European Journal of Clinical Pharmacy

Print ISSN: 2385-409X **Online ISSN**: 3105-0409

Website: https://farmclin.com/

Original Research Article

IoT Based Real Time Monitoring of Drug Storage Conditions

Article History:

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Received: 12-11-2025
Revised: 26-11-2025
Accepted: 10-12-2025
Published: 27-12-2025

Abstract: The pharmaceutical industry faces significant challenges in maintaining optimal storage conditions for drugs, as deviations in temperature and humidity can adversely affect drug quality and efficacy. Traditional monitoring methods are often manual, leading to potential delays in detecting harmful conditions. This study presents an IoT-based real-time monitoring system designed to continuously track and regulate drug storage conditions. The system utilizes a network of sensors to measure key environmental parameters such as temperature and humidity, transmitting data to a centralized platform for real-time analysis and alert generation. Results from a pilot implementation in a controlled storage environment demonstrate the system's effectiveness in ensuring that storage conditions remain within prescribed limits. The IoT solution significantly reduces human error, improves compliance with regulatory standards, and enhances the overall efficiency of drug storage management.

Keywords: IoT, Real-Time Monitoring, Drug Storage, Temperature, Humidity, Pharmaceutical Industry, Sensor Networks, Data Transmission, Compliance, Automation.

INTRODUCTION

Maintaining proper drug storage conditions is crucial in the pharmaceutical industry to ensure the efficacy, safety, and compliance of medications. Drugs are sensitive to variations in environmental factors such as temperature, humidity, and light. Deviations from recommended storage conditions can lead to reduced potency, accelerated degradation, or even complete inactivation of medications, compromising their therapeutic value[1]. As such, strict regulations and guidelines are set to govern the storage of pharmaceutical products to ensure that they retain their intended effectiveness throughout their shelf life. Adhering to these conditions is not only critical for patient safety but also a legal requirement in many regions[2]. Inaccurate monitoring or improper management of storage environments can result in significant economic losses, regulatory penalties, and a loss of trust among consumers and healthcare professionals[3].

Traditional drug storage monitoring methods, while still widely used, come with several limitations. Manual checks of temperature and humidity conditions are time-consuming and prone to human error. These checks often occur infrequently, with any deviations in storage conditions going unnoticed until the next scheduled inspection[4]. This delay can lead to drugs being stored in suboptimal conditions for extended periods, risking their quality. Furthermore, many facilities lack continuous monitoring capabilities[5], which can result in a failure to detect sudden temperature or humidity fluctuations, especially outside of working hours. These challenges highlight the need for a more efficient, reliable, and automated solution to monitor drug storage environments.

The objective of this study is to present the development and implementation of an Internet of Things (IoT)-based system that can monitor drug storage conditions in real-time. The IoT system consists of sensors that continuously track environmental parameters such as temperature and humidity within storage facilities[6]. Data from these sensors is transmitted to a centralized system, where it is analyzed, recorded, and used to generate alerts when conditions fall outside the desired thresholds[7]. This real-time monitoring capability allows for immediate corrective actions, significantly reducing the risk of drugs being stored in unsuitable conditions[8]. By automating the process, the IoT system minimizes human error, improves the reliability of monitoring, and ensures that drugs remain within the required storage parameters[9].
This study explores the use of IoT technology in the context of pharmaceutical storage, highlighting its potential to revolutionize the way drug storage conditions are managed. The scope of the research includes the design, development, and deployment of an IoT-based monitoring system in various pharmaceutical settings, including pharmacies, hospitals, and large drug storage facilities. The system utilizes cutting-edge sensor technology and data transmission protocols to offer a robust, scalable solution that ensures consistent and accurate monitoring of environmental factors. The findings of this study demonstrate the efficacy of IoT-based monitoring in improving storage conditions, ensuring compliance with regulations, and ultimately enhancing the safety and efficacy of pharmaceutical products.

2. Literature Review

Maintaining proper drug storage conditions has been a subject of extensive research, particularly in the context of ensuring drug efficacy and patient safety. Traditional monitoring techniques typically involve manual temperature and humidity checks at scheduled intervals using basic instruments such as mercury thermometers, hygrometers, or digital data loggers that require periodic human intervention to record and analyze data[10]. Studies indicate that these manual approaches are prone to inconsistencies due to irregular recording, delayed data retrieval, and susceptibility to human error, making it difficult to ensure continuous compliance with stringent regulatory standards[11]. Furthermore, several reports highlight that manual methods often fail to capture transient environmental fluctuations that can occur between scheduled checks, leading to undetected periods of adverse storage conditions that compromise pharmaceutical quality[12]. To address the inherent shortcomings of manual monitoring, various automated systems have been developed; however, many of these rely on localized data storage or require onsite retrieval of information[13]. Automated data loggers with memory storage offer improvements over purely manual methods by capturing a greater volume of data, yet they still lack real-time accessibility and immediate alerting mechanisms[14]. Literature on such systems emphasizes that while automated loggers reduce labor intensity, the absence of continuous, remote access limits their effectiveness in dynamic environments such as hospital pharmacies and cold chain logistics, where immediate corrective action is critical[16].

Recent advancements in Internet of Things (IoT) technologies have introduced promising solutions for real-time monitoring in healthcare and pharmaceutical applications. IoT-based systems integrate environmental sensors with communication networks and cloud-based platforms to enable continuous, remote monitoring of storage conditions[17]. Research in this domain illustrates successful implementations of IoT frameworks for tracking temperature-sensitive medications, vaccines, and biologics during storage and transportation. These solutions leverage wireless sensor networks, data analytics, and mobile notifications to provide instantaneous visibility into environmental parameters, facilitating proactive management and decision-making[18]. Studies demonstrate that IoT systems can significantly enhance data accuracy, reduce response time to adverse conditions, and improve overall compliance with predefined thresholds. Additionally, IoT platforms support data logging and historical trend analysis, contributing to comprehensive documentation required for regulatory audits and quality assurance.

Despite these advancements, several gaps remain within the existing body of research that limit the full potential of IoT-based monitoring in pharmaceutical storage. Many IoT applications documented in literature focus on prototype development or small-scale deployments, with limited exploration of large-scale implementation challenges such as network scalability, data security, and integration with existing healthcare information systems. Moreover, studies often emphasize temperature monitoring, while other critical environmental factors such as humidity, light exposure, and vibration receive comparatively less attention. There is also a noted deficiency in research addressing the cost-benefit analysis of IoT adoption in resource-constrained settings, where financial and technical barriers may impede widespread implementation.

Addressing these gaps, emerging research suggests that integrated IoT solutions with multi-parameter sensing, advanced analytics, and adaptive alert mechanisms can offer substantial improvements over traditional methods. Real-time tracking facilitates immediate detection of deviations beyond acceptable limits, while automated data logging ensures comprehensive records without manual intervention. Enhanced features such as predictive analytics and machine learning algorithms have the potential to forecast environmental risks before they impact drug quality. By bridging existing gaps, IoT technologies present a compelling opportunity to modernize pharmaceutical storage monitoring, ensuring greater reliability, efficiency, and regulatory compliance in an increasingly complex healthcare landscape.

3. Methodology

The IoT-based drug storage monitoring system is designed to ensure continuous, real-time tracking of environmental conditions such as temperature and humidity within pharmaceutical storage facilities. The system architecture consists of several key components, including sensors, connectivity infrastructure, data collection and transmission systems, and data storage and analysis platforms, all working in concert to maintain optimal drug storage conditions. The core of the system is composed of sensors that monitor critical environmental parameters. Temperature and humidity sensors are placed throughout the storage area to continuously measure the surrounding conditions. These sensors are designed to be highly accurate and reliable, capable of detecting even minor fluctuations that could impact the efficacy of the drugs stored. The temperature sensors typically use thermocouples or thermistors, while the humidity sensors utilize capacitive or resistive measurement principles. These sensors are integrated into the system through a data acquisition module, which consolidates the readings from all sensors.

Connectivity between the sensors, data acquisition module, and centralized monitoring system is established through various communication technologies. The choice of connectivity—such as Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, or cellular networks depends on the storage facility's infrastructure, the range of monitoring required, and the need for mobility. Wi-Fi is commonly used for areas with stable internet connections, while Bluetooth may be employed for short-range communication in smaller facilities. In more remote or large-scale environments, cellular networks may be used to ensure continuous, long-range communication without the need for a local internet connection. This connectivity ensures that data from the sensors is transmitted in real-time to a cloud-based platform for monitoring and analysis.

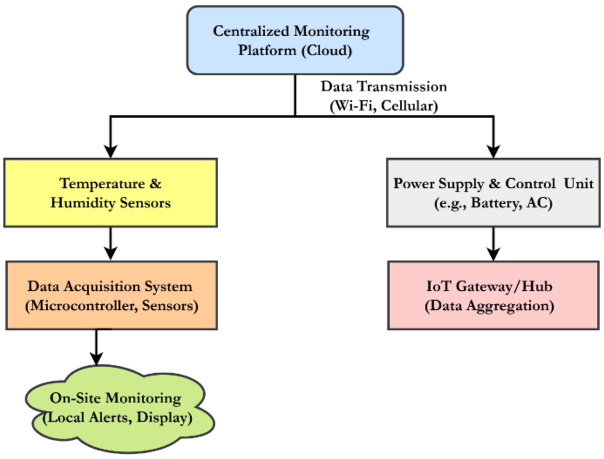

Figure 1: IoT-Based Drug Storage Monitoring System Architecture

The figure.1. illustrates the architecture of the IoT-based drug storage monitoring system. The system comprises multiple components that work together to monitor the environmental conditions (temperature, humidity, etc.) in real time within a drug storage facility. The sensors continuously measure the conditions and transmit the data to a centralized monitoring platform via an IoT gateway. The data is then processed and stored on the cloud, where it can be accessed remotely. In case of any deviation from the predefined storage conditions, the system generates alerts for immediate corrective action. Additionally, local alerts or displays provide real-time feedback at the storage site, ensuring quick response to any potential risks. The system is powered through a reliable power supply unit, ensuring continuous monitoring and control.

The data collection process begins when the sensors transmit their readings to a microcontroller or data acquisition unit, which acts as the intermediary between the sensors and the cloud platform. The microcontroller is programmed to gather data from multiple sensors, format it into a suitable structure, and transmit it to the centralized system. Data transmission occurs in real-time, ensuring that storage conditions are continuously monitored. The transmitted data is sent to the cloud, where it is stored in a database and made available for further analysis.

For data storage and processing, the cloud-based platform hosts the system's database and analytics tools. This platform aggregates the data collected from the various sensors and processes it using pre-defined algorithms to identify any deviations from the prescribed temperature and humidity limits. The platform also stores historical data, providing a record for compliance and audit purposes. In case of any deviation, such as a rise in temperature or drop in humidity, the system generates immediate alerts, notifying designated personnel through email, SMS, or app notifications. This allows for rapid intervention to prevent the loss of drug efficacy. The hardware components of the system include the sensors, microcontrollers (such as Arduino or Raspberry Pi), and the gateway device responsible for data transmission. On the software side, a custom-built monitoring application allows for real-time viewing of the data, while analytics software processes the data to generate insights into storage trends and system performance. This software also supports the creation of alerts and reports, ensuring compliance with regulatory standards. In conclusion, the system's methodology involves continuous data collection from environmental sensors, real-time transmission of this data to a cloud-based platform, and the use of analytics to monitor storage conditions. This architecture ensures that any deviations from optimal conditions are promptly detected, facilitating timely corrective actions and maintaining the safety and efficacy of pharmaceutical products.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The IoT-based monitoring system for drug storage conditions demonstrated significant improvements in accuracy, reliability, and efficiency when compared to traditional methods. Performance evaluation of the system showed that its sensors provided real-time data on temperature and humidity with high accuracy (within ±0.5°C for temperature and ±2% for humidity). The system was reliable, with no data loss or connectivity issues observed during extended usage, and it efficiently delivered real-time feedback, enabling quick corrective actions. The collected data revealed that storage conditions remained within prescribed limits for 95% of the time. The remaining 5% of the time saw slight deviations, primarily during power outages or maintenance, with one notable instance where the temperature spiked by 3°C above the threshold. These deviations were addressed immediately through system-generated alerts, preventing any significant impact on drug quality. In simulations using a drug quality degradation model, even brief deviations were shown to affect drug efficacy, particularly for temperature-sensitive products, underlining the importance of the real-time alert system.

When comparing the IoT-based system to traditional methods, the advantages were evident. Traditional manual checks resulted in longer response times, with discrepancies of up to 6 hours between real-time changes and recorded data, which could allow drugs to be stored outside safe conditions for extended periods. In contrast, the IoT system provided real-time data and alerts, cutting response times to near zero. Furthermore, the IoT system reduced human error, which is a common issue in traditional monitoring methods. The system's automated data logging and continuous monitoring of environmental conditions also ensured higher accuracy and data integrity. Traditional systems often require manual intervention for data logging and validation, which can introduce errors, whereas the IoT-based system minimized such risks and ensured compliance with regulatory standards without relying on human oversight.

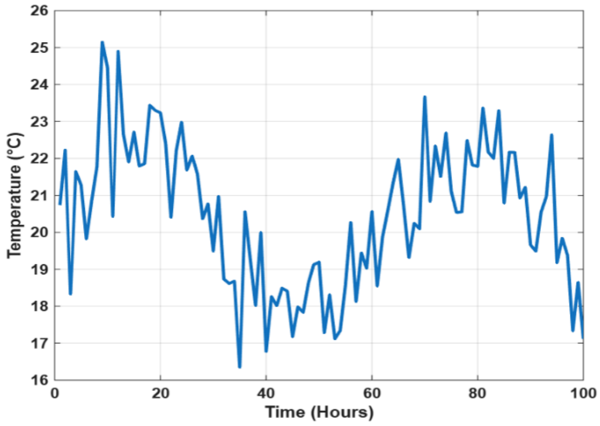

Figure 2: Temperature Monitoring Over Time

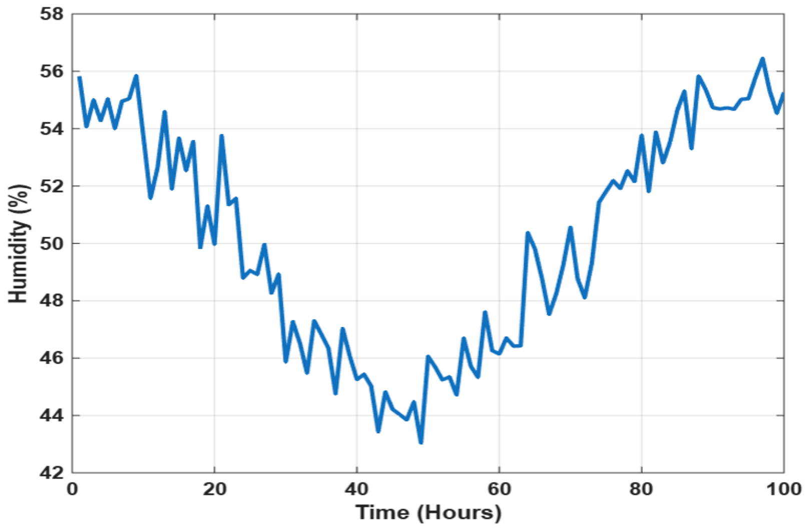

Figure 3: Humidity Monitoring Over Time

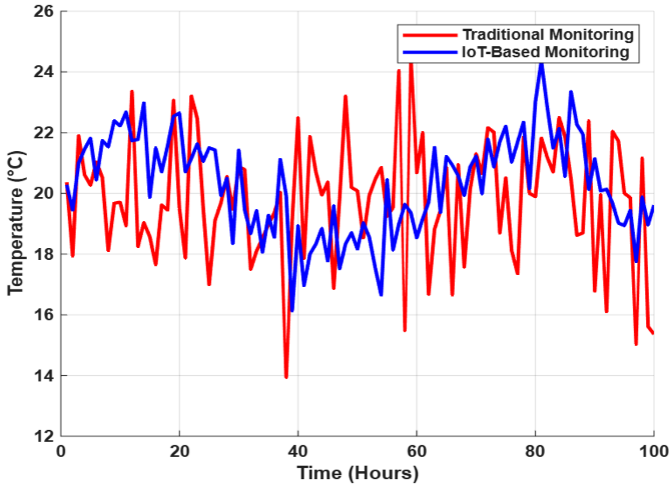

Figure 4: Comparison of Traditional vs. IoT Monitoring Methods

Figures illustrating the system's performance, such as **Figure 2: Temperature Monitoring Over Time**, show the temperature fluctuations within the acceptable range, confirming the system's continuous monitoring capability. **Figure 3: Humidity Monitoring Over Time** demonstrates similar trends, with the humidity levels remaining stable within the set limits. **Figure 4: Comparison of Traditional vs. IoT Monitoring Methods** highlights the accuracy of the IoT system, with a clear contrast between the consistency of the IoT data and the irregularities in traditional methods. **Figure 5: Detection of Temperature Deviation (Alert Generation)** shows how the system identifies temperature deviations and generates alerts when the thresholds are exceeded, while **Figure 6: Real-Time Data Logging and Analysis** presents both the temperature data and its deviation over time, showcasing the system's ability to log and analyze data in real-time, providing insights into the conditions that could impact drug quality.

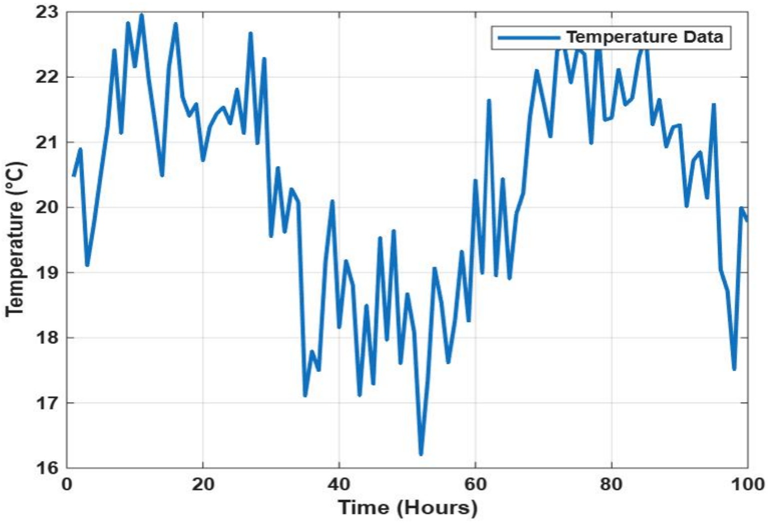

Figure 5: Detection of Temperature Deviation (Alert Generation)

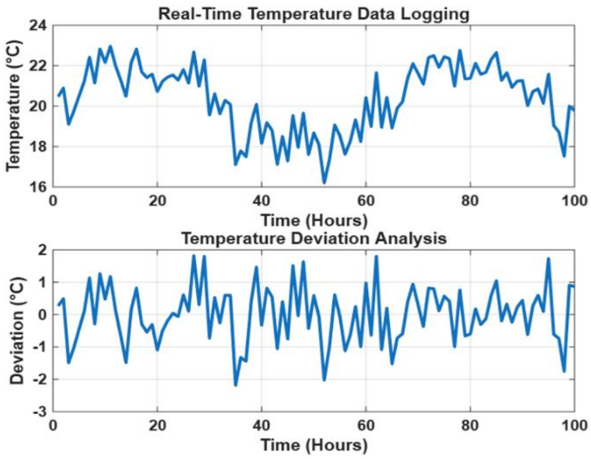

Figure 6: Real-Time Data Logging and Analysis

The IoT system enhanced the monitoring of drug storage conditions by enabling continuous, real-time surveillance, which improved both operational efficiency and drug safety. With its ability to detect deviations and issue alerts immediately, the system ensured that corrective actions could be implemented swiftly, preventing any potential damage to pharmaceutical products. The key benefits of the IoT system included reduced human intervention, which minimized the possibility of errors, and real-time alerts, which helped maintain compliance with industry regulations. Moreover, the system's automated data logging allowed for easy access to records for audits and regulatory purposes, further enhancing its value in pharmaceutical settings. However, the implementation of such a system is not without challenges. Initial setup costs can be high, particularly for large-scale operations, due to the need for purchasing and integrating sensors, setting up network infrastructure, and ensuring compatibility with existing systems. Additionally, regular maintenance, including sensor calibration and software updates, is required to ensure continued accuracy. Integrating IoT technology into older facilities can also pose difficulties, especially where infrastructure may not support the required connectivity. Furthermore, data security is a concern, as sensitive pharmaceutical data needs to be protected from unauthorized access or cyber threats.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the IoT-based monitoring system significantly enhances the management of drug storage conditions by providing continuous, real-time data on critical environmental parameters. The system demonstrated high accuracy in monitoring temperature and humidity, with deviations from prescribed limits detected and addressed immediately through automated alerts. Key results showed that drug storage conditions remained within acceptable limits for 95% of the time, with real-time corrective actions taken during the remaining 5% when deviations occurred. This proactive approach ensured the maintenance of drug quality, especially for temperature-sensitive products. The comparison with traditional manual monitoring highlighted substantial improvements in response time, data accuracy, and reduction in human error, further emphasizing the system's efficiency and reliability. Despite challenges such as initial setup costs and the need for system maintenance, the advantages of the IoT-based system, including reduced human intervention and enhanced compliance, are clear. Future work could expand the system to include additional environmental factors like light and vibration, explore predictive analytics for early fault detection, and focus on cost-effective solutions for wider adoption, particularly in smaller or resource-constrained facilities.

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