

Title	Miniaturized, multi-spectral optics for tissue differentiation
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Publication date	2022-04
Original Citation	Grygoryev, K., Lu, H., Sorensen, S., Li, C.L., Georgel, R., O'Hare, D., Burke, R. and Andersson-Engels, S. (2022) 'Miniaturized, multi-spectral optics for tissue differentiation', in Biophotonics Congress: Biomedical Optics 2022 (Translational, Microscopy, OCT, OTS, BRAIN). Fort Lauderdale, Florida, 24-27 April, Optica Publishing Group, JM3A.63 (2 pp). https://doi.org/10.1364/TRANSLATIONAL.2022.JM3A.63 .
Type of publication	Conference item
Link to publisher's version	https://doi.org/10.1364/TRANSLATIONAL.2022.JM3A.63
Rights	© 2022 The Author(s). Published by Optical Publishing Group
Download date	2026-09-15 21:19:13
Item downloaded from	https://hdl.handle.net/10468/13745

Miniaturized, multi-spectral optics for tissue differentiation

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Abstract: Identification of tumour margins during resection of the brain is critical for improving the post-operative outcomes. Present research aims to develop a miniaturized, optical system for simultaneous measurement of DRS and auto-fluorescence for brain tumour detection. © 2022 The Author(s)

1. Introduction

Due to the highly infiltrative nature of Glioblastoma multiforme (GBM) and limited intraoperative visualization of the tumour margin, incomplete surgical resection has been observed to occur in up to 80 % of GBM cases, leading to nearly universal tumour recurrence and overall poor prognosis of 14.6 months median survival [1,2]. The current gold standard for tumour delineation is fluorescence guided resection (FGR) which used a surgical microscope in combination with a fluorescent contrast agent, the 5-aminolevulinic acid (5-ALA) [3,4]. Unfortunately even with use of FGR, definitive delineation between tumour infiltration zone and healthy brain tissue remains challenging due to subjectivity of visually identifying the magnitude of fluorescent signal [5,6].

To address this problem, we have previously investigated a number of multi-spectral, clinical and laboratory based instruments designed to provide simultaneous diffuse reflectance spectroscopy (DRS) and quantitative fluorescence measurements [7,8]. Our current aim is to miniaturize the detector optics and sensor footprint without sacrificing low-light sensitivity while maintaining the ability of the instrument to account for strong ambient illumination.

2. Materials and methods

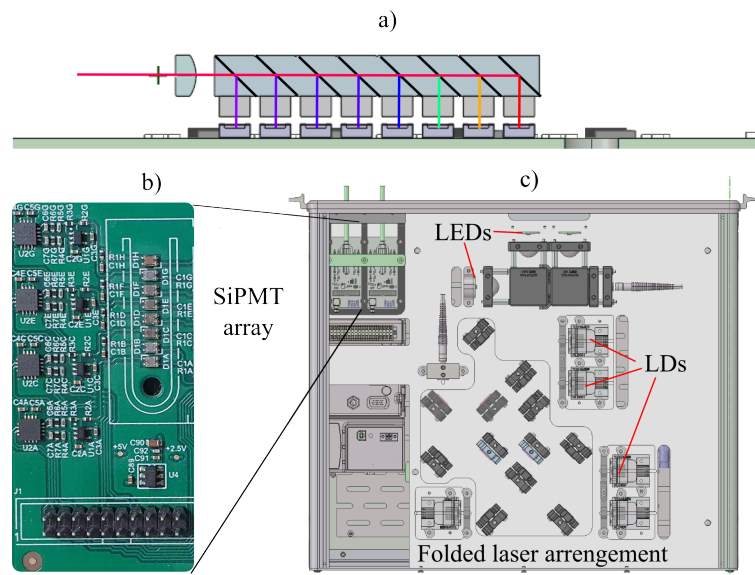


Fig. 1. a) Schematic of spatial light separation between the SiPMTs. b) PCB with an array of eight SiPMTs. c) The schematic of hybrid light source which consists of 5 laser diodes in a folded arrangement as well as three LEDs.

2.1. Detectors

The DRS and auto-fluorescence measurements are performed using eight separate silicon photo-multipliers (SiPMT). Figure 1(a) shows a schematic of wavelengths-dependant spatial separation of light where a custom prism with eight dichroic surfaces is positioned above eight SiPMT. A set of eight bandpass filters, placed between detectors and the dichroics, further define the collection band and reduce channel cross-talk. The SiPMTs in turn are soldered to a compact PCB that houses amplifiers and an analog output for data acquisition (Figure 1(b)).

2.2. Light source

Figure 1(c) shows the CAD design of the hybrid light source. The source consists of five laser diodes and three LEDs. The wavelengths of each source are matched to one detection band. The laser diodes and LEDs are coupled into 200 μ m and 600 μ m fibres, respectively. Both the detector boards and the source are packaged into a compact enclosure of standard size.

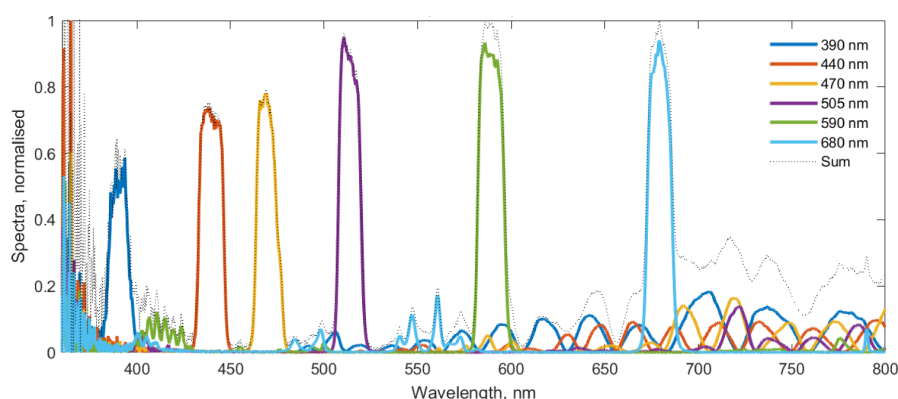


Fig. 2. Measured, normalized spectra of the detector array.

3. Preliminary results

As part of the development, this instrument is currently undergoing characterization of the optical elements. Figure 2 shows the measured spectra of six, longer wavelengths channels intended for measurement of auto-fluorescence intensity. In early 2022, further characterization experiments, such as estimation of dynamic range as well as fluorophore detection limits, will be performed prior to deployment of the instrument in the clinic.

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