Fabricating the microvasculature using 3D sugar printing

Citation for published version (APA):

Document status and date:
Published: 18/11/2019

Document Version:
Publisher’s PDF, also known as Version of Record (includes final page, issue and volume numbers)

Please check the document version of this publication:
• A submitted manuscript is the version of the article upon submission and before peer-review. There can be important differences between the submitted version and the official published version of record. People interested in the research are advised to contact the author for the final version of the publication, or visit the DOI to the publisher’s website.
• The final author version and the galley proof are versions of the publication after peer review.
• The final published version features the final layout of the paper including the volume, issue and page numbers.

Link to publication

General rights
Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal.

If the publication is distributed under the terms of Article 25fa of the Dutch Copyright Act, indicated by the “Taverne” license above, please follow below link for the End User Agreement:
www.tue.nl/taverne

Take down policy
If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us at:
openaccess@tue.nl
providing details and we will investigate your claim.
Fabricating the microvasculature using 3D sugar printing

A.M.A.O. Pollet*,a,b, F.G.A. Homburg a,b and J.M.J. den Toonder a,b

*Department of Mechanical Engineering, Microsystems group, The Netherlands
"Institute for Complex Molecular Systems (ICMS), The Netherlands

Microvasculature-on-chip

Mimicking the microvasculature remains one of the challenging aspects in microfabrication of biomedical devices such as "organ-on-chips". This is mainly due to the round cross sections, small diameters and complex network architectures1. Standard fabrication methods fail to represent all these features faithfully, however 3D printing of carbohydrate glass holds great promise to recreate the microvasculature structure in all aspects2 (Fig. 1). Others have shown it is possible to fabricate networks that are perfusable and can be casted in a variety of materials3,4. Our main focus was to be able to engineer hierarchical 3-dimensional branching networks that can change diameter along the vessel. These systems will lead to a better understanding of flow and distribution behaviour inside the microvasculature.

Setup

A dedicated setup was created based on standard 3D printing technology, with a barrel that can be heated and is connected to a pressure control system (Nordson EFD performus III). The nozzles used in the setup are standard 3D printer nozzles with a diameter of 0.15 mm and 0.4 mm for the results reported here. By controlling the speed of movement with a fixed material flow, the diameter can be tuned. Currently the printable range of fibres is from ~50 µm up to 1400 µm. The main advantage of carbohydrate glass is the fact it is self-supporting and can reflow with existing fibres to form in-plane junctions. This allows for a large degree of freedom to print complex structures and networks in 3D, only limited by the inability to print underneath existing structures. Examples of printed and casted structures are given in Figure 1 & 2. Perfusion and subsequent analysis with particle image velocimetry shows the flow profile throughout the system.

Results

Fig. 1: Free-standing structure of sugar glass inside a printed casting frame mimicking the vascular architecture. Insert: Perfused network with dye solution after dissolving sugar glass cast in PDMS. Scale bar 500 µm.

Fig. 2: Fibre diameter of printed Carbohydrate glass and Sugar glass network prints with the resulting PDMS casts. Figure A shows the influence of translation speed and temperature on the printed fibre diameter and deviation. Figure B is the printed sugar glass networks with in-plane bifurcations. Figure C is the PDMS casts after dissolving the sugar glass of similar prints, showing the reproducibility of the printing process. Scale bar 1000 µm for all images.

Fig. 3: Particle image velocimetry on the bottom right bifurcation of Figure 2 D with a flow rate of 100 µl/min at the inlet. Results show a velocity profile corresponding to the expected Poiseille flow with a maximum velocity of 12 mm/s.

References:

Acknowledgements:
The authors would like to thank: Luuk Tooten for designing and testing the printer, Robert Giesen for designing the extruder and characterising the carbohydrate glass material for printing and Stuart Smits for performing additional experiments on printing behaviour of the carbohydrate glass.

In the end, the printed models will be used to investigate the flow of blood and particles through a microvascular network, leading to a better understanding of perfusion and particle distribution/interaction in the microvasculature. To this extent scaling laws that are present in the microvasculature will be applied to the printed structures to increase their relevancy.

Outlook