

MAGNETIC RESONANCE IMAGING

Prof. Yasser Mostafa Kadah

Magnetic Resonance Imaging

- Anatomy
- Physiology (function)
- Angiography
- Diffusion
- Perfusion
- Spectroscopy

















Steps to Perform MR Imaging

- M: Magnetic Field
 Patient is placed inside magnet
- R: Radio-Frequency (RF) Pulse
 RF pulse is applied
- **R**: Relaxation
 - After RF application, signal is collected from relaxation





Basic Physics



BO Field

- The external magnetic field is denoted BO (read as "B-zero")
- In MRI, BO is on the order of 1 Tesla (1T)
 - One Tesla is equal to 10,000 Gauss.



Net Magnetization Magnitude

 \Box Follow Boltzmann distribution $e^{-(U/k_BT)} = e^{\gamma m \hbar B/k_BT}$

$$\langle \mu_z \rangle = \frac{\gamma \hbar \sum_{m=-I}^{I} m \, e^{\gamma m \hbar B / k_B T}}{\sum_{m=-I}^{I} e^{\gamma m \hbar B / k_B T}}.$$

 \Box At room temperature, $\gamma I\hbar B/k_BT\ll 1$

$$M_z = N \left< \mu_z \right> = \frac{N \gamma^2 \hbar^2 I(I+1)}{3k_B T} B_z$$

 $\implies M_z$ is proportional to the applied field BO

Precession

When a proton is placed in a large magnetic field, it begins to "wobble" or "precess"



Larmor Equation

The rate at which proton precesses around external magnetic field is given by:

$$\omega = \gamma B_0$$

Nucleus	Spin Quantum Number (S)	Gyromagnetic Ratio* (MHz/T)
¹ H	1/2	42.6
¹⁹ F	1/2	40.0
²³ Na	3/2	11.3
¹³ C	1/2	10.7
¹⁷ O	5/2	5.8

Problem in MRI Signal Acquisition

B0 field is much larger than tissue net magnetization

- Impossible to measure net magnetization in the z-direction
- Need to look at component on x-y plane
- Problem: x-y components cancel out
- Measured using pick-up coils







Idea: Sending RF radiation at Larmor frequency to flip net magnetization to x-y plane



Rotating Frame of Reference



Selection of RF Pulse Flip Angle



Relaxation

- Relaxation means that the spins are relaxing back into their lowest energy state or back to the equilibrium state
 - Equilibrium by definition is the lowest energy state possible
 - Once the RF pulse is turned off, the protons will have to realign with the axis of the BO magnetic field and give up all their excess energy



T1 Relaxation

- T1 is called the longitudinal relaxation time because it refers to the time it takes for the spins to realign along the longitudinal (z) axis
- T1 is also called the spin-lattice relaxation time because it refers to the time it takes for the spins to give the energy they obtained from the RF pulse back to the surrounding lattice in order to go back to their equilibrium state.



T2 Relaxation

- Dephasing: after the 90° RF pulse is turned off, all spins are in phase; they are all lined up in the same direction and spinning at the same frequency ω₀. There are two phenomena that will make the spins get out of phase: interactions between spins and external field inhomogeneities
- T2 Relaxation
 - Only spin-spin interactions
- □ T2* Relaxation
 - Both effects

$$1/T2^* = 1/T2 + \gamma \Delta B$$



Effect of Both T1 and T2 Relaxations



Example Tissue Relaxation Times

Tissue	T ₁ (ms)	T _z (ms)
H ₂ O	2500	2500
fat	200	100
CSF	2000	300
gray matter	500	100

Received Signal: Free Induction Decay (FID)



Sequence of Events in MRI



Pulse Repetition Time (TR)

□ Distance between successive RF pulses



Echo Time or Time to Echo (TE)

- Instead of making the measurement immediately after the RF pulse, we wait a short period of time TE and then make the measurement
 - Time sampling of FID starts



Tissue Contrast

Now we have to put the two curves together because both T1 recovery and T2 decay processes are occurring simultaneously



Signal Intensity = SI \propto N(H)(e^{-TE/T2*}) (1 - e^{-TR/T1})

T1-Weighting

- □ Long TR reduces the T1 effect
- □ Short TR enhances the T1 contrast



T2-Weighting

- □ Short TE reduces the T2* (T2) effect
- □ Long TE enhances the T2* (T2) effect



Tissue Contrast: Clinical Applications

T1 Recovery Curve

- Fat has the shortest T1
- Proteinaceous fluid also has a short T1
- H₂O has the longest T1
- Solid tissue has intermediate T1
- T2 decay Curve
 - H₂O has a very long T2
 - Solid tissue has short T2
 - Fat has an intermediate T2
 - Proteinaceous fluid may have a short or intermediate T2 depending on the protein content



Summary of T1/T2 Values for Tissues

	Long T1 (low SI)	Intermediate	Short T1 (high SI)
	Water /CSE		
Long 12	Pathology		
(high SI)	Edema		d (EC metHgb)
		Muscle	
		GM	
		a (oxyHgb)	
Intermediate		WM	
	Air		
	Cortical bone		
	Heavy Ca ⁺⁺		Fat
	b (deoxyHgb)		Proteinaceous solutions
	e (hemosiderin)		c (IC met Hgb)
Short T2	Fibrosis		Paramagnetic materials (Gd,
(low SI)	Tendons		etc.)

a-d represent breakdown products of hemoglobin (a, oxyhemoglobin; b, deoxyhemoglobin; c, intracellular methemoglobin; d, extracellular methemoglobin; e, hemosiderin). GM, gray matter; WM, white matter; SI, signal intensity; Hgb, hemoglobin; IC, intracellular; EC, extracellular.

Example: Brain Imaging

- WM: Fat
- GM: Solid Tissue
- \Box CSF: H₂O

0	T ₁ (msec)	T ₂ (msec)	N(H)
White matter	510	67	0.61
Gray matter	760	77	0.69
Edema	900	126	0.86
CSF	2650	180	1.00



Example: Brain Imaging

Detecting a lesion

- Compare contrasts at different TE values
- TE1 appears to provide best contrast



Tissue Contrast: T1W, T2W and PDW



Tissue Contrast Summary

	TR	TE	Signal (Theoretical)
T1W	short	short	$N(H)(1 - e^{-TR/T1})$
T2W	long	iong	N(H)(e ^{-TE/T2})
PDW	long	short	N(H)
		Short TE	Long TE
short TR		T1W	mixed
long TR		PDW	T2W

Tissue Contrast Examples

Normal brain imaging

Very different contrast using different weighting selection



Tissue Contrast Examples



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Tissue Contrast Examples







Pulse Sequences: Saturation, Saturation Recovery and Inversion Recovery

A pulse sequence is a sequence of radio frequency (RF) pulses applied repeatedly during an MR study

Embedded in it are the TR and TE time parameters

□ It is related to a timing diagram or a pulse sequence diagram



Saturation

- Immediately after the longitudinal magnetization has been flipped into the x-y plane by a 90° pulse, the system is said to be saturated
 - Application of a second 90° pulse at this moment will elicit no signal (like beating a dead horse).
- A few moments later, after some T1 recovery, the system is partially saturated
- With complete T1 recovery to the plateau value, the system is unsaturated or fully magnetized
- If longitudinal magnetization only partially flipped into the x-y plane (i.e., flip angles less than 90°), then there is still a component of magnetization along the z axis
 - Spins in this state are also partially saturated

Partial Saturation Pulse Sequence

Start with a 90° pulse, wait for a short period TR, and then apply another 90° pulse. Keep repeating this sequence.


Saturation Recovery Pulse Sequence

We try to recover all the longitudinal magnetization before we apply another 90° RF pulse

Wait a long time before we apply a second RF pulse (Long TR)



In saturation recovery, TR is long and TE is minimal.

The saturation recovery pulse sequence results in a proton density weighted image.

Longitudinal Magnetization almost completely recovered

Inversion Recovery Pulse Sequence

 first apply a 180° RF pulse. Next, we wait a period of time (the inversion time TI) and apply a 90° RF pulse



Inversion Recovery: Null Point

Clinical application: Suppress a tissue

Example: Fat Suppression using STIR





Signal intensity = $0 = 1 - 2e^{-TI/T1}$

 $TI(null) = 0.693 \times T1$

Pulse Sequences: Spin Echo

Dephasing problem causes

- Spin-spin interactions (inherent)
- External magnetic field inhomogeneity

 $1/T2^* = 1/T2 + \gamma \Delta B$

Spin echo sequence: only T2



Spin Echo Pulse Sequence



Multi-Echo Spin Echo Pulse Sequence

Add another 180° rephasing pulse

- **Symmetric echoes:** $\tau_1 = \tau_2$
- Asymmetric echoes: $\tau_1 \neq \tau_2$



Tissue Contrast with Spin Echo

Contrast	TR	TE	Signal (Theoretical)
T1W	Short	Short	N(H)(1-e ^{-TR/T1})
T2W	Long	Long	N(H)(e ^{-TE/T2})
PDW	Long	Short	N(H)

	Short TE	Long TE
Short TR	TIW	Mixed
Long TR	PDW	T2W

Fourier Transform

- The Fourier Transform (FT) provides a frequency spectrum of a signal.
 - It is sometimes easier to work in the frequency domain



Fourier Transform

□ Forward transform (*Analysis*)

$$\mathcal{F}\{g\} = \iint_{-\infty}^{\infty} g(x, y) \exp\left[-j2\pi(f_X x + f_Y y)\right] dx dy.$$

□ Inverse transform (Synthesis)

$$\mathcal{F}^{-1}\{G\} = \iint_{-\infty}^{\infty} G(f_X, f_Y) \exp[j2\pi(f_X x + f_Y y)] df_X df_Y.$$

Fourier Transform

Effect of high frequencies

- Details of signal
- The more you acquire, the higher the resolution the image will be
- The bandwidth (BW) is simply a measure of the range of frequencies present in the signal





Image Reconstruction

- The signals received from a patient contain information about the entire part of the patient being imaged.
 - They do not have any particular spatial information. That is, we cannot determine the specific origin point of each component of the signal.
- This is the function of the gradients where one gradient is required in each of the x, y, and z directions to obtain spatial information in that direction.
 - Slice-select gradient
 - Readout or frequency-encoding gradient
 - Phase-encoding gradient
- Depending on their orientation axis they are called G_x , G_y , and G_z .
- Depending on the slice orientation (axial, sagittal, or coronal), G_x,
 G_y, and G_z can be used for slice select, readout, or phase encode.

□ Signal is obtained only from a particular slice from the body.

Can be in any direction





- Larmor frequency depends on location
- Send RF pulse with desired frequency range to excite a slice !





Slice Selection: Changing Thickness

- Different RF pulse bandwidth
- Different slice selection gradient
- To decrease the thickness is to use a narrower bandwidth.
 - Narrower frequency bandwidth will excite protons in a narrower band of magnetic field strengths
- Second way to decrease slice thickness is to increase the slope of the magnetic field gradient



Slice Selection: RF Pulses

- There are two types of RF pulses:
 - Nonselective
 - Selective
- □ Slice profile = Fourier transform of pulse shape



Slice Selection: Multi-Slice Scan



In-Plane Spatial Encoding: Fourier Imaging

- Basic idea: encode location by frequency
 - Magnetic field gradient is used during reception
 - Larmor frequency depends on present magnetic field
 - Returned frequency from an area depends on its location
 - Easily decoded by Fourier transformation
- Applied by 2 different methods
 - Frequency encoding
 - Phase encoding

Frequency Encoding

Read-out gradient

The G_x gradient is applied during the time the echo is received, i.e., during readout



Frequency Encoding Example



Can we apply frequency encoding in 2 directions simultaneously?

Answer is NO

2D Fourier transform

$$F(k_x,k_y) = \iint f(x,y) \cdot e^{-j2\pi(k_x \cdot x + k_y \cdot y)} dxdy$$

$$F(k_x, k_y) = \int e^{-j2\pi k_y y} \left\{ \int f(x, y) \cdot e^{-j2\pi k_x x} dx \right\} dy$$

Phase Encoding Frequency Encoding

□ G_y is usually applied between the 90° and the 180° RF pulses or between the 180° pulse and the echo.





- Each phase encoding requires 1 RF pulse
 - Acquisition time = #phase encoding steps x TR

The protons in each pixel have a distinct frequency and a distinct phase, which are unique and encode for the x and y coordinates for that pixel.



Pulse Sequence Diagram



Pulse Sequence Diagram



K-Space and Image Space



K-Space and Image Space

- Spatial frequencies k_x and k_y are expressed as: ■ $k_x = \gamma \int_0^t G_x(\tau) d\tau$
 - $\square k_y = \gamma \int_0^t G_y(\tau) d\tau$

with units in cycles/cm.



MRI Scan Parameters

Primary:

Primary:		Secondary:	
TR TE			SNR
FI			Scan time
FA (flip angle)			Coverage
$\Delta z = \text{slice thickness}$ contribute to <i>coverage</i>			Resolution
Interslice gap			Image contras
FOV _x	Contribute to resolution:		
FOV _y J N _x : # of frequency-encoding steps N _y : # of phase-encoding steps	Δx : spacing in x direction Δy : spacing in y direction	Contribute to S/N ratio	
NEX Bandwidth }			

Parameter Optimization

SNR defines as ratio of signal magnitude to noise standard deviation

- Voxel volume = $\Delta x \cdot \Delta y \cdot \Delta z$
- Number of excitations (NEX)
- Number of phase-encoding steps (N_y and N_z)
- Bandwidth (BW)

$$3D SNR \propto \Delta x \cdot \Delta y \cdot \Delta z \sqrt{(N_y)(N_z)(NEX)/BW}$$

- SNR can be increased by
 - Increasing TR
 - Decreasing TE
 - Using a lower BW
 - Using volume (i.e., 3D) imaging
 - Increasing NEX
 - $\square Increasing N_y$
 - Increasing the voxel size

Parameter Optimization

- Spatial resolution (or pixel size) is the minimum distance that we can distinguish between two points on an image.
- □ It is determined by Pixel size = FOV/# of pixels

• For example, pixel size in $y = \Delta y = FOV_y/N_y$

Nx, Ny, Nz are called Matrix Size

If we want higher resolution in a given time, we have to sacrifice SNR:



Parameter Optimization

Acquisition Time or Scan Time, as we have seen previously, is given by

Scan time = $TR \cdot Ny \cdot Nz \cdot NEX$

where Ny, Nz are the number of phase-encoding steps (in the y and z directions)

- If we have a multi-slice sequence (i.e., no phase encoding in z direction), then we may be able to squeeze in each TR multiple slice acquisition
 - Maximum of TR/TE slices

Parameter Optimization: Examples

- □ If we keep FOV constant and increase N_y , we will decrease SNR. $\uparrow N_y$, FOV constant $\rightarrow \downarrow$ SNR
- □ If we increase N_y and increase FOV, thus keeping pixel size constant, then we will increase the SNR.

■ \uparrow FOV, pixels fixed \rightarrow \uparrow SNR, \uparrow acquisition time

- □ If we increase the number of pixels with the FOV constant:
 - Increase resolution.
 - Decrease SNR Therefore, as we decrease the pixel size, we increase the resolution and decrease the SNR.
 - Increase scan time (number of pixels increases in phase-encode direction).

Parameter Optimization: Examples

- □ if we decrease the FOV and keep number of pixels constant:
 - Increase the resolution.
 - Decrease SNR.
 - Same acquisition time
- In the x direction, there are two ways of increasing resolution (for a given FOV):
 - Increase N_x by reducing the sampling time ΔTs (i.e., by increasing the BW) and keeping the total sampling time Ts fixed (recall that $Ts = N_x \cdot \Delta Ts$). The advantage here is no increase in TE; the trade-off is a reduction in SNR (due to increased BW).
 - Increase N_x by lengthening Ts and keeping ∆Ts (and thus BW) fixed. Here, the SNR does not change, but the trade-off is an increased TE (due to a longer Ts) and less T1 weighting (this is only a concern in short echo delay time imaging).

Block Diagram of MRI System


Primary Magnetic Field (BO)

- Permanent magnet
- Resistive magnet
- Superconductive magnet

Permanent Magnet









Table 11-1	Characteristics of a	permanent magnet magnetic resonance imager
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Feature	Value
Magnetic field (B _o)	Up to 0.3 T
Magnetic field homogeneity	50-100 ppm
Weight	90,000 kg
Cooling	None
Power consumption	20 kW
Distance to 0.5 mT fringe field	< 1 m

Resistive Magnet





Table 11-2 Characteristics of a resistive electromagnet MR imager

Feature	Value	
Magnetic field (B _o)	Up to 0.3 T	
Magnetic field homogeneity	10-50 ppm	
Weight	4000 kg	
Cooling	Water, heat exchanger	
Power consumption	80 kW	
Distance to 0.5 mT fringe field	2 m	

Superconductive Magnet



Table 11-3

Characteristics of a superconducting electromagnet magnetic resonance imager

Feature	Value
Magnetic field (B _o)	0.3 T to 4 T
Magnetic field homogeneity	1-10 ppm
Weight	10,000 kg
Cooling	Cryogenic
Power consumption	20 kW
Distance to 0.5 mT fringe field	10 m

Superconductive Magnet

Magnetic field ramp-up



- Ramp-down must be very slow, otherwise catastrophic quenching will occur
 - Heating up increases resistance, which in turn increases heating, causing positive feedback loop that can result in rapid vaporization of helium

Magnet Shielding

- □ None
- Passive
- Active



Distance to Safe 5G (0.5 mT) Line for different fields

Secondary Magnets: Coils

□ Shim coils

Improves BO field uniformity to within a few ppm scale

Gradient coils

Apply gradients in x, y, and z directions for slice selection, frequency and phase encoding.

□ RF coils

Send RF pulses and receive signal from patient

Shim Coils

- Make small adjustments to make BO uniform throughout the volume
 - Inhomogeneity measured in ppm units
 - Example: for 1.0T magnet, a homogeneity of ±1ppm means that the field has a variation of up to ±1 μT



Gradient Coils







Choosing a Magnet Type

Table 13-1 Characteristics of magnetic resonance imagers

Characteristics	Permanent magnet	Resistive magnet	Superconducting magnet
Field strength (T) Cost ($\$ \times 10^6$) Approximate size (m) Weight (kg $\times 1000$) Power requirements (kW) Distance to 0.5 mT fringe field (m)	$\begin{array}{c} 0.1 \text{-} 0.3 \\ 0.5 \text{-} 1.0 \\ 1.5 \times 2.0 \\ 4.5 \text{-} 30 \\ 20 \\ < 1 \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{c} 0.15 \text{-} 0.4 \\ 0.8 \text{-} 1.2 \\ 2.1 \times 2.3 \\ 5.5 \text{-} 9.0 \\ 80 \\ 0.5 \text{-} 2 \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{c} 0.5\text{-}4.0 \\ 1.0\text{-}2.5 \\ 2.3 \times 3.0 \\ 4.5\text{-}8.1 \\ 25 \\ 3\text{-}10 \end{array}$



Choosing a Magnet Type

Table 13-2 Advantages and disadvantages of magnetic resonance imagers

Advantages

Permanent Low capital cost Low operating cost Negligible fringe field

Resistive Iron Core Low capital cost Easy coil maintenance Negligible fringe field

Resistive air core Low capital cost Lightweight Easy coil maintenance

Superconductive High field strength High field homogeneity Low power consumption

Disadvantages

Limited field strength Fixed field strength Very heavy

High power consumption Water cooling necessary Potential field instability

High power consumption Water cooling necessary Significant fringe field

High capital cost High cryogen cost Intense fringe field

Site Selection for MRI

Table 13-3 Considerations for locating a magnetic resonance imager

Advantages

New construction Easier to plan for fringe magnetic field Custom design

Existing building Proximity to other services Use of existing facilities

Temporary building Short time to operation Easier to plan for fringe magnetic field

Mobile

Cost effective for low workload Learning period for all

Disadvantages

Cost Possibly remote

Accommodation of fringe magnetic field, higher renovation cost

Possible compromised patient access Unsightly addition

Scheduling Time required for setup

Effects of MRI on the Environment



Effects of the Environment on MRI



Covered Material

Solve the problems at the end of Chapters 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 16 and 17.