Feasibility of a non-invasive wireless blood glucose monitor

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FEASIBILITY OF A NON-INVASIVE WIRELESS BLOOD GLUCOSE MONITOR

By

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Abstract

Blood glucose monitors are critical to diabetes management. Many new non-invasive measurement techniques are being investigated. The present work focuses on the possibility of a monitor that non-invasively measures blood glucose levels using electromagnetic waves. The technique is based on relating a monitoring antenna’s resonant frequency to the permittivity and conductivity of blood which in turn is related to the glucose levels.

At first a realistic data base for the dielectric properties of blood has been established through in-vitro measurements performed on blood samples obtained from 20 patients with glucose levels ranging from normal (87 mg/dl) to hyperglycemic (330 mg/dl). Using the Agilent 85070E dielectric probe and an Agilent 8720B network analyzer the dielectric permittivity and conductivity of the blood samples have been measured over a frequency range of 1GHz – 10GHz. The Cole-Cole model has been modified through curve fitting to in-vitro data that includes a factor representing glucose levels.

Two antennas (wideband and narrowband) have been designed, constructed and tested in free space. A simulation model of layered tissue and blood together with an antenna has been created to study the effect of changing glucose levels. It is noted that the antenna’s resonant frequency increases with increase in glucose levels.

An analytical model for the antenna has been developed, which has been validated with simulations. The model consists of a lumped-element antenna that represents a narrowband radiator. The resonant frequency of the radiator is dictated by a resonant LCR circuit, which is a function of the materials within the antenna’s near-field.
A measurement system has been developed to measure the resonant frequency of the antenna. A frequency synthesizer generates an RF signal over the desired frequency range. This signal is sent to the antenna through a directional coupler that generates forward and reflected signals. These voltages are measured and the reflection coefficient is calculated with a microprocessor.

As an experimental verification, two antennas were strapped one on each leg of a patient with one antenna connected to the PNA and the other to the measurement system. As the patient ingested fast acting glucose tablets, the blood glucose level was measured by a traditional glucose meter. At the same time, a comparison of the resonant frequency of the antenna measured by the PNA and by the measurement system showed good agreement. Further, it is seen that the antenna resonant frequency increases as the glucose level increases, which is consistent with the simulation model.
# Table of Contents

Acknowledgements ........................................................................................................ ii
Abstract ......................................................................................................................... iv
List of Figures ................................................................................................................ viii
List of Tables .................................................................................................................. xi
1. Introduction and Background ................................................................................. 1
   1.1 Diabetes Mellitus ................................................................................................. 1
   1.2 Invasive Glucose Monitoring Techniques .......................................................... 3
   1.3 Non-Invasive Glucose Monitoring Techniques ...................................................... 5
      1.3.1 Interstitial Fluid Chemical Analysis ................................................................. 5
      1.3.2 Breath Chemical Analysis ............................................................................... 6
      1.3.3 Infrared Spectroscopy .................................................................................... 6
      1.3.4 Optical Coherence Tomography ..................................................................... 7
      1.3.5 Temperature-modulated localized reference .................................................. 7
      1.3.6 Raman Spectroscopy ...................................................................................... 8
      1.3.7 Polarization Change ....................................................................................... 8
      1.3.8 Ultrasound ...................................................................................................... 8
      1.3.9 Fluorescence ................................................................................................... 8
      1.3.10 Thermal Spectroscopy .................................................................................. 9
      1.3.11 Ocular Spectroscopy ..................................................................................... 9
      1.3.12 Impedance Spectroscopy .............................................................................. 9
   1.4 Dielectric Properties of Blood ............................................................................. 17
   1.5 Major Contributions of Present Work ................................................................. 21
   1.6 Organization of Present Work .............................................................................. 22
2. Dielectric Properties of Blood ................................................................................. 24
   2.1 Experimental Blood Measurements ...................................................................... 24
   2.2 Models for Characterizing Dielectric Properties of Tissue .................................... 25
   2.3 Developing a Glucose-Dependent Model ............................................................... 26
3. Simulations for Non-Invasive Blood Glucose Monitoring ........................................ 33
   3.1 Design of an Antenna for Glucose Monitoring ..................................................... 33
   3.2 Human Body Models ............................................................................................. 36
   3.3 Antenna Design and Simulations .......................................................................... 37
3.3.1 Design of a Wideband Antenna ................................................................. 37
3.3.2 Design of a Narrowband Antenna ............................................................... 40
3.3.3 Analytical Model of Narrowband Antenna .................................................. 42

   4.1 Antenna Performance .................................................................................... 46
   4.2 Measurement System Design Details ............................................................ 48
   4.3 Evaluation of System Operation and Performance ......................................... 52
   4.4 Measurement System Results .................................................................... 57

5. Conclusions and Future Work ........................................................................ 60
   5.1 Future Work ............................................................................................... 60

References ............................................................................................................. 62

Appendix A: Measurement System Schematic ..................................................... 67
Appendix B: Measurement System Bill of Materials ............................................. 68
Appendix C: Measurement System Board Layout .............................................. 71
Appendix D: Measurement System Board Errata .............................................. 73
## List of Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1</td>
<td>Typical blood glucose control system. [27]</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2</td>
<td>Simplified glucose measurement method. [8]</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3</td>
<td>Lifescan OneTouch Ultra glucose meter[9] (left), and Medtronics CGMS <a href="right">10</a></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4</td>
<td>Simple electrical model of skin sensor used by Pendragon device. [26]</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5</td>
<td>Block diagram of Pendragon blood glucose sensing system. [26]</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 6</td>
<td>Experimental data of Pendragon blood glucose monitoring system, showing sensor signal, blood glucose concentration (measured invasively) and interstitial fluid glucose concentration. [26]</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 7</td>
<td>Clarke error grid from a study of the Pendragon blood glucose monitor. [25]</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 8</td>
<td>Resonant spiral transmission line developed by Baylor University research team, and S21 measurements during “soda” test. [27]</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 9</td>
<td>Frequency change in S21 response of device developed by Baylor University. [27]</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 10</td>
<td>Resonant spiral glucose measurement device without (left) and with thumb guide (right). [28]</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 11</td>
<td>Serpentine antenna (left) embedded in human tissue (right) [44].</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 12</td>
<td>Serpentine antenna in air and in mimicking gel [44].</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 13</td>
<td>Time varying permittivity (a) and blood glucose concentration (b) of hamster tails, measured invasively. [33]</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 14</td>
<td>Fischer projection of biologically active D-Glucose and the biologically inactive isomer L-Glucose. [34]</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 15</td>
<td>Permittivity of erythrocytes as a function of frequency and D-glucose concentrations [34].</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 16</td>
<td>Hypothetical model of the effect triggered by increasing glucose concentrations. [34]</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 17</td>
<td>Agilent 85070E high temperature dielectric probe. [36]</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 18: Collected and measured data of permittivity (solid) and conductivity (dashed) of human blood. [31]........................................................................................................... 25

Figure 19: Average permittivity of collected data from study and permittivity of established model.................................................................................................................. 27

Figure 20: Average conductivity of collected data from study and conductivity of established model.................................................................................................................. 27

Figure 21: Collected data permittivity (left) and conductivity (right) as a function of blood glucose at 1 GHz (top) and 5 GHz (bottom). ............................................................. 28

Figure 22: Average permittivity of collected data and permittivity of modified model... 29

Figure 23: Average conductivity of collected data and conductivity of modified model. 30

Figure 24: Collected permittivity and modified model permittivity for various blood glucose concentrations at 1 GHz (top) and 5 GHz (bottom). ........................................... 31

Figure 25: Three samples from study measuring 72 mg/dL(left), 95 mg/dL (center), and 134 mg/dL (right), with modified model. ........................................................................... 32

Figure 26: Conceptual blood glucose measurement form factor. .................................. 33

Figure 27: Detection of tissue properties through antenna fringing field....................... 34

Figure 28: Permittivity of Human Blood........................................................................... 35

Figure 29: Penetration depth of human blood................................................................ 35

Figure 30: Ansoft HFSS human body model skeletal (top left), muscular (top right), vascular (bottom left), and "average" tissue (bottom right). ......................................................... 36

Figure 31: Tissue layers used for simplified human body model................................. 37

Figure 32: Modified UWB antenna with dimensions in mm....................................... 38

Figure 33: Modified UWB antenna return loss........................................................... 39

Figure 34: Modified UWB antenna return loss for varying glucose concentrations. ...... 39

Figure 35: Modified NB antenna with dimensions in mm. ......................................... 40

Figure 36: Simulated NB antenna return loss.............................................................. 41

Figure 37: NB antenna return loss for varying glucose concentrations...................... 41
List of Tables

Table 1: Cole-Cole dispersion parameters for various human tissues [32] ...................... 26

Table 2: Parameters of original and modified blood Cole-Cole models. ......................... 29

Table 3: Lumped element values of analytical model. .................................................. 42
1. Introduction and Background

1.1 Diabetes Mellitus

Diabetes mellitus, often referred to as diabetes is a group of metabolic diseases in which a person has high blood sugar. This high blood sugar will often cause symptoms of frequent urination, increased hunger and increased thirst. The two types that affect the general population are known as Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes.

Type 1 diabetes (often known as juvenile diabetes) is a condition in which pancreatic β-cell destruction usually leads to absolute insulin deficiency. This results in the inability to maintain glucose homoeostasis. Susceptibility to Type 1 diabetes is largely inherited, but there are also environmental triggers that are not fully understood. Of those with Type 1 diabetes, 50-60% of patients are under 18 years of age [1].

Figure 1: Typical blood glucose control system. [27]
Type 2 diabetes is characterized by a resistance to insulin, and in some cases absolute insulin deficiency. Lifestyles are significant factors in acquiring Type 2 diabetes. In one study, those that had high levels of physical activity, a healthy diet, did not smoke, consumed alcohol in moderation and were a healthy weight had a 89% lower diabetes Type 2 rate [2].

Diabetes can result in chronic conditions such as Vascular Disease, Renal Complications, and a variety of neurological symptoms. In 2003, the cost of treating diabetes was estimated to be $132 billion. By 2020 it is estimated the number of people diagnosed with diabetes could rise to over 17 million, costing an estimated $192 billion [3].

While there is no cure for diabetes, symptoms are controlled through the regulation of blood glucose levels. There are several types of measurements that can be used to monitor glucose regulation. Once in the blood stream, glucose combines with hemoglobin found in red blood cells (erythrocytes) to create glycated hemoglobin (HBA1C). The hemoglobin will remain glycated for the life of the erythrocyte, typically 90-120 days [4]. This makes HbA1c concentration measurement the best indication of average blood glucose concentration. While HbA1c measurements are the best method of long-term control, self monitoring of blood glucose levels is fundamental to diabetes care. Frequent monitoring avoids hypoglycemia, and aids in determining dietary choices, physical activity, and insulin doses.

Most at-home monitoring is performed with a blood glucose monitor. While current blood glucose monitors require small amounts of blood (2-10 µL) and can be used at sites other than the fingertips, it is still a painful and tedious measurement. Although
blood glucose measurements fluctuate much more than HbA1c measurements, there is a strong correlation between HbA1c measurements and average glucose measurements taken over the same time period [5]. Continuous monitoring systems also exist, but they require a subcutaneous injection to be replaced every 3 to 7 days. While it has been shown that continuous monitoring systems are effective in reducing blood glucose to recommended levels [6], adolescents and young adults often have difficulty adhering to this intensive treatment. For this reason non-invasive monitoring systems would be preferred.

1.2 Invasive Glucose Monitoring Techniques

Current glucose monitoring devices are extremely similar to the devices originally created in the 1960’s. [7] Aside from the miniaturization, ease of use and the ability to log data, the measurements fundamentally are the same as the first laboratory sensors. A blood sample is placed in contact with an enzyme (typically glucose oxidase) which produces hydrogen peroxide from glucose and oxygen. The hydrogen peroxide quantity is then measured amperometrically with a (typically platinum) electrode. The vast majority of monitoring systems sold today, whether continuous or blood meters, use enzyme-coated electrodes and amperometric analysis.
There are several downsides to the current offerings of glucose meters. The blood meters require a blood sample, which is a painful procedure. If repeatedly measured, thick calluses can form on the fingertips causing more pain over time to draw blood. Continuous glucose monitoring systems (CGMS) provide the ability to continuously monitor glucose levels, but they require additional calibration to blood samples, as they often measure interstitial fluid. Perhaps the greatest downside, however, is the cost of current monitors. CGMS can cost several thousand dollars, and while blood monitors are relatively inexpensive, the electrodes are disposable and become costly over time. A single-use blood electrode strip costs about $1, and a CGMS 3-7 day sensor can cost $30-$50. For people who measure their blood glucose level several times a day, the measurement strips can become a significant expenditure.
Clearly, a reusable, non-invasive glucose monitoring system would be beneficial. This has been a heavily researched field in recent years. Various non-invasive glucose monitoring techniques will be discussed in the next section.

1.3 Non-Invasive Glucose Monitoring Techniques

Non-invasive glucose monitoring techniques have been heavily researched over the past several decades. The current areas of research will now be discussed. They have been divided into the following categories: Interstitial fluid chemical analysis, Breath chemical analysis, Infrared spectroscopy, Optical coherence tomography, Temperature-modulated localized reflectance, Raman spectroscopy, Polarity changes, Ultrasound, Fluorescence, Thermal spectroscopy, Ocular spectroscopy, and Impedance spectroscopy.

1.3.1 Interstitial Fluid Chemical Analysis

Of all non-invasive monitoring techniques, Interstitial fluid (ISF) chemical analysis is the most like traditional invasive monitors. There is an enzymatic reaction...
very similar to the one already described, except that the reaction is performed on ISF that is excreted through the skin. The most significant ISF glucose monitor was called Glucowatch®, designed by Cygnus inc[11]. The monitor was in a watch form factor, with a disposable pad pressed against the skin to absorb the ISF. The Glucowatch® has been shown able to effectively measure blood glucose levels in several clinical trials [12],[13], and was approved by the FDA in 2001. The company that manufactured it, however, has been shut down in 2005. It has been suggested that this was caused by a combination of technical issues and high costs to the user (in addition to a $700 meter, the cost of the disposable pads was greater than $5000 per year)[14]. It is unknown if similar techniques are currently being used on new products.

1.3.2 Breath Chemical Analysis

Another chemical analysis technique involves the measurement of acetone in an exhaled breath. It has been shown that the level of acetone in exhaled breaths sharply rises in diabetic patients, and increases as a function of blood glucose levels. A system has been designed which can chemically analyze exhaled air, which can be used to determine blood glucose levels [15].

1.3.3 Infrared Spectroscopy

Infrared spectroscopy can be separated into two categories, Near-infrared spectroscopy (NIR) and Mid-Infrared spectroscopy (Mid-IR). NIR is a lower frequency measurement in which the transmission and reflection of infrared light is used to characterize blood glucose levels [16]. Some designs provide a depth resolution through the use of a confocal system [17]. It is typically performed in an area of the body with
relatively thin tissue like an earlobe, upper lip, or finger web. Due to the frequency of the light, this measurement is sensitive to changes in skin structure than can found in subjects with chronic hyperglycemia. A recent investigation has also been performed into the possibility of an NIR optical implant [18]. Mid-IR uses essentially the same technique as NIR, although there is typically not enough light penetration at Mid-IR frequencies for transmission analysis to be performed. As a result, only reflection analysis is used. Infrared spectroscopy has not yet been shown to be a reliable measurement technique.

1.3.4 Optical Coherence Tomography

Optical coherence tomography (OCT) is a specific form of light scattering measurement in which the phase component of reflected light is measured. OCT utilizes a low coherence (wide frequency spectrum) light source, which is sent from an interferometer to a reference mirror and to the subject (typically an arm)[19]. The reflected light from both the subject and the mirror are then correlated. By moving the subject location and the reference mirror location, an image can be generated with both lateral and in-depth scanning. An increase in ISF glucose levels causes an increase in refractive index, which can be seen in the generated images.

1.3.5 Temperature-modulated localized reference

Temperature-modulated localized reflectance is another form of light scattering measurement. Tissue have varying refractive index based on temperature, but the variation is also a factor of glucose concentrations [20]. By modulating skin temperature between 22 and 38 degrees C, variations in light packets reflected can be used to determine glucose levels.
1.3.6 **Raman Spectroscopy**

Raman spectroscopy is a method in which an oscillation is generated in a fluid which causes changes in light scattering properties [21]. Specifically, this technique can be used to measure glucose concentrations in the front of the eye. A laser is used to stimulate glucose molecules to oscillate in the ocular fluid. The scattered light from the oscillation is an indicator of the glucose concentration. A negative to this technique is the potential interference from other molecules.

1.3.7 **Polarization Change**

Another optical technique being investigated in the eye is that of polarization change. The polarization of a polarized light source will change angle slightly if it is passed through a solution of chiral molecules, such as glucose [22]. While this technique is feasible, pH and interfering compounds have prevented high specificity.

1.3.8 **Ultrasound**

A promising technique for monitoring glucose levels exists that utilizes ultrasound. Several types have been investigated, but they all essentially operate on the same principles. A short laser burst is used to locally heat a small tissue area, which causes an ultrasonic pulse to propagate through the tissue. The photoacoustic excitation is dependent on the laser frequency. As the laser frequency is varied, the concentration of glucose levels in fluids can be determined from the photoacoustic spectrum [23].

1.3.9 **Fluorescence**

A study has demonstrated that fluorescence can be used as an indicator of glucose concentrations [16]. By exciting tissue with an ultraviolet laser, the tissue generates
fluorescence at 380 nm, the intensity of which is dependent on glucose levels. This has limited capabilities since the intensity is strongly affected by skin pigment and thickness.

1.3.10 Thermal Spectroscopy

Thermal spectroscopy is the measurement of infrared radiation emitting from the human body. While other factors are significant as well, glucose concentration has been shown to have an absorptive effect on the quantity of human body infrared emission [11].

1.3.11 Ocular Spectroscopy

Ocular spectroscopy is a method through which tears are chemically analyzed to reveal glucose levels. A contact lens has been designed [24], which reacts with the glucose in tears. When emitted with a light source, such as a laser, the reflected light changes wavelength based upon the glucose concentration, which can be measured with a spectrometer.

1.3.12 Impedance Spectroscopy

Impedance spectroscopy is the study of interaction between electromagnetic radiation and matter as a function of wavelength ($\lambda$). While other blood glucose measurement techniques utilize infrared or visible light spectroscopy, this technique focuses on the use of radio frequency radiation. This involves the measurement of the impedance of human tissues in the radio frequency range, which will ultimately be used to characterize blood glucose levels. While this describes the present work, there have been other research groups that have investigated the possibility of a radio frequency impedance spectroscopy system for blood glucose monitoring. They will be discussed at greater length. The following research is supportive and encouraging to the present work,
but there are clear areas that were not investigated fully that are addressed later in this paper.

There have been two research groups that have previously published work in this field. The first group began publishing their work in 2000 [25]. It involved a novel sensor based on a resonant RLC circuit [26].

![Simple electrical model of skin sensor used by Pendragon device.][26]

The resonant frequency of the sensor was detected by measuring the impedance magnitude of the resonant circuit through a voltage divider. The frequency was swept through the desired frequency range by the configuration of a digital to analog converter (DAC).
Immediately, there are several potential issues that can be identified with this device. Since the resonant circuit is placed directly on the skin, the quality factor (Q) of the capacitor is a function of the dielectric losses of the skin. In addition, the measurement method only measures the magnitude of the resonant frequency impedance. This means that for a very low Q, without detecting any phase component it could be very difficult to identify the true resonant frequency. Finally, despite the temperature compensation that is performed digitally, controlling the VCO with a DAC outside of a phase-locked-loop (PLL) significantly reduces the frequency accuracy. If a PLL was used to control the loop, the temperature variation of a VCO could be compensated for while introducing only minor frequency inaccuracy from a crystal resonator.
Despite these possible issues with the design, there were some promising experiments performed and published (Figure 6).

![Experimental data of Pendragon blood glucose monitoring system, showing sensor signal, blood glucose concentration (measured invasively) and interstitial fluid glucose concentration.][26]

The device was productized into a watch form factor called Pendra® by Pendragon Medical and approved by the CE regulatory body in 2003. The calibration procedure required a 2-3 day process, after which approximately 30% of the users had to give up wearing the sensors. This was due to skin conditions, impedance, or other factors that the Pendra® system was unable to account for. After an initial launch in 2004 to several European markets, significant technical problems caused the Pendragon Medical to file for bankruptcy.

A detailed analysis of data from the Pendra® system has shown that its correlation to actual glucose values was only 35.1% and that it provided potentially dangerous readings to its users. The Clarke error grid can be shown in Figure 7, in which
a significant amount of the readings fall into the dangerous D and E zones.

Figure 7: Clarke error grid from a study of the Pendragon blood glucose monitor. [25]

Another promising radio frequency impedance spectroscopy system has been developed by Buford Randall Jean and Eric C, Green at Baylor University [27]. Rather than an open-ended resonant circuit, the team at Baylor University has opted to use a resonant-spiral transmission line (Figure 8).
For various blood glucose levels, the sensor has been shown to resonate at different frequencies. This response shows many maxima and minima which are used for analysis. Like previous work, the phase component has not been used for analysis.

Figure 8: Resonant spiral transmission line developed by Baylor University research team, and S21 measurements during “soda” test. [27]

Figure 9: Frequency change in S21 response of device developed by Baylor University. [27]
This research group has also provided similar promising results that show a significant response to glucose consumption, shown in Figure 9, from their “soda test”, but has not shown the correlation of this data to glucose levels.

![Resonant spiral glucose measurement device without (left) and with thumb guide (right). [28]](image)

The form factor of this device is shown in Figure 10. The spiral is a pad on which a thumb is pressed [28]. Clearly, like previous work, the physical orientation of the subject with regard to the device is critical to the measurement.

While both of these research groups have shown promising experimental evidence, neither has provided any insight on the mechanism that causes their devices to work. Both of their devices make use of only magnitude and not phase data. Both of these discrepancies will be addressed in future chapters, in addition to other work.

There is another group currently working on antennas for continuous blood glucose monitoring [44]. While this research group has focused on the use of an implanted antenna for data communication, there has been significant progress in the design of an antenna for use in direct contact with human tissues. A serpentine antenna
has been designed (Figure 11) that has been designed to operate in the presence of tissues.

Gels that mimic the dielectric properties of skin have been created, and it can be seen (Figure 12) that the antenna’s response changes whether or not it is in the presence of the skin gel.

Figure 11: Serpentine antenna (left) embedded in human tissue (right) [44].

Figure 12: Serpentine antenna in air and in mimicking gel [44].
In the present work, an antenna will be designed to provide the same effect. For our purposes, the resonant frequency of the antenna will be used as a measurement method, not for communication.

1.4 Dielectric Properties of Blood

In order to better understand the mechanism for a radio frequency glucose monitoring system to work, we must explore the properties that affect electromagnetic devices. Every medium, including biological materials can be described by a frequency-dependant complex relative permittivity [29].

\[ \varepsilon = \varepsilon' - j\varepsilon'' \]  

The real part of the permittivity \( \varepsilon' \) denotes the amount of electromagnetic energy stored in a material relative to that stored in a vacuum.

The imaginary part of the permittivity \( j\varepsilon'' \) is a loss factor describing the dielectric losses in the material. It can be re-written as equation 2 [30],

\[ \varepsilon'' = \frac{\sigma}{\varepsilon_0 \omega} \]  

where \( \sigma \) is the total conductivity of the material, which may include a contribution from a frequency-independent ionic conductivity. \( \varepsilon_0 \) is the permittivity of free space, and \( \omega \) is the angular frequency of the field.

The dielectric properties are often determined as \( \varepsilon' \) and \( \sigma \) values, which is how they will be referenced for the rest of this work.

The dielectric properties of blood, like all tissues, are not constant over frequency. They vary based on frequency, called dispersion. There are many dispersion zones, frequency ranges in which certain mechanisms (macromolecules, water molecules, etc.) will dominate the dielectric properties of the medium [30]. Each of these zones can be
modeled with separate term of a Debye or Cole-Cole Model. Both of these models have multiple terms that can be used to describe the dielectric properties of a medium accurately. These models have already been used extensively by research groups to characterize blood, as well as other human tissues. They will be discussed later in greater detail.

There has already been extensive characterization of blood dielectric properties [31]. In 1996, a research group from King’s College published a thorough series of papers in which blood and 16 other types of human tissue were measured with an impedance analyzer and modeled [32]. This information has been modeled and compiled into a database which has served as a reference for human tissue dielectric properties.

While human tissue dielectric properties have been characterized, there is little information present regarding the effect of blood glucose levels on blood dielectric properties in the radio frequency range. What little studies have been performed will now be discussed.

It has been shown that the dielectric properties of tissues in hamster tails changes according to variations in blood glucose [33], but this data was only collected at 10 kHz. It can be seen (Figure 13) that the permittivity has an inverse relationship with the hamster blood glucose level.
Another study has shown that red blood cells (erythrocytes) suspended in saline have a varying relative permittivity with the biologically active glucose [34]. The biologically inactive glucose was not seen to have an effect on the erythrocyte dielectric properties, suggesting that the dielectric property changes were a result of a biological mechanism rather than the dielectric properties of the glucose itself.

![Fischer projection of biologically active D-Glucose and the biologically inactive isomer L-Glucose.](image)

Figure 13: Time varying permittivity (a) and blood glucose concentration (b) of hamster tails, measured invasively. [33]

Figure 14: Fischer projection of biologically active D-Glucose and the biologically inactive isomer L-Glucose. [34]
The real relative permittivity of erythrocytes can be seen in Figure 15, for various D-glucose concentrations. It can be seen that the permittivity is not monotonic over various glucose concentrations.

![Figure 15: Permittivity of erythrocytes as a function of frequency and D-glucose concentrations [34]](image)

It has been suggested that the intake of glucose in the erythrocytes causes a modification of the membrane porosity or activity of membrane ion pumps (Figure 16). While this has not been proven, it is reasonable that the permittivity changes are a result of a biological interaction with the glucose. This is encouraging, but it does not account for any dielectric changes in the blood beyond the erythrocytes.

There is a clear lack of a model for human blood as a function of glucose level. This will be addressed by the present work in a later chapter.
1.5 Major Contributions of Present Work

From this work we define our major contributions as the following:

1) In vitro testing of blood samples from 20 subjects, in a collaborative study with the University at Buffalo, during which the dielectric properties of blood were correlated to blood glucose levels (ranging from normal to hyperglycemic). This data has been used to modify an existing Cole-Cole model to include a factor that describes the dielectric properties of human blood based on blood glucose levels as well as frequency.

2) This model has been used to define the frequency requirements of an impedance spectroscopy system. Two antennas (wideband and narrowband) have been designed specifically to be sensitive to dielectric changes of blood when placed near the human body. A simulation model of layered tissue and blood together with an antenna has been created to study the effect of changing glucose levels. The antenna’s resonant frequency is shown to increase with an increase in glucose concentrations.

Figure 16: Hypothetical model of the effect triggered by increasing glucose concentrations. [34]
levels. An analytical model for the narrowband antenna has been developed, which has been validated with simulations.

3) A measurement system has been developed to measure the resonant frequency of the antenna. Through the use of a frequency synthesizer, directional coupler, log amp and a microprocessor, the board is able to calculate the antenna’s reflection coefficient and determine the resonant frequency. An experimental verification has been performed, in which an antenna and measurement system were strapped (one on each leg) to a patient. The antenna’s resonant frequency was measured by a PNA, and the measurement system recorded data as the patient ingested fast acting glucose tablets. A comparison of the resonant frequency of the antenna measured by the PNA and by the measurement system showed good agreement. It is also shown that the antenna’s resonant frequencies increases as the glucose level increases, which is consistent with the simulation model.

1.6 Organization of Present Work

Chapter 1 serves to present the previous work that has been done up to this point, in the field of non-invasive blood glucose monitoring and blood dielectric properties, as well as presenting the major contributions to the field as provided by this paper.

Chapter 2 will address the dielectric properties of blood in more detail. Specifically, this will involve in vitro measurements of blood samples, from which a realistic model will be created that is a function of frequency and blood glucose concentrations. This model will be compared to accepted models of previous work.

Chapter 3 will present a feasibility study for non-invasive blood glucose monitoring through simulation. Utilizing the derived model, an antenna will be designed
that will be shown to effectively measure changed in blood glucose levels. Simulated results will be presented.

Chapter 4 will present a prototype of a non-invasive blood glucose monitoring system. The system will be manufactured and shown to operate as intended, while achieving a body-worn form factor. Experimental measurements of the antenna will be presented and shown to agree well with the measurement system.

Chapter 5 will conclude this work by discussing results, reiterating the major contributions of the present work, and describing future possible work in the field.
2. **Dielectric Properties of Blood**

2.1 **Experimental Blood Measurements**

Previous work has shown that there is a relationship between the dielectric properties of blood and the glucose concentration. This relationship, while highly referenced, has had very little research. One of the major contributions of the present work is to provide a model that could be used for future research in this field.

In an effort to better understand the effect of blood glucose on human blood dielectric properties, the Rochester Institute of Technology partnered with the State University of New York at Buffalo to perform a study. In this study, 20 subjects volunteered (8 diabetics, 12 non-diabetics) to have two samples of their blood drawn. Two 3 ml samples were taken, one in a vial containing Ethylenediaminetetraacetic acid (EDTA) and one without any additives. EDTA is a chelating agent, which sequesters the iron molecules in the blood to prevent clotting [35]. The blood with EDTA was sent to the laboratory for glucose concentration testing. The blood without additives was placed in a 5 ml dish and the dielectric properties were measured with an Agilent 85070E high temperature probe (Figure 17) and an Agilent 8720B Network Analyzer.

![Figure 17: Agilent 85070E high temperature dielectric probe. [36]](image-url)
2.2 Models for Characterizing Dielectric Properties of Tissue

As mentioned earlier, there already exists an established model for the dielectric properties of human blood. It has been generated from the compilation of previous studies and experimental measurements (Figure 18) by Gabriel and Gabriel. In the present work this is used as a reference to validate our collected data as well as to provide a starting point for our model which will be generated.

A popular model for dielectrics is a Debye model. It can contain multiple terms, which can be used to represent the effect of different types of dispersions (Equation 3). This is what allows the model to track the plateau/slope/plateau nature of tissue dielectric properties[32].

\[ \varepsilon(\omega) = \varepsilon_\infty + \sum_{m=1}^{n} \frac{\Delta\varepsilon_m}{1+j\omega\tau_m} + \frac{\sigma_i}{j\omega\varepsilon_0} \]  

(3)

A modification of the Debye model has been generated to slightly improve its usefulness, called a Cole-Cole model (Equation 4). It contains a broadening term \( \alpha \),

Figure 18: Collected and measured data of permittivity (solid) and conductivity (dashed) of human blood. [31]
which can be used to set the frequency range over which each term will dominate the equation[32].

\[
\varepsilon(\omega) = \varepsilon_\infty + \sum_{m=1}^{n} \frac{\Delta \varepsilon_m}{1 + (j\omega \tau_m)^{(1-\alpha_m)}} + \frac{\sigma_i}{j\omega \varepsilon_0}
\] (4)

Ultimately, the researchers found that a fourth order Cole-Cole dispersion model provided the best fit to the gathered data for all tissue types. The parameters of this model for various tissues are shown in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tissue Type</th>
<th>Blood</th>
<th>Fat</th>
<th>Muscle</th>
<th>Dry Skin</th>
<th>Wet Skin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(\varepsilon_\infty)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(\Delta \varepsilon_1)</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>39</td>
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<tr>
<td>(\Delta \varepsilon_2)</td>
<td>5200</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7000</td>
<td>1100</td>
<td>280</td>
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<tr>
<td>(\Delta \varepsilon_3)</td>
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<td>3.3e4</td>
<td>1.2e6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3e4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(\Delta \varepsilon_4)</td>
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<td>1e7</td>
<td>2.5e7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3e4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(\tau_1)</td>
<td>8.377e-12</td>
<td>7.958e-12</td>
<td>7.234e-12</td>
<td>7.234e-12</td>
<td>7.958e-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(\tau_2)</td>
<td>132.629e-9</td>
<td>15.915e-9</td>
<td>353.678e-9</td>
<td>32.481e-9</td>
<td>79.577e-9</td>
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<tr>
<td>(\tau_3)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>159.155e-6</td>
<td>318.31e-6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1.592e-6</td>
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<tr>
<td>(\tau_4)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7.958e-3</td>
<td>2.274e-3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1.592e-3</td>
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<tr>
<td>(\alpha_1)</td>
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<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(\alpha_2)</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
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<td>0.16</td>
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<tr>
<td>(\alpha_4)</td>
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<td>0.01</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(\sigma)</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Cole-Cole dispersion parameters for various human tissues [32]

### 2.3 Developing a Glucose-Dependent Model

The discussed model for blood has now been compared to the collected data from our study. The average of the collected data is shown in Figure 19 and Figure 20 as a function of frequency, with the accepted model for human blood dielectric properties [32]. There is agreement between the collected data and the model, but for our purposes the model could be adjusted slightly to fit the collected data.
Figure 19: Average permittivity of collected data from study and permittivity of established model. It can be seen that at concentrations lower than 150 mg/dL, there is an inverse relationship between blood glucose concentrations and relative permittivity.

Figure 20: Average conductivity of collected data from study and conductivity of established model.

Plotted as a function of glucose concentration, all 20 samples are shown in Figure 21 at 1 GHz and 5 GHz. It can be seen that at concentrations lower than 150 mg/dL, there is an inverse relationship between blood glucose concentrations and relative permittivity.
There does not, however, appear to be a relationship between blood glucose concentration and conductivity.

![Blood Permittivity at 1 GHz](image1)

![Blood Conductivity at 1 GHz](image2)

![Blood Permittivity at 5 GHz](image3)

![Blood Conductivity at 5 GHz](image4)

Figure 21: Collected data permittivity (left) and conductivity (right) as a function of blood glucose at 1 GHz (top) and 5 GHz (bottom).

From this collected data, the established model can be revised to fit the collected data. The result is a Cole-Cole model in the form of (5).

\[
\varepsilon(\omega) = Re \left[ \varepsilon_\infty + \sum_{m=1}^{4} \frac{\Delta \varepsilon_m}{1 + j\omega \tau_m (1 - \alpha_m)} \right] \left[ (-0.001445)g + 1.145882 \right] + Im \left[ \varepsilon_\infty + \sum_{m=1}^{4} \frac{\Delta \sigma_m}{1 + j\omega \tau_m (1 - \alpha_m)} + \sigma_\sigma / j\omega \varepsilon_0 \right] \tag{5}
\]

where \( g \) is blood glucose from 70 to 150 mg/dL, and the model is defined by the parameters of Table 2.
Tissue Type Original Blood Model [32] Modified Blood Model
\[\varepsilon_0\] 4 2.8
\[\Delta\varepsilon_1\] 56 56.5
\[\Delta\varepsilon_2\] 5200 5500
\[\Delta\varepsilon_3\] 0 0
\[\Delta\varepsilon_4\] 0 0
\[\tau_1\] 8.377e-12 8.377e-12
\[\tau_2\] 132.629e-9 132.629e-9
\[\tau_3\] - -
\[\tau_4\] - -
\[\alpha_1\] 0.1 0.057
\[\alpha_2\] 0.1 0.1
\[\alpha_3\] - -
\[\alpha_4\] - -
\[\sigma\] 0.7 0.5

Table 2: Parameters of original and modified blood Cole-Cole models.

This model can be seen to agree very well with the collected data, shown in Figures 22-24.

![Figure 22: Average permittivity of collected data and permittivity of modified model](image-url)
Figure 23: Average conductivity of collected data and conductivity of modified model.
Figure 24: Collected permittivity and modified model permittivity for various blood glucose concentrations at 1 GHz (top) and 5 GHz (bottom).
Three samples of collected data from the study are shown in Figure 25 with the modified model for the glucose levels measured.

While this model agrees well with the collected data, above 150 mg/dL there does not appear to be a trend as a function of glucose. It is possible that the mechanism that has caused a relationship between glucose concentrations and relative permittivity below 150 mg/dL is different within a diabetic population. This is supported by the collected data; the 12 non-diabetic subjects had glucose concentrations ranging from 72 mg/dL to 134 mg/dL, while the diabetic subjects had concentrations ranging from 111 mg/dL to 330 mg/dL.

Further work is clearly needed to characterize the various impacts of other factors (hydration level, glycated hemoglobin, blood pressure, temperature, etc.) and the effects on blood dielectric properties, but this is outside the scope of this work.
3. Simulations for Non-Invasive Blood Glucose Monitoring

3.1 Design of an Antenna for Glucose Monitoring

Ultimately a non-invasive blood glucose monitoring device is one that could be worn around the arm or leg, like the one shown in Figure 26.

![Antenna and Cuff Diagram](image)

Figure 26: Conceptual blood glucose measurement form factor.

Our proposed method would involve an antenna which would change resonant frequency based on the dielectric properties of the tissues present in its fringing fields (Figure 27). A similar method has been used previously by this research group to effectively characterize tissue dielectric properties [37].
When determining criteria for an antenna, the first factor to consider is the frequency range of operation. This can be determined from the already discussed dielectric properties of biological tissues. The relative permittivity of blood [32] is shown in Figure 28. Below 100 MHz, it can be seen the permittivity rises exponentially. This very high permittivity would provide almost complete reflection, making it extremely difficult to characterize relatively minor changes in the dielectric properties of various tissues.
The penetration depth for blood can be seen in Figure 29. It is the thickness at which the radiation within a material falls to approximately 37%. In order for the antenna resonant frequency to be affected by the blood dielectric properties, a large penetration depth is desirable. It can be seen that at 4 GHz it falls to a minimum desired 1 cm. Because of this, the desired frequency range of the antenna is 300 MHz to 4 GHz.

Figure 28: Permittivity of Human Blood.

Figure 29: Penetration depth of human blood.
3.2 Human Body Models

In order to design a device that responds accordingly to changes in blood dielectric properties, an accurate simulation model must first be created. Initially the HFSS human body model was explored (Figure 30), because it has relatively high resolution (1mm) details of many tissues. The model, however, does not account for the large network of capillary and subcutaneous tissues in any significant detail. The “Average” tissue contains large amount of homogeneous tissues, which for our purposes need to be separated into skin, blood, fat, and muscle.

![Figure 30: Ansoft HFSS human body model skeletal (top left), muscular (top right), vascular (bottom left), and "average" tissue (bottom right).](image)

For this reason, we have adopted the model shown in Figure 31. It is a simplified stack of tissue that more accurately represents the tissues present in a human arm or leg. It contains 0.015 mm of dry skin, 0.985 mm of wet skin, 0.5 mm of fat, 2.5 mm of blood, and 15 mm of muscle. Each of the layers contains the dielectric properties from the
established database already discussed [32], with the exception of the blood layer, which contains the dielectric properties of the new model presented in this work. The antenna presented in the next chapter will be designed to be located 1 mm above the dry skin layer to prevent the accumulation of perspiration.

![Antenna Diagram](image)

Figure 31: Tissue layers used for simplified human body model.

This tissue model will be used for all future simulations in which a human model will be discussed.

3.3 Antenna Design and Simulations

3.3.1 Design of a Wideband Antenna

When initially designing this antenna, it was desired to cover the widest frequency range possible while maintaining a planar, easy to manufacture design. Because of this, an ultra-wideband monopole antenna has been adopted [38]. The antenna
has been modified to operate from 1.2 to 6 GHz (Figure 32). In addition to enlarging the antenna dimensions, the ground plane needed to be extended to operate at lower frequencies.

Figure 32: Modified UWB antenna with dimensions in mm.

The antenna was modeled in Ansoft HFSS from 300 MHz to 6 GHz, the return loss is shown in Figure 33 in free space and with the tissue model (Figure 31) present. It is clear that the resonant frequencies of the antenna have shifted significantly.
A simulation has been performed using the model for the three different blood glucose concentrations plotted in Figure 25. The resonance that in free space resonated at 2.33 GHz ($\omega_r$ in Figure 31) was found to shift to 2.209 GHz, 2.213 GHz, and 2.219 GHz for 72 mg/dL, 95 mg/dL, and 134 mg/dL, respectively (Figure 34).

Figure 33: Modified UWB antenna return loss.

Figure 34: Modified UWB antenna return loss for varying glucose concentrations.
These results, while encouraging, were difficult to analyze due to the broad response of the UWB antenna. Work has been done to determine the equivalent model of an UWB antenna [39], but performing similar analysis on the collected and simulated data was not found to be beneficial.

3.3.2 Design of a Narrowband Antenna

The antenna has been modified further by removing the “steps” in the design which provided an ultra-wideband response. The new antenna (Figure 35) is now a narrowband (NB) resonant antenna with a free space resonant frequency of 1.85 GHz. The antenna was modeled in Ansoft HFSS from 300 MHz to 4 GHz; the return loss is shown in Figure 36 in free space and with the tissue model (Figure 31) present. This antenna is also shown to shift resonant frequencies significantly.

Figure 35: Modified NB antenna with dimensions in mm.
A simulation with the NB antenna has been performed for the three different blood glucose concentrations plotted in Figure 23. The resonance that in free space resonated at 1.85 GHz ($\omega_r$ in Figure 36) was found to shift to 1.301 GHz, 1.303 GHz, and 1.307 GHz for 72 mg/dL, 95 mg/dL, and 134 mg/dL, respectively (Figure 37).

Figure 36: Simulated NB antenna return loss.

Figure 37: NB antenna return loss for varying glucose concentrations.
3.3.3 Analytical Model of Narrowband Antenna

A method to determine a lumped element equivalent circuit has been successful for dipole antennas [40]. This method has been applied to this planar antenna, with some minor additions (Figure 38). The feed network can be modeled as a transmission line between the radiator and the port. Figure 38 shows the real and imaginary impedance of the simulated antenna and the equivalent circuit model. Good agreement can be seen between the model and the simulated data. The values of this model that match the free space resonance at 1.8 GHz can be found in Table 3.

![Equivalent Circuit Model](image)

**Figure 38: Lumped element model of NB antenna.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>$E_{s1}$</th>
<th>$L_{s1}$ (nH)</th>
<th>$C_{s1}$ (pF)</th>
<th>$R_{s1}$ (Ω)</th>
<th>$L_{p1}$ (nH)</th>
<th>$R_{p1}$ (Ω)</th>
<th>$C_{p1}$ (pF)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>50 ohm transmission line. 230 degree Delay at 1.8 GHz.</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>36.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Lumped element values of analytical model.
The presence of tissue near the antenna will act as an additional capacitor $C_{p2}$ present in the parallel resonant RLC network that is a function of the tissue dielectric properties and position (Figure 40).

![Image of an RLC network with capacitors and inductors labeled $E_{s1}$, $L_{s1}$, $C_{s1}$, $R_{s1}$, $L_{p1}$, $R_{p1}$, $C_{p1}$, $C_{p2}$](image)

**Figure 40: Analytical model accounting for tissue layers.**

To verify the validity of this model, the antenna has been simulated in HFSS with a dielectric block at varying distances from the antenna’s radiator (Figure 41). The dielectric has been simulated for a permittivity ranging from 1 to 7, and for distances between 1 mm and 7 mm. The $C_{p2}$ capacitor values have then been determined in the equivalent circuit to match the antenna reactance from the HFSS simulations. The various
$C_{p2}$ values determined are plotted in Figure 42 as a function of the dielectric permittivity and distance from the antenna.

![Antenna orientation used to validate model.](image)

Figure 41: Antenna orientation used to validate model.

![Capacitance of $C_{p2}$ for varying dielectrics.](image)

Figure 42: Capacitance of $C_{p2}$ for varying dielectrics.

It can be seen that for all distances, the changes in $C_{p2}$ are nearly a linear function of permittivity, which would be expected for a capacitor. This confirms the validity of this model.

While this shows how the antenna’s resonant frequency has the ability to characterize the dielectric properties of tissues, it also emphasizes the effect of
positioning on the antenna response. If a consistent position is not maintained with the antenna, the proximity of the antenna to human tissues could provide unwanted variation.
4. Prototype Non-Invasive Wireless Blood Glucose Monitor

4.1 Antenna Performance

The modified UWB antenna was manufactured as specified on FR4 dielectric, shown in Figure 43. The performance of this antenna was verified outside of the measurement system.

![Manufactured UWB antenna on FR4](image)

Figure 43: Manufactured UWB antenna on FR4.

The return loss of the manufactured antenna in free space compared to the simulated antenna is shown in Figure 44. There is good agreement between the simulation and the manufactured antenna.
An experiment was performed in which the resonant frequency of the antenna was measured while pressed against a subject’s lower leg. After 6 minutes, 16g of fast-acting glucose was ingested. The resonant frequency can be seen plotted in Figure 45 with the blood glucose level measured with a ONETOUCH UltraMini. After glucose ingestion, there is a shift in both the resonant frequency of the antenna as well as blood glucose level.

Figure 44: Simulated and measured response of UWB antenna.
The results from this experiment are very promising. Similar data will be measured on the NB antenna as a part of a complete measurement system, described in more detail in the next section.

4.2 Measurement System Design Details

In order to accurately measure the resonant frequency of the planar antenna, a system was devised in which the phase component of the antenna could be measured as well. The implemented system block diagram can be seen in Figure 46. A microcontroller configures a frequency synthesizer to a particular frequency; the signal is filtered, amplified and terminated into the antenna. A directional coupler produces the forward and reflected signals that are sent to log amps.

Figure 45: UWB response recorded over time.
Figure 46: Block diagram of measurement system.
The particular log amp that is used is an Analog Devices AD8302, which provides amplitude and phase comparison output of the two input signals (Figure 47). In the configuration implemented in this design, the output of the AD8302 is the reflection coefficient of the antenna in dB and degrees phase. Unfortunately it only provides a measurement of the phase difference magnitude, so there is no indication of the phase sign. This was not found to be an issue, since a significant reactance was found to be present at resonance.

![AD8302 block diagram](image)

*Figure 47: AD8302 block diagram [41]*

The frequency synthesis was achieved through the use of the Analog Devices part ADF4350 (Figure 48). It contains an internal VCO with frequency dividers, as well as an on-board phase-locked loop, allowing a single part to generate signals from 125 MHz to 4.4 GHz. Due to the harmonics from the frequency division, however, low-pass filters are required to filter harmonics.
The directional coupler used was a Minicircuits SYBD-19-172. It has been chosen due to its high directivity and wide frequency range. The maximum dynamic range of the AD8302 is 30 dB, so directivity as close to 30 dB was desired.

The board was designed and routed in Cadsoft Eagle software. The complete schematic, bill of materials, layout drawings, and errata can be found in the appendices. The completed and populated board (Figure 49) shows how the board was designed to contain components only on the side away from the subject.
4.3 Evaluation of System Operation and Performance

Prior to controlling the board with the ADF4350, a signal generator was connected to the board and swept from 200 MHz to 2.5 GHz. The return loss magnitude and phase voltages that were output from the AD8302 were measured with an oscilloscope (Figure 50). It can be seen that the 1.85 GHz resonance is present due to the antenna.
The same data was recorded with an arm pressed gently against the antenna. It can be seen (Figure 51) that the resonance has shifted to approximately 900 MHz.

Figure 50: Output voltages of AD8302.

Figure 51: Output voltages of AD8302 with arm present.
With the ADF4350 and microcontroller controlling the board, and a computer collecting data through the serial port, similar data can be seen with and without an arm present (Figure 52).

Figure 52: Return loss of complete measurement system.

The resonant shift from 1.8 GHz to 0.9 GHz shows that the antenna is working as intended. Figure 53 shows the collected board data plotted with the antenna measured directly by a network analyzer. Some of the discrepancies could be due to higher harmonic content on the measurement board, differences in the antenna matching as a result of the directional coupler, or isolation issues on the board. The positive return losses indicate that at some frequencies the reflected signal from the coupler is higher than the forward signal. While these effects are unwanted, it is also apparent that the measurement system is operating more-or-less as intended.
The microcontroller has been configured to sweep only from 700 MHz to 1.1 GHz and to decrease the frequency step when a resonance is detected (by lower return loss). When the antenna is pressed against an arm, a clear resonant can be seen and identified by rapid change in phase (Figure 54). This data has been gathered and captured by a LabView program (Figure 55). This change in phase at the resonance is used to detect changes in the antenna resonant frequency.

Figure 53: Return loss of system compared to antenna alone.
Figure 54: Return loss and phase of complete measurement system.

Figure 55: LabView program used to analyze data.
4.4 Measurement System Results

The final verification of the complete system operation was performed by the following experiment. The antenna from an unpopulated measurement board was connected to a network analyzer with a cable. The antenna was gently held on a subject’s left leg with an Ace bandage. A populated measurement board was held on the subject’s right leg in the same fashion. 20 g of fast-acting glucose was ingested at the start of the test. The antenna response and the subject’s blood glucose were manually measured (using a Network Analyzer and a ONETOUCH UltraMini) repeatedly. The measurement board was measured through the LabView program. The change in the response of the antennas along with the blood glucose levels can be seen in Figure 56.

![Graph of Blood Glucose, Measurement System Response and Antenna Response](image)

Figure 56: Verification of measurement system response with blood glucose.

It should be noted that the absolute resonant frequencies of the measurement board and the antenna were not equal. It is believed that this was a result of slightly different placements of the two boards, as well as differences in the antenna match. The
SMA connector on the unpopulated board was not mounted in an ideal manner, providing a less-than-optimal match between the cable and antenna. Regardless, this test verifies proper operation of the measurement system.

When Figure 56 is analyzed, the relationship between blood glucose levels and resonant frequency can be determined to be approximately 9E-06 (mg/dL)/Hz. This slope can be used to predict the blood glucose levels for other experiments.

A test similar to the one shown in Figure 45 was performed with the complete measurement system. The results of the experiment are shown in Figure 57. As expected the resonant frequency of the antenna increases with blood glucose levels. If a one-point calibration is performed (to account for the differences in starting frequencies due to antenna positioning) using the 9E-06 (mg/dL)/Hz relationship, the data for the measurement system can be seen to predict glucose levels reasonably well. If plotted on a
Clark error grid (Figure 58), all of the data points are found to occur within the desired zone A [43].

![Figure 58: Clarke error grid for measurement system.](image)

Clearly this data is not definitive as the blood glucose range is limited, but it does show promise for this type of a system to be developed. Further work is needed to test the measurement system at a wider range of blood glucose levels.
5. **Conclusions and Future Work**

In conclusion, the present work has made the following contributions to the research of non-invasive blood glucose monitoring. A study was performed, during which the in vitro testing of blood samples has been able to correlate the dielectric properties of blood to blood glucose levels. This data has been used to modify the Cole-Cole model which describes the dielectric properties of blood based on blood glucose levels and frequency.

The model has been used to determine the frequency range best suited for an impedance spectroscopy system. Two antennas have been designed in this frequency range to be sensitive to dielectric changes in blood when placed next to the human body. These antennas, along with a simulation model of layered tissue and blood, has been created to study the effects of various blood glucose levels. In simulations, the antennas’ resonant frequency has been shown to increase with blood glucose levels.

These simulated results have been supported by experimental evidence. An antenna, measured by a PNA, has been strapped to the leg of a patient. After ingesting fast-acting glucose tablets, the resonant frequency of the antenna increases with the patient’s blood glucose level. An embedded measurement system, designed in this work, was simultaneously strapped to the patient's other leg. The resonant frequency of the antenna in the measurement system was also seen to increase with blood glucose level. The measurement system and the antenna both have shown promising results that agree with the simulations.

5.1 **Future Work**

Future work in this field can be defined as the following:
1. Further in-vitro clinical studies need to be done on diabetic patients with different blood glucose levels, using an antenna and measuring the shift in its resonant frequency. This data can be used to develop the relationship between dielectric properties of blood, glucose levels, and the antenna response.

2. An accurate analytical model to measure blood glucose levels through dielectric properties needs to be developed. There are many factors involved in this measurement and understanding them is critical to creating a model.

3. With multiple receive antennas, diversity techniques could be developed to improve the accuracy of the estimation of the glucose levels.
References


44. Karacolak, Tutku, Aaron Hood, and Erdem Topsakal. "Design of a dual-band implantable antenna and development of skin mimicking gels for continuous
Appendix A: Measurement System Schematic
### Appendix B: Measurement System Bill of Materials

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Device</th>
<th>Package</th>
<th>Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>C0603</td>
<td>Capacitor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C2</td>
<td>0.1uF</td>
<td>C-USC0603</td>
<td>C0603</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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Appendix C: Measurement System Board Layout

Layer 1:

Layer 2:
Appendix D: Measurement System Board Errata

The latch enable line was not originally connected on the board layout. To fix this, a jumper wire must be run from pin 5 of IC4 (microcontroller) to pin 3 of U$3.

The microcontroller ground pin8 has accidentally been wired to 3.3V in the layout. To fix this, the 3.3V trace to pin 8 of IC4 must be cut, and pin 8 must be connected with a jumper wire to pin 19 of IC4.