Multispectral fluorescence imaging for tumor detection and molecular biology

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Published in:
2006 IEEE LEOS Annual Meeting Conference

DOI:
10.1109/LEOS.2006.278993

2006

Link to publication

Citation for published version (APA):

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Multispectral Fluorescence Imaging for Tumor Detection and Molecular Biology
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1. Introduction
Optical techniques, such as fluorescence imaging, are of particular interest for visualization of various
superficially located epithelial tissues, such as the skin or the mucosa of interior hollow organs
including easily reachable areas, such as the oral cavity or genital tract, besides the endoscopically
accessible organs. The feature that fluorescence changes early in the development of certain types of
malignant lesions and the utility for identification of premalignant lesions is of particular clinical
interest. Obvious advantages with fluorescence detection are the minimally invasiveness and real-time
aspect. In the clinic this means that LIF can be utilized interactively during the procedure and give up-
dated information during the diagnostic procedure. Spectroscopic characterization is based on very
ev early biochemical as well as morphological changes in the tissue. Multispectral fluorescence imaging
can also be used for identification of early lesion and for delineating tumours based on exogenous
fluorescent tumour markers.

For tumor detection located inside solid organs, such as liver, kidney and breast parenchyma,
fluorescence techniques are not equally favorable and straight forward due to poor penetration and
multiple scattering of light in tissue. A currently very interesting field of research for deep lesion
characterization is based on fluorescence mediated tomography, of interest especially for longitudinal
small animal investigations, where a fluorescence labeled lesion can be studied for treatment
evaluation; as well as for studies of molecular interactions in vivo. Also fluorescence-based optical
mammography is presently investigated by several groups. As the tomographic reconstruction is
complex and relatively mathematically ill-conditioned, any additional knowledge is welcome to
improve the reconstruction and can potentially speed it up and/or make it more robust. The data
presented here suggest that multispectral detection can be used for both these purposes1,2.

2. System outline
The multispectral detector unit consists of a CCD-camera (Hamamatsu C4742-80-12AG) for CW
detection or an ICCD-camera (ANDOR Corp., DH734-18F-73) for gated detection, a liquid crystal
tunable filter (Varispec LCTF VIS 20-35) adapted to a standard camera objective lens. The camera and
the filter is controlled by a user-developed software making it possible to rapidly acquire images at a
preset number of arbitrary wavelengths, with individual setting of the acquisition parameters. The
excitation source used varied with the application, being a matrix of LEDs at 405 nm or a diode laser at
652 nm.

3. Multispectral imaging during clinically PDT of skin tumours
A clinically adapted setup of the multispectral system was used during photodynamic therapy of skin
lesions. The photosensitizer (mTHPC) was applied topically onto skin lesions four hours prior to the
treatment session. The fluorescence emission emitted from the lesions induced by continuous wave
excitation light at 405 nm was monitored pre-treatment and post-treatment. Thus the spatial extent of
the lesion and photobleaching of the photosensitiser during the treatment could be retrieved using image
processing of the spectrally resolved images. The multispectral imaging system was in this way utilized
to monitor the treatment progression yielding valuable information to clinicians.
4. **Experimental studies of fluorescence in small animal models and phantoms**

Extensive studies have been conducted to evaluate the possibilities of multispectral imaging to localise small fluorescence volumes located deeply into tissues, without utilizing tomographic reconstruction algorithms as also shown in Refs 1-3. This method could thus be used as a quick way to obtain a rough estimation of the position of a lesion inside tissue. This estimate could, if necessary, be used in a subsequent tomographic analysis as an initial guess, thus speeding up and making this algorithm more robust. This has been demonstrated in modelling and experimental phantom measurements. In one series of experiment the concentration of mTHPC was investigated in nude mice following intravenous injection of mTHPC containing sensitizer. The fluorescence imaging system was used to acquire fluorescence images from mTHPC. The aims of these in vivo measurements were to evaluate the pharmacokinetics of mTHPC concentration following systemic administration. The experimental setup and example images are shown in figure 1.

![Experimental setup and acquired fluorescence image at 653 nm for one animal.](image)

Figure 1: Experimental setup and acquired fluorescence image at 653 nm for one animal.

5. **Conclusions**

The use of a multispectral imaging system provides possibilities to map all information encoded in the spectral fingerprint of an exogenous or endogenous chromophore in biological media. The spectral information has been used to demarcate the spatial extent of superficial skin tumours. Monitoring the fluorescence emitted from the photosensitizer over time yield information about the photodynamic treatment progression. The multispectral approach will also enable depth estimation of a lesion and thus allow quantitative measurements of a fluorophore as shown by the results presented.

6. **Acknowledgements**

This research was supported by the EU Integrated Projects “Molecular Imaging” LSHG-CT-2003-503259 and “Wide Wavelength light for public Welfare: High-Brightness Laser Diode Systems for Health, Telecom and Environment Use”, IST – 511722-2003.

7. **References**