Parallel Imaging Using a 3D Stack-of-Rings Trajectory

H. H. Wu1,2, M. Lustig2,3, and D. G. Nishimura2

1Cardiovascular Medicine, Stanford University, Stanford, CA, United States, 2Electrical Engineering, Stanford University, Stanford, CA, United States, 3Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, University of California at Berkeley, Berkeley, CA, United States

Introduction: The 3D stack-of-rings non-Cartesian $k$-space trajectory, based on the 2D concentric rings [1–5], enables robust and time-efficient magnetization-prepared imaging due to its unique circularly symmetric sampling nature [4, 5]. At the same time, this circular symmetry enables a time-efficient retracing acquisition that can resolve off-resonance effects and perform fat/water separation [3–5]. In this work, we present an efficient parallel imaging strategy for the 3D stack-of-rings trajectory to further enhance its flexible trade-offs between image quality and scan time. Non-Cartesian sampling and parallel imaging [6–8] are two complementary acceleration methods; combining the two can potentially enable a great reduction in scan time. However, the general problem of performing parallel imaging with an arbitrary sampling trajectory is computationally demanding [7]. Once again, due to its distinct geometry, parallel imaging reconstruction for the 3D stack-of-rings trajectory can be decomposed directly into a series of 2D Cartesian sub-problems, which can be solved very efficiently. Our approach thus combines the acceleration from both non-Cartesian sampling and parallel imaging in an efficient and easily deployable algorithm.

Methods: The 3D stack-of-rings trajectory encodes $(k_x, k_y)$ with a set of 2D concentric rings and covers $k_z$ with conventional slice encoding, already enabling a 2-fold scan-time reduction with respect to 3D Cartesian encoding [1–5]. In addition, efficient parallel imaging reconstruction is possible for the 3D stack of rings by recognizing that the dataset can be reformatted as a collection of “spoke-planes” (Fig. 1a) which cut through the rings acquisition along full-diameter spokes and contains data points that lie directly on 2D Cartesian grids. Parallel imaging reconstruction for the 3D stack of rings can thus be decomposed directly into a series of fast 2D Cartesian reconstructions for each spoke-plane. After the missing data points are filled out for each spoke-plane and coil [8], a Fourier transform is taken along $k_z$ followed by a series of 2D gridding reconstructions for each $(k_x, k_y)$-plane. Data from multiple coils are combined using a sum-of-squares approach.

Experiments: Setup: 3D head scans were performed on a GE Signa 1.5 T Excite system using an 8-channel head coil. The FOV was 24x24x18 cm$^3$ and matrix size was 240x240x180 (120 rings of 472 samples/2π in $(k_x, k_y)$). Each ring was acquired over 3 revolutions to enable fat/water separation [3–5]. Spherical coverage was implemented (Fig. 1b) [5] and this 3D stack-of-rings trajectory was incorporated into an IR-SPGR sequence that produced high white/gray matter contrast [4, 5]. Total scan time for the fully-sampled dataset was 7 min. This dataset was reformatted as 236 spoke-planes of 239x180 points each and retrospectively undersampled with a checkerboard pattern of reduction factor $R = 2$ (Fig. 1b). GRAPPA-based reconstruction [8] was performed for each spoke-plane using a fully-sampled central region of 17 rings x 32 slices (33x32 in each spoke-plane) for calibration and a 5x5 interpolation kernel. Results: Shown in Fig. 2 are representative head images (water images) obtained by using a fully-sampled reconstruction (Fig. 2a), a zero-filled reconstruction of the undersampled dataset (Fig. 2b), and by using the proposed parallel imaging reconstruction algorithm for the undersampled dataset (Fig. 2c). Aliasing is seen in the zero-filled reconstructions, while the parallel imaging reconstructions exhibit minimal residual aliasing and closely match the fully-sampled reconstructions.

Discussion: The 3D stack-of-rings trajectory has a distinct sampling geometry that allows its parallel imaging reconstruction to be broken down into a series of fast 2D Cartesian calculations. Experimental results demonstrate that a 2-fold acceleration in scan time ($R = 2$) can be achieved on top of the 2-fold time savings inherently offered by the rings. This means that the fat-water-separated 3D head scan would only take 3.5 minutes. In addition to the uniform undersampling example shown, it may be possible to design the 3D stack-of-rings undersampling pattern to fully utilize coil sensitivity encoding in all three spatial dimensions. While the spoke-plane decomposition enables a fast reconstruction, the azimuthal neighbors on multiple spoke-planes currently are not used to estimate missing data. In the future, we will compare our current approach to a fully 3D parallel imaging method and explore higher undersampling reduction factors.