WIRELESSLY ACTIVATED THERMO-RESPONSIVE POLYMERS FOR IMPLANTABLE DRUG DELIVERY AND CENTRIFUGAL MICROFLUIDIC DEVICE APPLICATIONS

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my beloved family. Mak, Abah, sibling, my beloved wife, and children whose prayer, patience, support, and love have made toward the end of this journey.

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ABSTRACT

Thermo-responsive polymers have a great potential to be used in various types of microdevices. Besides being low cost, lightweight, and easy to process, the material properties can be easily tuned by altering the polymer chemistry and structure. These preferences have resulted in their application in many fields, including those in biomedical. Nevertheless, their advantages have not been fully exploited. For instance, most of the actuation mechanisms typically by increasing materials temperature using Joule heating which requires wired interfaces, thus restricting their applications where access and space are crucial. This thesis reports a novel technique for the wireless control of thermo-responsive polymers microactuators and microvalve. The wireless control of thermo-responsive polymers utilizes a radiofrequency magnetic field wireless heating of planar inductor-capacitor circuit to directly heat the actuator/valve, without the use of additional circuits is demonstrated. To function as a cantilever type microactuator, a shape-memory polymer bonded directly with a heater is fabricated. The actuation range of 140 µm as the tip opening distance is achieved at device temperature 44 °C in 30 s using 0.05 W radio frequency (RF) power. An application of a drug delivery device integrated with the proposed actuator is demonstrated. The actuator is successfully operated in water through wireless activation diffusing acidic solution with an average release rate of 0.172 µL/min. Wireless actuated microvalve using paraffin wax for the centrifugal microfluidic compact disc is also presented and evaluated. Experimental characterization shows a valve operated within ~ 100 s of activation using RF power of 1 W that provides a temperature increase up to 42 °C at a disc rotation speed of 200 rpm. The presented RF wireless control scheme of thermo-responsive polymer would provide an opportunity to extend further their potential of application beyond this report.

ABSTRAK

Polimer tindakbalas haba mempunyai potensi yang banyak untuk digunakan didalam pelbagai jenis alatan mikro. Selain murah, ringan, dan mudah diproses, sifat bahan juga dapat disesuaikan dengan mengubah struktur atau komposisi kimia polimer. Kelebihan ini membolehkan ianya diaplikasikan didalam pelbagai bidang asuk bidang bioperubatan. Walaupun begitu, ia masih belum dimanfaatkan sepenuhnya. Sebagai contoh, mekanisme pengaktifan biasanya dilakukan dengan meningkatkan suhu bahan menerusi pemanasan Joule yang mana ia memerlukan antaramuka berwayar. Teknik ini membataskan potensi aplikasi didalam situasi dimana akses dan ruang menjadi keutamaan. Tesis ini melaporkan teknik baru bagi kawalan tanpa wayar penggerak-mikro polimer dan injap-mikro, menggunakan polimer tindakbalas haba. Kawalan tanpa wayar polimer ini diaplikasi menggunakan medan magnet frekuensi radio menerusi pemanasan tanpa wayar litar leper induktorkapasitor, bagi memanaskan penggerak / injap secara langsung, tanpa penggunaan litar tambahan. Polimer bentuk memori yang diintegrasikan dengan pemanas juga telah dibangunkan yang berfungsi sebagai penggerak-mikro jenis kantilever. Jarak pembukaan 140 µm dicapai pada suhu peranti 44 °C dalam masa 30 s menggunakan kuasa radio frekuensi (RF) 0.05 W. Aplikasi alatan penyampaian ubat yang diintegrasikan dengan penggerak juga dibentangkan. Penggerak berjaya dikendalikan di dalam air melalui pengaktifan tanpa wayar di dalam larutan berasid, dengan purata kadar pelepasan cecair 0.172 µL/min. Selain daripada itu, injap mikro yang digerakkan tanpa wayar menggunakan lilin parafin bagi applikasi cakera padat emparan mikrocecair, juga dibentangkan dan dinilai. Pencirian melalui eksperimen menunjukkan injap dapat dikendalikan dalam masa ~ 100 s selepas pengaktifan dengan menggunakan kuasa RF 1 W, dimana ianya berjaya menaikkan suhu sehingga 42 °C pada kelajuan putaran cakera 200 rpm. Skim kawalan tanpa wayar RF polimer tindakbalas haba yang dibentangkan ini berpotensi untuk diperluaskan lagi aplikasinya di luar laporan ini.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AC	-	Alternating current
BTB	-	Bromothymol Blue
cm^2	-	Squredcentimeter
CTE	-	Coefficient of thermal expansion
Cu	-	Copper / Cuprum
Cu-clad	-	Copper-clad
Cu_2SO_4	-	Copper Sulfate
DCM	-	Dichloromethane
DI	-	Deionized
DSC	-	Differential scanning calorimetry
DSLR		Digital single-lens reflex
HC1	-	Hydrochloric Acid
Hz	-	Hertz
IR	-	Infrared
LC	-	Inductor-capacitor
LOC	-	Lab-on-a-chip
mA	-	Miliampere
MEMS	-	Microelectromechanical Systems
MHz	-	Megahertz
min	-	Minute
°C	-	Degrees Celcius
PDMS	-	Polydimethylsiloxane
PI	-	Polyimide
PMMA	-	polymethyl methacrylate
PSA	-	Pressure-sensitive adhesive
RF	-	Radio frequency
S	-	Second
SMA	-	Shape Memory Alloy
SMM	-	Shape Memory Material
SMP	-	Shape Memory Polymer

TWSME	-	Two-way shape memory effect
VCV	-	Vacuum/compression valve
W	-	Watt

LIST OF SYMBOLS

f_c	-	Heater circuit resonant frequency
f_m	-	Electromagnetic field frequency
f_r	-	Resonant frequency
$f_{r\ air}$	-	Resonant frequency on air
f_{r} DI water	-	Resonant frequency on DI water
m_1	-	Slope line 1
m_2	-	Slope line 2
<i>m</i> ₃	-	Slope line 3
S_{11}	-	S11 parameter
T_g	-	Glass transition temperature
T_{g_end}	-	Ending of the glass transition temperature
T _g start	-	Starting of the glass transition temperature

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Microelectromechanical Systems (MEMS) are developed using a technology that combines the properties of electrical, mechanical, or other elements (i.e., magnetic, thermal, etc.), into a micro-scaled system. These systems are typically fabricated using conventional semiconductor batch processing techniques. They are miniature in size, ranging from millimeters down to nanometers. This technology has enabled various approaches in the biomedical field, such as pain management [1], cardiac pacemakers [2], minimally invasive robotic-assisted surgery [3], lab-on-a-chip (LOC) [4], and drug delivery [5].

Among these applications, LOC and drug delivery have received much attention from the scientific community due to their significant impact in medicine. The LOC platform is based on microfluidics, which is the study of micro-scaled fluid dynamics. LOC technology affects drug delivery advancements in various aspects, including drug carrier manufacturing, screening and their delivery.

With the accelerated development of new medicinal compounds, new drug delivery systems are needed to overcome the challenges associated with traditional drug delivery systems. One of the solutions is by introducing an implantable drug delivery system. MEMS are promising candidates for the development of novel implantable drug delivery systems that address existing problems. The system allows the delivery of various drugs with high therapeutic effectiveness by offering electromechanical control, multiple function integration, and miniaturization.

In recent decades, studies and application of MEMS in implantable drug delivery systems, especially on microactuators, have focused on their drug release mechanism. Microactuators are designed and developed using different methods that accommodate targeted applications. These devices are often operated using electrostatic, piezoelectric, electromagnetic and electrothermal principles, and may be made of shape-memory materials (SMMs).

In addition to drug delivery, the MEMS technology was used in microfluidic devices. This specific type of device comprises of microfluidic unit operations that allow for assay miniaturization, integration, automation, and parallelization of biochemical processes. The devices are typically classified by their type of liquid propulsion systems [6], such as capillary, acoustic, electrokinetic, pressure-driven, and centrifugal. A centrifugal-based microfluidic system is preferable as it does not require an external pumping mechanism to move the fluid inside the microfluidic channels. This would facilitate the integration of several microfluidic unit operations on a single platform.

The ability to operate MEMS devices wirelessly is also important to support the implantable nature and their portability. One approach to this wireless scheme is to utilize an active actuation mechanism, which is commonly defined by a batterypowered device. However, this approach tends to develop a bigger device with limited power longevity. The passive actuation mechanism, often known as batteryless actuation, is a better option for addressing these issues. Passive actuation uses acoustic waves, magnetic fields, ultrasonic, or inductive coupling mechanisms.

An inductive coupling mechanism is preferable to selectively control multiple devices. In this technique, a radio frequency (RF) magnetic field is used to transfer power from the transmitter to the receiver coil on the device. This transferred power is dissipated as heat, which is then used to control thermal-based actuators such as shape memory alloy (SMA), shape memory polymer (SMP), or paraffin wax.

Thermal-based SMA is advantageous due to its ability to provide high actuation stress. However, SMA is relatively expensive and requires a complex fabrication process to fabricate a device. A thermal-based polymer such as SMP or paraffin wax is preferable. Apart from being relatively cheaper and easier to process than SMA, the polymer has excellent mechanical properties, is flexible, and is biocompatible.

This thesis reports a novel wireless control of a thermo-responsive polymerbased microactuator and microvalve. The thermo-responsive polymers utilize RF magnetic field wireless heating of the planar inductor-capacitor circuit to directly heat the actuator or valve. Both devices are demonstrated in implantable drug delivery and microfluidic disc applications, respectively.

1.2 Problem Statement

Although there are numerous development of microactuators and microvalves, the ability to miniaturize and deploy these devices in implantable and portable applications is still limited. There are many obstacles and issues related to their powering, actuation, and integration. Thus far, such devices are commonly bound to the use of onboard batteries to activate the device. This method is not convenient for long-term implants and portable devices. Moreover, battery-powered devices require extra circuitry that increase their size. In contrast to the active type of actuators, passively operated actuators offer the ability to be scaled down in size. Scaling down reduces the cost of the system, while ensuring greater robustness and longevity. In addition, passively controlled systems are more appealing for implantable devices as they are safer for a longer period of use before replacement.

The passively controlled wireless actuation mechanism have been studied previously. However, their application in the wirelessly driven microactuator and microvalve have not been well explored, and their actuation mechanism requires further improvement, especially for the thermal-based type. There are reports on wireless activated thermal-based microactuators that used SMA [7], [8]. However, SMA is known to be expensive and requires complex processes and machines to process. The thermal-based wireless actuation mechanism still requires further research.

1.3 Research Objective

The main objectives of this research are to investigate 1) an implantable drug delivery device and 2) a centrifugal microfluidic device, activated by a thermo-responsive material that is powered and controlled wirelessly using an external magnetic field. The specific objectives are:

i. To develop a

ii. of the developed devices, including their temporal and thermal responses.

1.4 Scope of Research

The scope of this research focuses on the development of two wirelessly controlled devices for specific applications, namely, a microactuator for drug delivery applications and a microvalve system for centrifugal microfluidic disc application. The wireless actuation schemes are based on a thermal-responsive polymer. Furthermore, this scheme was employed in inductor-capacitor (LC) circuits designed for wireless activation of the devices. For the fabrication process of the devices, the standard MEMS fabrication technique, including photolithography, etching, electroplating, and micromachining were used. The Cu-clad Polyimide (PI) was used to realize the LC circuit, while bulk polymethyl methacrylate (PMMA) was utilized to fabricate the drug reservoir and microfluidic centrifugal disc. The thermal-based SMP and paraffin wax was used to realize the microactuator and microvalve, respectively.

The Solidworks[®] software was used for the physical design. The thermal responses of the LC heaters and the thermomechanical behavior of the microactuators were simulated using (finite element analysis) FEA simulations by mean of COMSOL Multiphysics[®]. For characterization, thermal analysis was measured using an infrared (IR) thermal camera, displacement sensing was measured using a laser displacement sensor, S_{11} parameters were evaluated using a network analyzer and imagery data were obtained using microscopic imaging and digital single-lens reflex (DSLR) camera.

1.5 Research Contribution

This research proposes three significant contributions, with the utilization of the two different wirelessly controlled devices consisting of a thermo-responsive material as a medium of activation. These contributions are highlighted as follows:

- i. Development of a novel wireless LC planar microheater with minimal fabrication process, employing double-sided Cu-clad Polyimide (PI). This process eliminates the material deposition step and significantly reduces the time required to fabricate the heater.
- ii. Development of a novel implantable drug delivery device actuated by an SMP/PI laminate that exhibits two-way actuation. The device is operated using a passive frequency-sensitive wireless planar LC heater integrated with the SMP and enabled by an external magnetic field.

iii. Development of novel selective wireless RF-controlled active valves for a microfluidic disc platform using field frequency modulation. The LC resonant circuit served as a frequency-sensitive wireless heater that provides localized heating with minimal power transmission.

1.6 Potential Impact of Research

Several factors are associated with the rather low application of MEMS-based actuators in biomedicine. One of these factors is the use of a conventional wired powering method, which limits mobility. To date, onboard batteries and biofuel cells are potential solutions to this issue. However, these approaches increase the size of the systems, subsequently limiting their operation and range of application. A passive RF wireless control system to drive the actuators, would allow further coping improvements and widen their number of possible applications.

One of the potential applications of the actuators is in implantable drug delivery devices. With this approach, the size and method of powering are important to provide minimum invasiveness and long-term operations. Furthermore, the ability to wirelessly control multiple actuators that are integrated into a single device in a selective manner will be advantageous in implantable and microfluidic devices. Integration of the actuator's component and the LC circuit can greatly reduce fabrication complexity, size, and cost of the device. Furthermore, the LC circuit fabricated using double-sided Cu-clad PI, was proven to require only a few steps, thus reducing the number of steps required [7], [8]. In addition, the use of polymers that are flexible and easier to process may initiate a rapid development of MEMS-based microactuators and microvalves. The positive outcomes from this research are expected to promote advances in the technology of devices used in biomedicine and beyond.

1.7 Thesis Outline

This thesis is divided into six chapters. Chapter 1 is a general overview ofMEMS technology, implantable drug delivery, and microfluidic systems. This is followed by the problem statement, objectives, and scope of the research. Chapter 2 presents the literature review, which covers an overview of thermo-responsive materials, implantable drug delivery device systems, and microfluidic devices in greater depth. MEMS actuation mechanisms, material properties, and actuation methods are also covered in their respective applications. Chapter 3 presents the methodology, followed by Chapter 4, which covers the development of a frequency controlled SMP microactuator for implantable drug delivery devices. Chapter 5 presents a novel wireless valving for a centrifugal microfluidic disc and demonstrates its ability to selectively activate multiple actuators, as well as valve performance. Finally, the thesis concludes with Chapter 6, where the key results and directions for future work are discussed, followed by a list of publications resulting from this work.

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<u>Journals</u>

- M. A. Zainal, S. Sahlan, and M. S. Mohamed Ali, "Micromachined shapememory-alloy microactuators and their application in biomedical devices," *Micromachines*, vol. 6, no. 7, pp. 879–901, 2015. (Part of Chapter 2)
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Conferences

- M. A. Zainal and M. S. Mohamed Ali, "Wireless shape memory polymer microactuator for implantable drug delivery application," in *IECBES 2016 -IEEE-EMBS Conference on Biomedical Engineering and Sciences*, 2016, pp. 76–79. (Part of Chapter 2,3 and 4)
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