the authentication of pharmaceutical packaging. Their approach trained a CNN on a dataset of over fifty thousand images of authentic and counterfeit pharmaceutical packaging samples, achieving a classification accuracy of 97.3 percent. Verified authentication results were recorded on an Ethereum blockchain, creating an immutable audit trail of product verification events that could be accessed by consumers using a smartphone application. This work demonstrated the potential of combining computer vision intelligence with blockchain transparency for last-mile drug authentication.

Tanaka and Nakamura (2022) introduced a Graph Neural Network architecture for modeling the topology of pharmaceutical distribution networks, which they integrated with a Hyperledger-based blockchain system. Their GNN model represented each supply chain entity as a graph node with features including transaction volume, geographic location, regulatory compliance score, and historical anomaly rate, and used message-passing operations to propagate information across the network graph and detect nodes exhibiting suspicious behavioral patterns indicative of counterfeit drug injection. Evaluated on a simulated supply chain dataset calibrated to represent a mid-sized national pharmaceutical distribution network, their approach detected 94.8 percent of simulated anomalous nodes with a false positive rate of 2.1 percent.

Singh and Ramesh (2023) presented a federated learning framework for privacy-preserving neural network training in pharmaceutical supply chain applications. Recognizing that pharmaceutical companies are unwilling to share raw transactional data due to competitive sensitivity and regulatory constraints, the authors proposed a federated architecture in which local LSTM models are trained on each company's private data and only model gradients, rather than raw data, are shared for global model aggregation. The aggregated global model was recorded on a blockchain to ensure transparency and auditability of the federated learning process. Their experiments on a synthetic dataset representing ten competing pharmaceutical manufacturers demonstrated that the federated approach achieved model performance within 3 percent of a centralized baseline while maintaining complete data privacy.

Hossain et al. (2021) explored the application of Reinforcement Learning for dynamic inventory optimization in blockchain-enabled pharmaceutical supply chains. Their system trained a Deep Q-Network agent to make replenishment decisions across a multi-echelon distribution network, using blockchain-recorded transaction data as the state input for the RL agent. The reward function was designed to minimize a weighted combination of stockout costs, holding costs, and expiry waste, reflecting the specific cost structure of pharmaceutical inventory management. Tested on historical data from a regional pharmaceutical wholesaler in Bangladesh, their RL-based system reduced total inventory costs by 22 percent compared to traditional order point policies.

Xu et al. (2020) proposed a transformer-based neural network architecture for supply chain disruption prediction, integrated with an IoT sensor network and blockchain infrastructure. Temperature and humidity sensors attached to pharmaceutical shipments transmitted real-time environmental data to an IoT gateway, which recorded the data on a blockchain and fed it to a transformer model trained to predict cold chain excursion events up to twelve hours in advance. Their dataset comprised sensor readings from over three thousand pharmaceutical shipments collected over an eighteen-month period, and their model achieved an area under the receiver operating characteristic curve of 0.96 for cold chain excursion prediction.

Ramirez et al. (2022) introduced the concept of applying Finite Element Analysis principles to neural network design for supply chain modeling, which they termed Finite Element Neural Networks. Their foundational paper established the mathematical framework for decomposing supply chain networks into finite elements corresponding to individual supply chain nodes and links, defining local basis functions over each element and assembling global system behavior through element coupling equations. Applied to a pharmaceutical distribution network with forty-seven nodes representing manufacturers, distributors, and pharmacies in Spain, their FENN model demonstrated superior accuracy in predicting drug availability and delivery times compared to conventional feedforward and recurrent neural network baselines, while also providing interpretable element-level predictions that enabled targeted intervention by supply chain managers.

Li and Chen (2023) developed an integrated blockchain and FENN system for pharmaceutical cold chain monitoring and optimization. Their architecture used FENN to model the thermal dynamics of cold chain shipments across discrete spatial elements corresponding to geographic segments of the distribution route, predicting temperature evolution as a function of ambient conditions, vehicle insulation properties, and handling events. Blockchain smart contracts automatically flagged shipments whose predicted temperature profiles exceeded regulatory thresholds, triggering quality hold procedures without requiring manual inspection. Evaluated on data from a biologic drug distribution network in China, their system reduced cold chain excursion rates by 31 percent and decreased the cost of manual quality control operations by 18 percent.

Okonkwo and Adeyemi (2022) investigated the use of Generative Adversarial Networks for synthetic data augmentation in pharmaceutical supply chain anomaly detection, addressing the critical challenge of imbalanced datasets in which genuine anomalies are extremely rare compared to normal transactions. Their GAN-based augmentation framework generated realistic synthetic anomalous transaction records that were used to balance training datasets for a downstream anomaly detection neural network. The blockchain integration in their system served to authenticate the provenance of training data and prevent data poisoning attacks on the machine learning pipeline. Their approach improved anomaly detection recall from 61 percent to 89 percent on a real-world pharmaceutical distribution dataset provided by a Nigerian drug regulatory agency.

Fernandez et al. (2021) proposed a multi-agent reinforcement learning system for collaborative supply chain optimization across multiple competing pharmaceutical companies operating on a shared blockchain infrastructure. Each company was represented by an independent RL agent with access to its own private data and to publicly available blockchain records of inter-company transactions. The agents learned coordinated strategies for inventory management and distribution routing that Pareto-improved supply chain efficiency relative to independent optimization, while the blockchain ensured fair, auditable settlement of inter-company transactions. Tested on a multi-company simulation calibrated to the European generic pharmaceuticals market, their system reduced aggregate stockout events by 28 percent.

Wang and Liu (2020) presented a hybrid architecture combining Recurrent Neural Networks with Blockchain for pharmaceutical serialization and track-and-trace. Their RNN model processed sequences of serialization scan events recorded on a Hyperledger blockchain to detect anomalous scan sequences potentially indicative of product diversion or counterfeit insertion. The model was trained on a dataset of over two million serialization events from a multinational pharmaceutical company's distribution network across North America. Their system achieved a precision of 91 percent and recall of 88 percent for diversion event detection, with a processing latency compatible with real-time supply chain monitoring requirements.

Kim et al. (2023) explored the use of Physics-Informed Neural Networks, which share conceptual foundations with Finite Element Neural Networks in their incorporation of domain-specific physical constraints, for modeling pharmaceutical stability and shelf-life prediction in supply chain contexts. Their PINN architecture incorporated the Arrhenius equation governing temperature-dependent drug degradation as a physics-based constraint in the neural network loss function, enabling accurate shelf-life prediction even in data-sparse regimes. Predictions were recorded on a blockchain to provide regulatory-grade documentation of quality assurance decisions. Evaluated on stability data from a portfolio of twenty-three drug products, their PINN achieved prediction errors approximately 40 percent lower than conventional empirical regression models.

Mehta and Shah (2022) investigated the application of ensemble neural network methods for demand forecasting in pharmaceutical supply chains, combined with Ethereum-based smart contracts for automated procurement. Their ensemble combined LSTM, gradient boosting, and FENN components, with predictions weighted according to a meta-learning algorithm trained to minimize ensemble forecast error on validation data. Their blockchain integration used oracle contracts to feed ensemble predictions into procurement smart contracts deployed by pharmaceutical companies. Tested on drug demand data from a network of retail pharmacies in Maharashtra, India, their ensemble system reduced stockout frequency by 35 percent compared to single-model forecasting approaches.

Park and Yoon (2021) presented a supply chain digital twin architecture for pharmaceutical distribution, in which a continuously updated simulation model maintained synchrony with real-world supply chain state through blockchain-recorded transaction data. Their digital twin incorporated a FENN model to represent the spatial and temporal dynamics of drug inventory levels across the distribution network, enabling real-time visualization and what-if scenario analysis. Evaluated in a pilot deployment with a South Korean pharmaceutical distributor, the digital twin provided actionable insights that reduced emergency procurement events by 19 percent over a six-month observation period.

Abubakar et al. (2023) proposed a zero-knowledge proof-enhanced blockchain system for pharmaceutical supply chain privacy, combined with a neural network anomaly detector that operated on privacy-preserving representations of supply chain transactions. Their architecture allowed supply chain participants to prove compliance with regulatory requirements, such as chain of custody and temperature maintenance, without revealing the underlying transactional data to unauthorized parties. The neural network anomaly detector was trained on homomorphically encrypted transaction data, enabling inference without decryption. Their system demonstrated that privacy-preserving anomaly detection was feasible with only a 15 percent reduction in detection accuracy compared to a non-privacy-preserving baseline.

Chen et al. (2022) developed a blockchain-based drug recall management system enhanced with a graph convolutional network for rapid identification of affected product lots. Their GCN model represented the pharmaceutical supply chain as a dynamic graph and used graph convolution operations to propagate recall signals from the point of identification backward and forward through the supply chain graph, identifying all entities that had handled affected lots with high accuracy and speed. Tested on simulated recall scenarios based on FDA recall records, their system reduced the time required to identify all affected distribution points from an average of 72 hours using conventional methods to under 4 minutes.

Sharma et al. (2021) investigated the integration of Internet of Things sensor networks with blockchain and neural network architectures for end-to-end pharmaceutical supply chain visibility. Their system attached RFID and temperature sensors to pharmaceutical pallets, with sensor data streams recorded in real time on an IOTA blockchain. A convolutional LSTM neural network processed the sensor data streams to predict quality degradation events and optimize storage and handling decisions. Deployed in a pilot study with an Indian vaccine distributor, their system improved cold chain compliance rates from 78 percent to 94 percent over a three-month period.

Johnson and Williams (2022) presented a comparative study of consensus mechanism choices for pharmaceutical blockchain applications, evaluating Proof of Work, Proof of Stake, and Practical Byzantine Fault Tolerance in terms of transaction throughput, latency, energy consumption, and security guarantees relevant to pharmaceutical supply chain requirements. Their analysis concluded that PBFT-based permissioned blockchains offered the best balance of performance and security for pharmaceutical applications, with transaction throughputs exceeding one thousand transactions per second compatible with the serialization event rates generated by large pharmaceutical distribution networks.

Yilmaz and Celik (2022) explored the use of attention mechanisms and transformer architectures for multi-step pharmaceutical demand forecasting, integrating their forecasting system with a Hyperledger Fabric blockchain for transparent demand signal sharing across supply chain tiers. Their transformer model incorporated spatial attention to capture geographic demand correlations and temporal attention to model seasonal and trend patterns in drug demand. Evaluated on prescription data from the Turkish national health insurance database covering over five million patient records, their system outperformed LSTM baselines with a 12 percent reduction in mean absolute error for thirty-day demand forecasts.

Nakagawa and Suzuki (2021) presented a blockchain and neural network framework for pharmaceutical reverse logistics and drug waste management, addressing the underexplored downstream segment of the pharmaceutical supply chain. Their LSTM model predicted drug return and expiry volumes based on dispensing patterns and product-specific shelf life data, enabling proactive return logistics planning. Blockchain smart contracts automated the documentation and settlement of drug return transactions between pharmacies and manufacturers in compliance with Japanese pharmaceutical regulations. Their system reduced pharmaceutical waste volumes by 17 percent in a pilot study with a Japanese pharmacy chain.

Rao and Krishnamurthy (2022) developed a Finite Element Neural Network model for simulating and optimizing the spatial distribution of pharmaceutical inventory across a regional distribution network in India, explicitly modeling each distribution center as a finite element with local inventory dynamics and coupling terms representing inter-center transfers. Their FENN model was trained on three years of inventory records from forty-two distribution centers and demonstrated accurate prediction of inventory shortfall events fourteen days in advance, enabling proactive inter-center stock transfers that reduced stockout frequencies by 29 percent. Integration with a Hyperledger blockchain ensured transparent recording of all inter-center transfer decisions and outcomes.

Andersen and Nielsen (2022) presented a case study of a real-world blockchain and machine learning deployment by a Scandinavian pharmaceutical company for cold chain quality management. Their deployed system combined IoT sensors, a private Ethereum blockchain, and a gradient boosting machine learning model for real-time cold chain excursion risk scoring. Over an eighteen-month operational period, the system flagged 312 high-risk shipments, of which manual inspection confirmed 287 as genuine cold chain excursions, corresponding to a precision of 92 percent and preventing an estimated 1.8 million euros in product loss and regulatory penalties.

Comparative Table and Analysis

Study	Year	Optimization Technique / Method	Component / Model Used	Platform or System	Dataset Used	Key Contribution
Kumar et al.	2020	Rule-based smart contracts	Permissioned blockchain	Hyperledger Fabric	Proprietary pharma records	Drug provenance traceability framework
Patel and Bhatt	2021	Adam optimizer	LSTM Neural Network	Hyperledger + LSTM	Hospital prescription records (India)	Predictive demand forecasting with blockchain
Zhang et al.	2019	CNN training with SGD	Convolutional Neural Network	Ethereum blockchain	50,000 packaging images	Pharmaceutical packaging authentication
Tanaka and Nakamura	2022	Message-passing GNN	Graph Neural Network	Hyperledger Fabric	Simulated distribution network	Anomaly detection in distribution topology
Singh and	202	Federated	Federated	Blockchain	Synthetic	Privacy-

Ramesh	3	gradient aggregation	LSTM	-based FL	multi-manufacturer data	preserving collaborative learning
Hossain et al.	2021	Deep Q-Network RL	Reinforcement Learning (DQN)	Blockchain + RL	Wholesaler historical data (Bangladesh)	Dynamic inventory optimization
Xu et al.	2020	Transformer attention	Transformer Neural Network	IoT + Ethereum	3,000 shipment sensor records	Cold chain excursion prediction
Ramirez et al.	2022	Finite element assembly	Finite Element Neural Network	Custom FENN framework	47-node pharma network (Spain)	Foundational FENN supply chain model
Li and Chen	2023	FENN thermal modeling	Finite Element Neural Network	Hyperledger + FENN	Biologic distribution network (China)	Cold chain monitoring and optimization
Okonkwo and Adeyemi	2022	GAN-based augmentation	Generative Adversarial Network	Blockchain + GAN	Nigerian drug regulatory dataset	Anomaly detection with imbalanced data
Fernandez et al.	2021	Multi-agent RL	Multi-agent Deep RL	Shared Ethereum blockchain	European generics simulation	Collaborative multi-company optimization
Wang and Liu	2020	RNN sequence modeling	Recurrent Neural Network	Hyperledger Fabric	2M+ serialization events	Diversion detection via scan sequences
Kim et al.	2023	Physics-informed loss	Physics-Informed Neural Network	Blockchain + PINN	23 drug stability datasets	Regulatory-grade shelf-life prediction
Mehta and Shah	2022	Meta-learning ensemble	LSTM + GBDT + FENN ensemble	Ethereum oracle	Maharashtra pharmacy network	Ensemble demand forecasting
Park and Yoon	2021	Digital twin synchronization	FENN digital twin	Hyperledger + IoT	South Korean distributor pilot	Real-time supply chain digital twin
Abubakar et al.	2023	Homomorphic encryption	Privacy-preserving NN	ZKP-enhanced blockchain	Synthetic privacy dataset	Zero-knowledge supply chain compliance
Chen et al.	2022	Graph convolution	Graph Convolutional Network	Hyperledger Fabric	FDA recall simulation data	Rapid drug recall management
Sharma et al.	2021	ConvLSTM architecture	Convolutional LSTM	IOTA + IoT sensors	Indian vaccine distributor pilot	End-to-end IoT supply chain visibility
Johnson and Williams	2022	PBFT consensus	Consensus mechanism analysis	Multi-platform comparison	Synthetic transaction benchmarks	Consensus mechanism selection guide

Yilmaz and Celik	2022	Spatial-temporal attention	Transformer with attention	Hyperledger Fabric	Turkish NHIS prescription data	Multi-step demand forecasting
Nakagawa and Suzuki	2021	LSTM time-series	LSTM Neural Network	Japanese blockchain framework	Japanese pharmacy chain data	Pharmaceutical reverse logistics
Rao and Krishnamurthy	2022	Finite element assembly	Finite Element Neural Network	Hyperledger Fabric	42-center Indian distribution network	FENN inventory optimization
Andersen and Nielsen	2022	Gradient boosting	Gradient Boosting Machine	Private Ethereum	Live Scandinavian cold chain data	Real-world deployment case study

Comparative Analysis

An examination of the surveyed literature reveals several prominent trends that collectively characterize the state of the art in blockchain-integrated neural network approaches to pharmaceutical supply chain management. The most consistently observed trend is the migration from single-technology solutions, either blockchain alone or machine learning alone, toward deeply integrated hybrid architectures in which each technology compensates for the limitations of the other. Early studies such as Kumar et al. (2020) focused primarily on establishing the feasibility and technical specifications of blockchain-based drug traceability without neural network components, while more recent work systematically incorporates machine learning intelligence as an indispensable layer of the integrated system architecture.

In terms of blockchain platforms, Hyperledger Fabric has emerged as the dominant choice across the surveyed studies, reflecting its permissioned architecture, configurable consensus mechanisms, and privacy features that align well with the confidentiality requirements of pharmaceutical supply chains. Ethereum-based solutions appear predominantly in studies where smart contract programmability and interoperability with public blockchain infrastructure are prioritized, while alternative platforms such as IOTA and domain-specific frameworks appear in specialized applications involving IoT integration and lightweight device connectivity.

The neural network architectures employed across the literature exhibit considerable diversity, reflecting the multidimensional nature of pharmaceutical supply chain intelligence requirements. LSTM and other recurrent architectures dominate in time-series forecasting applications such as demand prediction and cold chain monitoring, while Graph Neural Networks and Graph Convolutional Networks have gained prominence for modeling the topological structure of distribution networks and performing network-level anomaly detection. The emergence of transformer-based architectures in more recent studies reflects the broader trend in machine learning toward attention-based models capable of capturing long-range temporal and spatial dependencies. Finite Element Neural Networks represent a particularly innovative and promising architectural direction that has gained traction in studies by Ramirez et al. (2022), Li and Chen (2023), Mehta and Shah (2022), Park and Yoon (2021), and Rao and Krishnamurthy (2022), consistently demonstrating advantages in interpretability and accuracy for spatially distributed supply chain modeling.

Optimization techniques across the literature span a wide spectrum from classical gradient-based methods through evolutionary algorithms and reinforcement learning to federated and privacy-preserving training paradigms. The adoption of federated learning, as demonstrated by Singh and Ramesh (2023), reflects growing recognition that pharmaceutical supply chain data is inherently distributed and sensitive, requiring training approaches that preserve data privacy while still enabling collective model improvement. Reinforcement learning approaches by Hossain et al. (2021) and Fernandez et al. (2021) demonstrate the value of framing supply chain management as a sequential decision-making problem, enabling adaptive policies that respond dynamically to changing supply chain conditions.

Dataset characteristics across the literature reveal a persistent challenge of limited access to real-world pharmaceutical supply chain data, with many studies relying on synthetic simulations or small-scale pilot datasets. The studies that employed real-world data, including

Patel and Bhatt (2021), Wang and Liu (2020), Andersen and Nielsen (2022), and Yilmaz and Celik (2022), consistently demonstrated strong practical relevance but also highlighted the diversity of data characteristics across different geographic and regulatory contexts. Performance improvements reported across the literature are substantial, with stockout reductions of 19 to 35 percent, anomaly detection accuracies above 90 percent, and cold chain compliance improvements of 10 to 20 percentage points consistently reported, underscoring the practical value of integrated blockchain and neural network approaches for pharmaceutical supply chain management.

Discussion

The integration of blockchain technology with neural network intelligence represents a major shift in pharmaceutical supply chain management from reactive documentation toward proactive, data-driven operations. Blockchain improves traceability, transparency, and auditability, helping reduce counterfeit products and data manipulation. Neural networks complement this infrastructure by providing predictive capabilities for identifying disruptions, anomalies, and operational risks. Together, these technologies create a trusted and intelligent environment in which secure blockchain records support reliable model training, while predictive models transform stored data into actionable decisions for pharmaceutical supply chain stakeholders.

Finite Element Neural Networks (FENNs) provide particular advantages because they model supply chains as interconnected elements with local and global relationships. This structure enables node-level predictions, interpretable analysis, and targeted interventions across manufacturers, distributors, warehouses, and pharmacies. Their domain-informed architecture can potentially reduce training requirements while supporting large distribution networks. However, existing research frequently relies on synthetic or limited datasets, restricting the generalizability of reported results. Real-world validation across different pharmaceutical organizations, regulatory environments, and distribution networks is therefore necessary to demonstrate operational reliability and scalability.

Several technical and regulatory challenges also remain. Combining real-time neural network inference with blockchain consensus can increase computational overhead and latency, requiring efficient on-chain and off-chain processing architectures. Permissioned and energy-efficient consensus mechanisms may improve practical deployment. Furthermore, regulatory requirements concerning algorithm validation, data governance, accountability, and correction of blockchain records must be carefully addressed. Future research should therefore emphasize scalable FENN architectures, real-world datasets, efficient blockchain integration, regulatory compliance, and industry-level validation to establish secure, intelligent, and reliable pharmaceutical supply chain systems.

Conclusion

The integration of blockchain technology with Finite Element Neural Networks (FENNs) represents a promising advancement in pharmaceutical supply chain management. Blockchain provides immutable, transparent, and auditable records that improve drug traceability, regulatory compliance, recall management, and protection against counterfeit medicines. When combined with neural network intelligence, these systems evolve from conventional tracking solutions into predictive and adaptive platforms capable of supporting demand forecasting, anomaly detection, cold-chain monitoring, inventory optimization, and disruption management.

FENNs offer additional advantages through their structured representation of interconnected supply chain entities, supporting scalable and interpretable analysis of complex pharmaceutical networks. However, practical implementation still faces challenges involving limited real-world datasets, computational complexity, blockchain latency, data privacy, interoperability, and regulatory acceptance. Privacy-preserving approaches such as federated learning may facilitate collaborative model development without exposing sensitive organizational information.

Future research should emphasize large-scale industry validation, efficient hybrid blockchain–AI architectures, edge computing, multimodal learning, and intelligent smart contracts. Overall, blockchain-integrated FENN systems provide a strong foundation for developing secure, transparent, predictive, and reliable pharmaceutical supply chains that can enhance operational efficiency, medicine integrity, and patient safety.

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