# THERMOLUMINESCENCE RESPONSE OF DOPED SILICON DIOXIDE OPTICAL FIBRES SUBJECTED TO ELECTRON IRRADIATION

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Science (Physics)

Faculty of Science Universiti Teknologi Malaysia

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I dedicate this work

To my beloved parent

Buang bin Hj. Pelet Salmi binti Hj. Kasimon

Whose love, kindness, patience and prayer have brought me this far

To my dear siblings

For their love, understanding and support through my endeavour

To my friends

Whose presence fills my life with joy and cheerful

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#### **ABSTRACT**

This study was focused on the suitability of commercial optical fibres as a new thermoluminescence dosimeter (TLD). The materials doped to silicon dioxide (SiO<sub>2</sub>) were germanium type A (Ge (A)) of first, second and third batch, germanium type B (Ge (B)), erbium (Er), aluminium and thulium (Al + Tm), photonic crystal fibre (PCF) of first and second batch, and multi photonic crystal fibres (MPCF). The MPCF came with different range of core diameter of 220 µm (MPCF 220 µm) and 2 mm (MPCF 2 mm). The study also used pure glasses such as photosensitive flat fibre (PFF), flat fibre (FF) and dummy flat fibre (DFF). A comparison of the thermoluminescence (TL) response of electron irradiation concerning sensitivity, linearity, energy dependence, fading signal, reproducibility, minimum detectable dose (MDD) and effective atomic number,  $Z_{eff}$  parameters as well as cross-comparison with that of TL dosimeter i.e TLD-100 (LiF:Mg,Ti) rods were investigated. Scanning electron microscopy (SEM) was used to determine the dopant concentration in each doped optical fibres. The irradiation was performed using 6 MeV electrons for doses ranging from 1 – 4 Gy at Pantai Hospital and University of Malaya Medical Centre separately according to the batch. All the optical fibres produced linear dose-TL responses for dose range of 1 – 4 Gy. TLD-100 produced greater TL sensitivity followed by PFF, FF, Ge (A), MPCF 2 mm, DFF, Al + Tm, Er, MPCF 220 µm, Ge (B) and PCF with their relative sensitivity of 0.2, 0.15, 0.08, 0.04, 0.02, 0.01, 0.005, 0.004, 0.003 and 0.002 respectively compared to TLD-100. Ge (A) showed 7% signal loss followed by PFF, Er, FF and PCF with 15%, 26%, 28% and 33% signal loss respectively after 14 days of irradiation. Reproducibility of Ge (A), Ge (B), Er, PCF, MPCF 2 mm and MPCF 220 µm were poor due to high degree of fading. The lowest MDD obtained from TLD-100, followed by FF, Ge (A) 1st batch, Ge (A) 3<sup>rd</sup> batch and PFF with their MDD of 0.13, 0.9, 4.0, 5.2 and 5.4 mGy respectively. The Z<sub>eff</sub> for Ge (B), Ge (A) and Er doped to SiO<sub>2</sub> optical fibres were 11.88, 12.95 and 20.69 respectively. Several attractive features offered by these fibres point to its use in radiation therapy.

#### **ABSTRAK**

Kajian ini memberi tumpuan kepada kesesuaian gentian optik komersial sebagai dosimeter luminesens terma (TLD). Gentian optik yang didopkan kepada silikon dioksida (SiO<sub>2</sub>) ialah germanium jenis A (Ge (A)) kumpulan pertama, kedua dan ketiga, germanium jenis B (Ge (B)), erbium (Er), aluminium + tulium (Al + Tm), "photonic crystal fibre" (PCF) kumpulan pertama dan kedua, dan "multi photonic crystal fibre" (MPCF). MPCF terdiri daripada teras diameter yang berbeza iaitu 220 μm (MPCF 220 μm) dan 2 mm (MPCF 2 mm). Kajian ini juga menggunakan kaca tulen iaitu "photosensitive flat fibre" (PFF), "flat fibre" (FF) dan "dummy flat fibre" (DFF). Perbandingan sambutan luminesens terma (TL) dilakukan terhadap sinaran elektron mengenai kepekaan, kelinearan, pergantungan tenaga, isyarat pudar, kebolehulangan, dos minimum terkesan (MDD) dan nombor atom berkesan, Zeff begitu juga perbandingan silang dengan dosimeter rod TLD-100 (LiF:Mg,Ti) turut dikaji. Mikroskopi pengimbas elektron (SEM) digunakan untuk menentukan kepekatan dopan dalam setiap gentian optik. Penyinaran telah dilakukan menggunakan 6 MeV untuk dos elektron dalam julat 1 – 4 Gy di Hospital Pantai dan Pusat Perubatan Universiti Malaya secara berasingan mengikut kumpulan. Semua gentian optik menghasilkan tindak balas dos linear-sambutan TL untuk julat dos 1 – 4 Gy. TLD-100 menghasilkan sambutan TL yang lebih peka diikuti oleh PFF, FF, Ge (A), MPCF 2 mm, DFF, Al + Tm, Er, MPCF 220 µm, Ge (B) dan PCF dengan kepekaan relatif masing-masing adalah 0.2, 0.15, 0.08, 0.04, 0.02, 0.01, 0.005, 0.004, 0.003 dan 0.002 berbanding dengan TLD-100. Ge (A) menunjukkan isyarat pudar sebanyak 7% diikuti dengan PFF, Er, FF dan PCF dengan masing-masing isyarat pudar adalah15%, 26%, 28% dan 33% selepas 14 hari penyinaran. Kebolehulangan Ge (A), Ge (B), Er, PCF, MPCF 2 mm dan MPCF 220 µm adalah rendah kerana darjah kepudaran yang tinggi. Nilai MDD terendah diperoleh daripada TLD-100, diikuti dengan FF, Ge (A) kumpulan pertama, Ge (A) kumpulan ketiga dan PFF dengan MDD masing-masing adalah 0.13, 0.9, 4.0, 5.2 dan 5.4 mGy. Z<sub>eff</sub> bagi Ge (B), Ge (A) dan Er yang didopkan kepada gentian optik silikon dioksida masing-masing adalah 11.88, 12.95 dan 20.69. Beberapa ciri menarik yang ditawarkan oleh gentian ini membawa kepada penggunaan dalam terapi sinaran.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	TITLE	PAGE
	DECLARATION	ii
	DEDICATION	iii
	ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iv
	ABSTRACT	V
	ABSTRAK	vi
	TABLE OF CONTENTS	vii
	LIST OF TABLES	X
	LIST OF FIGURES	xii
	LIST OF SYMBOLS	xvii
	LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xviii
	LIST OF APPENDICES	xix
1	INTRODUCTION	1
	1.1 Overview	1
	1.2 Background of the problems	2
	1.3 Statement of the problems	3
	1.4 Research objectives	4
	1.5 Statement of the hypothesis	4
	1.6 Scopes of the research	6
	1.7 Organization of thesis	7
2	LITERATURE REVIEW	8
	2.1 Concept of ionizing radiation	8
	2.2 Radiation therapy	9

	2.3	Introdu	action of Scanning Electron Microscopy	10
		(SEM)		
		2.3.1	Resolution	10
		2.3.2	Interaction of electron with matter	10
	2.4	Theore	etical models of thermoluminescence	12
	2.5	Therm	oluminescence mechanism	13
	2.6	Therm	oluminescence studies on optical fibres	14
	2.7	TLD C	Characteristics	17
		2.7.1	A relatively simple glow curve	17
		2.7.2	High sensitivity	17
		2.7.3	Simple annealing techniques	18
		2.7.4	Linearity of dose response	19
		2.7.5	Low fading	20
		2.7.6	Negligible dependence of radiation	21
			energy	
		2.7.7	Minimum detectable dose (MDD)	21
		2.7.8	The effective atomic number, $Z_{eff}$	22
	2.8	Optica	l fibres fabrication	23
	2.9	Scanni	ng electron microscopy (SEM)	23
3	ME'	THODO	DLOGY	25
	3.1	TL ma	terials	25
	3.2	Sample	e preparations	27
	3.3	Annea	ling	28
	3.4	Encaps	sulation	30
	3.5	Irradia	tion	31
	3.6	TL me	asurement	33
	3.7	Scanni	ng Electron Microscopy (SEM)	34
4	TL 1	MEASU	REMENTS	38
	4.1	Overvi	ew	38

1	X

	4.2	Glow curve analysis	39
	4.3	Dose response and linearity	47
	4.4	Sensitivity	69
	4.5	Energy response	74
	4.6	Fading	79
	4.7	Reproducibility	87
	4.8	Minimum detectable dose (MDD)	94
	4.9	The effective atomic number, $Z_{eff}$	95
5	CO	NCLUSION	97
	5.1	Summary of Findings	97
	5.2	Recommendations and Future Research	100
REFERENCES			101
Appendices A			106

# LIST OF TABLES

TABLE NO.	TITLE	PAGE
3.1	List of the optical fibres been irradiated for first, second and	26
2.2	third irradiation.	22
3.2	Irradiation set up at UMMC for second and third irradiation.	32
4.1	Summary of main peak value for each TLD.	46
4.2	Sensitivity and relative sensitivity of each optical fibre	70
	compared to standard dosimeter, TLD-100 rods irradiate	
	at Pantai Hospital (1 <sup>st</sup> irradiation).	
4.3	Sensitivity and relative sensitivity of each optical fibre	71
	compared to standard dosimeter, TLD-100 rods irradiate	
	at UMMC (2 <sup>nd</sup> irradiation).	
4.4	Sensitivity and relative sensitivity of each optical fibre	73
	compared to standard dosimeter, TLD-100 rods irradiate at	
	UMMC (3 <sup>rd</sup> irradiation).	
4.5	Fading response for 14 days after irradiation at 1 Gy.	85
4.6	Percentage of signal loss after irradiation at 1 Gy.	86
4.7	TL response of Ge (A) for 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> irradiation.	88
4.8	TL measurements of Ge (B) for first and second	89
	irradiations.	
4.9	TL measurements of Er for first and second irradiations.	90
4.10	TL measurements of PCF for first and second irradiations.	91
4.11	TL measurements of MPCF 2 mm for first and second	92
	irradiations.	

4.12	TL measurements of MPCF 220 $\mu m$ for first and second	93
	irradiations.	
4.13	Minimum detectable dose for all optical fibres.	94

# LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE NO.	TITLE	PAGE
2.1	Production of electron-matter interactions.	11
2.2	TL mechanism process.	14
3.1	The optical fibres before cut.	27
3.2	The optical fibres after cut into 0.5 cm.	27
3.3	An optical fibre cleaver (Fujikura, Japan) was used to cut the fibres.	27
3.4	BSA224S-CW analytical balance (Sartorius, Germany).	28
3.5	A furnace (Harshaws) used to anneal TL materials.	29
3.6	TLD-100 rods were placed on a stainless steel plate for	29
	annealing procedure.	
3.7	The fibres were placed inside vegetable-based gelatine	30
	capsule.	
3.8	Dymax 5-06260160 (Surrey, England) electrical vacuum.	30
3.9	Linear Accelerator Elekta Synergy of electron irradiation at	31
	Pantai Hospital radiotherapy unit.	
3.10	Varian Model 2100C linear accelerator for electron	33
	irradiation at UMMC radiotherapy unit.	
3.11	Harshaw 3500 TL reader was used to take the TL reading.	34
3.12	The optical fibres were put on the sample stage.	35
3.13	Scanning Electron Microscopy with Gemini® Column.	35
3.14	Operating principle of the GEMINI® field emission column.	36
4.1	Glow curve of TLD-100 at 1 Gy irradiate at UMMC at 6	39

	MeV of electron irradiation.	
4.2	Glow curve of PFF at 1 Gy irradiated with 6 MeV of	40
	electrons.	
4.3	Glow curve of FF at 1 Gy irradiated with 6 MeV of	41
	electrons.	
4.4	Glow curve of Ge (A) 1 <sup>st</sup> batch at 1 Gy irradiated with 6	41
	MeV of electrons.	
4.5	Glow curve of Ge (A) 2 <sup>nd</sup> batch at 1 Gy irradiated with 6	42
	MeV of electrons.	
4.6	Glow curve of Ge (A) 3 <sup>rd</sup> batch at 1 Gy irradiated with 6	42
	MeV of electrons.	
4.7	Glow curve of MPCF 2 mm at 1 Gy irradiated with 6 MeV	43
	of electrons.	
4.8	Glow curve of Al+Tm at 1 Gy irradiated with 6 MeV of	43
	electrons.	
4.9	Glow curve of DFF at 1 Gy irradiated with 6 MeV of	44
	electrons.	
4.10	Glow curve of Ge (B) at 1 Gy irradiated with 6 MeV of	44
	electrons.	
4.11	Glow curve of PCF 2 <sup>nd</sup> batch at 1 Gy irradiated with 6 MeV	45
	of electrons.	
4.12	Glow curve of MPCF 220 µm at 1 Gy irradiated with 6 MeV	45
	of electrons.	
4.13	TL response of Ge (A) 1 <sup>st</sup> batch compared with TLD-100 at	47
	6 MeV of electron irradiation at Pantai Hospital.	
4.14	TL response of Ge (B), Er and PCF at 6 MeV of electron	48
	irradiation at Pantai Hospital.	
4.15	f(D) of Ge (A) at 6 MeV of electrons at Pantai Hospital.	49
4.16	f(D) of Ge (B) at 6 MeV of electrons at Pantai Hospital.	50
4.17	f(D) of Er at 6 MeV of electrons at Pantai Hospital.	50
4.18	f(D) of PCF at 6 MeV of electrons at Pantai Hospital.	51

		xiv
4.19	TL response of Ge (A) 2 <sup>nd</sup> batch and MPCF 2 mm at 6 MeV	52
	of electrons at UMMC (2 <sup>nd</sup> irradiation).	
4.20	TL response of MPCF 220 µm and PCF 2 <sup>nd</sup> batch at 6 MeV	52
	of electrons at UMMC (2 <sup>nd</sup> irradiation).	
4.21	$f(D)$ of Ge (A) $2^{nd}$ batch at 6 MeV of electrons at UMMC.	53
4.22	f(D) of MPCF 2 mm at 6 MeV of electrons at UMMC.	54
4.23	$f(D)$ of MPCF 220 $\mu$ m at 6 MeV of electrons at UMMC.	54
4.24	$f(D)$ of PCF $2^{nd}$ batch at 6 MeV of electrons at UMMC.	55
4.25	TL response of PFF, FF and DFF at 6 MeV of electrons at	56
	UMMC (3 <sup>rd</sup> irradiation).	
4.26	TL response of Ge (A) for all batches at 6 MeV of electrons	57
	at UMMC (3 <sup>rd</sup> irradiation).	
4.27	Average TL response of Ge (A) for all batches at 6 MeV of	57
	electrons at UMMC (3 <sup>rd</sup> irradiation).	
4.28	TL response of MPCF 2 mm MPCF 220 µm at 6 MeV of	58
	electrons at UMMC (3 <sup>rd</sup> irradiation).	
4.29	TL response of PCF 2 <sup>nd</sup> batch and 3 <sup>rd</sup> batch with their	59
	average of TL response at 6 MeV of electron irradiation at	
	UMMC (3 <sup>rd</sup> irradiation).	
4.30	TL response of Al+Tm, Er and Ge (B) at 6 MeV of electrons	60
	at UMMC (3 <sup>rd</sup> irradiation).	
4.31	f(D) of PFF at 6 MeV of electrons at UMMC.	61
4.32	f(D) of FF at 6 MeV of electrons at UMMC.	62
4.33	f(D) of Ge (A) 1 <sup>st</sup> batch at 6 MeV of electrons at UMMC.	62
4.34	$f(D)$ of Ge (A) $3^{rd}$ batch at 6 MeV of electrons at UMMC.	63
4.35	$f(D)$ of Ge (A) $2^{nd}$ batch at 6 MeV of electrons at UMMC.	64
4.36	f(D) of MPCF 2 mm at 6 MeV of electrons at UMMC.	64
4.37	f(D) of DFF at 6 MeV of electrons at UMMC.	65
4.38	f(D) of Al+Tm batch at 6 MeV of electrons at UMMC.	65
4.39	f(D) of Er at 6 MeV of electrons at UMMC.	66
4.40	$f(D)$ of MPCF 220 $\mu$ m at 6 MeV of electrons at UMMC.	66

4.41	f(D) of Ge (B) at 6 MeV of electrons at UMMC.	67
4.42	f(D) of PCF 2 <sup>nd</sup> batch at 6 MeV of electrons at UMMC.	68
4.43	f(D) of PCF 3 <sup>rd</sup> batch at 6 MeV of electrons at UMMC.	68
4.44	Energy response of Al+Tm doped SiO <sub>2</sub> at 6 MeV, 9 MeV	74
	and 12 MeV of electron irradiation.	
4.45	Energy response of DFF at 6 MeV, 9 MeV and 12 MeV of	75
	electron irradiation.	
4.46	Energy response of FF at 6 MeV, 9 MeV and 12 MeV of	75
	electron irradiation.	
4.47	Energy response of Ge (A) 2 <sup>nd</sup> batch doped SiO <sub>2</sub> at 6 MeV, 9	76
	MeV and 12 MeV of electron irradiation.	
4.48	Energy response of Ge (A) 3 <sup>rd</sup> batch doped SiO <sub>2</sub> at 6 MeV, 9	76
	MeV and 12 MeV of electron irradiation.	
4.49	Energy response of MPCF 220 μm doped SiO <sub>2</sub> at 6 MeV, 9	77
	MeV and 12 MeV of electron irradiation.	
4.50	Energy response of MPCF 2 mm doped SiO <sub>2</sub> at 6 MeV, 9	77
	MeV and 12 MeV of electron irradiation.	
4.51	Energy response of PCF 2 <sup>nd</sup> batch doped SiO <sub>2</sub> at 6 MeV,	78
	9 MeV and 12 MeV of electron irradiation.	
4.52	Energy response of PCF 3 <sup>rd</sup> batch doped SiO <sub>2</sub> at 6 MeV,	78
	9 MeV and 12 MeV of electron irradiation.	
4.53	Energy response of PFF at 6 MeV, 9 MeV and 12 MeV of	79
	electron irradiation.	
4.54	Fading of Er doped SiO <sub>2</sub> for 14 days at 1 Gy.	80
4.55	Fading of Er doped SiO <sub>2</sub> for 14 days at 1 Gy after	81
	normalized at 1 <sup>st</sup> day.	
4.56	Fading of FF for 14 days at 1 Gy.	81
4.57	Fading of FF for 14 days at 1 Gy after normalized at 1st day.	82
4.58	Fading of Ge (A) doped SiO <sub>2</sub> for 14 days at 1 Gy.	82
4.59	Fading of Ge (A) doped SiO <sub>2</sub> for 14 days at 1 Gy after	83
	normalized at 1 <sup>st</sup> day.	

		xvi
4.60	Fading of PCF doped SiO <sub>2</sub> for 14 days at 1 Gy.	83
4.61	Fading of PCF doped SiO <sub>2</sub> for 14 days at 1 Gy after	84
	normalized at 1st day.	
4.62	Fading of PFF for 14 days at 1 Gy.	84
4.63	Fading of PFF for 14 days at 1 Gy after normalized at 1st	85
	day.	
4.64	TL response of Ge (A) for 1st and 2nd exposure at 6 MeV of	88
	electron irradiation.	
4.65	TL response of Ge (B) for 1st and 2nd exposure at 6 MeV of	89
	electron irradiation.	
4.66	TL response of Er for 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> exposure at 6 MeV of	90
	electron irradiation.	
4.67	TL response of PCF for 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> exposure at 6 MeV of	91
	electron irradiation.	
4.68	TL response of MPCF 2 mm for 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> exposure at 6	92
	MeV of electron irradiation.	
4.69	TL response of MPCF 220 µm for 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> exposure at 6	93
	MeV of electron irradiation.	
4.70	Dopant concentration and $Z_{\it eff}$ for Er, Ge (A) and Ge (B)	95
	doped optical fibres.	

xvii

# LIST OF SYMBOLS

 $E_o$  Electron original energy

T Lifetime

Z Atomic number of the atom

 $\theta$  Small scattering angle

 $E_l$  Electron energy of the elastic scattering

 $S_{\Delta}$  The linear stopping power

*e* The electronic charge

*LiF* Lithium fluoride

CaSO<sub>4</sub> Calcium sulphate

 $B_{mean}$  The mean TL background signal

 $\sigma$  The standard deviation

F TL system calibration factor

*D<sub>o</sub>* Threshold dose

 $N_2$  Nitrogen gas

SiO<sub>2</sub> Silicon dioxide

MU Monitor Units

 $Z_{eff}$  The effective atomic number

 $S_d$  Relative sensitivity

# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

TLD Thermoluminescence dosimetry

ICRP International Commission of Radiological Protection

TL Thermoluminescence

LET Linear energy transfer

MCVD Modified Chemical Vapour Deposition

LINAC Linear accelerator

SEM Scanning electron microscope

ALARA As low as reasonable acievable

PCS Plastic clad silica

MU Monitor unit

PDD Percentage depth dose

FSD Field source distance

PMT Photomultiplier

# LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX	TITLE	PAGE	
A	Titles of Paper Presentation (International/Local)	106	

#### **CHAPTER 1**

#### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Overview

As part of cancer therapy, every year 2.5 million people around the world are treated with ionizing radiation which is radiation therapy. A predictable fraction of the cancer cells die when high energy is applied in the deterministic regime. In spite of that, radiation can also act as a carcinogen (cancer-causing agent) which will cause radiation sickness. In addition to destroy the cancer cells, radiation therapy can also destroy the healthy tissue near the cancer cells when exposed to high energy. Dose that is delivered to the healthy tissue possibly creates an enhanced risk of cancer at some time later (Suzanne, 2003).

For that, radiation energy that is deposited in human tissue should be measured. A specific dosimetric system is chosen for the planned measurement of absorbed dose. In radiotherapy, *in vivo* dosimetry is required in order to measure of actual dose delivered to internal organs with a high level of accuracy. Apart of ensuring the critical organ is delivered with the prescribed dose, it is also necessary to limit the dose burden from damaging of the surrounding normal tissue as low as possible (Khalil, 2006).

In this work, thermoluminescence dosimetry (TLD) is used for radiotherapy application. TLD is found widespread in *in vivo* dosimetry, probably because of its high thermoluminescence (TL) output. One of the characteristic needed in a

dosimeter is that one must have closeness of its effective atomic number,  $Z_{eff}$  to that of tissue ( $Z_{eff} = 7.4$ ). Only lithium fluoride in the form of LiF: Mg: Ti from all the phosphors available so far has found widespread application in electron dosimetry. It fills the characteristic needed in dosimetry system as its  $Z_{eff}$  is 8.2 (Klevenhagen, 1985, Greening, 1981, Attix, 1986). Different TL materials have different TL response. Lithium borate, Li<sub>2</sub>B<sub>4</sub>O<sub>7</sub> has a better tissue equivalency,  $Z_{eff}$  being 7.4 but its sensitivity is only one tenth to the LiF with respect to electron irradiation (Klevenhagen, 1985). A material such as CaSO<sub>4</sub> although having high sensitivity for TLD has not been used as much in medical dosimetry as its atomic number was far from human tissue with respect to photons irradiation (Greening, 1981).

As an improvement and a better understanding of the nature of the material in order to develop new TL materials, many researchers has investigated the potential use of silica glass (SiO<sub>2</sub>) optical fiber as TL materials. Applications of SiO<sub>2</sub> optical fibre such as the measurement of absorbed dose for *in vivo* radiation therapy and diagnostics was reported by Aznar, 2002. The optical fibre also demonstrated high flexibility, easy handling and low cost compared with the other TL materials (Espinosa, 2006).

## 1.2 Background of the problems

The potential for health hazards will occur if ionizing radiation is not properly used or contained. When doses of radiation exceed certain level acute health effects such as skin burns or acute radiation syndrome can occur. Cancer will also occur when someone is exposed to low doses of ionizing radiation in longer term. Tissue or organ damage depends on the dose, type of radiation received and sensitivity of different tissues and organs.

In order to prevent our health from being threatened by radiation hazard, first we have to make sure the dose received is in the standard level. For this purpose, we use a device called radiation dosimeter that is capable of providing a reading of absorbed dose deposited in matter by ionizing radiation (Attix, 1986). Radiation dosimeters must exhibit several desirable characteristics in order to be useful. The desirable dosimeter properties such as accuracy and precision, linearity with dose, dose rate dependence, energy response, directional dependence and spatial resolution must be taking into account (Podgorsak, 2005). There are many types of integrating dosimeters such as TLD, photographic dosimetry, chemical dosimetry and calorimetric dosimetry (Attix, 1986). This work will focus on the TLD as it has been widely applied in areas such as environmental monitoring of ionizing radiation, personal dose monitoring, diagnostic radiology and radiation oncology.

TLD is one of the methods widely used to measure ionizing radiation. TLD is based on the capability of the material itself to keep the energy trapped as it been radiated and release the energy in the form of light as it been heated. The amount of energy trapped and energy released after heated depend on the absorbed dose by the TLD (Wagiran, 1997).

### 1.3 Statement of the problems

While TLDs are widely used for *in vivo* dosimetry, the problem is that they are unable to store dose information permanently. Heating the TLD can erase the stored information. In addition, annealing procedures are required to restore the original sensitivity after being irradiated. This is because the sensitivity is unstable after receiving a large dose of radiation. Additional limitations of TLDs include their high sensitivity to light especially UV, sunlight or fluorescence light. Poor response due to environmental factor like humidity also is one of its limitations.

For optical fibre provided by Universiti Malaya (UM), the manufacturer did not specified about the percentage dopant consist in each doped SiO<sub>2</sub> optical fibres. Scanning Electron Microscopy (SEM) is required to determine its dopant

concentration. The image of cross section area of optical fibres can be obtained by using SEM. In this research, Er, Ge (A) and Ge (B) doped optical fibres were investigated.

Different dosimeters made in UM from a given batch of optical fibres showed a distribution of dopant uniformity. After being cut into 0.5 cm, the dopant concentration in each optical fibres still unknown. Thus, the TL yields were sometimes produced different average sensitivities. To overcome this problem several optical fibres for each material; at least five fibres are necessary for acceptable accuracy and precision.

# 1.4 Research objectives

This study embarks on the following objectives:

- i) To investigate the TL response of linearity, sensitivity, dose response, energy response, fading, the reproducibility and minimum detectable dose of doped optical fibres subjected to electron irradiation.
- ii) To compare the TL response of doped SiO<sub>2</sub> optical fibres with TLD-100.
- iii) To determine the dopant concentration and effective atomic number ( $Z_{eff}$ ) for doped SiO<sub>2</sub> optical fibres using a scanning electron microscope (SEM).

### 1.5 Statement of the hypothesis

For many applications, this study has hypothesized that the TLD-100 rods and SiO<sub>2</sub> doped optical fibre have a high sensitivity, which means both high efficiency of the high emission and low threshold dose. The relationship between the TL signal and

dose applied is assumed to have a linear relation. In other words, a proportionality factor will always be included or implied in the considerations of response to dose.

Furthermore, TLDs are expected to have long term stability of the stored dosimetric information at the room temperature concerning thermal and optical fading. It is very important to get dosimeter with low fading. The greatest stability of signals on the electron traps is the preferred dosimeter either in medical or environmental fields.

Moreover, it is preferred to get dosimeter with plan or fixed response for a wide range of energies. For precise dosimetric purposes, the proposed TLD should get a constant response over wide incident energy. To be used in radiotherapy application, TLD is expected to have close value of effective atomic mass with the biological tissue. The ideal dosimeter is the mixture that have effective atomic number equal or close to the composition of human biological tissues of 7.4. The dosimeter with effective atomic number far from this composition is demanding for calibration and conversion factor.

Minimum detectable dose determination is another important factor in determining the required dosimetric material that is appropriate. This lower dose or signal of an irradiated TLD is almost the same as the noise or background signal. Another official definition is "the dose which gives three times the standard deviation of the zero doses reading of the dosimeter" (Furetta *et al.*, 2001).

All these TL characteristics, plus the small size SiO<sub>2</sub> optical fibre, the high flexibility, easy handling and low cost compared with other TL materials make the commercial optical fibre a very promising TL material for use in research, medicine, industry, reactor physics and a variety of other applications (Espinosa *et al.*, 2006). This research is expected to have the way for the introduction of optical fibre as a new TL material in dosimetry.

# 1.6 Scopes of the research

This study may provide a basis for employing TL phenomena in various dosimetric situations. Their general characteristics which include TL response, linearity, sensitivity, dose response, fading, reproducibility, minimum detectable dose, glow curve analysis and effective atomic mass, may provide ten types of doped SiO<sub>2</sub> optical fibres. It consists of two types of Germanium (Ge) doped fibres named Ge (A) and Ge (B). Other material of TLDs investigated were Erbium (Er), Photosensitive Flat Fibre (PFF), Flat Fibre (FF), Dummy Flat Fibre (DFF), Aluminium+Thullium (Al+Tm), Photonic Crystal Fibre (PCF). PCF also came with different core diameter. They are 220 µm (MPCF 220 µm) and 2 mm (MPCF 2 mm). This dosimeter may be suitable for a variety of applications particularly in radiation therapy. The TL responses of these TLDs were then compared to the well known, TLD-100 rod.

The irradiation on the core of the optical fibre has been conducted at dose levels ranging from 1 to 4 Gy of electron ionizing radiation source by using a linear accelerator Elekta Synergy machine (LINAC) at Pantai Hospital and Varian Clinac 2100C at UMMC. These dosimeters were irradiated to 6, 9 and 12 MeV of electron beams. The TL results obtained are compared with the commercially available TL material, TLD-100 rod.

The determination of the fading effect of all doped optical fibre has been perform using 6 MeV of electron irradiation for 1-4 Gy dose applied. Readings of TL yield are obtained on 14 consecutive days following the time of irradiation, while the reproducibility characteristic were examined using 6 MeV electron with dose 1 Gy produced by LINAC.

This research is also carried out to determine dopant concentration and  $Z_{eff}$  for doped optical fibre using SEM. By using SEM, the  $Z_{eff}$  can be obtained by measuring the composition of the elements present. In this study, the sample used is Ge (A),

Ge (B) and Er optical fibres only, due to unavailability of SEM equipment. Thus, study for the rest of doped optical fibres is not executed in this study.

# 1.7 Organization of thesis

This chapter provides an introduction to the problems associated with TL and offers review of the existing literature regarding the subject. The physics behind the TL theory is described in Chapter 2. The methods of material preparation and analyzing the TL response will be described theoretically in Chapter 3. In chapter 4, the results obtained are presented and discussed in detail. Chapter 5 summarizes the findings of this investigation, and provides an outlook for future study in this area.

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