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Optical and acoustic characterization of freeze-thawed polyvinyl alcohol phantoms

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Introduction
- Preclinical validation of non-invasive photoacoustic imaging of carotid artery atherosclerosis requires vessel phantoms that imitate optical, acoustic and mechanical properties of vascular tissue.
- In this study, we investigated the relation between acoustic scatterers and optical absorbers to quantify optical and acoustic properties of the polyvinyl alcohol (PVA) phantoms.

Material and Methods
The PVA gel was molded in cylindrical vessel molds to get vessel shaped samples with a wall thickness of 1 mm. After each freeze-thaw (F-T) cycle, pieces of vessel wall were taken out to fit inside 96-well plate slots as seen in Figure 1. The absorbance measurements of the samples were performed using a plate reader with 3 nm increment from 400 nm to 990 nm.

Planewave ultrasound system is used to measure the speed of sound and the attenuation. The demineralized water was used as a reference as in Eqn. (1). The attenuation of acoustic energy through the sample was calculated based on the amplitude change in the wave reflected from the acoustic reflector as in Eqn. (2) and Eqn. (3).

\[
\frac{1}{c_s} = \frac{1}{c_w} \frac{\Delta t}{2d_s}
\]

\[
\alpha_s = \frac{1}{d_s} \ln \left( \frac{A_w}{A_M} + 2 \frac{d_s}{d_w} \ln (1 - R_{FVA}) + \alpha_w \right)
\]

\[
R_{FVA} = \frac{R_{Sted}}{A_{FVA}}
\]

Discussion
- Freezing and thawing targets to imitate stiffness of the soft tissue; however, it introduces acoustic and optical scattering.
- Multi-layer vessel phantoms with different inclusions, photoacoustic analysis of phantoms is planned for in future work.

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Reference:
Arabul, M.U. et al., doi: 10.1109/ULTSYM.2014.060