

### **Emerging Technologies in Positron Emission Tomography:**

TOF-PET, PET/MRI, In-beam PET

D.R. Schaart, LPC Clermont, 9-Mar-2012

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www.rrr.tudelft.nl/rdm

### Positron Emission Tomography



# Positron Emission Tomography

# Applications of PET:

- Cancer / oncology
- Heart tissue viability
- Neurology
- Etc.

Rectal carcinoma and multiple metastases Data courtesy of J. Karp, Univ. of Pennsylvania



#### $\rightarrow$ PET images Function, not Anatomy!

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### Clinical use: PET/CT





# PET/CT (fused images): primary pancreatic cancer with suspicious chest wall and mediastinum lesions



#### **Time of Flight PET Systems**



#### $\rightarrow$ ToF: more signal, less noise



### Time-of-flight PET

#### Colon cancer, left upper quadrant peritoneal node

#### 114 kg; BMI = 32.2 13.4 mCi; 2 hr post-inj



#### State-of-the-art clinical PET: coincidence resolving time (CRT) $\approx$ 500 ps



Images: J. Karp, University of Pennsylvania

# Time-of-flight PET: concept of CRT

The accuracy of source position localization along line of response depends on the *coincidence resolving time (CRT)* 



 $\Delta x$  = uncertainty in position along LOR = c · CRT/2, where c is the speed of light.

The TOF benefit is proportional to  $\Delta x/D$ , where D is the effective patient diameter.

=> The smaller the CRT, the better.

State-of-the-art: CRT  $\approx$  500 ps  $\Rightarrow \Delta x \approx$  7.5 cm.



## PET detectors: classic "block" detector



- Several block detectors are assembled into a ring
- A scanner may consist of several detector rings

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# Silicon Photomultiplier (SiPM)



- Array of many self-quenched Geiger-mode APDs (microcells) connected in parallel
- Increasingly interesting as replacement for PMTs:
  - high gain (~10<sup>6</sup>)
  - high PDE
  - compact and rugged
  - transparent to γ-photons
  - fast response (ns)
  - insensitive to magnetic fields

### Multimodality: PET + MRI

Now: avalanche photodiodes (APDs) Next generation systems: SiPMs









Images: Siemens

### Multimodality: PET + MRI



www.pet-mri.eu



# Single-photon avalanche diode (SPAD)



Above the breakdown voltage, electrons generate a Geiger discharge

- Quenched by a series resistor
- A binary device: "on" or "off"

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- Very large gain ( $\sim 10^5$  to  $\sim 10^6$ ) => sensitive to single photons
- Fast response (time jitter ~100 ps for single photons)

### SiPM: parallel array of many SPADs





- Array of many SPADs ("microcells") in parallel
- The combined output of all the microcells is "proportional" to the incident photon flux.



## 100 ps barrier broken using SiPMs

Made possible by the combination of:

- Small LaBr<sub>3</sub>:Ce(5%) crystals (3 mm x 3 mm x 5 mm)
- Silicon Photomultipliers (Hamamatsu MPPC-S10362-33-050C)
- Digital Signal Processing (DSP)

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### Recent measurements with LSO:Ce,Ca



3 mm x 3 mm SiPM (MPPC-S10362-33-050C)

#### SiPM preamplifier





- SiPM: either a bad voltage source, or a bad current source
- Large capacitance (> 300 pF)
- Solution: common-base amplifier
- The signal current i is copied at collector and transformed into a voltage by resistor R.
- Low input impedance of the emitter isolates the detector capacitance from the rest of the circuit

J. Huizenga et al, NIMA A, <u>http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.nima.2011.11.012</u> 17





S. Seifert et al, "Monolithic LaBr<sub>3</sub>:Ce crystals on silicon photomultiplier arrays for time-of-flight positron emission tomography", accepted for publication in Phys Med Biol 2012



#### SiPM-array based PET detectors



For example:

- crystal matrix composed of e.g.
  4 mm x 4 mm x 20 mm crystals
- each crystal coupled 1-to-1 to an individual SiPM
- => high spatial resolution
- => high energy resolution
- => excellent timing





Individual readout of array elements => position-sensitive light sensor

## Digital PET system

- Local position decoding and time-stamping
  - $\rightarrow$  no limit on no. of channels, no loss of (Fisher) information!
- Real-time DOI correction of spatial and timing information
- Fast, accurate & repeatable system calibration and time alignment



#### SUBLIMA project

#### Whole-body TOF-PET / MRI



Philips Research Delft University of Technology Leiden University Medical Center University of Heidelberg University of Ghent King's College London Fondazione Bruno Kessler University of Pennsylvania Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne Micro Systems Engineering GmbH Technolution BV

 RF-Screen

 Magnet

**RF-Coil** 

Gradient

PET-Ring



www.sublima-pet-mr.eu

Gradient

PROGRAMME

### The importance of spatial resolution



Image resolution is determined by the accuracy with which we can determine the interaction position of the gamma photon in the detector

#### State-of-the-art PET: 2 – 4 mm

low spatial resolution:

high spatial resolution:





## Depth of interaction errors



parallax error or radial elongation (at off-centre positions only)



near center

Parallax errors can be avoided by correcting for the *depth of interaction (DOI)* in the scintillator

### Monolithic scintillator detectors



- GEANT4 simulation of monolithic scintillation crystal
- One or more (d)SiPM arrays (double-sided readout, DSR, shown here)
- Gamma interaction position from scintillation light distribution
- Intrinsic depth-of-interaction information

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### Monolithic scintillator detectors



## **Digital SiPMs**

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#### **Analog Silicon Photomultiplier**



From: Thomas Frag, IEEE NSS/MIC, Orlando, FL October 28, 2009

### Installation of 1st prototypes in Delft





#### First tests in progress:

- Timing performance
- PDPC with monolithic scintillators

### Test setup dSiPM-based detectors

X-Y stage

#### **Reference detector**

Collimator





#### 24 mm x 24 mm x 10 mm monolithic LSO:Ce,Ca on PDPC array



G.J. van der Lei et al, NSS-MIC 2011, MIC15.S-83

## Sub-mm spatial resolution

#### 0.98 mm FWHM and 2.31 mm FWTM average resolution

FWHM position resolution

FWTM position resolution



- Improved nearest neighbors method (*H.T. van Dam, IEEE Trans Nucl Sci 58, 2139-2147, 2011*), using 100 reference events per calibration position
- Measurement performed at 0 °C.

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#### Energy resolution

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- Average energy resolution: ~11.5% FWHM
- Negligible saturation





#### Excellent timing resolution

- Better timing using time stamps of multiple Si dies
- Coincidence resolving time for 2 detectors: < 350 ps FWHM
- Further improvement expected with version 2.0 tiles, having better photon detection efficiency and neighbor logic between dies.



## Sub-mm resolution, TOF & DOI



Summary of results with 24 x 24 x 10 mm<sup>3</sup> LSO:Ce,Ca:

- Coincidence resolving time < 350 ps FWHM
- 0.98 mm FWHM average spatial resolution
- 11.5% average energy resolution
- Intrinsic depth-of-interaction information
- Further improvement expected with version
   2.0 dSiPM arrays

⇒ A cost-effective, high-performance detector concept for clinical PET/CT and PET/MRI?



#### And now for something (not) completely different...

### Proton therapy initiatives in NL

Holland Particle Therapy Centre

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- Erasmus Universitair Medisch Centrum Daniël den Hoed Kankercentrum (ErasmusMC), Nederlands Kanker Instituut -Antoni van Leeuwenhoek Ziekenhuis (NKI-AVL), Leids Universitair Medisch Centrum (LUMC), Technische Universiteit Delft (TU Delft)
- UMCG Protonen Therapie Centrum Noord-Nederland
  - Universitair Medisch Centrum Groningen (UMCG), Kernfysisch Versneller Instituut (KVI)
- Particle Therapy Center Euregion Meuse Rhine
  - Maastricht Radiation Oncology (MAASTRO Clinic), Maastricht Universitair Medisch Centrum (MUMC+), Universitätsklinikum Aachen (UKA), Rheinisch-Westfälische Technische Hochschule Aachen (RWTH), and others



#### Holland Particle Therapy Centre ( www.hollandptc.nl )
## Particle therapy: the promise...



#### Bragg peak





Images: M. Schippers, PSI

## ... and the problem





## Effect of density variation



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Tony Lomax, PSI

# Tissue activation by protons

## Radionuclide production by protons in tissue

Activation process	$E_{th}$	$\tau_{d}$	E <sub>max</sub>
	(MeV)	$(\min^{-1})$	(MeV)
$p + {}^{16}O \rightarrow {}^{15}O + (p, n)$	16.6	0.341	1.73
$p + {}^{16}O \rightarrow {}^{13}N + \alpha, 2(p, n)$	5.5	0.07	1.19
$p + {}^{16}O \rightarrow {}^{11}C + 3(p, n)$	14.3	0.034	0.96
$p + {}^{14}N \rightarrow {}^{13}N + (p, n)$	11.2	0.07	1.19
$p + {}^{14}N \rightarrow {}^{11}C + \alpha, 2(p, n)$	3.1	0.034	0.96
$p + {}^{12}C \rightarrow {}^{11}C + (p, n)$	20.1	0.034	0.96

# In-beam PET

Verification of dose delivery accuracy through imaging of positron emitters created by therapeutic charged particles in tissue

Proof-of-concept K. Parodi, P. Crespo, et al GSI Darmstadt / FZ Dresden-Rossendorf





# Proof of principle



Measured and predicted activity distribution after proton irradiation of a clivus chordoma patient at Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston.



# In-beam TOF-PET: early work at GSI

Problem: low angular coverage => insufficient counts & image artefacts

Solution: better system design & TOF

Proof-of-concept K. Parodi, P. Crespo, et al GSI Darmstadt / FZ Dresden-Rossendorf







## In-beam TOF-PET

## $\Rightarrow$ How to implement PET in a particle gantry?



Gantry of Heidelberger Ionenstrahl-Therapiezentrum (HIT)



www.hit-centrum.de



Rotating

# In-beam TOF-PET



Images: Paulo Crespo et al; Philips

# TOF detection of prompt gamma's

GEANT4 Monte Carlo simulation geometry



- Prompt-gamma's created by proton interactions escape from phantom
- Escaped gamma photons measured perpendicularly to the beam

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# TOF neutron rejection



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# TOF neutron rejection

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#### **GEANT4** Monte Carlo simulation



# TOF neutron rejection

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#### **GEANT4** Monte Carlo simulation



# TOF-PET detectors for PG imaging



• Scalable



- Bring high-performance SiPM-based detectors from the lab to clinical TOF-PET and PET/MRI systems
- Apply TOF technology in hadron therapy applications
- Keep on pushing the limits in time-of-flight resolution, ultimately towards "10-picosecond PET"



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# Backup slides

## Detector signal processing algorithms

IEEE TRANSACTIONS ON NUCLEAR SCIENCE

#### Improved Nearest Neighbor Methods for Gamma Photon Interaction Position Determination in Monolithic Scintillator PET Detectors

Herman T. van Dam, Stefan Seifert, Ruud Vinke, Peter Dendooven, Herbert Löhner, Freek J. Beekman, and Dennis R. Schaart

Abstract-Monolithic scintillator detectors have been shown to provide good performance and to have various practical advantages for use in PET systems. Excellent results for the gamma photon interaction position determination in these detectors have been obtained by means of the k-nearest neighbor (k-NN) method. However, the practical use of monolithic scintillator detectors and the k-NN method is hampered by the extensive calibration measurements and the long computation times. Therefore, several modified k-NN methods are investigated that facilitate as well as accelerate the calibration procedure, make the estimation algorithm more efficient, and reduce the number of reference events needed to obtain a given lateral (x, y)-resolution. These improved methods utilize the information contained in the calibration data more effectively. The alternative approaches were tested on a dataset measured with a SiPM-array-based monolithic LYSO detector. It appears that, depending on the number of reference events,  $\sim 10\%$  to  $\sim 25\%$  better spatial resolution can be obtained compared to the standard approach. Moreover, the methods amongst these that are equivalent to calibrating with a line source may allow for much faster and easier collection of the reference data. Finally, some of the improved methods yield essentially the same spatial resolution as the standard method using  $\sim 200$  times less reference data, greatly reducing the time needed for both calibration and interaction position computation. Thus, using the improvements proposed in this work, the high spatial resolution obtainable with the k-NN method may come within practical reach and, furthermore, the calibration may no longer be a limiting factor for the application of monolithic scintillator detectors in PET scanners.

Index Terms—Calibration, entry point, line source, monolithic scintillator detector, nearest neighbor method, position of interaction.

#### I. INTRODUCTION

**M** ONOLITHIC scintillation crystals read out by position sensitive photosensors are investigated as alternatives to detectors based on seemented crystals in positron emission to-



Fig. 1. (a) Illustration of a monolithic scintillator detector irradiated at a given position (x, y) by a perpendicularly incident beam of gamma photons. (b) The same detector irradiated along a line parallel to the *y*-axis at a given *x*-coordinate.

clinical PET systems. They exhibit excellent depth-of-interaction (DOI) correction as well as good spatial resolution, and, since they allow for reduced dead space, high system sensitivity can be obtained [6], [8]. Furthermore, they have several practical advantages, such as easier detector assembly.

The determination of the interaction position of a gamma photon in a monolithic scintillator is more complex than in a detector based on segmented crystals in which the lateral interaction coordinates (x, y-plane, see Fig. 1(a)) are usually determined by crystal segment identification. For example, in a monolithic scintillator detector the position of the sensor pixel with the largest signal does not necessarily correspond to the (x, y)-coordinates of the interaction position, since a large fraction of the scintillation photons may be reflected one or more times within the crystal before being detected. Furthermore, the scintillation photons twpically spread over many sensor pixels.



Same spatial resolution as standard method using ~200 times less reference data, speeding up calibration and interaction position computation by a similar factor Can make use of line source calibration, allowing for much faster and easier calibration

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H.T. van Dam, IEEE Trans Nucl Sci 58, 2139-2147, 2011.

# Detector signal processing algorithms

IOP PUBLISHING

Phys. Med. Biol. 56 (2011) 4135-4145

PHYSICS IN MEDICINE AND BIOLOGY

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#### A practical method for depth of interaction determination in monolithic scintillator PET detectors

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#### Abstract

Several new methods for determining the depth of interaction (DOI) of annihilation photons in monolithic scintillator detectors with singlesided, multi-pixel readout are investigated. The aim is to develop a DOI decoding method that allows for practical implementation in a positron emission tomography system. Specifically, calibration data, obtained with perpendicularly incident gamma photons only, are being used. Furthermore, neither detector modifications nor *a priori* knowledge of the light transport and/or signal variances is required. For this purpose, a clustering approach is utilized in combination with different parameters correlated with the DOI, such as the degree of similarity to a set of reference light distributions, the measured intensity on the sensor pixel(s) closest to the interaction position and the peak intensity of the measured light distribution. The proposed methods were tested



DOI resolutions of ~1 mm to ~4 mm feasible using perpendicular calibration data only.

> No detector modifications nor models of the light transport and/or signal variances are required.



H.T. van Dam, Phys Med Biol 56, 4135-4145, 2011.

## PET scintillators



	Nal:Tl	BGO	LSO:Ce	LSO:Ce,Ca	LaBr <sub>3</sub> :Ce
Density (g/cm <sup>3</sup> )	3.67	7.13	7.4	7.4	5.1
Effective Z	51	75	66	66	47
Atten. I. 511 keV (mm)	29.1	10.4	11.4	11.4	21.3
Decay time (ns)	230	300	40-45	30-35	16
# photons /MeV	40,000	8,500	30,000	30 00 EI	70,000
Emission max. (nm)	410	480	cod	for .20	380
Hygroscopic	yes	no	110	no	yes



# LaBr<sub>3</sub>:Ce<sup>3+</sup>

World-record energy resolution, extremely fast, and very bright. Discovered at TU Delft.



662 keV pulse-height spectrum



ESA 2013 BepiColombo mission



First prototype LaBr<sub>3</sub>:Ce time-of-flight PET scanner



## LaBr<sub>3</sub>:Ce<sup>3+</sup>





sealed detectors with windows

LaBr<sub>3</sub>:Ce<sup>3+</sup> hygroscopic and must be handled within a dry box  $\Rightarrow$  detectors must be sealed, like NaI(TI)



# Signal from timing branch





## Creating a Time Stamp



- Pick leading edge
- Interpolation with full cubic spline
- Determine baseline (averaging) directly prior to onset
- Determine intersection with constant level threshold



# Monolithic LaBr<sub>3</sub>:Ce detector

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- Hamamatsu SiPM array S11064-050P(X1)
- LaBr<sub>3</sub>:Ce(5%) 16.2 mm x 18 mm x 10 mm
- Front-side readout (FSR)
- Sealed, temperature-regulated detector box



# Monolithic LaBr<sub>3</sub>:Ce detector



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- Detector spatial resolution ~ 1.6 mm FWHM (averaged over entire detector)
- Coincidence resolving time (CRT) for 2 detectors in coincidence 198 ps FWHM
- Observed energy resolution 6.4% FWHM

# DOI-dependent signal delay in crystal



# Depth-of-interaction determination



Methods to determine DOI: (a) layered design, (b) single crystals with dualsided readout, (c) phoswich design, (d) monolithic scintillator, (e) dual layer with offset, (f) dual layer with mixed shapes

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# dsipM timing performance demonstrator chip



Photograph of Ca co-doped LSO:Ce crystal mounted on dSiPM demonstrator chip



- Time difference spectrum measured with a Na-22 point source
- CRT = 120 ps FWHM (for two detectors in coincidence) at room temperature

**Dennis R. Schaart** D.R. Schaart et al, NSS-MIC 2011, MIC15.S-137 Delft University of Technology

# Energy resolutioned LSO:Ce on PDPC demonstrator chip



Photograph of Ca co-doped LSO:Ce crystal mounted on dSiPM demonstrator chip



- Pulse height spectrum measured with a Na-22 point source at room temperature
- Energy resolution ≈ 10% FWHM (after saturation correction)

**Dennis R. Schaart** D.R. Schaart et al, NSS-MIC 2011, MIC15.S-137 Delft University of Technology

# Order Statistics

### Timestamp for the n<sup>th</sup> detected scintillation photon



for LYSO:Ce on MPPC-S10362-33-050C

# Lower bound for LYSO:Ce





Parameters:  $\tau_r = 90 \text{ ps}$   $\tau_d = 44 \text{ ns}$   $\sigma = 120 \text{ ps}$  $N_{det} = 4700$ 

Lower bound on the CRT for LYSO:Ce on MPPC-S10362-33-050C, using the n<sup>th</sup>, the first n, or all detected photons ("order statistics") for timing

**Denne Reifert of technology Denne Reifert of technology Delft University of Technology Delft University of Technology** 

# Lower bound for LYSO:Ce

It appears possible to closely approach the CR lower bound using a leading edge trigger set at the optimum threshold level





**TUDelft** Delft University of Technology Transactions on Nuclear Science 59, 190-204, 2012 72
## Comparison to measured values



**Dennis Reifert et al, "The lower bound on the timing resolution of scintillation detectors," Delft University of Technology** accepted, Phys Med Biol 2012