A Catheter-Mounted Magnetic Resonance Detector Coil For Biliary Imaging: First Ex Vivo Human Hepatobiliary Images

Christopher A. Wadsworth1, Ian R. Young2, Shahid A. Khan1, Marc Rea4, Munir M. Ahmad2, Shirin E. Khorsandi3, Brian Davidson3, Simon D. Taylor-Robinson1 and Richard R.A. Syms2

1Liver Unit, Department of Medicine and 2Department of Electrical and Electronic Engineering, Imperial College London. 3Department of Surgery, Royal Free Hospital, London. 4MR Imaging Unit, Department of Radiology, Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust, London, United Kingdom.

Introduction
- Correct classification of biliary strictures as benign or malignant is difficult
- Even ERCP with brush cytology has a low sensitivity for neoplasm detection
- Diagnosis is particularly challenging in patients with PSC
- Standard MRI systems have an external resonant radiofrequency (RF) detector coil
- A MR system in which a miniature resonant RF detector is very closely apposed to the tissue of interest should improve the resolution of the images obtained
- Our group has developed a resonant microcoil, designed to be passed into the biliary tree via an endoscope to improve tissue conspicuity (Figs 1 and 2)

Aim
- To confirm the utility of a prototype MR receiver microcoil
- To image a human liver resection specimen
- To collect signal-to-noise ratio (SNR) and resolution data
- To collect comparable imaging data with the MR body coil

Method
- An extended left hemihepatectomy specimen was studied (Fig 3A)
- Images were acquired using a 1.5T GE SignaTM scanner
- The microcoil is a 60mm long flexible 2-turn thin film device, tuned and matched at 63.8 MHz and is attached to an 8F biliary catheter. Overall the probe is 2.7mm in diameter and is fully MR compatible
- Imaging data were first acquired using the main body coil for excitation and detection
- Scan repeated with the same parameters, but with the prototype microcoil used for detection
- The microcoil was positioned on the surface of the specimen, parallel to the gallbladder and cystic duct (Fig 3B)
- The microcoil was located at the magnet isocentre and arranged parallel to the magnet bore
- Axial images were obtained

Results
- High resolution images were obtained using the body coil (Fig 4) and the catheter-mounted microcoil (Fig 5)
- The microcoil images had a field of view of 15mm radius around the coil
- Resolution was substantially better in the images obtained with the microcoil than those obtained with the gantry receiver coil
- The SNR was 8-fold greater in the microcoil images; 260 vs 30

Conclusion
- A MR microcoil can produce high quality images of ex vivo human liver tissue.
- These images demonstrate interpretable anatomical detail, with sub-millimetre resolution
- Images are superior to those obtained using a standard body coil
- Ongoing work includes:
  - migration to a 3T scanner
  - sequence optimisation
  - collection of MR spectroscopy data
  - development of a clinical study
- This catheter-mounted microcoil has the potential to enhance clinical imaging, as well as a number of exciting research applications

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