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Published in:
Proceedings of 2017 IEEE International Ultrasonics Symposium

Link to article, DOI:
10.1109/ULTSYM.2017.8092004

Publication date:
2017

Document Version
Peer reviewed version

Link back to DTU Orbit

Citation (APA):

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Volumetric 3-D Vector Flow Measurements using a 62+62 Row-Column Addressed Array

Simon Holbek\textsuperscript{1,2}, Matthias Bo Stuart\textsuperscript{1}, and Jørgen Arendt Jensen\textsuperscript{1}
\textsuperscript{1}Center for Fast Ultrasound Imaging, Dept. of Elec. Eng., Bldg. 349, Technical University of Denmark, 2800 Kgs. Lyngby, Denmark
\textsuperscript{2} BK Ultrasound, Mileparken 34, 2730 Herlev, Denmark

Abstract—Experimental results from volumetric 3-D vector flow measurements using a 62+62 row-column addressed (RCA) array are presented. A plane-by-plane steered transmit sequence and its post processing steps are described for obtaining 3-D vector flow in a volume. A modified version of the transverse oscillation (TO) velocity estimator is used, which exploits the focal lines generated with the tall elements of a RCA array. Validation of the method is made in a flow-rig system where circulating blood mimicking fluid produced a steady parabolic flow profile with a flow rate of 13.7 mL/s, translating to a peak velocity of 24.1 cm/s. A volume rate of 16.4 volumes per second is achieved by redesigning the transmit sequence and modifying the post processing steps. With 3-D vector flow information present in a full volume, new complex blood dynamics can be investigated as well as user dependency can be reduced.

Section II presents the measurement materials and methods applied, section III describes the experimental setup, section IV presents and results, and section V provides conclusions.

### Table I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transducer Parameters</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transducer type</td>
<td>2-D Row-Column</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of elements in x</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of elements in y</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pitch in x</td>
<td>0.27 mm = 0.53(\lambda)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pitch in y</td>
<td>0.27 mm = 0.53(\lambda)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Width</td>
<td>0.245 mm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerf</td>
<td>0.025 mm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sampling frequency</td>
<td>35 MHz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center frequency</td>
<td>3.0 MHz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Footprint size</td>
<td>1.67 (\times) 1.67 cm(^2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

II. MATERIALS & METHODS

A. Transducer array and scanner

An piezoelectric RCA 2-D array \cite{7,4} with 62+62 elements and roll-off hardware apodization \cite{8} was used, with properties as described in Table I. The probe was connected to the ultrasonic research scanner SARUS \cite{9} and raw RF data from all 124 channels were sampled at 35 MHz.

B. Flow-rig system

An in-house built flow-rig system was used to validate the estimated volumetric 3-D velocities. The flow-rig contains a long inlet of 1.2 m which ensures a steady laminar parabolic flow profile at the measuring site. Blood mimicking fluid is driven inside the rubber vessel \((R = 6 \text{ mm})\) by a centrifugal pump in a closed loop circuit. The volume flow \(Q\), is measured with a MAG 1100 flow meter (Danfoss, Hasselager, Denmark), which, due to the assumption of a laminar parabolic flow, can be translated to a peak velocity \(v_0\) via the relation \(v_0 = 2Q/(\pi R^2)\).

C. The transverse oscillation method

Conventional use of transverse oscillation (TO) velocity estimator requires emissions weakly focused in a point \cite{10,11}. After each transmit event, three lines are beamformed; a center line used for the axial velocity estimate, and two lines spatially separated by \(\pm \lambda_x/8\), where \(\lambda_x\) is the lateral wavelength, required for the transverse velocity estimate. Thus, from one transmit event 2-D vector flow information can be extracted along the beamformed centerline. With RCA arrays, however, focusing will result in a focal line, rather than
A focal point, due to the tall element dimensions. This can be exploited to beamform several TO pairs along the focal line, such that 2-D vector flow can be estimated in an entire plane from one single transmit event [5] as illustrated in Fig. 1.

### D. Emission sequence

A plane-by-plane 3-D volumetric vector flow imaging emission sequence was designed by expanding the single plane approach described in previous work [5]. A schematic illustration of the applied steered transmit sequence is seen in Fig. 1. As described in Section II-C, 2-D vector flow can be obtained in an entire plane from each transmit event. By transmitting $N$ distinguishable steered focused emissions by only exciting row elements and perform TO beamforming on each of the events, results in $N$ planes in a volume containing 2-D vector flow estimates. By interleaving the sequence with $M$ steered focused emissions where only column elements are excited, yields 2-D vector flow information also in the orthogonal dimension. Combining the 2-D vector flow information from the row and column emissions results in volumetric 3-D vector flow in the intersections of the $N$ and $M$ planes as illustrated.
in Fig. 1. The repeating volumetric sequence is schematically written as

\[ C_1 \rightarrow C_2 \rightarrow \ldots C_M \rightarrow R_1 \rightarrow R_2 \rightarrow R_3 \rightarrow \ldots R_N \]

\[ \vdots \quad \vdots \quad \vdots \]

\[ C_1 \rightarrow C_2 \rightarrow \ldots C_M \rightarrow R_1 \rightarrow R_2 \rightarrow R_3 \rightarrow \ldots R_N, \]

where \( C_i \) indicates focal line index \( i \) when emitting with column elements and \( R_i \) similarly for row elements.

The volumetric sequence consisted of \( N = 11 \) row emissions and \( M = 9 \) column emissions and was designed to acquire continuous data. The row emissions were steered from \(-15^\circ\) to \(15^\circ\) in steps of \(3^\circ\) and the column emissions from \(-8^\circ\) to \(8^\circ\) in steps of \(2^\circ\). This produces estimates along the intersections of the \( N \times M = 99 \) planes corresponding to a \(16^\circ \times 30^\circ\) volume. The c-plane at 3 cm depth spans an area of 16.1 mm \( \times \) 8.4 mm.

**E. Data processing**

The emission sequence was repeated 2240 times corresponding to 4.3 seconds of data. The data was beamformed offline on a Linux cluster using a delay-and-sum beamformer specialized for RCA arrays [8]. Velocities were estimated with averaging over 32 estimates yielding 70 independent velocity estimates for each point using the TO method.

The nine scan-planes corresponding to cross-sections of the vessel are extracted for volume flow estimation. Volume flow is calculated by integrating the angle corrected estimates across each cross-sectional plane. The bias with respect to the flow rate reported by the flow rig and standard deviations are calculated for the volume flow through each scan plane.

**III. EXPERIMENTAL SETUP**

With the described probe and scanner a measurement was performed with the volumetric 3-D emission sequence. The applied transmit frequency was 3.0 MHz and the pulse repetition frequency (\( f_{prf} \)) was 10.5 kHz. For the continuous data acquisition sequence presented here with \( M + N = 20 \) emissions and averaging over 32 estimates, 16.4 independent 3-D vector flow volumes per volume are attained.

The flow rate chosen in this setup was \(13.7 \text{ mL s}^{-1}\), translating to a peak velocity of 24.1 cm s\(^{-1}\). The center of the vessel was located 2.9 cm from the transducer’s surface.

**IV. RESULTS**

A volumetric representation of the mean out-of-plane velocity estimates are shown in Fig. 2. Based on the velocity component perpendicular to the cross-sectional area, the mean flow rate for each plane was calculated and are shown in Fig. 3. A positive bias was found for all of the steering angles, with the smallest at \(2^\circ\) (6.5 \%) and the largest at \(-8^\circ\) (21.2 \%). Similarly, the smallest standard deviation was found for the plane steered by \(8^\circ\) (\(\pm 3.0\) \%) and the largest standard deviation was at a steering of \(0^\circ\) (\(\pm 3.8\) \%). The overall mean flow rate, based on the estimated value for each plane was 15.2 \(\pm 0.7\) mL s\(^{-1}\). However, erroneous velocities are estimated at larger steering angles, which may be due to the chosen lateral wavelength not matching the expected velocity range or that a further optimization of the beamforming for steered directions are required.

An illustration of the present parabolic flow is seen in Fig. 4, where the mean out-of-plane velocity component for the nine cross-sectional scan planes are shown. As expected, similar
This work was supported by grant 82-2012-4 from the Danish National Advanced Technology Foundation and by BK Ultrasound ApS.

**ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

This work was supported by grant 82-2012-4 from the Danish National Advanced Technology Foundation and by BK Ultrasound ApS.

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**V. CONCLUSION**

This work demonstrates that volumetric 3-D vector flow can be measured with a 2-D RCA array with only 124 channels at a volume rate of 16.4 volumes per second. Measurements in a flow rig with laminar, parabolic flow yield a precision better than 4% and a bias below 21.2% in a sector of $16^\circ \times 30^\circ$.

Fig. 3. Estimated flow rates for each of the nine steered planes with the expected flow rate (dotted line) and standard deviation of the estimates denoted by the blue bar around the mean velocity estimate (red dot).

Fig. 4. Mean out-of-plane velocity for the 9 cross-sectional planes steered from $-8^\circ$ to $8^\circ$ in steps of $2^\circ$ averaged from 70 frames.

Profiles with similar peak-velocities are seen across all steering angles.