

The effect of skin phototype on laser propagation through skin

by

Aletta Elizabeth Karsten



Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

PhD (Physics)

in the Faculty of Natural & Agricultural Sciences
University of Pretoria
Pretoria

December 2012
Supervisor: Prof MWH Braun

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Aletta Elizabeth Karsten declare that the thesis, which I hereby submit for the degree PhD in Physics at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution.

SIGNATURE:

DATE:



DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my parents

Jacobus (Kobus) Marthinus Malherbe

and

Magdalena (Dalene) Catharina Malherbe (née Visser)

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ABSTRACT

The use of lasers for diagnosis and treatment in medical and cosmetic applications is increasing worldwide. Not all of these modalities are superficial and many require laser light to penetrate some distance into the tissue or skin to reach the treatment site. Human skin is highly scattering for light in the visible and near infrared wavelength regions, with a consequent reduction of the fluence rate. Melanin, which occurs in the epidermis of the skin, acts as an absorber in these wavelength regions and further reduces the fluence rate of light that penetrates through the epidermis to a treatment site. *In vivo* fluence rate measurements are not viable, but validated and calibrated computer models may play a role in predicting the fluence rate reaching the treatment site.

A layered planar computer model to predict laser fluence rate at some depth into skin was developed in a commercial raytracing environment (ASAP). The model describes the properties of various skin layers and accounts for both the absorption and scattering taking place in the skin. The model was validated with optical measurements on skin-simulating phantoms in both reflectance and transmission configurations. It was shown that a planar epidermal/dermal interface is adequate for simulation purposes.

In the near infrared wavelength region (676 nm), melanin (consisting of eumelanin and pheomelanin) is the major absorber of light in the epidermis. The epidermal absorption coefficient is one of the required input parameters for the computer model. The range of

absorption coefficients expected for typical South African skin phototypes (ranging from photo-sensitive light skin, phototype I on the Fitzpatrick scale, to the photo-insensitive darker skin phototype V) was not available. Non-invasive diffuse reflectance spectroscopy measurements were done on 30 volunteers to establish the expected range of absorption coefficients. In the analysis it became apparent that the contributions of the eumelanin and pheomelanin must be accounted for separately, specifically for the Asian volunteers. This is a new concept that was introduced in the diffuse reflectance probe analysis. These absorption coefficient measurements were the first to be done on the expected range of skin phototypes for the South African population. Other authors dealing with diffuse reflectance probe analysis only account for the dominant eumelanin.

Both the epidermal absorption coefficient and thickness are important in the prediction of the fluence rate loss. The computer model was used to evaluate the effect of the epidermal absorption coefficient (a parameter dictated by an individual's skin phototype) and the epidermal thickness on the fluence rate loss through the skin. The epidermal absorption is strongly wavelength dependent with the higher absorption at the shorter wavelengths. In the computer model a longer wavelength of 676 nm (typical for a photodynamic treatment (PDT) of cancer) was used. For the darker skin phototypes (V) only about 30% of the initial laser fluence rate reached a depth of 200 μm into the skin (just into the dermis). For the PDT application, results from the computer model indicated that treatment times need to be increased by as much as 50% for very dark skin phototypes when compared to that of very light phototypes.

Key words: calibrated computer model, laser fluence rate, ray-tracing, skin modelling, optical properties of skin, diffuse reflectance spectroscopy, ASAP, skin phototype.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY	iii
DEDICATION	v
ABSTRACT	vii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ix
TABLE OF CONTENTS	xi
LIST OF FIGURES	xiv
LIST OF TABLES	xvi
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS	xvii
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	5
2.1 Interaction between lasers and human tissue	5
2.2 Human skin	6
2.2.1 Epidermis	7
2.2.1.1 Stratum corneum	7
2.2.1.2 Living epidermis	7
2.2.1.2.1 Melanin	8
2.2.1.2.2 Fitzpatrick skin tone classification	9
2.2.2 Dermis	10
2.3 Optical properties	10
2.3.1 Descriptions and definitions	11
2.3.1.1 Refractive index	12
2.3.1.2 Reflection and refraction at an interface	12
2.3.1.3 Absorption	13
2.3.1.4 Scattering	14
2.3.1.5 Anisotropy	15
2.3.1.6 Reduced scattering coefficient	16
2.3.2 Values for the optical properties of skin	17
2.4 Measurement techniques	19
2.4.1 Integrating sphere	19

2.4.2	Diffuse reflectance probe	20
2.5	Skin simulating phantoms	21
2.5.1	Liquid phantoms	22
2.5.2	Solid phantoms	22
2.6	Light propagation models	23
2.6.1	Radiative Transport equation	23
2.6.1.1	Diffusion approximation	24
2.6.1.2	Monte Carlo simulations	24
2.6.2	Raytracing models	26
2.7	Cancer and photodynamic therapy	27
2.7.1	Photodynamic therapy (PDT)	27
2.7.1.1	Photodynamic interaction mechanism	28
2.8	Synthesis	29
 CHAPTER 3: DEVELOPMENT OF A LASER FLUENCE RATE PREDICTION MODEL		 33
3.1	ASAP raytracing software	33
3.2	Layered skin model	34
3.2.1	Geometrical layout	34
3.2.2	Light source	35
3.2.3	Ray tracing - Monte Carlo approach	35
3.2.4	Heney-Greenstein approximation	36
3.2.5	Evaluations	36
3.3	Non-planar epidermal/dermal interface	38
3.4	Experimental verification and validation of the computer model	39
3.5	Paper on the experimental validation of the computer model	41
3.6	Contribution of the computer model to the work	51
 CHAPTER 4: THE ROLE OF EPIDERMAL ABSORPTION COEFFICIENTS APPLICABLE TO THE SOUTH AFRICAN POPULATION		 53
4.1	Diffuse reflectance theory and model development	53
4.2	Probe calibration	58
4.2.1	Paper on Reflectance probe calibration	60
4.3	Contribution of the diffuse reflectance probe calibration to the work	71
4.4	<i>In vivo</i> tests	71
4.4.1	Paper on <i>in vivo</i> tests	74

4.5	Value of the diffuse reflectance probe measurements	85
CHAPTER 5: EFFECT OF THE OPTICAL PROPERTIES OF THE EPIDERMIS ON LASER TREATMENT PARAMETERS		87
5.1	Paper on the Effect of the epidermis on laser treatment parameters	89
5.2	Value of the epidermal absorption work	98
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS AND WAY FORWARD		99
6.1	Brief summary of the major findings and contributions of the work in the thesis	99
6.2	Objectives set out and their achievement	99
6.2.1	Objective 1: To develop a computer model that can predict the laser fluence rate some distance into skin.	100
6.2.2	Objective 2: To develop a non-invasive optical measurement technique to determine the epidermal absorption coefficient of an individual.	100
6.2.3	Objective 3: To determine the effect of skin phototype on the absorption of laser light in the epidermis.	100
6.3	Limitations of the work	101
6.4	Further investigations identified	102
6.5	Contributions of the work to the scientific community and the wider public	102
6.5.1	Contribution to the scientific community	102
6.5.2	Contribution to the wider public	103
6.6	Conclusions	103
REFERENCES		105
APPENDIX 1: ETHICS CLEARANCE - CSIR		113
APPENDIX II: ETHICS CLEARANCE - UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA		114
APPENDIX III: SOURCE CODE FOR THE ASAP COMPUTER MODEL		115

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1: Relation between total exposure and exposure time for different modes of laser-tissue interaction (with permission from (Peng Q, 2008)).	6
Figure 2.2: Relation between fluence rate and exposure time for different modes of laser-tissue interaction (with permission from (Peng Q, 2008)).	6
Figure 2.3: Structure of the human skin.	7
Figure 2.4: Extinction coefficient as a function of wavelength for both of eumelanin and pheomelanin (data from (Jacques S, 2001)).	9
Figure 2.5: Fitzpatrick skin tone colour card.	10
Figure 2.6: Absorption coefficient as a function of wavelength for oxyhaemoglobin and deoxyhaemoglobin (data from (Prahl S, 1999)).	11
Figure 2.7: Snell's law.	12
Figure 2.8: Wavelength dependence of the major biological absorbers (from tabulated data (Jacques SL, 1998(a)), (Prahl S, 1999)).	14
Figure 2.9: Scattering from typical cellular structures (as adapted from (Jacques SL, 1998(a))).	15
Figure 2.10: Similarity principle where photons taking different paths arrive at the same end point.	17
Figure 2.11: Integrating sphere system for reflection (R) and transmission (T) measurements.	19
Figure 2.12: Absorption and scattering in skin.	21
Figure 2.13: Schematics of an experimental setup for the diffuse reflectance probe measurements.	21
Figure 2.14: Random walk of 15 photons.	25
Figure 2.15: Random walk of 3.1 million photons.	25
Figure 2.16: Energy level diagram for a Type 2 photosensitiser.	28
Figure 3.1: Layered structure of the computer model with the laser beam entering the outer layer.	35
Figure 3.2: Schematic of the computer model with the detectors and the different layers.	37
Figure 3.3: Typical OCT image of skin recorded at the NLC with a Thorlabs OCT system.	38
Figure 3.4: Wavy epidermis/dermis interface 0.12 mm into the skin with a wave amplitude of 0.05 mm and length of 0.6 mm.	38
Figure 3.5: Transmission through the resin without the addition of absorbers and scatterers.	40
Figure 3.6: Absorption spectrum of the black ink used in the experiments.	40
Figure 3.7: Schematic of the cuvettes for the Intralapid phantoms.	44
Figure 3.8: Integrating sphere system for reflection and transmission measurements.	45
Figure 3.9: Side view of the computer model of a two-layered solid phantom. The semi-sphere back reflector detector as well as the circular detector plate is visible.	46
Figure 3.10: Experimental setup: S (Sample), L (Lens $f=150\text{mm}$, $D=50.8\text{mm}$), CCD (Camera), PC (Computer), u (Object distance = 450 mm), v (Image distance = 225 mm), F= filters, $M(v/u)=0.5$, HeNe Laser power = 9 mW.	48
Figure 3.11(a): Fluence rate contour plots from the CCD images of the back surface of the liquid phantoms.	49
Figure 3.11(b): Fluence rate contour plots from the calculated fluence rate through the last layer in the IL phantom model.	49
Figure 4.1: Diffuse reflected light.	54
Figure 4.2: Comparing the two different melanin models for three volunteers each representing a different skin phototype. Model A2 only uses a single melanin parameter and model D2 uses both eumelanin and pheomelanin. Solid lines (—) represent the experimental data and the dashed lines (---) the fitted curve.	57
Figure 4.3: Comparison of input values to the fitted values for two different test cases. Solid lines (—) represent the input data and the dashed lines (---) the fitted curve.	57

Figure 4.4: Experimental setup for calibration and <i>in vivo</i> tests.	59
Figure 4.5: Absorption and scattering in skin.	62
Figure 4.6: Experimental setup.	62
Figure 4.7(a): Calibration data - Absorbance as function of the wavelength for the different OD filters.	67
Figure 4.7(b): Calibration data - μ_a values extracted from the DRP measurements compared to the true μ_a values (measured using the beer Lambert law) of the ink phantoms.	67
Figure 4.8(a): Reflectance probe measurement as a function of μ'_s at $\lambda=676$ nm when only IL was used ($\mu_a = 0$).	68
Figure 4.8(b): Reflectance probe measurement as a function of μ_a at a $\lambda=676$ nm for three different μ'_s solutions.	68
Figure 4.9(a): Reflectance probe measurements on three individuals with skin phototype II, IV and V. Three measurements were taken on both the lower outer arm (sun exposed) and the inner upper arm (not sun exposed).	69
Figure 4.9(b): Absorption coefficient values calculated from the reflection probe measurements for three different skin phototypes at wavelengths 633 nm and 676 nm on sun exposed (E) and non- exposed (N) parts of the arm.	69
Figure 4.10: Fitzpatrick skin tone colour card.	71
Figure 4.11: Absorption spectra of eumelanin and pheomelanin (data from (Jacques S, 2001)).	72
Figure 4.12: Reflectance measurements for two different skin phototypes.	74
Figure 4.13: Experimental setup with the main system components (Karsten A, 2012(b)).	76
Figure 4.14: Reflectance probe measurements on the inner arm as a function of wavelength for all volunteers. Line styles were used to group graphs with similar trends.	79
Figure 4.15(a): Absorption coefficients (mm^{-1}) as calculated at a wavelength of 633 nm, for volunteers of skin phototypes I-III. The volunteer numbers are displayed on the X-axis. Sun-exposed value (0.084 mm^{-1}) for volunteer 18 is excluded from the graph for scaling purposes.	80
Figure 4.15(b): Absorption coefficients (mm^{-1}) as calculated at a wavelength of 633 nm, for volunteers of skin phototypes IV-V. The volunteer numbers are displayed on the X-axis. The not exposed value (0.0075 mm^{-1}) for volunteer 15 is barely visible.	80
Figure 4.16 (a): Absorption coefficient as a function of wavelength for the lower absorbance volunteers. Measurements were done on the outer arm (sun-exposed).	81
Figure 4.16(b): Absorption coefficient as a function of wavelength for the higher absorbance volunteers. Measurements were done on the outer arm (sun-exposed).	81
Figure 5.1(a): Schematic of the computer model with the detectors and the different layers.	93
Figure 5.1(b): Structure of the un-even epidermis-dermis interface.	93
Figure 5.2 (a): Absorption of light in the first 100 μm through the NBCC model for the different epidermal thicknesses.	94
Figure 5.2(b): Absorption of light in the first 100 μm through the SCC model for the different epidermal thicknesses.	94
Figure 5.3(a): Fluence rate transmitted through the first 100 μm of the NBCC model for the different epidermal thicknesses.	94
Figure 5.3(b): Fluence rate transmitted through the first 100 μm of the SCC model for the different epidermal thicknesses.	94
Figure 5.4(a): Reflection measured on the reflection detector of the model for different epidermal thicknesses and a NBCC tumour.	95
Figure 5.4(b): Reflection measured on the reflection detector of the model for different epidermal thicknesses and a SCC tumour.	95

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1: Fundamental optical properties of tissue.	11
Table 2.2: Transport properties.	11
Table 2.3: Comparison of optical properties measured in various laboratories. Note: most authors publish the data in units of cm^{-1} and therefore this table uses cm^{-1} but in the rest of this work units of mm^{-1} are used (Table adapted from (Tuchin V, 2007)).	18
Table 3.1: Optical parameters used in the sawtooth model.	38
Table 3.2: Percentage of reflected light collected on the back reflection detector for the different sawtooth parameters described in Table 3.1 and the planar skin model with an epidermal thickness of 0.09 mm.	39
Table 3.3: Geometric parameters for the IL phantoms.	46
Table 3.4: Optical parameters for the IL phantoms used in the model.	46
Table 3.5: Optical parameters for the solid phantoms. Parameters for the A and B samples are given. Sample C used the μ_a and μ_s values from A and B respectively for the 2 layers in the phantom.	47
Table 3.6: Optimisation results showing the total absorption through the phantom, absorption in the last layer, the transmitted power and the standard deviation (Stdev) of the data.	47
Table 3.7: Comparisons between the model and measured values for the solid phantoms.	48
Table 3.8: Comparisons between the model and measured values for the liquid phantoms.	48
Table 4.1: Fitted parameters as compared to the input parameters into the algorithm.	57
Table 4.2: IL concentrations and corresponding μ'_s values at $\lambda = 632$ and 676 nm.	65
Table 4.3: Ink sample and the μ'_s values calculated with the Beer-Lambert law using the transmission measurements.	65
Table 4.4: Comparison between the different methods to calculate μ_a for the neutral density absorbing filters at a wavelength of 676 nm.	66
Table 4.5: Geometrical parameters (k_1 and k_2), calculated from the reflectance measurements of the IL+ ink phantoms in Figures 4.8(a) and 4.8(b).	68
Table 4.6: Absorption coefficients calculated using the mean k_1 and k_2 values for the different skin types at wavelengths of 633 nm and 676 nm.	68
Table 4.7: Minimum and maximum μ_a and μ'_s values at wavelengths, 561 , 633 and 676 nm.	81
Table 4.8: Absorption coefficients from literature using similar diffuse reflectance techniques (Reflectance) as well as an integrating sphere (IS).	82
Table 5.1: Geometrical dimensions for the planar surfaces and optical properties of the different layers in the skin model.	93
Table 5.2: % Light reflected from the model for the different wave interface parameters described above.	94
Table 5.3: Fraction of power reaching $100 \mu\text{m}$ into the skin, just entering the dermis for the SCC tumour.	95
Table 5.4: Fraction of power reaching the SCC tumour at a depth of $200 \mu\text{m}$ into the skin and the resulting treatment time to deliver a light dose of 4.5 J/cm^2 onto the tumour. The laser beam diameter is 1.3 cm at the tumour depth.	96

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

ASAP	Advanced Systems Analysis Program
BCC	Basal Cell Carcinoma
c	Speed of light in vacuum
c_d	Scatter size parameter
c_{Hb}	Deoxyhaemoglobin concentration
c_{HbO_2}	Oxyhaemoglobin concentration
c_{mel}	Melanin concentration
c_{Pheo}	Pheomelanin concentration
c_{Eu}	Eumelanin concentration
CANSA	Cancer Association of South Africa
CW	Continuous Wave
d, l	Optical path length through the medium
d_s	Effective scatter size
DRP	Diffuse Reflectance Probe
g	Anisotropy
I	Laser intensity
I_0	Laser intensity before sample (initial laser intensity)
IL	Intralipid
IR	Infrared
IS	Integrating Sphere
MC	Monte Carlo
n	Refractive index
OCT	Optical Coherence Tomography
p	Henye-Greenstein scattering phase function
PCG	Preconditioned Conjugate Gradients
PDT	Photodynamic therapy
PS	Photosensitiser
R_p	Reflectance probe measurement
RSM	Realistic Skin Model
RTE	Radiative Transport Equation
SCC	Squamous Cell Carcinoma

R_t	Total diffuse reflection
T_p	Probability of ‘survival’ of a photon after a path length l
UV	Ultraviolet
α	Oxygen saturation
ϵ_{HbO_2}	Extinction coefficient for oxyhaemoglobin
ϵ_{Eu}	Extinction coefficient for eumelanin
ϵ_{mel}	Extinction coefficient for melanin
ϵ_{Pheo}	Extinction coefficient for pheomelanin
λ	Wavelength
μ_a	Absorption coefficient
μ_s	Scattering coefficient
μ'_s with $\mu'_s = (1 - g)\mu_s$	Reduced scattering coefficient
μ_t with $\mu_t = \mu_s + \mu_a$	Total attenuation
v	Speed of light in medium
ξ	Random number between 0 and 1
ρ_a	Volume density of absorbers
ρ_s	Volume density of scatterers
σ_a	Effective absorption cross-sectional area
σ_s	Effective scattering cross-sectional area
ϕ	Fluence rate