Fast water suppression for high resolution MRSI by frequency selective spokes pulses at 7T

Tessa N van de Lindt1, Ronald Mooiweer2, Peter R Luijten3, Dennis W J Klomp2, and Vincent O Boer2

17 Tesla, UMC Utrecht, Amsterdam, Noord-Holland, Netherlands, 2UMC Utrecht, Utrecht, Utrecht, Netherlands

Introduction:
In brain MRSI, spatial resolution is limited by a relatively inefficient MR sequence because most localization methods require long repetition times (TR). Recently, a drive to more efficient localization techniques, such as ring mode selective excitation [1], have been developed. With these developments, the duration of the water suppression (WS) sequence becomes the limiting factor for fast MRSI. Because of the inhomogeneous B1-field at 7T, the main challenge for adaption of WS is to achieve high suppression factors over the whole brain. In this work an ultra short WS method is achieved by using frequency selective spokes pulses to correct for B1-inhomogeneties. In this way the TR can be further reduced, and an increase in spatial resolution becomes possible for brain MRSI at 7T, which potentially increases the diagnostic applicability of MRSI at ultrahigh field strengths.

Sequence: A pair of spokes block pulses is used to homogenize the B1-profile of a transverse slice through the brain (fig1). A frequency selective spokes pulse was designed by fitting six pairs of spokes pulses to a Gaussian shaped envelope (fig2) with a total duration of 4.7 ms. Three spokes pulses was obtained (3x3x10mm, TR=120ms, 2 averages, scan time=9min). All scans were performed on a 7T whole body MR system (Philips, USA). A B1-map was recorded with the actual receiver array and a volume transmit head coil (Nova Medical, USA). A B1-map was recorded with the actual gradient amplitudes and phase difference of a 2-spokes compensating field by 2 spokes, homogeneous B1 field after compensation.

Methods: Simulations to determine the water suppression profile were performed. An outer volume crusher coil [2] was used for fast lipid suppression and placed inside a 16-channel (Nova Medical, USA) RF receiver array and a volume transmit head coil (Nova Medical, USA). A B1-map was recorded with the actual flip angle method [3] and used to optimize the RF and gradient amplitudes and phase difference of a 2-spokes pulse [4]. While crushing the lipid signal with the crusher coil, slice selective pulse-acquire (SSPA) 2D MRSI was acquired using the designed spokes pulses as three WS pulses with nominal flip angles of 90, 100 and 110°. For comparison, SSPA 2D MRSI scans were applied with the commonly used 8-pulse VAPOR [5] (800 ms duration) and 3-90°pulse CHESS [6] (35 ms duration) WS methods. For all scans: voxel size=6x6x10mm, TR=850ms, scan time=3min. Additionally, a very high resolution SSPA 2D MRSI with spokes WS pulses was obtained (3x3x10mm, TR=120ms, 2 averages, scan time=9min). All scans were performed on a 7T whole body MR system (Philips, USA).

Results: The simulated frequency profile shows that suppression of the signal with spokes pulses will occur only on resonance with a bandwidth of 300Hz (fig3). Due to the subsampling with only 6 spokes pairs, this pattern repeats every 1.2 kHz. After WS with VAPOR, on average 0.5% of the original water signal remains (fig4a). WS with CHESS is only sufficient in the center of the brain where the flip angle reaches 100% (fig4b). WS with spokes pulses maintains a water residual of 1% on average over the whole slice (fig4c). The spectra of the VAPOR and spokes scans are virtually identical (fig5), apart from the suppression of the macromolecule at 1.2 kHz offset (0.9 ppm). Very high resolution imaging still shows sufficient SNR to detect brain metabolites [fig6].

Discussion & Conclusion: Over a whole slice, water suppression with the fast spokes pulses is almost identical to VAPOR water suppression. As expected by the frequency profile simulations, not only water is suppressed but macromolecules at 0.9 ppm are suppressed as well, which can be avoided by subsampling the gaussian envelope with more than 6 spokes pairs. Since the duration of the water suppression sequence is much faster than compared to VAPOR (26 vs 800 ms) scan times can be reduced and spatial resolution can be boosted as was shown by the very high resolution MRSI scan obtained in only 9 minutes. This may open up new possibilities for diagnostic applicability of MRSI.

References: