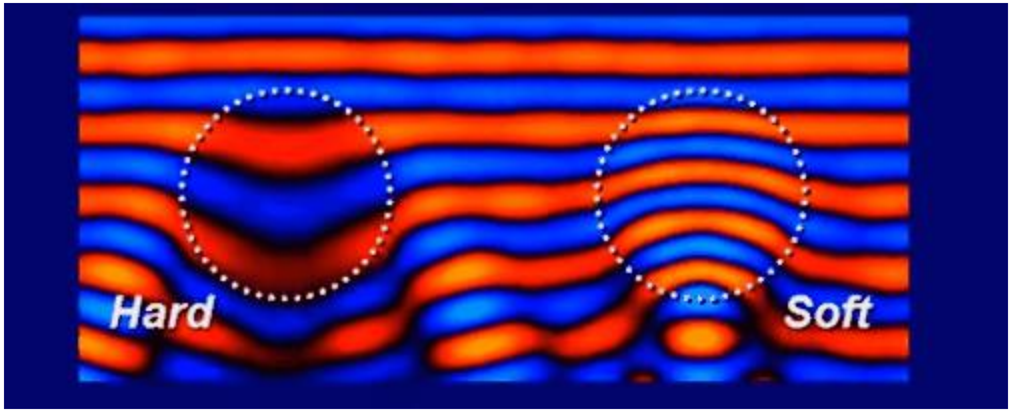
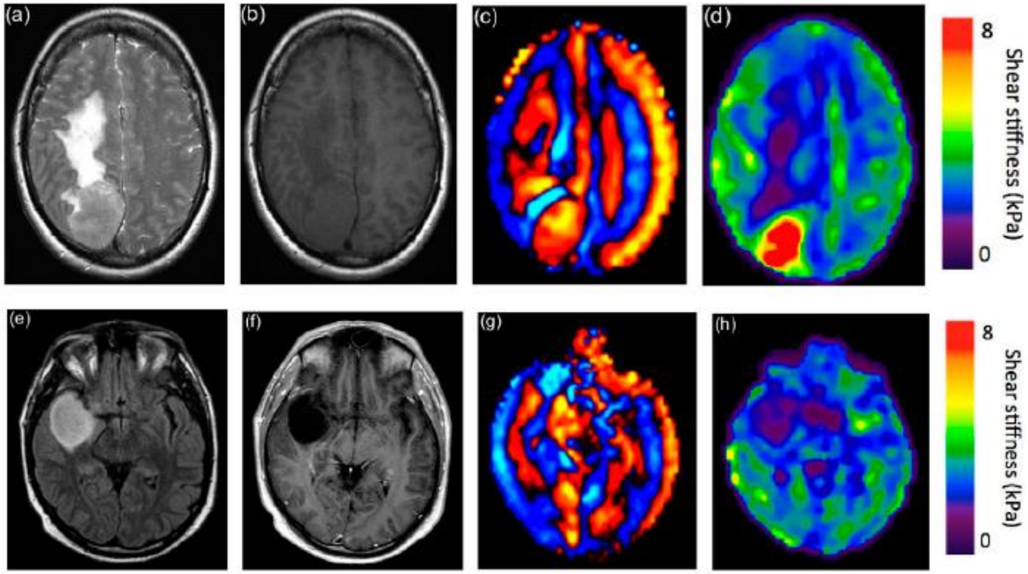
Brain MR Elastography:
Acquisition and Reconstruction Strategies



From: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CcmZi0J_u3Y



From: Hiscox. *Phys Med Bio* (2016)

MRI Group Talk

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March 5th, 2020

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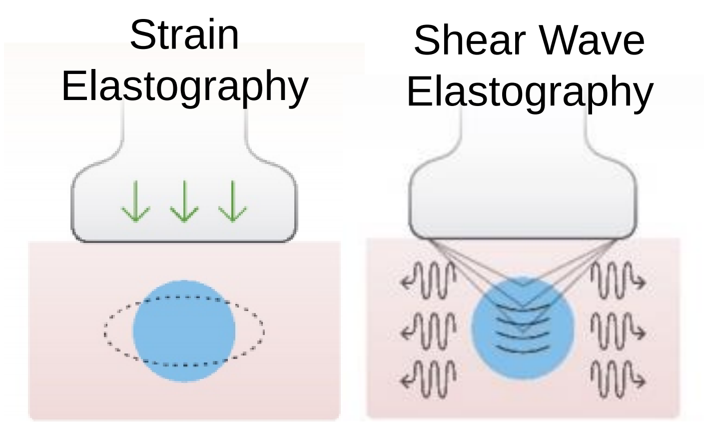
Elastography Introduction

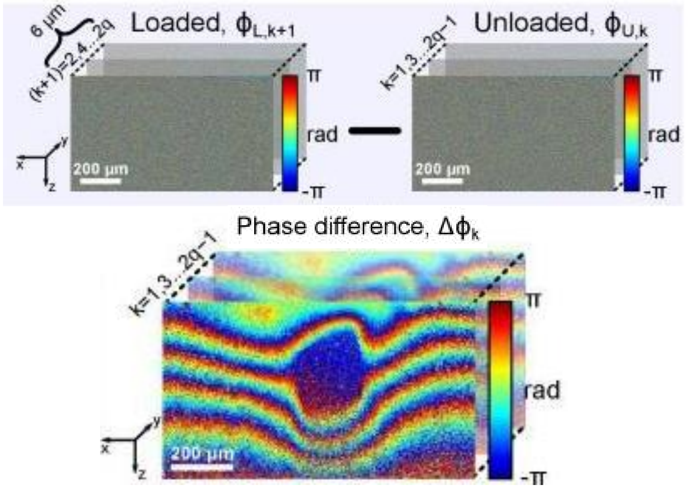
- Ingredients for elastography
  1. Mechanical excitation
  2. Measurement of tissue response
  3. Mechanical parameter estimation

Ultrasound



From: Sigrist, et al. *Theranostics*. (2017)

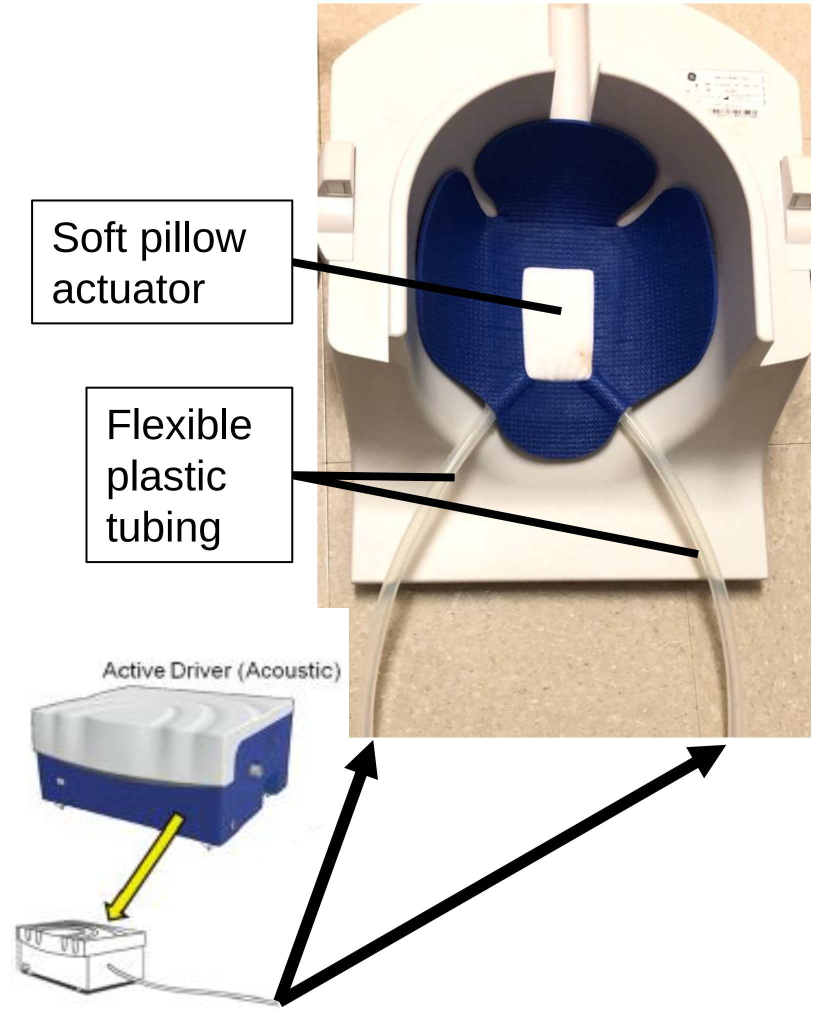
Optical Imaging



From: Kennedy, et al. *Biomed Opt Express*. (2014)

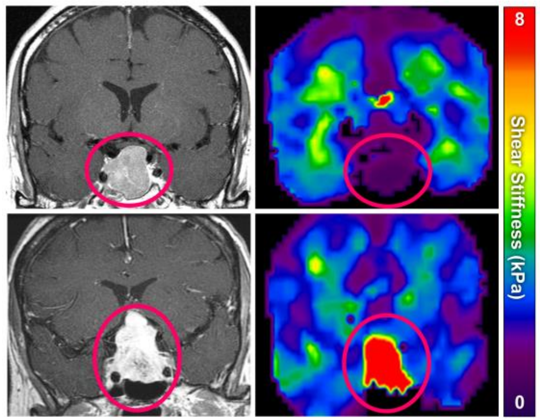
MR Elastography

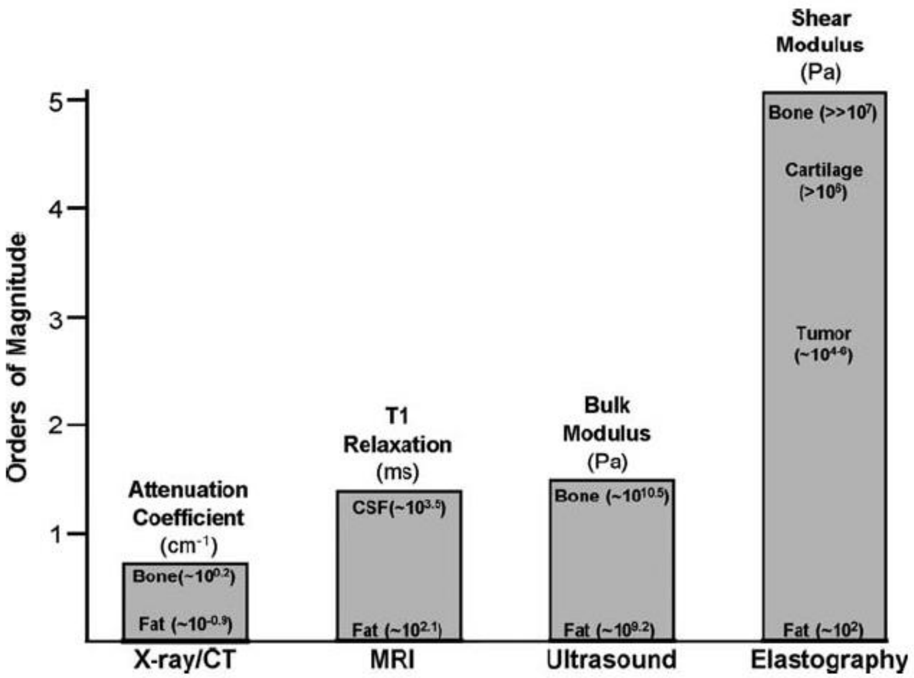
- MRE allows quantitative analysis of viscoelastic properties of tissue
  - "Virtual palpation"
- Shear waves are introduced by driver (20-200Hz)
  - <u>Active</u> pneumatic driver placed outside of MR room
  - <u>Passive</u> driver placed under patient's head
- Wavelength dependent on shear modulus
  - Waves propagate rapidly in rigid tissue, slower in softer tissue



Shear Elastic Modulus

- **MRE measures shear modulus (G)**
  - $\tilde{G} = G' + iG''$
  - Other elastic moduli:
    - Young's Modulus (E), Bulk Modulus (K), etc.
  - High inherent dynamic range





From: Mariappan, et al. *Clin Anat* (2010)

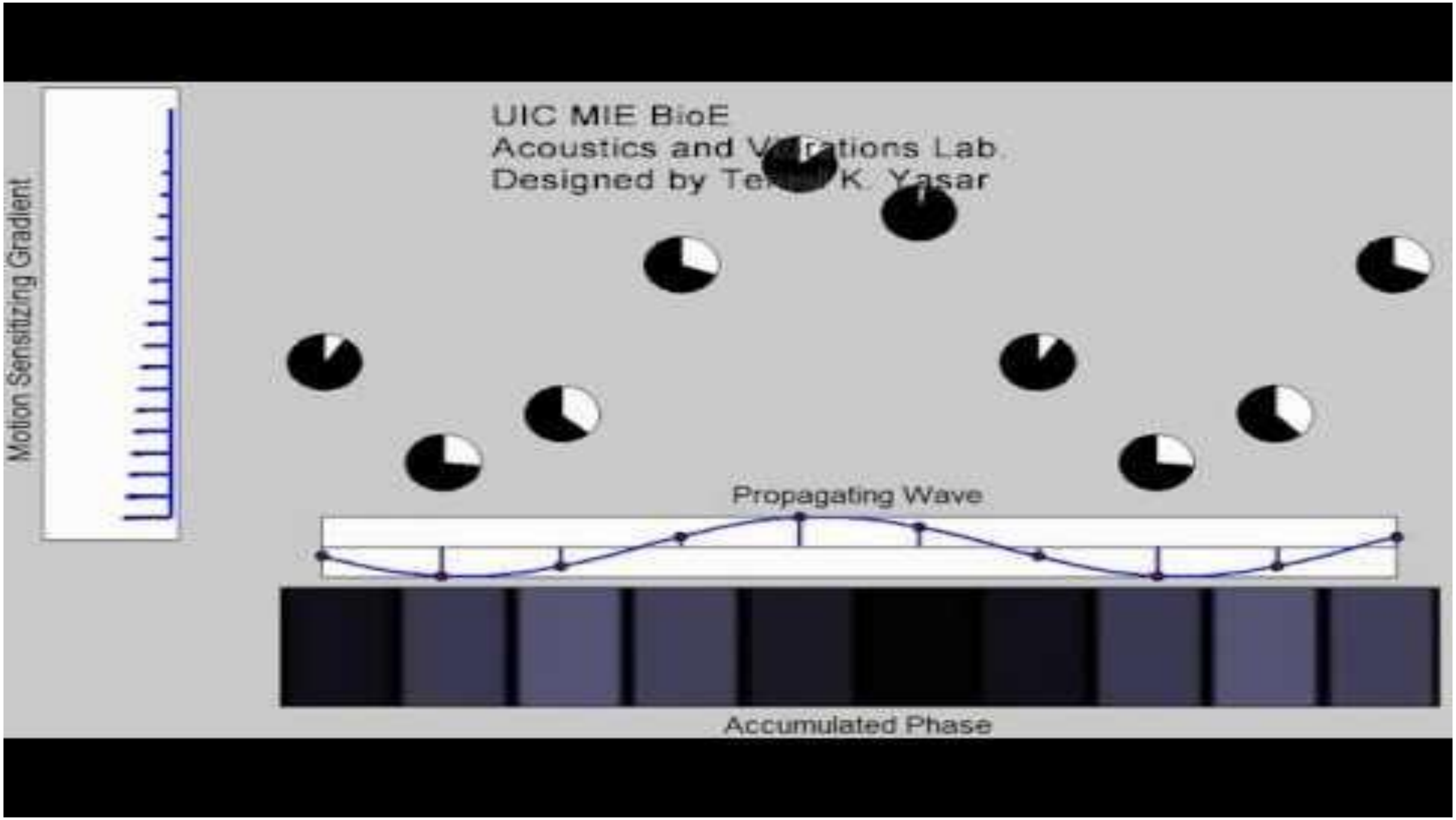
MRE Encoding

- Modified phase-contrast sequence
- Sensitized motion to cyclic displacement from shear waves
  - Spins accumulate phase along motion encoding gradients
    - Bipolar or 1st order motion compensated gradient
  - Synchronized to driver frequency
- Multiple acquisitions with phase offsets
  - Shows shear wave at different points in cycle
- <u>Goal: Acquire displacement fields in 3D (encode x,y,z) at different phase offsets</u>

MRE Encoding

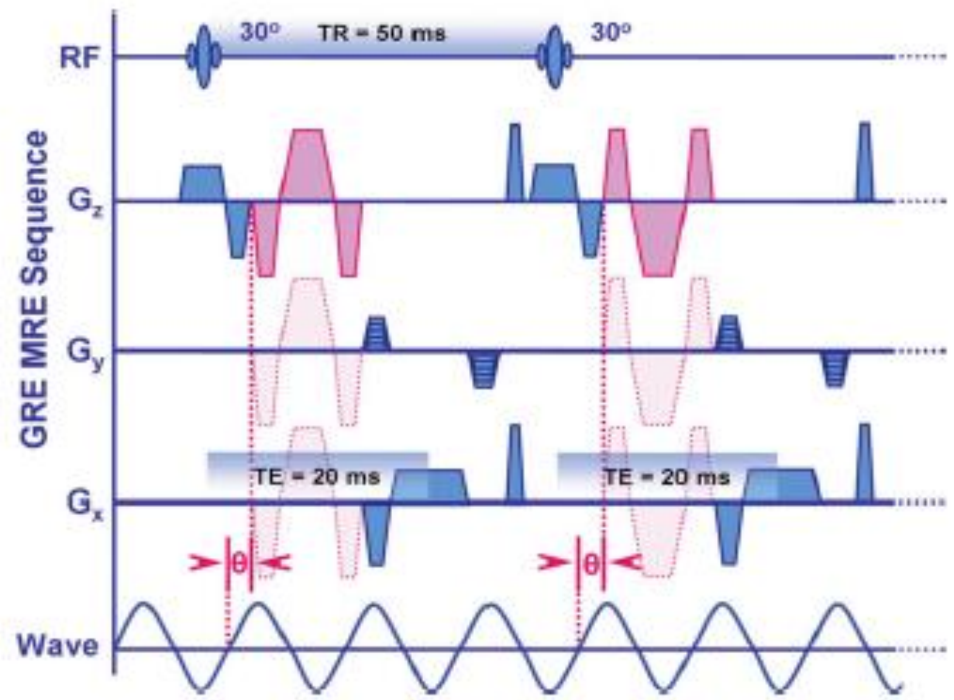
- Phase is described by the following equation
  - $\phi(\vec{r},\theta) = \frac{\gamma NT\left(\vec{G}\cdot\xi_0\right)}{2}\cos\left(\vec{k}\cdot\vec{r}+\theta\right)$
    - ϕ = displacement induced phase
    - $\vec{r}$ = spatial position
    - θ = phase offset
    - γ = gyromagnetic ratio
    - N = number of MEG pairs
    - T = period of the MEG
    - $\vec{G}$ = gradient strength
    - ξ_0 = peak amplitude of motion
    - k = wave number

MRE Encoding (Visual)



GRE Acquisition

1. **Gradient-recalled echo (GRE)**
   - Oldest method
   - Online reconstruction
- Limitations:
  - Relatively slow

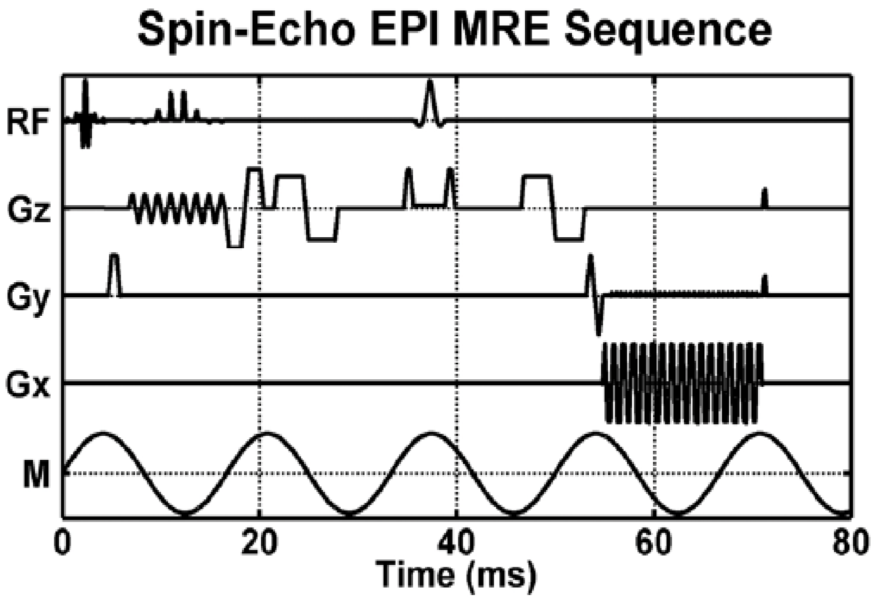


From: Venkatesh, et al. *JMRI* (2013)

SE-EPI Acquisition

2. **Single-shot echo planar imaging (SE-EPI)**
   - Most common
     - What we use here
   - Much faster than GRE
   - Online reconstruction

- Limitations:
  - Long readouts
    - Distortion
    - Reduced SNR

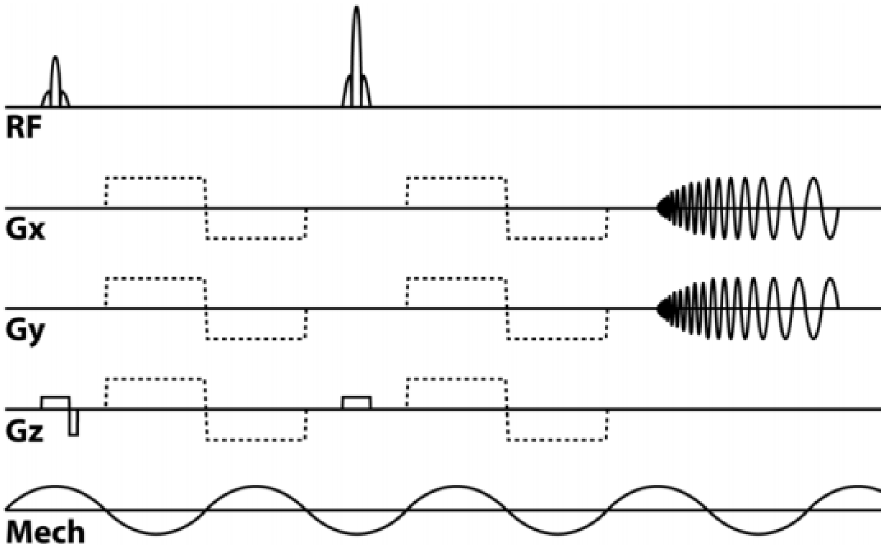


From: Glaser, et al. *JMRI* (2012)

Multi-Shot Spiral Acquisition

3. **Multi-shot, variable density spiral**
   - Relatively new
   - Increased resolution
   - Increased SNR
   - Flexible Tradeoffs

- Limitations:
  - Phase error between shots from bulk motion
  - Offline Recon
  - Increased complexity

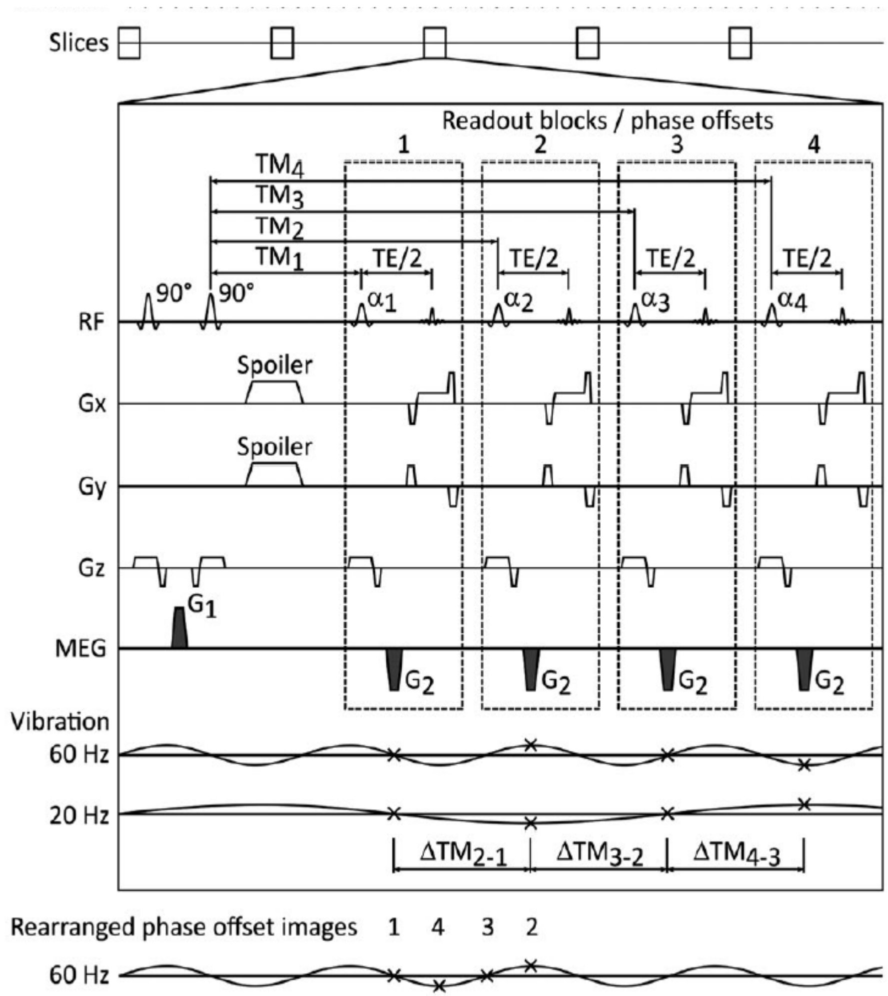


From: Johnson, et al. *MRM* (2013)

DENSE Acquisition

4. **Displacement Encoding Using a Stimulated Echo (DENSE)**
   - Relatively new
   - Allows for imaging with lower driver frequency
   - Fast/Efficient

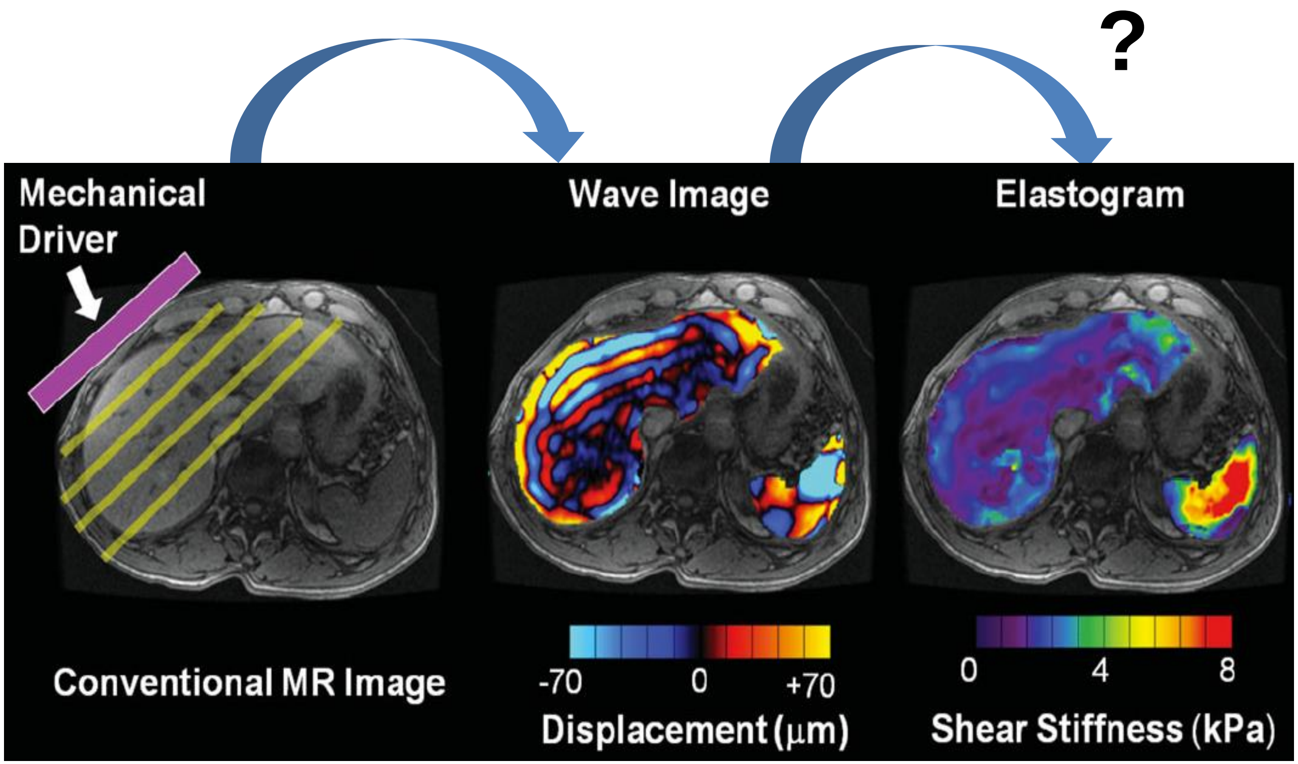
- Limitations:
  - Offline Recon
  - Increased Complexity



From: Strasser, et al. *MRM* (2018)

Reconstruction

- How can we go from wave images to stiffness maps?



From: Venkatesh, et al. *JMRI* (2013)

Pre-Processing

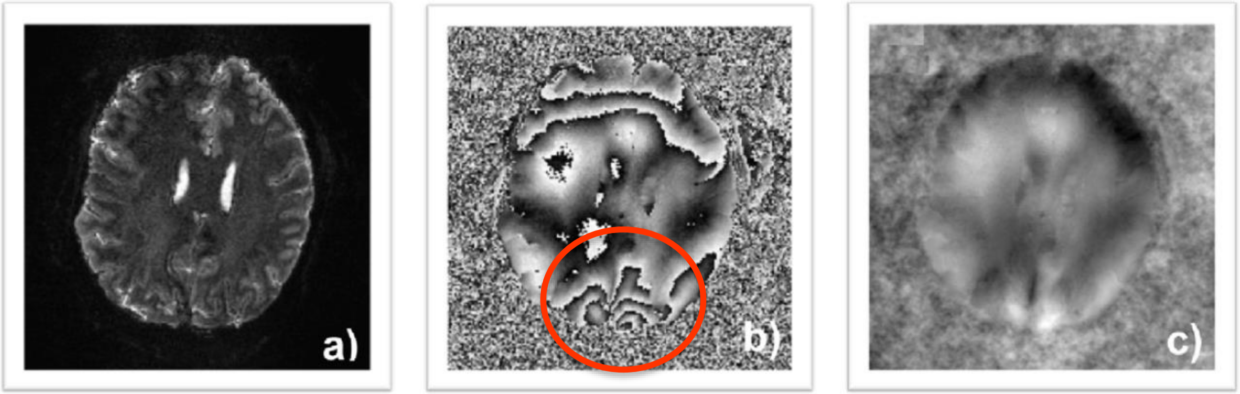
1) Phase Unwrapping

– Higher amplitude of shear waves allows deeper penetration

– However, this leads to phase-wrapping near brain edges.

– Phase unwrapping algorithms need to be applied before stiffness reconstruction

  • 4D Laplacian-based algorithm

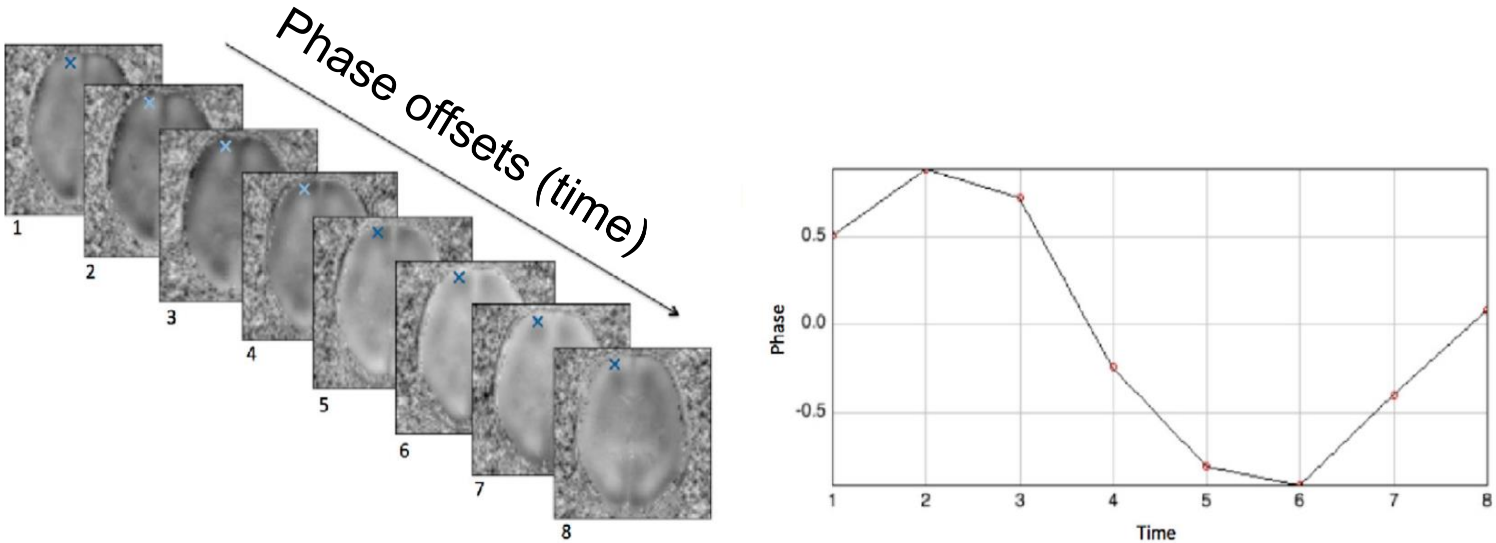


From: Hiscox. *Phys Med Biol* (2016)

Pre-Processing

2) Filtering

- Low frequency bulk waves
  - Occur because brain is not incompressible
- High frequency noise
  - Prevent parameter overestimation



From: Hiscox. *Phys Med Biol* (2016)

LFE Reconstruction

1) <u>Local frequency estimation (LFE)</u>

- Simplest, most-intuitive method
- Uses multiscale filters to estimate spatial wavelengths of shear waves in image.
- $G' = \rho V_S^2 = \rho\left(\lambda_{sp} f\right)^2$
  - ρ = tissue density (~1000 kg/m^3)
  - V_s = shear wave speed
  - f = driver frequency
  - λ_{sp} = spatial frequency of shear wave
- Limitations:
  - Get only real part of shear modulus
  - Effected by boundary reflections and dilatational waves

DI Reconstruction

2) Single Frequency Direction Inversion (DI)

- Mechanical properties calculated *directly* through the wave equation.
- Complex inversion problem
  - Requires rank 4 tensor with 21 independent complex quantities to relate applied shear stress to resulting shear strain.
- If we assume tissue isotropy, we can greatly simplify problem.
  - $\tilde{G} = -\rho(2\pi f)^2 \cdot \vec{u}(f)/\nabla^2\vec{u}(f)$
    - $\tilde{G}$ = complex shear modulus
    - f = driver frequency
    - ρ = tissue density (~1000 kg/m^3)
    - $\vec{u}(f)$ = frequency-dependent vector displacement field

DI Reconstruction

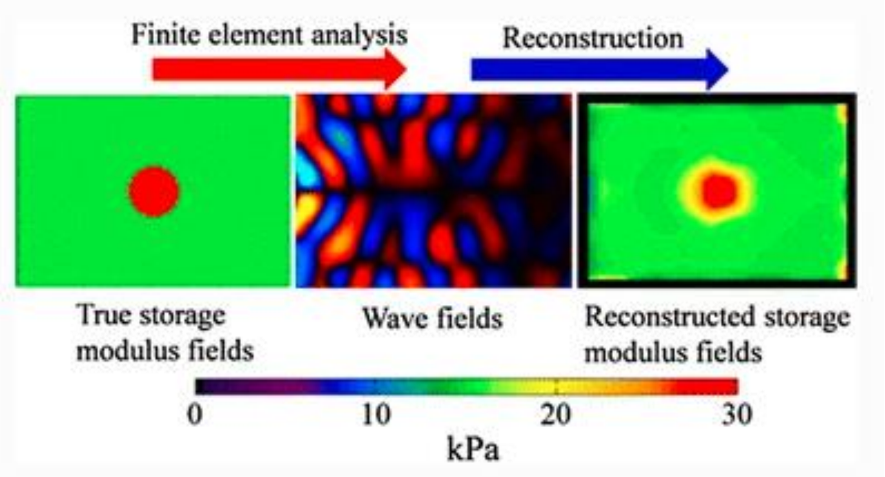
2) <u>Single Frequency Direction Inversion (DI)</u>

- Allows for a very quick calculation
  - Really only need to calculate $\nabla^2 \vec{u}(f)$
- UW scanners use DI
- Limitations:
  - Making many assumptions about material
    - Brain tissue is heterogenous and anisotropic
  - High noise sensitivity
    - Due to second derivative (Laplacian)
  - Susceptible to wave nodes
    - Imaging at single frequency

NLI Reconstruction

3) Non-Linear Inversion with Finite Element Models (NLI)

- Partial differential equations
- Forward problem utilizing prior knowledge
  - Boundary conditions
  - Tissue geometry
  - Mechanical properties



From: Tomita, et al. *J Visual-Japan* (2017)

- Iteratively update heterogenous tissue distribution until difference between experiment and theoretically derived data is minimized.
- Incorporates full equations of motion, nonlinearity, and anisotropy
- Limitations:
  - Speed of processing is on the order of hours

Conclusion

- MRE is a modified phase contrast sequence to encode displacement into image phase.
- Creates shear modulus maps
  - Must mechanically excite tissue
  - Measure/image tissue stress/strain
- Shear modulus has high dynamic range
- Acquisition Strategies:
  - GRE, Spin-echo EPI, Multi-shot spiral, DENSE
- Reconstruction Strategies:
  - Local frequency estimation (LFE), direct inversion (DI), non-linear finite element modelling (NLI)

Acknowledgements

Wieben Group

Oliver Wieben
Carson Hoffman
Phil Corrado
Dan Seiter
Ruiming Chen
Archana Dhyani

UW MR Support Staff

Kelli Hellenbrand
Sara John
Jenelle Fuller

Special Thanks To:

Kevin Johnson
Laura Eisenmenger
Walter Block
Alejandro Roldán-Alzate
Alan McMillan
Leonardo Rivera-Rivera
David Rutkowski
Robert Moskwa

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