



Do's and Don'ts of Gafchromic Film Dosimetry

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Disclosure

- Ashland provided me with travel support.
- Mayo Clinic does not endorse Ashland or its products.

Learning objectives

- To discuss considerations for starting and maintaining a film dosimetry program
- To understand some common errors in film dosimetry and how to avoid them
- To see the benefits of using film through clinical applications of FilmQA Pro software

My background in film dosimetry

- In 2012, someone said “It would probably be worth it if you could figure out how to use film.”
- I had no prior film experience whatsoever, but I did have time.
- I made a lot of mistakes early on, but learned a lot from them.
- ***My goal today is to help people avoid the same problems I encountered, and therefore quickly become proficient with film dosimetry***

“Why would you want to use film?”

- It's a very useful dosimeter because
 - It's nearly water equivalent
 - It's thin, flexible, and water resistant
 - Sub-millimeter spatial resolution
 - Largely energy independent from ~50 keV to >18 MV
 - No electronics to plug in or warm up or avoid hitting with radiation
 - No angular correction
 - No dose rate correction
 - No temperature correction
 - No polarity correction
 - One film for electrons, photons, HDR brachy sources...

Too good to be true?

- Not really, but you do have to follow some rules!
- Choose the film that's ideal for your application
- Define a procedure that works accurately and consistently and stick to it
 - Shortcuts or skipping details can lead to bad results
 - You want to be able to trust the film, all the time, every time

Film Dosimetry – What do you need?



Radiation source



Film

Suitable phantom material

Computer with film analysis software

Flatbed document scanner



Guillotine Cutter

~3 mm thick glass sheet to push films flat on scanner



The vast majority of my experience is with Epson 10000/11000 XL scanners and FilmQA Pro software.

The film

- In my clinic, we only use EBT3 and EBT-XD
 - EBT3 for applications <10 Gy
 - EBT-XD for high dose applications >10 Gy

Matte Surface Clear Polyester Base, 125 µm

Active Layer, 28 µm

Matte Surface Clear Polyester Base, 125 µm

Matte Surface Clear Polyester Base, 125 µm

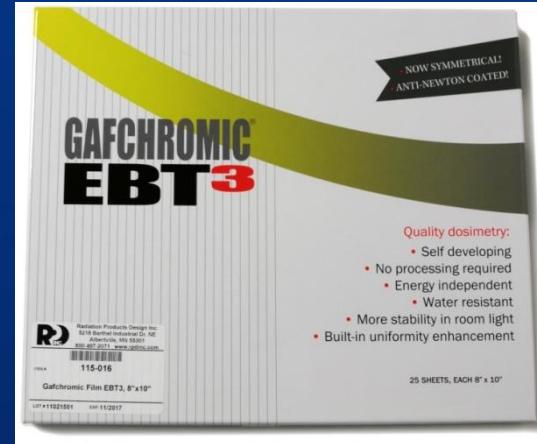
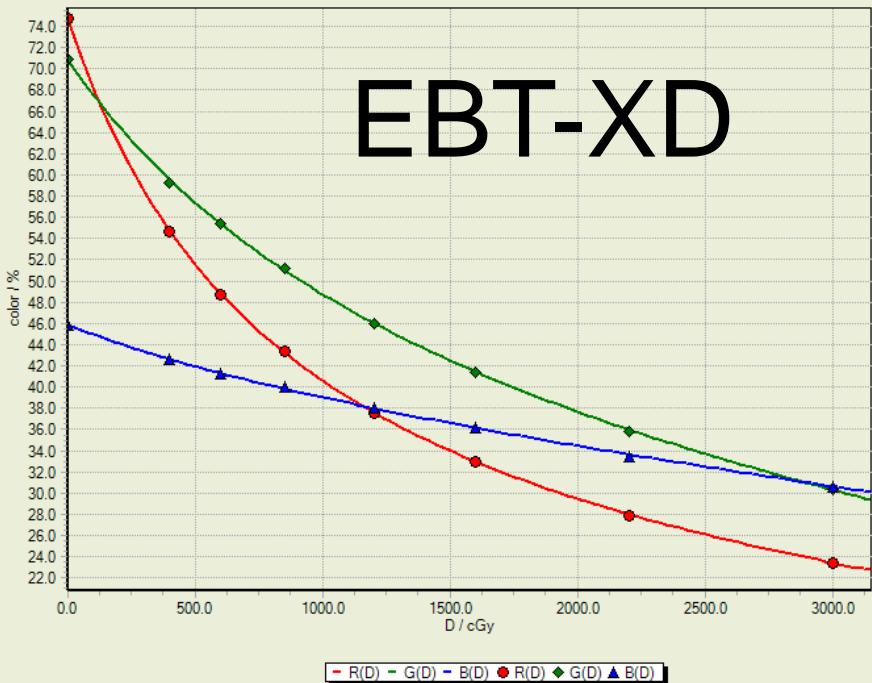
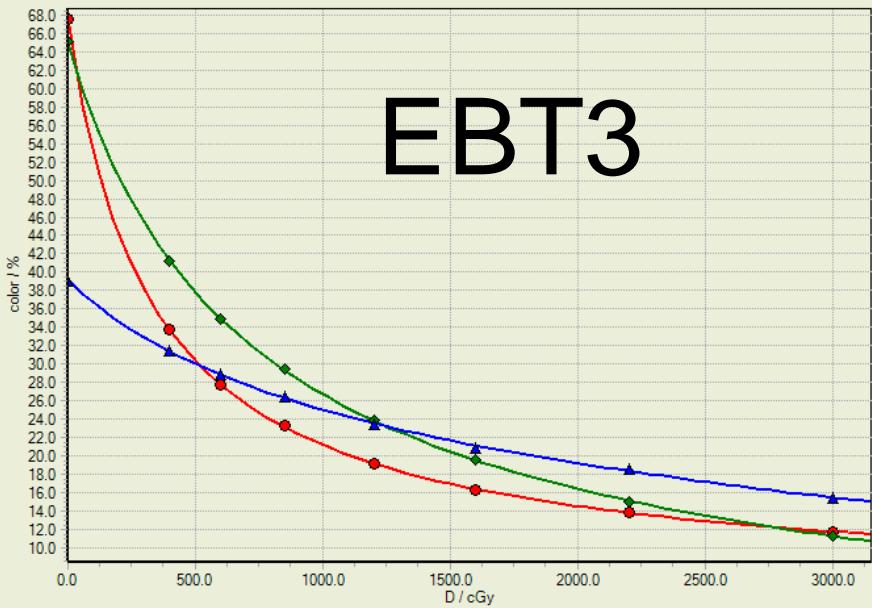
Active Layer, 25 µm

Matte Surface Clear Polyester Base, 125 µm

EBT3

EBT-XD

Since the active layer is in the middle of the film, it does not matter which side is up for scanning (not true with previous versions of film, e.g., EBT2)

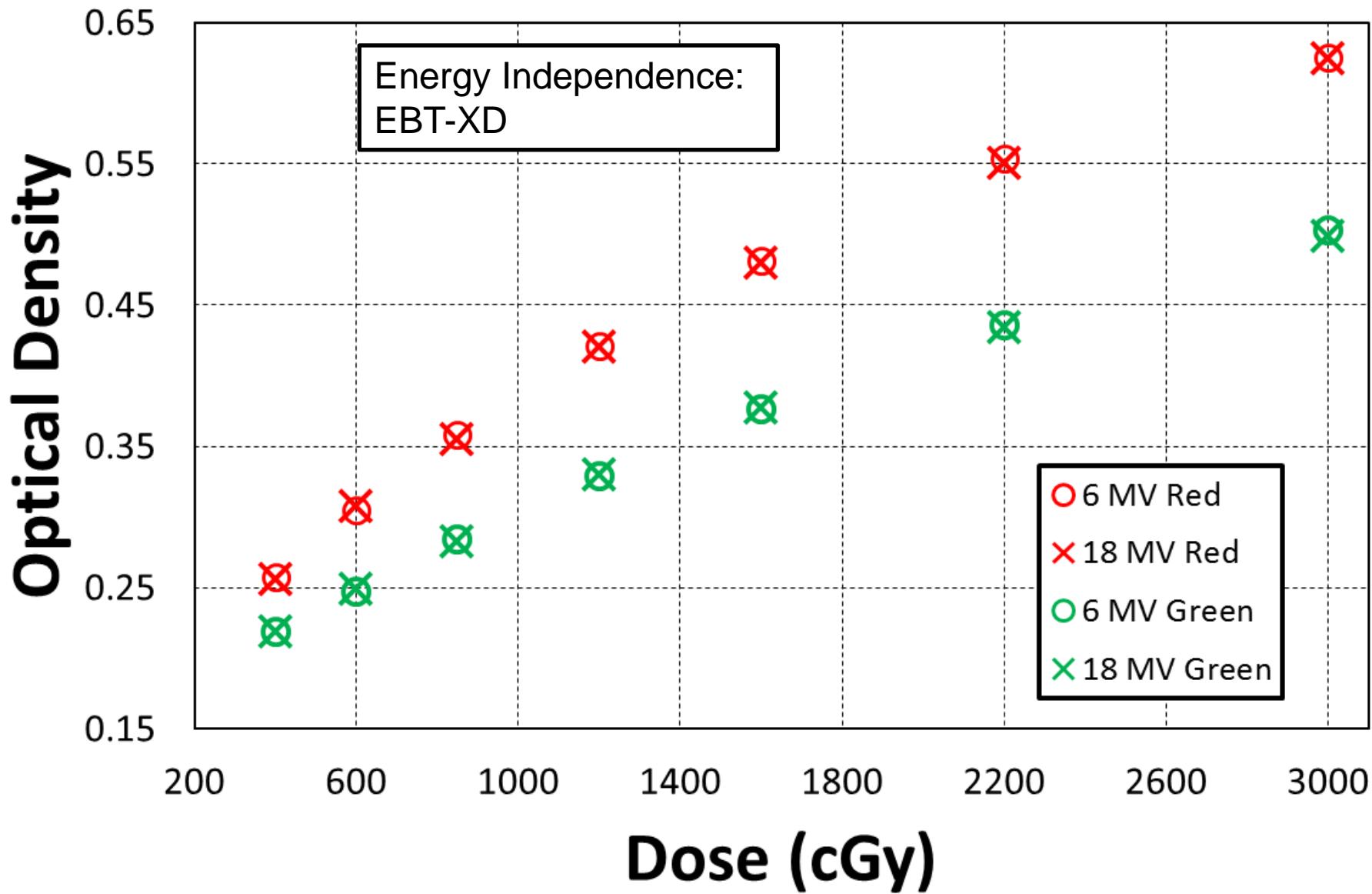


At higher doses, the signal from EBT3 films tends to saturate. XD is less sensitive, so at higher doses saturation is less of an issue.



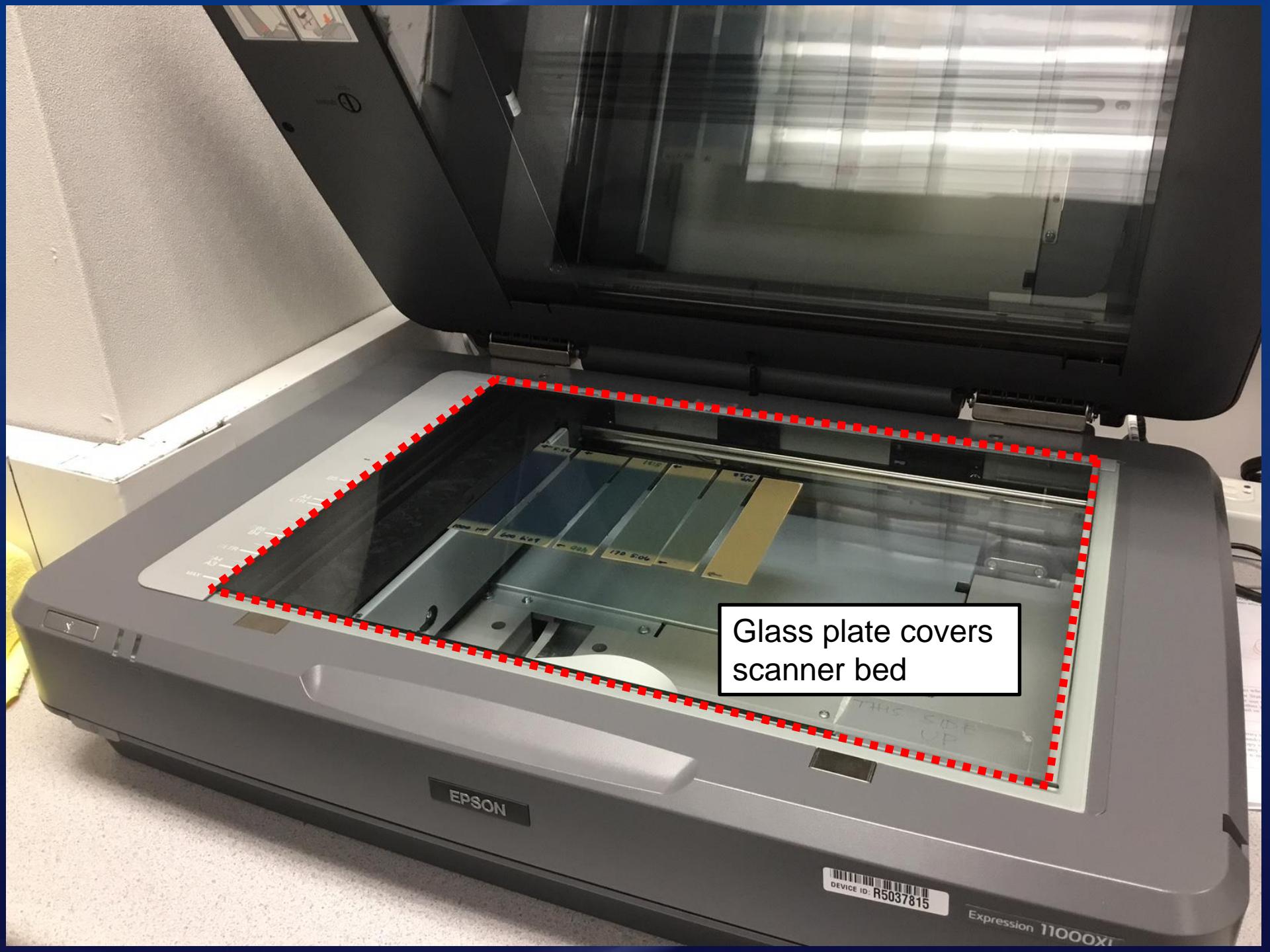
The calibration

- Expose films to a uniform dose under conditions where you know what that dose is
 - In my clinic, I calibrate in solid water at d_{\max} using a $10 \times 10 \text{ cm}^2$ field and a 6 MV beam where $1 \text{ MU} = 1 \text{ cGy}$
- I use 6 MV for all calibrations
- I create calibrations from 0 – 3 Gy, 0 – 6 Gy, and 0 – 10 Gy for EBT3 and from 0 – 40 Gy for EBT-XD
 - I use 4 – 7 doses, more dose points does not necessarily mean higher accuracy!



The calibration

- Use a glass plate to push the films flat and position them at the center of the scanner



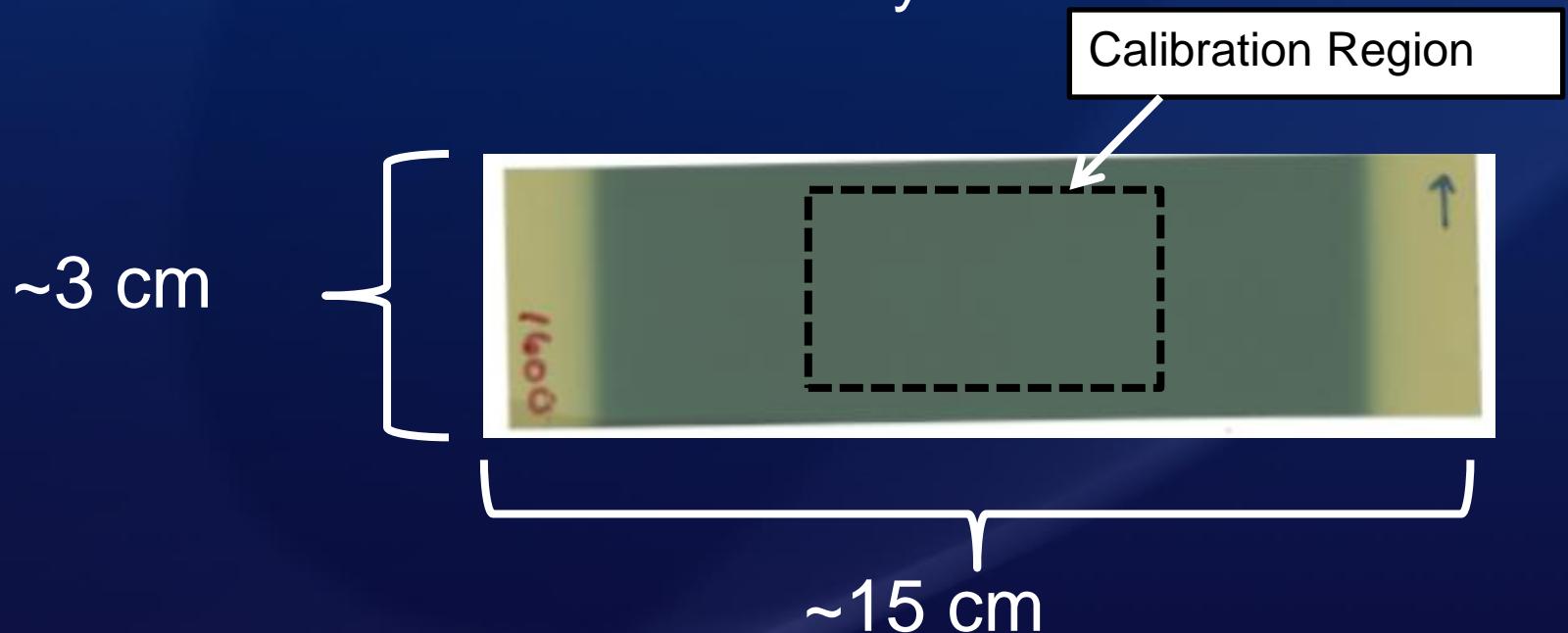
Glass plate covers
scanner bed

DEVICE ID: R5037815

Expression 11000XL

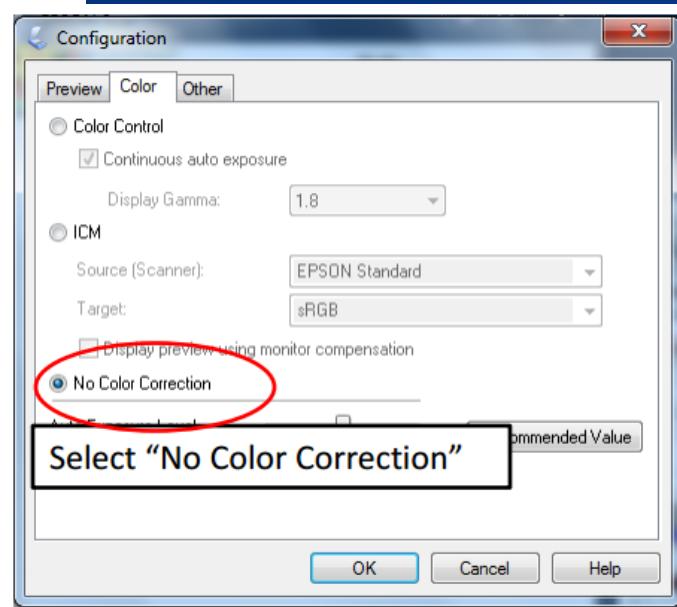
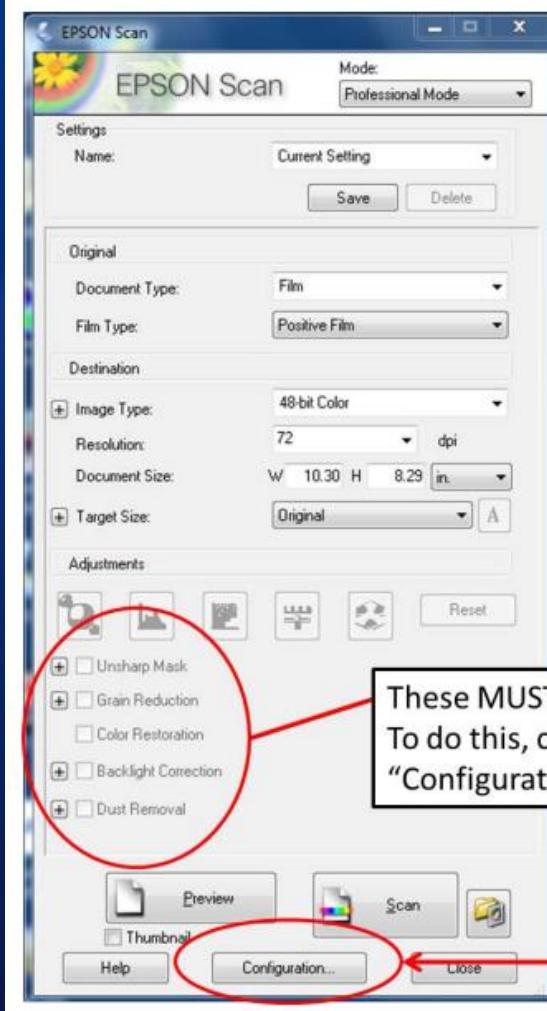
The calibration

- Use a glass plate to push the films flat and position them at the center of the scanner
- The calibration curve should represent the average behavior of the film as much as possible
- Try not to use really small calibration strips!
 - You could catch an anomaly



Scan Parameters

- The scanner is the weakest link in the film dosimetry process, it will try to mess you up every chance it gets!
- Scanners are designed to make pretty pictures. They have lots of added features which can enhance, smooth, change the sharpness or contrast, etc.
- Don't use any of those features.
- Do turn off anything and everything that will alter the raw image data.

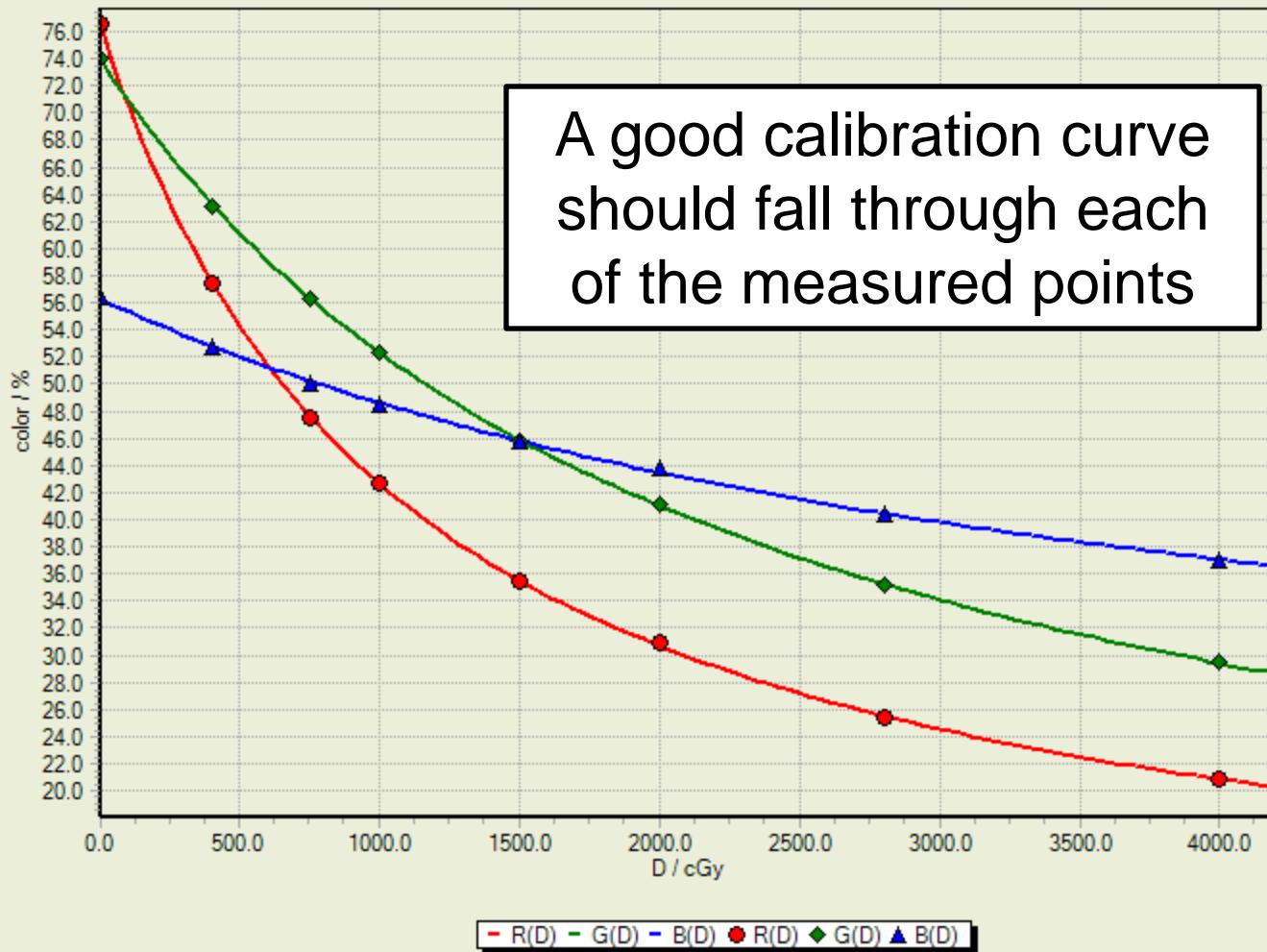


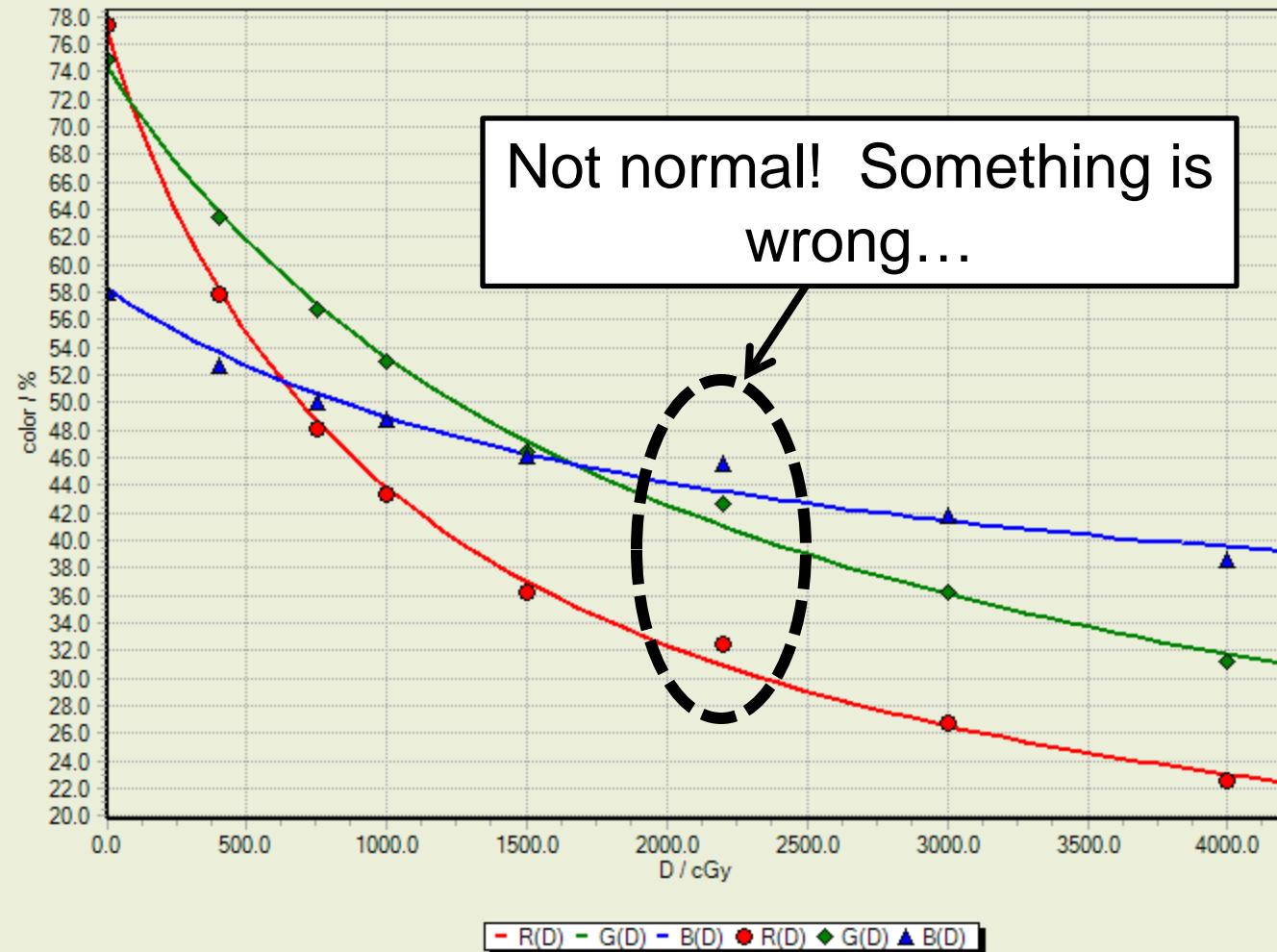
You MUST turn off all color corrections and anything else that will alter the image. You want the raw data.

Checking the calibration

- Visually inspect your calibration curve
 - It should go right through your data points, if not something is wrong

A good calibration curve
should fall through each
of the measured points





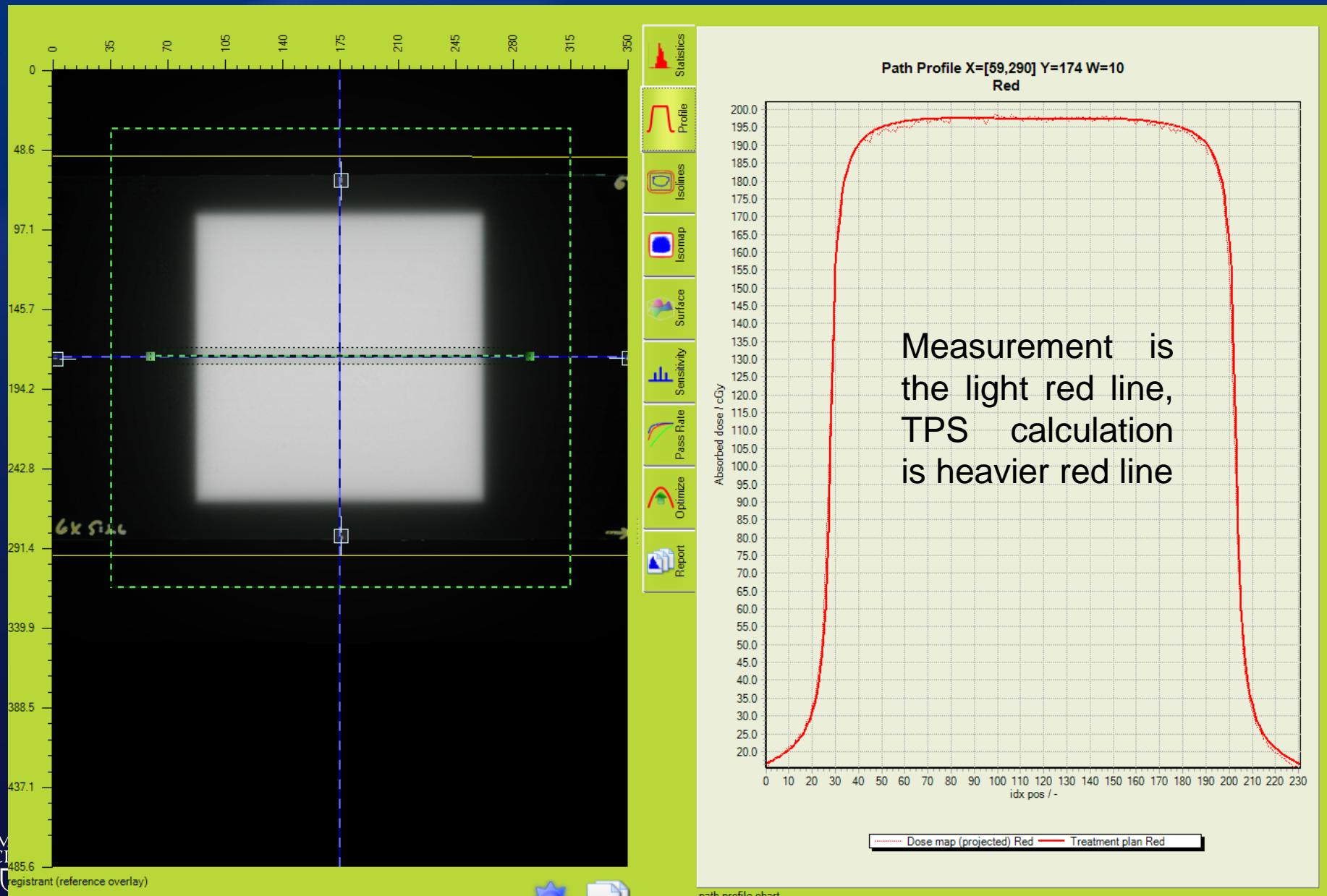
Checking the calibration

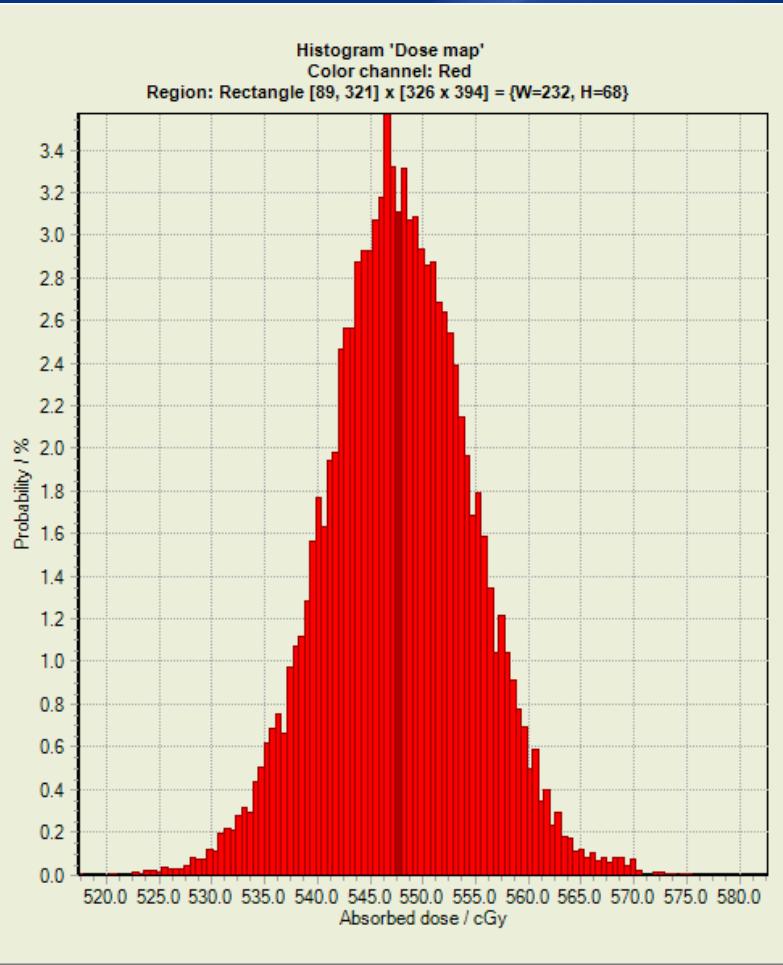
- Visually inspect your calibration curve
 - It should go right through your data points, if not something is wrong
- If something is wrong, try to determine what happened and fix it
 - Delivered wrong dose?
 - Calibration conditions incorrect?
 - You can delete an offending dose point, but it's better to understand what was wrong

QA the calibration

- QA your calibration curve before you proceed!
- Don't assume that if the calibration curve looks ok, everything is fine, you really should test it
- Do expose a number of other films to known doses and make sure you get the right results
- Use simple, open fields to establish consistency and accuracy
- I commission each new batch of film this way before it's released for clinical use (~2-2.5 hours of work)

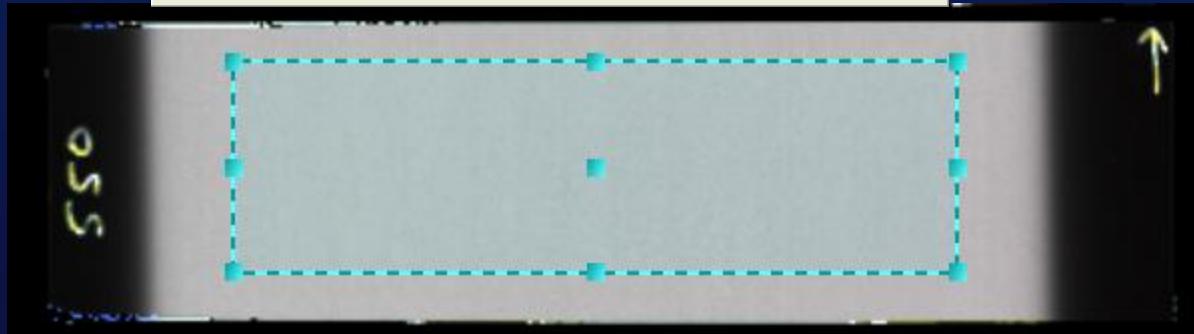
Start simple: Check basic open fields (dose and profiles)





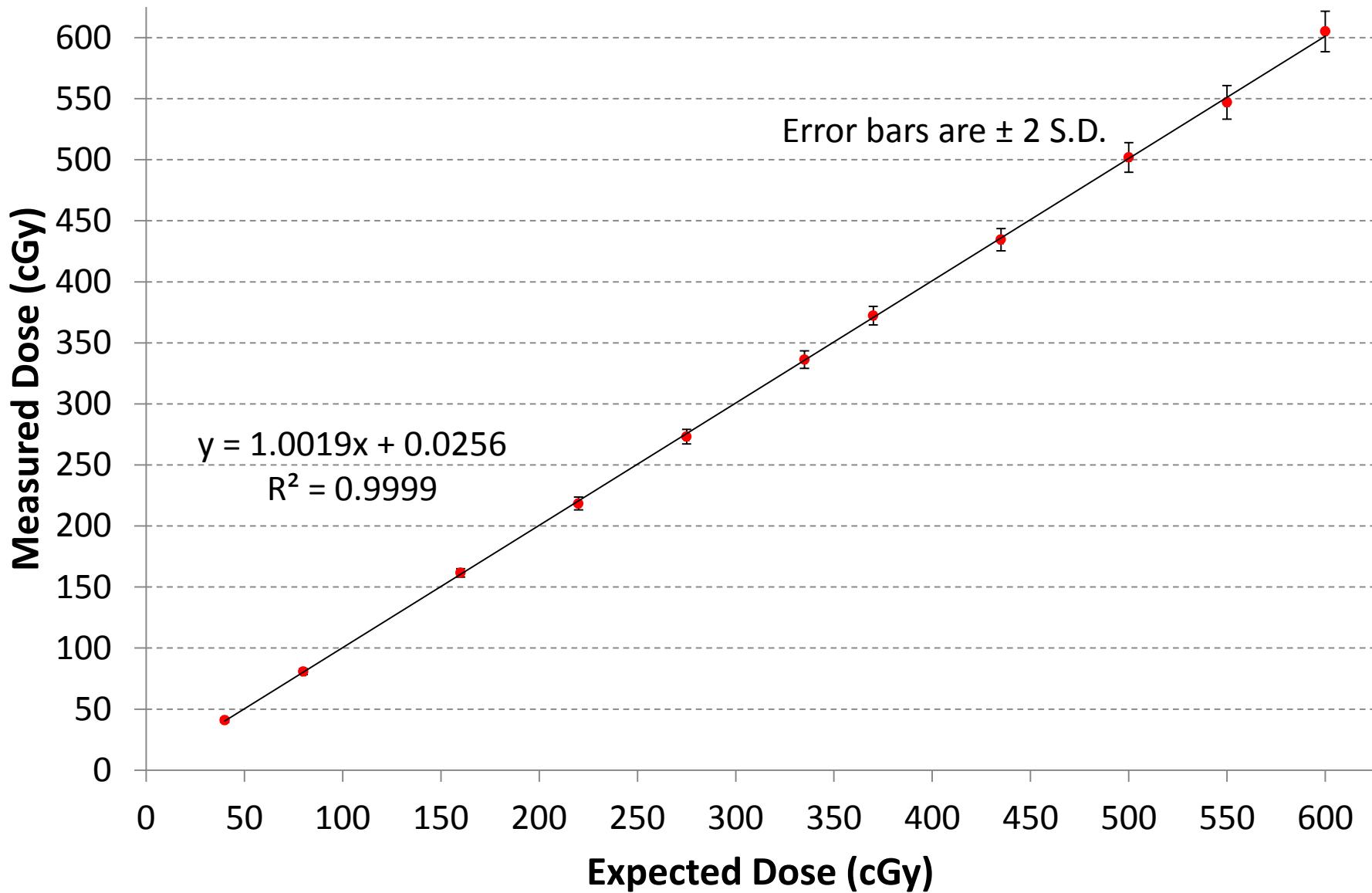
Expected Dose = 550 cGy
Measured Mean = 547.8 cGy
Standard Dev. = 6.8 cGy

My criteria is the measured mean MUST be within 2% of the expected value (most of the time I'm around 1%)

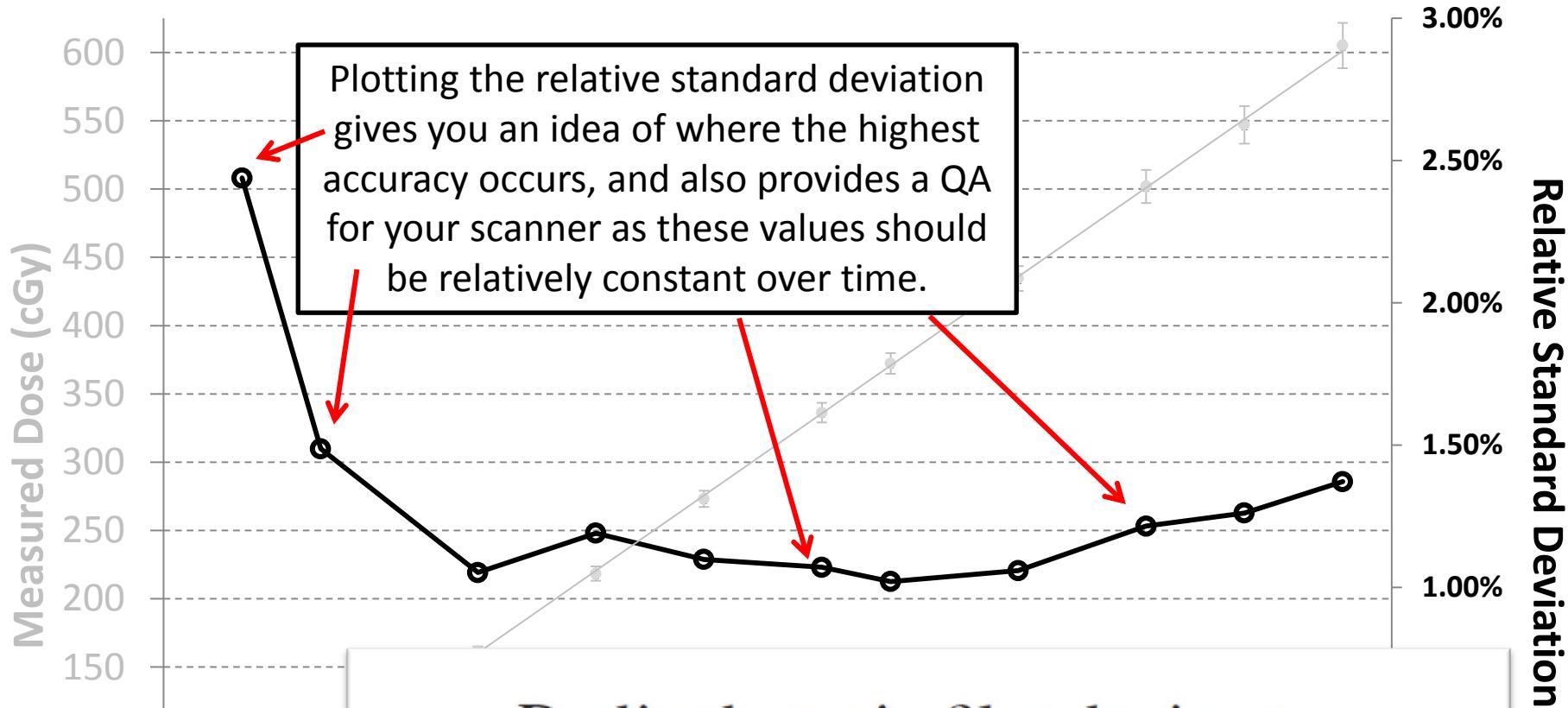


Make sure your calibration is accurate over the entire range!

EBT3 Measured vs. Expected Doses (0 to 6 Gy Calibration)



EBT3 Measured vs. Expected Doses (0 to 6 Gy Calibration)



Radiochromic film dosimetry

Christopher G. Soares

National Institute of Standards and Technology, Gaithersburg, MD 20899, USA

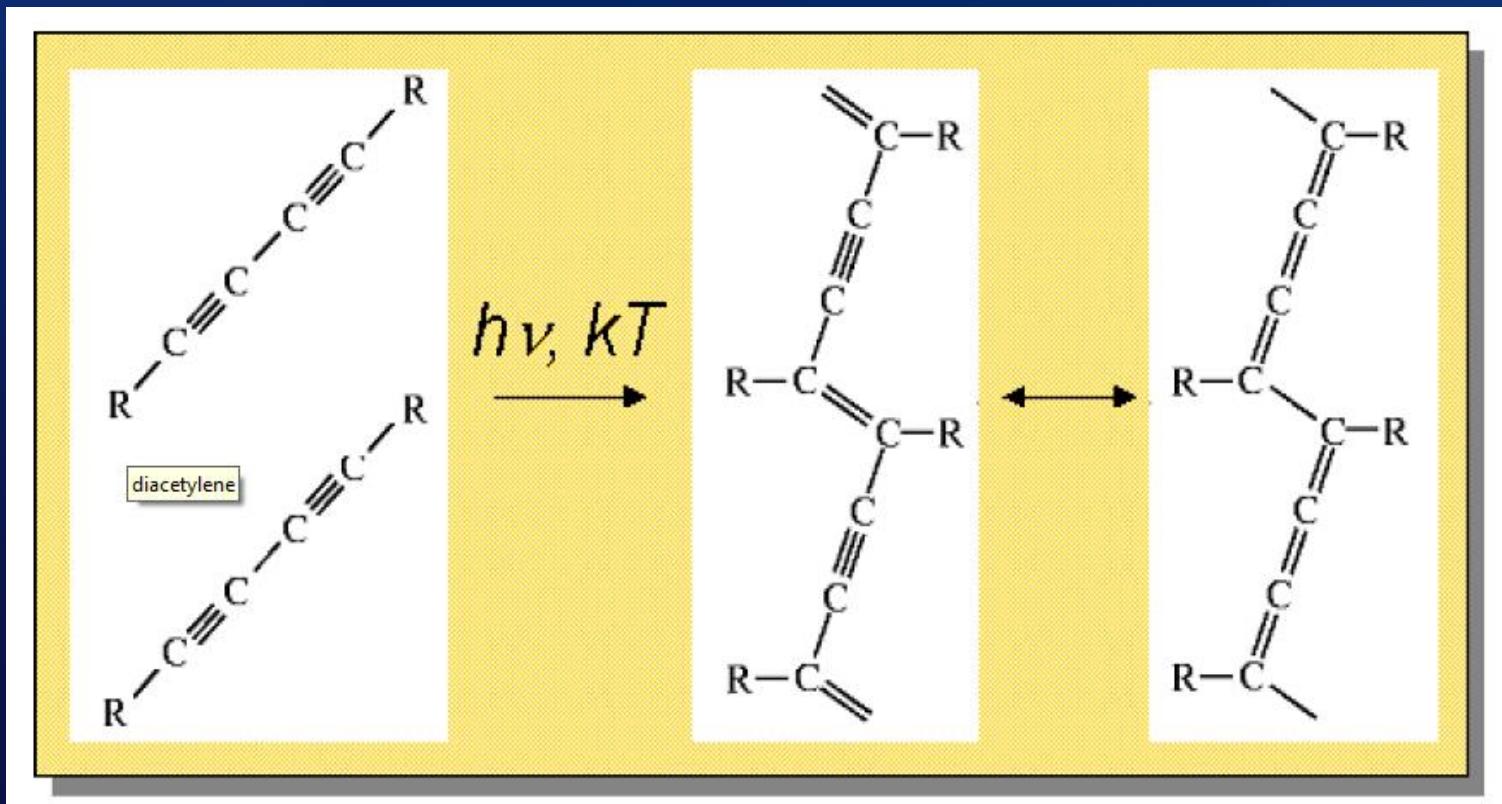
C.G. Soares / Radiation Measurements 41 (2007) S100–S116

Other pitfalls

- Once you've established an accurate calibration, you're ready to move on
- But there's still several things that can mess you up!
- It is very helpful to understand some basic things about
 - The film
 - The scanner
 - How the two interact with each other

Gafchromic Film – How does it work?

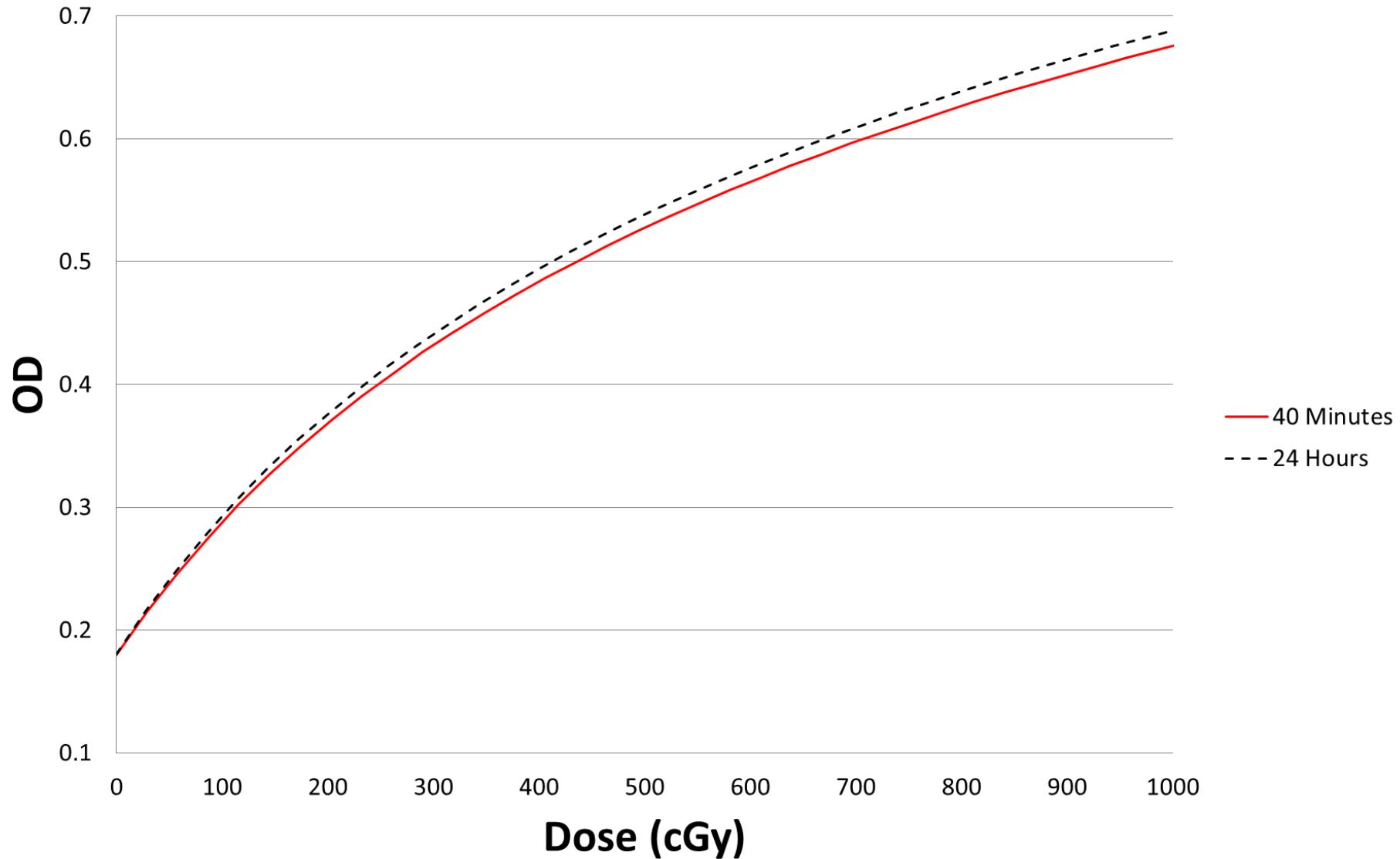
- When irradiated, the long monomers of active ingredient polymerize into even longer chains



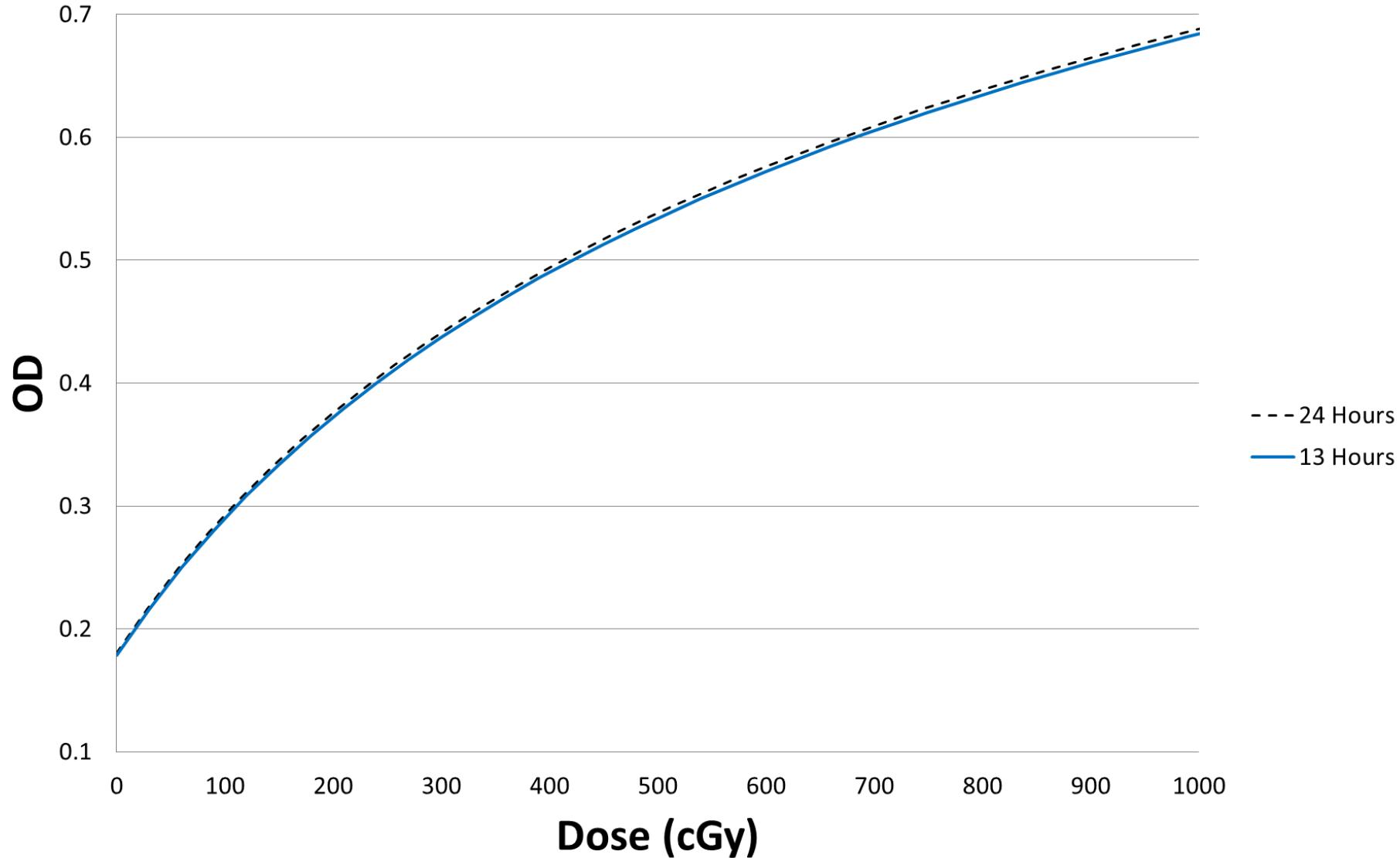
Gafchromic Film – How does it work?

- The reaction continues on even after the radiation stops, and the film gets darker over time
- The reaction proceeds very quickly at first, and then slows down considerably after a few hours
- I usually wait 16-24 hours before I scan my calibration films
- You then need to wait the same amount of time before scanning other films UNLESS you use the one scan protocol

Change in OD Over Time

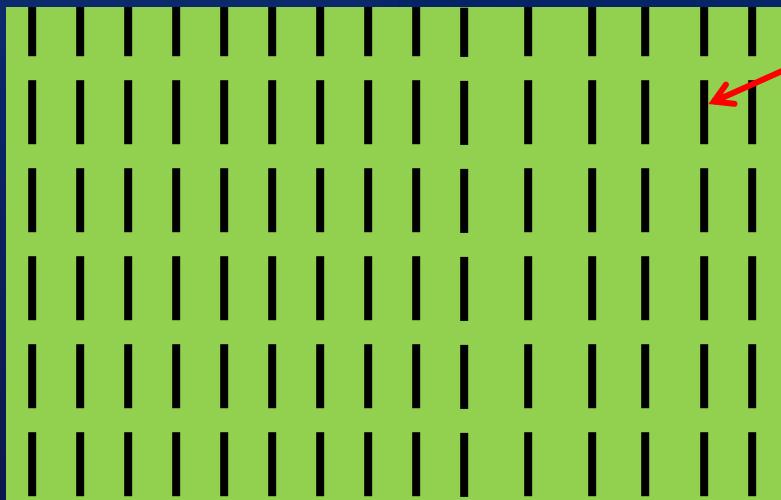


Change in OD Over Time

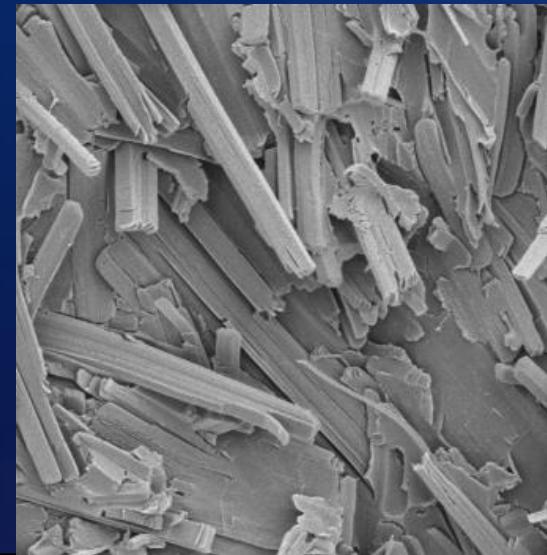


Gafchromic Film - Structure

- The active ingredient has a preferentially oriented direction



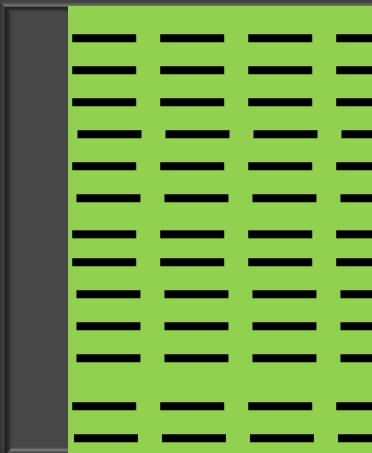
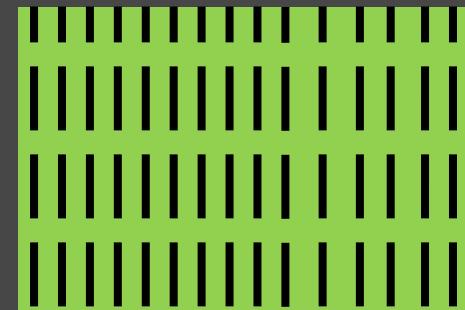
"Hair like" active ingredient is preferentially oriented parallel to the short side of the film



Since the active component tends to lie in the same general direction, it does matter which way the film is placed on the scanner.

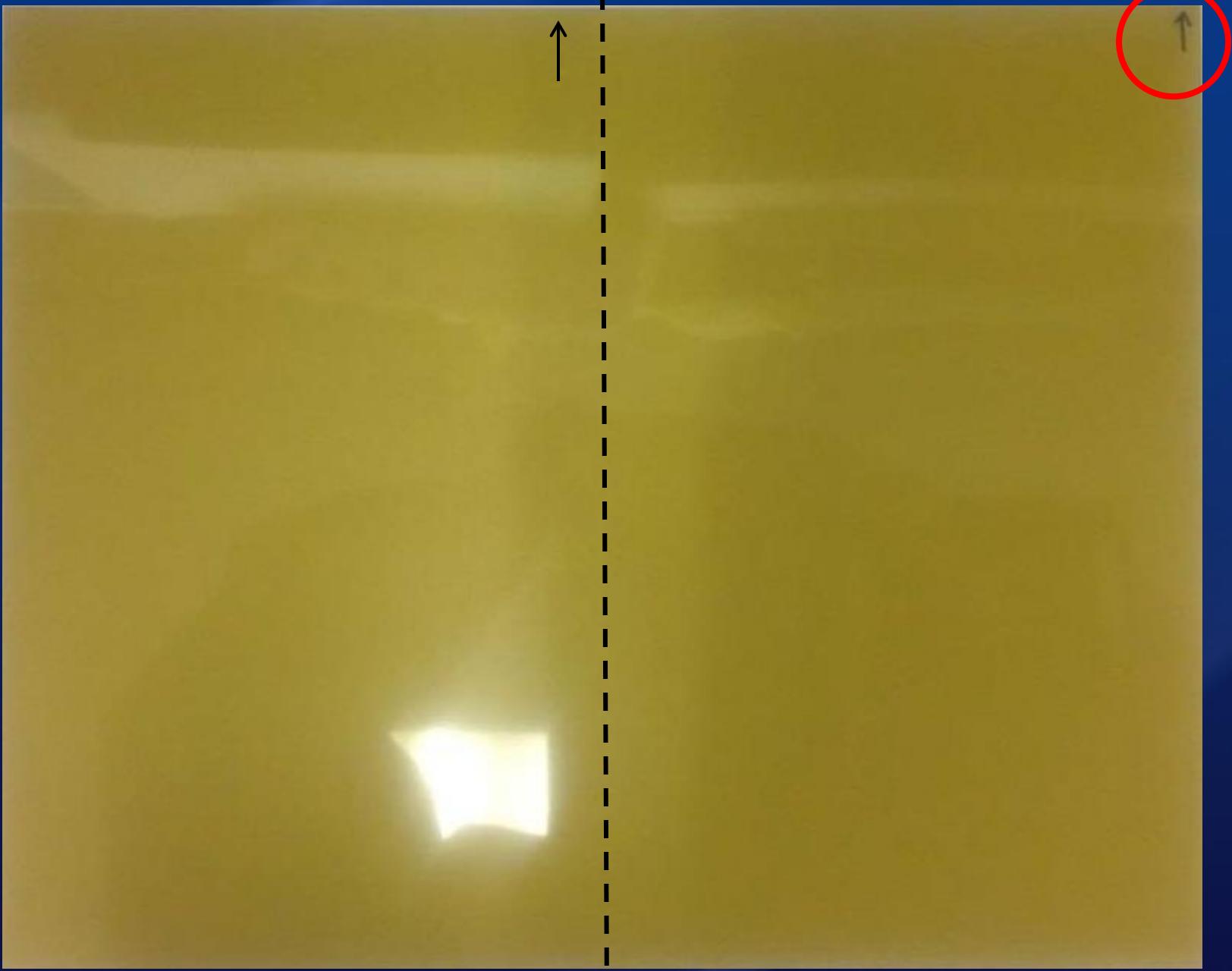


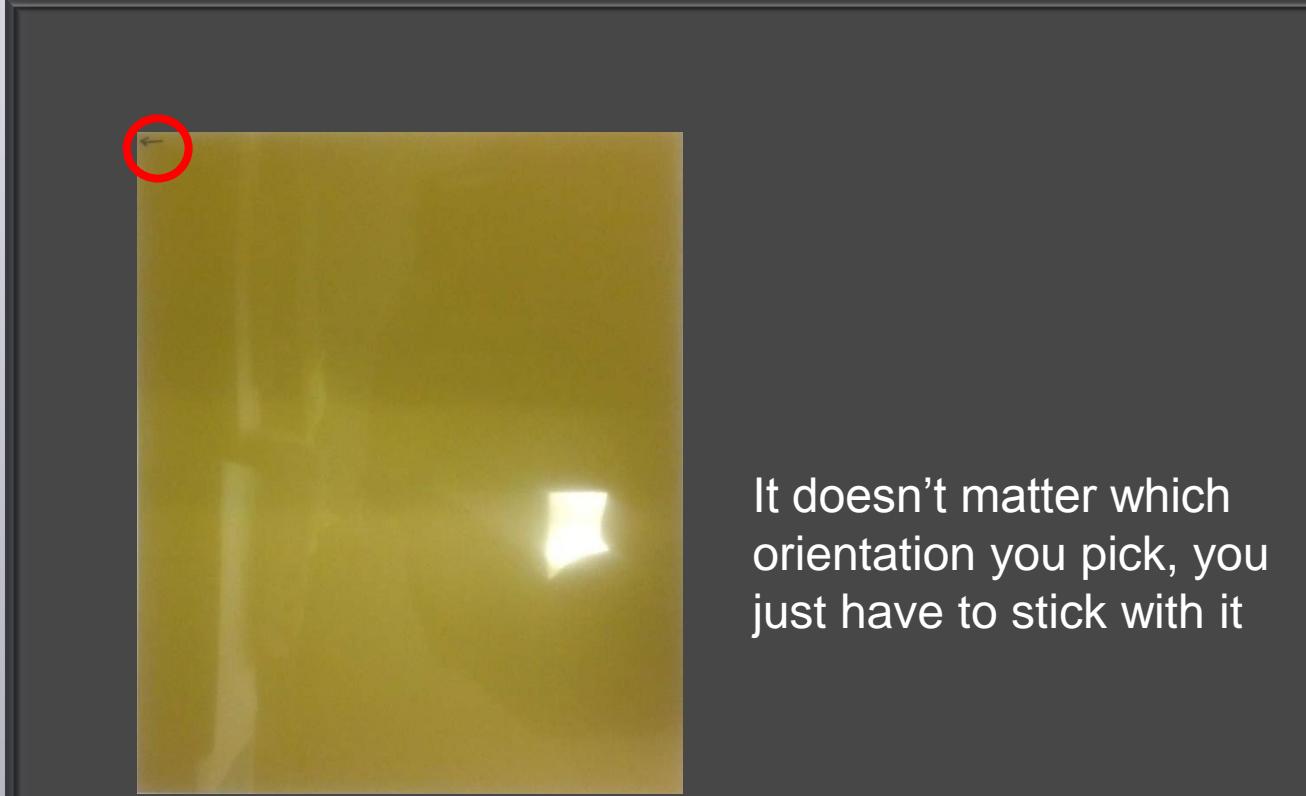
Different!



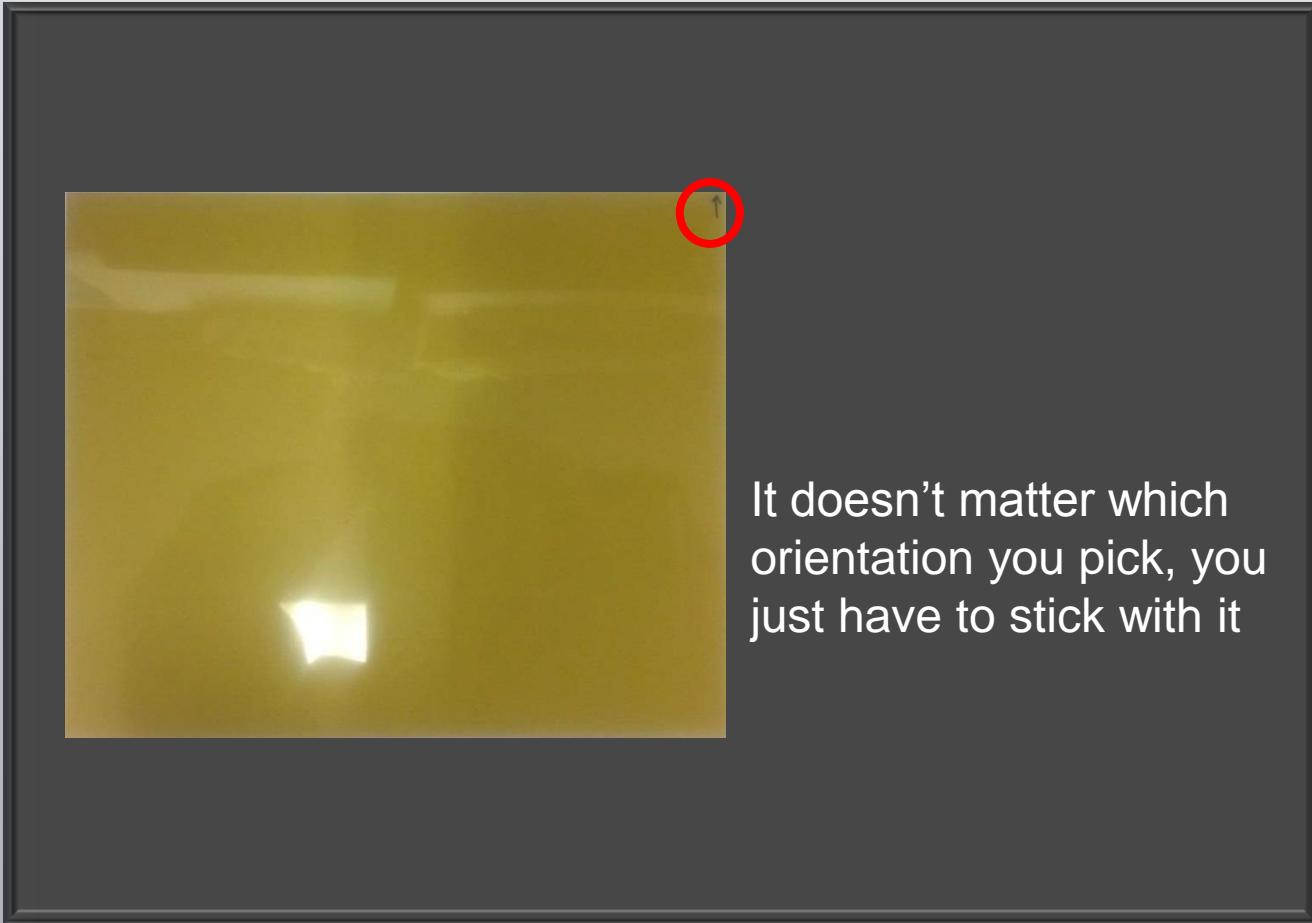
Gafchromic Film - Structure

- Is the preferential orientation of the active ingredient a problem?
- No, as long as you scan the films in the same orientation as the calibration films.
- Don't lose track of the film orientation (especially if cutting smaller squares)
- Do pick an orientation, mark it, and always stay consistent





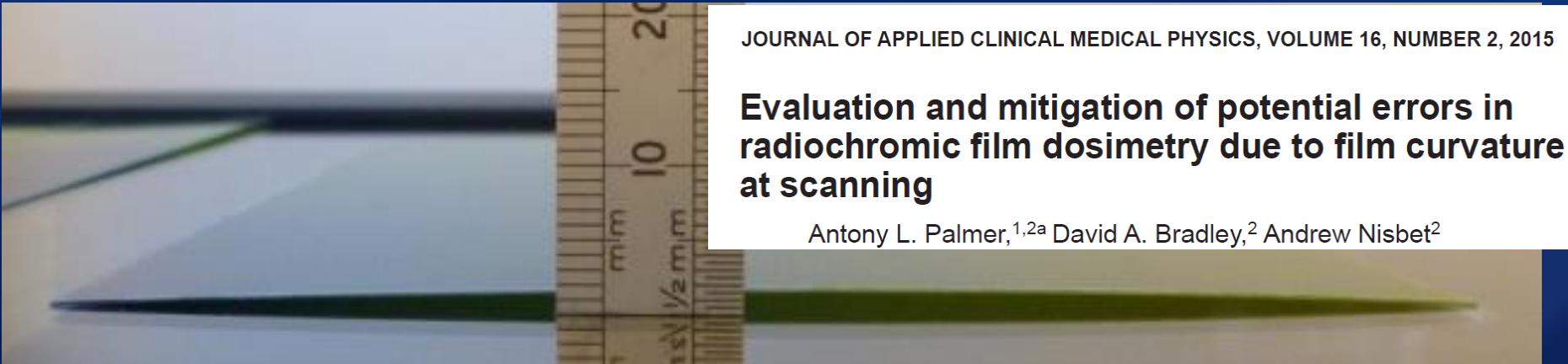
It doesn't matter which orientation you pick, you just have to stick with it



It doesn't matter which orientation you pick, you just have to stick with it

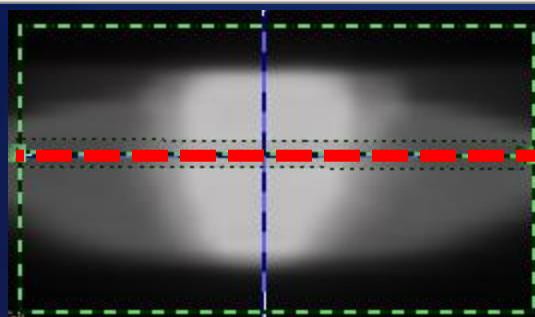
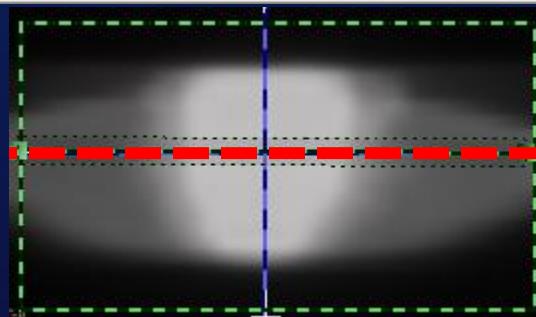
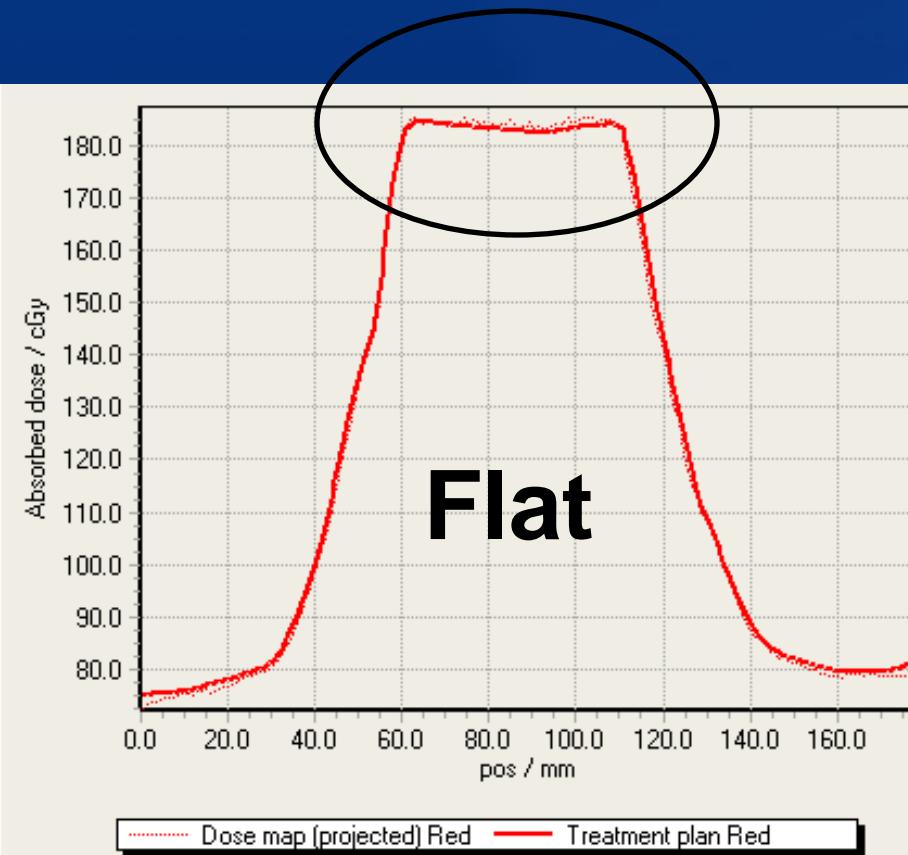
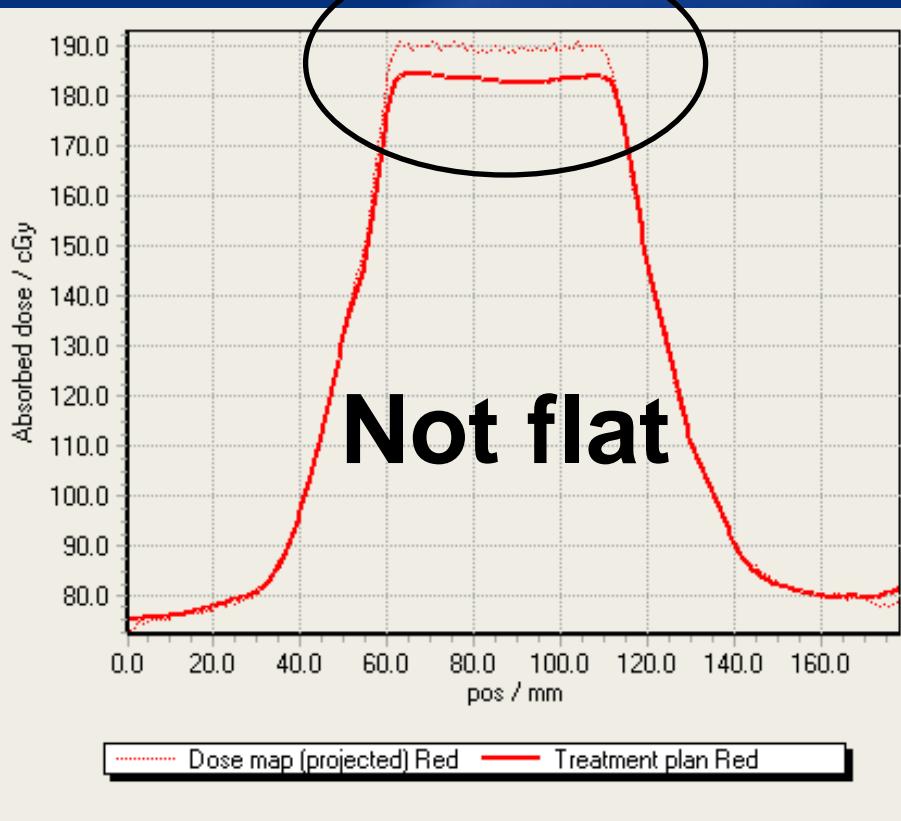
The scanner – film interaction

- Don't let the film curl on the scanner!!!



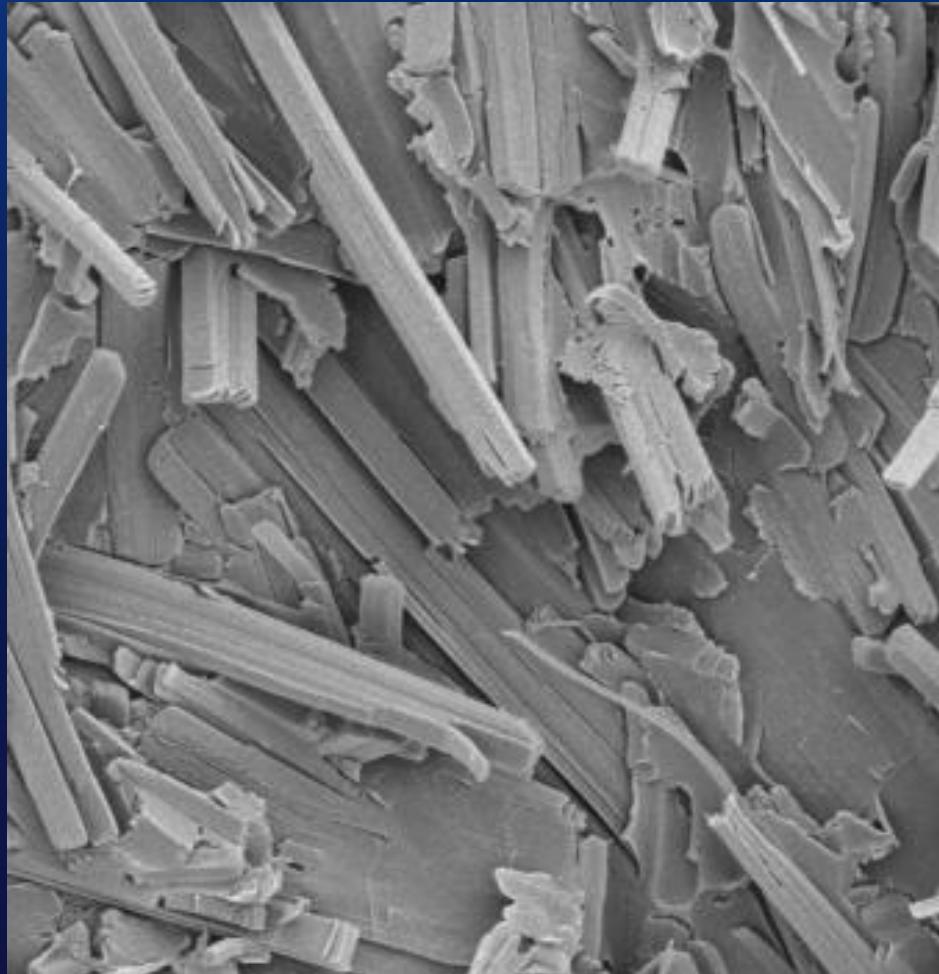
- Do press it flat with a glass plate. You might get lucky when some films lay flatter than others, but in the long run your results will be inconsistent





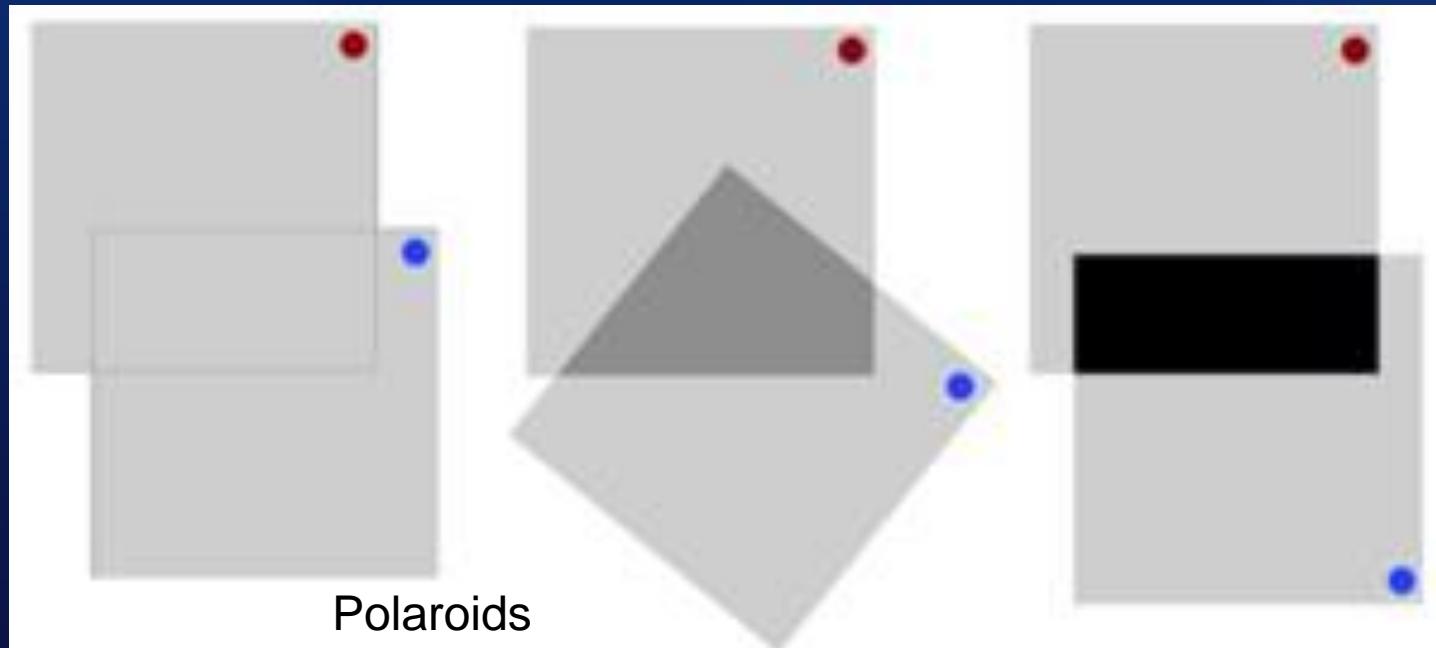
The scanner – film interaction

- Remember those long polymer chains?



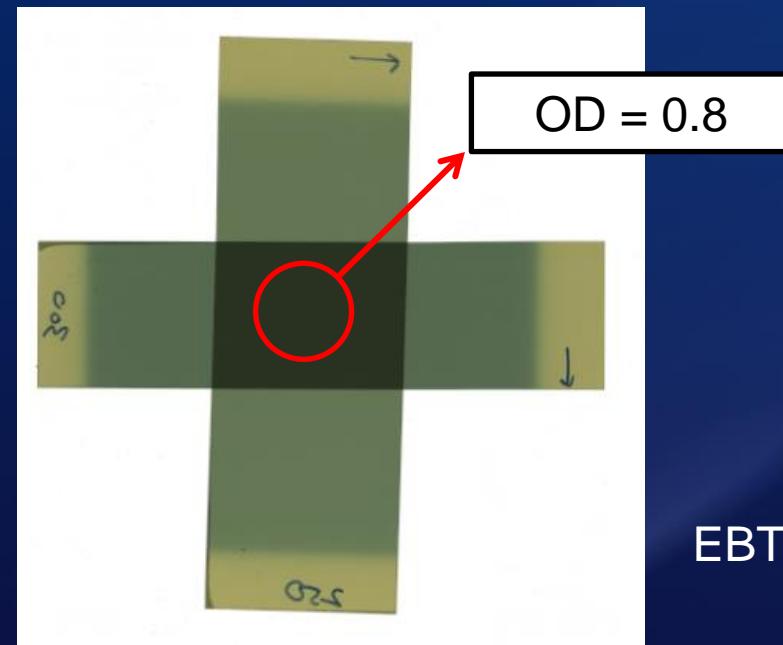
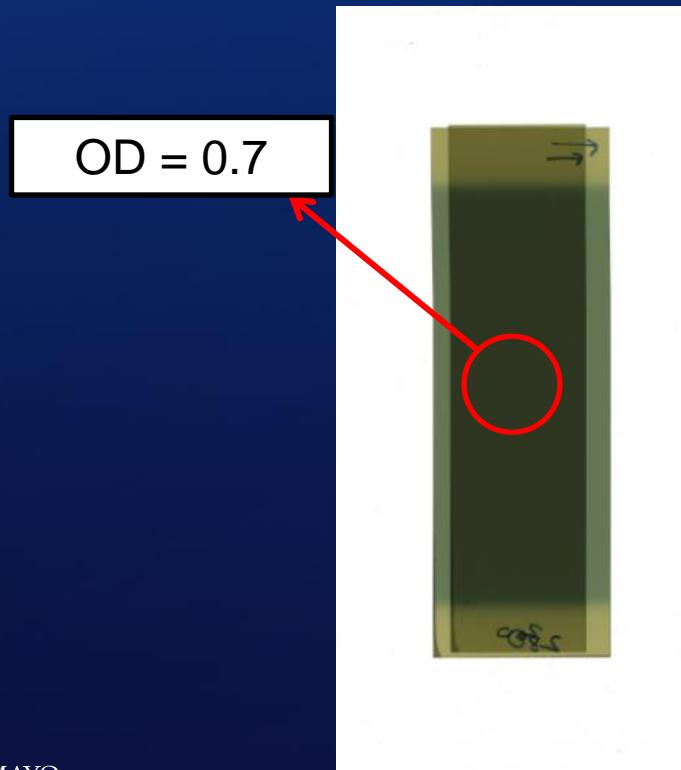
Gafchromic Film

- These long chains act to polarize the light passing through the film

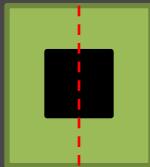


Gafchromic Film

- These long chains act to polarize the light passing through the film



EBT3 Film

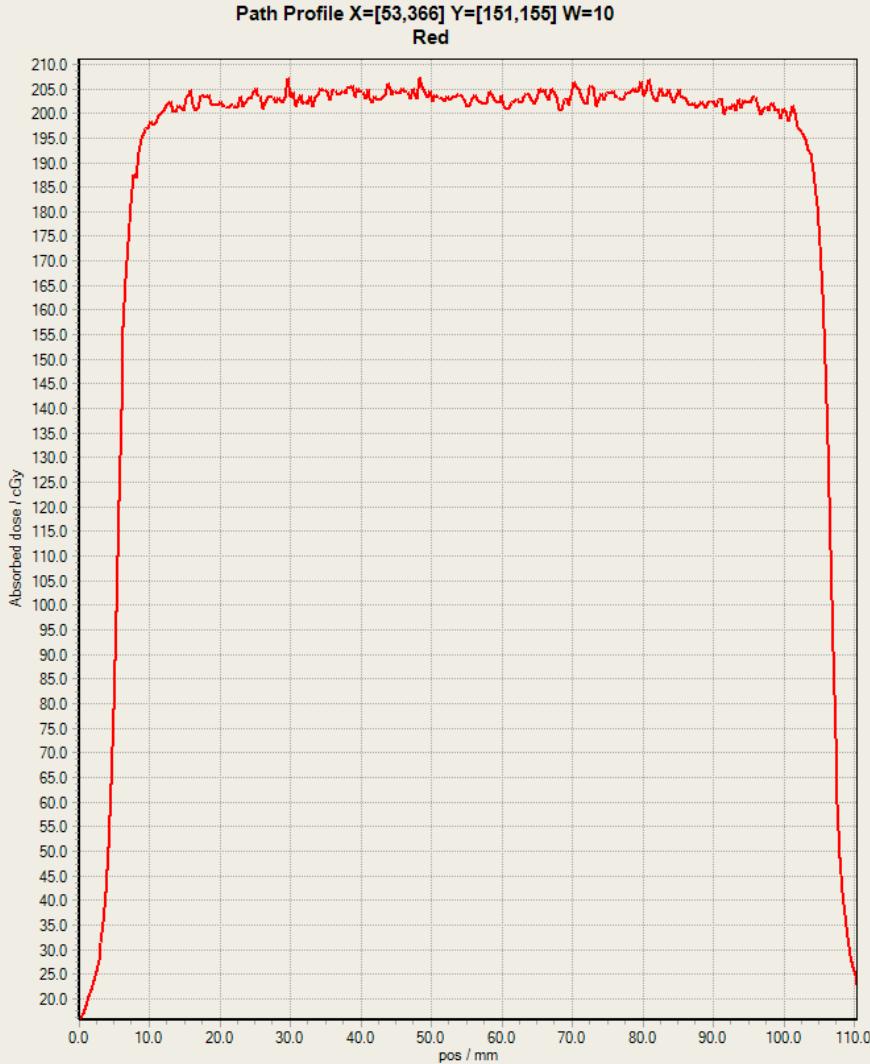


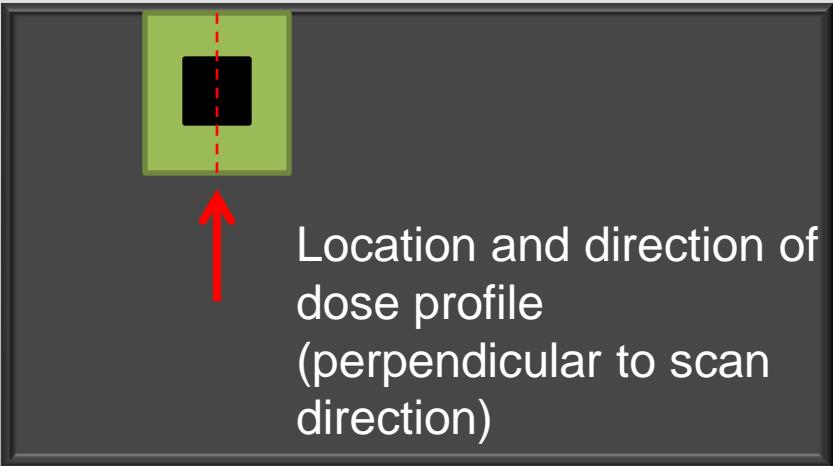
Location and direction of dose profile
(perpendicular to scan direction)



Scan Direction

Piece of EBT3 exposed to
10x10 cm² field and
centered on scanner bed



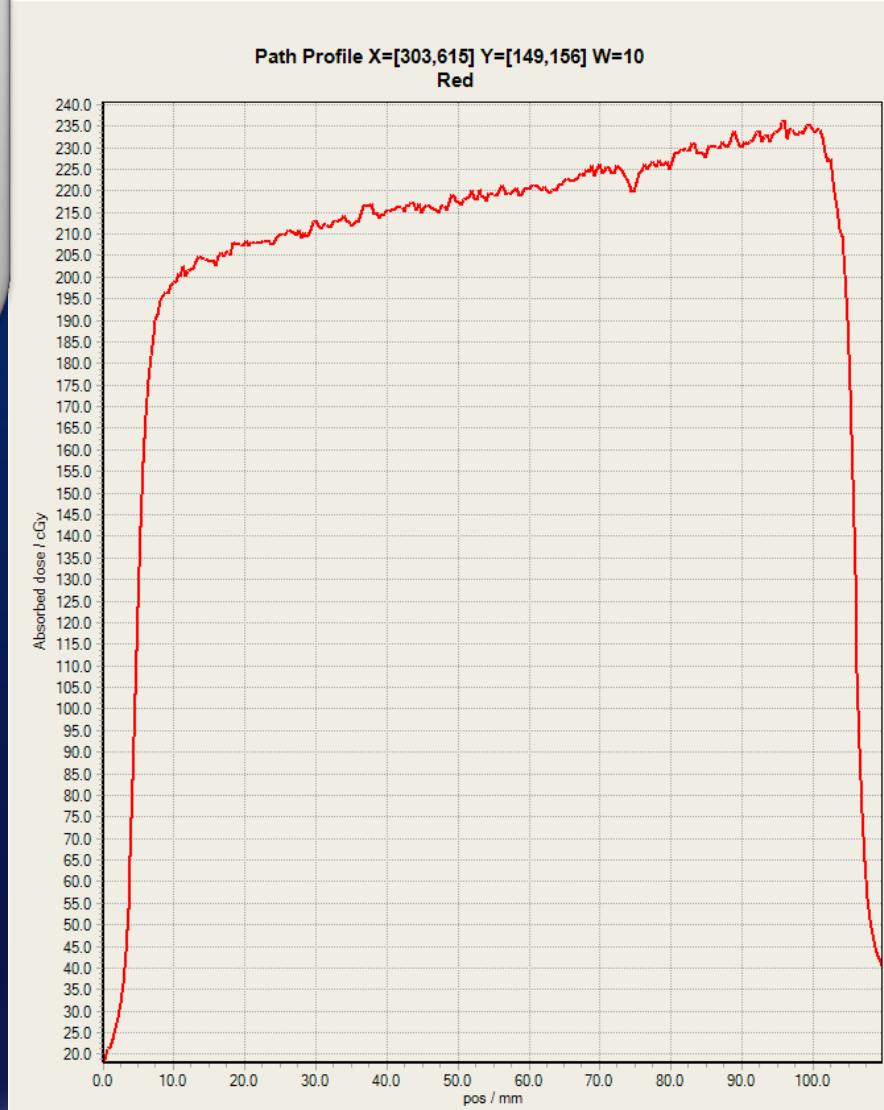


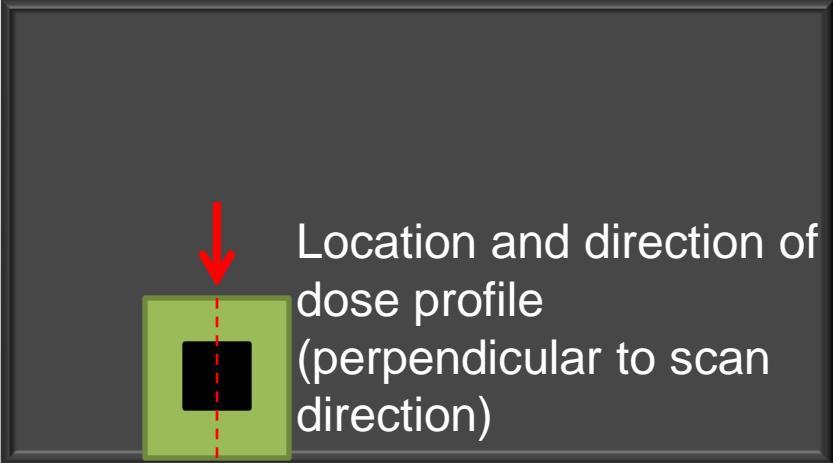
Location and direction of
dose profile
(perpendicular to scan
direction)



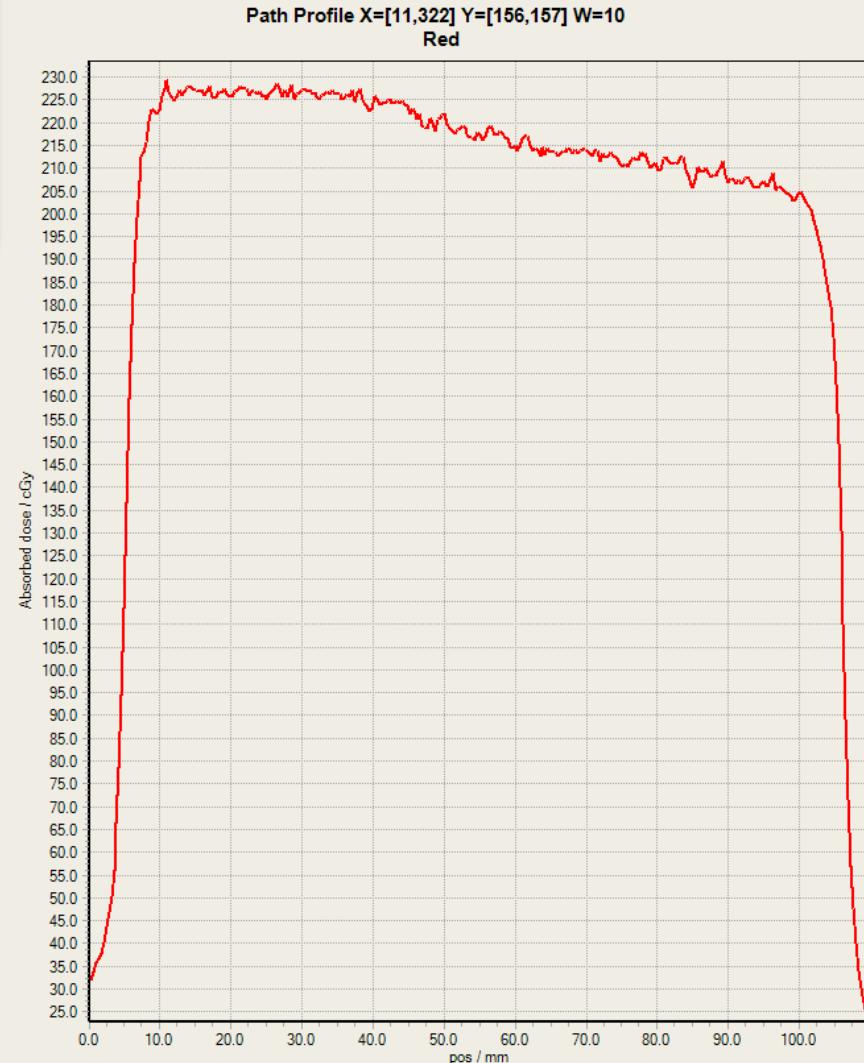
Scan Direction

Same piece of EBT3
scanned off-center

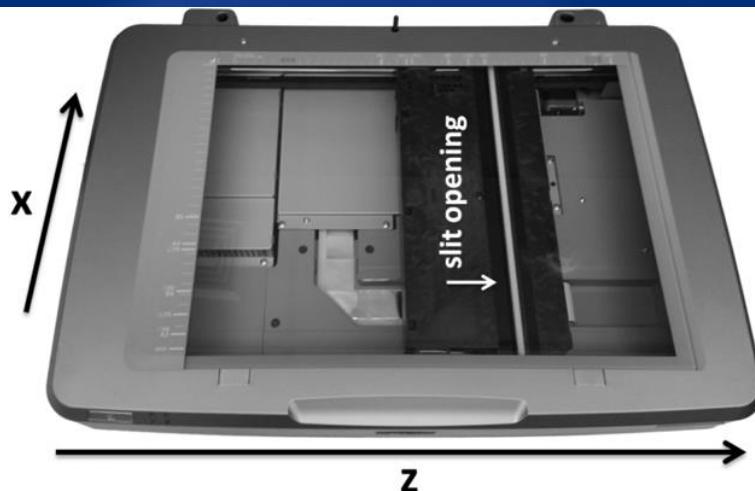




Same piece of EBT3
scanned off-center



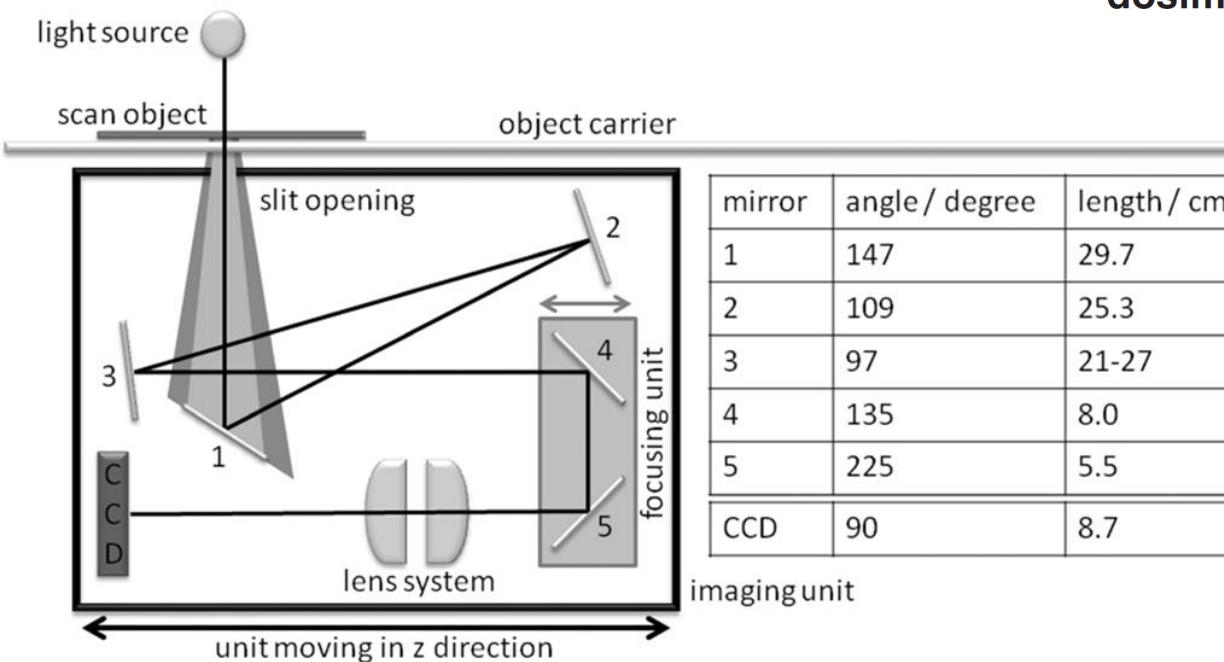
The Lateral Response Artifact (LRA)



The artefacts of radiochromic film dosimetry with flatbed scanners and their causation by light scattering from radiation-induced polymers

Andreas A Schoenfeld^{1,2}, Daniela Poppinga^{1,2},
Dietrich Harder³, Karl-Joachim Doerner⁴
and Bjoern Poppe^{1,2}

Phys. Med. Biol. 59 (2014) 3575–3597



How flatbed scanners upset accurate film dosimetry

L J van Battum¹, H Huizenga², R M Verdaasdonk¹
and S Heukelom¹

Phys. Med. Biol. 61 (2016) 625–649

mirror	angle / degree	length / cm
1	147	29.7
2	109	25.3
3	97	21-27
4	135	8.0
5	225	5.5
CCD	90	8.7

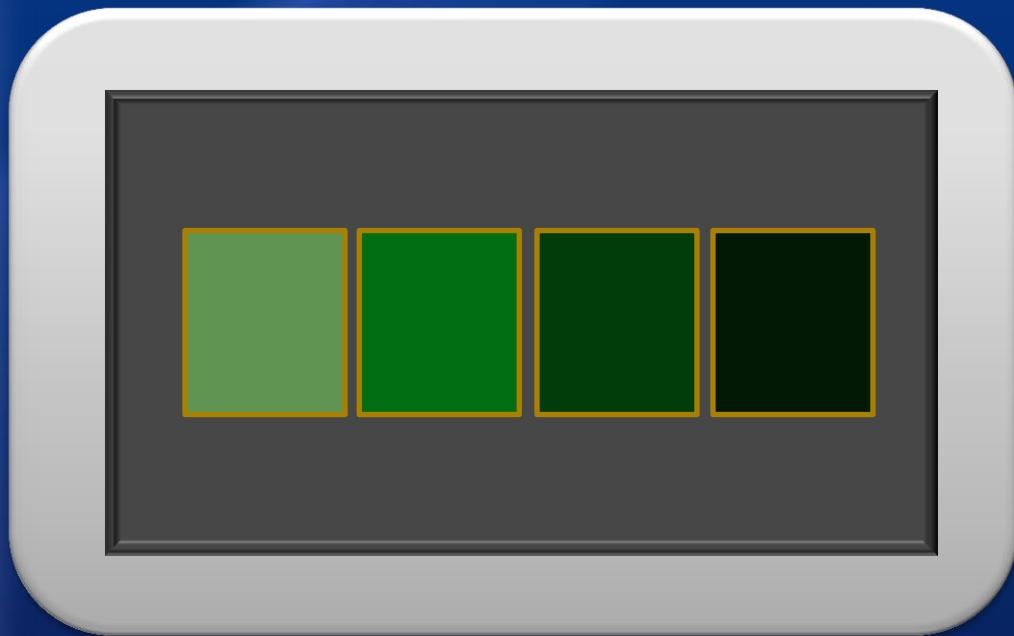
imaging unit

The Lateral Response Artifact (LRA)

- The reflection of polarized light by a mirror is dependent on the angle of incidence.
- The angle of incidence on the scanner's mirrors changes with distance from the scanner center
- The signal received at the center of the CCD array can be different than the signal at the edges
- It scales with dose, the effect is worse at higher doses

The Lateral Response Artifact (LRA)

- Don't put your films anywhere but the center of the scanner!
 - Line them up in a single column



The Lateral Response Artifact (LRA)

- Don't put your films anywhere but the center of the scanner!
 - Line them up in a single column
- Do assess the magnitude of the LRA for your applications and determine if you need to correct for it
 - Scan different doses at lateral positions and measure the effect

LRA Summary

- The magnitude depends on the type of film, the dose, the scanner used, single vs. triple channel dosimetry, how far from the scanner center you are...
 - 5 Gy, 10 cm from center, ~10% error with EBT3 single channel dosimetry

Technical Note: Initial characterization of the new EBT-XD Gafchromic film

Michael P. Grams, Jon M. Gustafson, Kenneth M. Long, and Luis E. Fong de los Santos

Medical Physics **42**, 5782 (2015)

Conclusions: The LRA of EBT-XD is greatly reduced when compared to EBT3.

Technical Note: On GAFChromic EBT-XD film and the lateral response artifact

David F. Lewis and Maria F. Chan

Medical Physics **43**, 643 (2016)

We also conclude that for EBT-XD and EBT3 with equal exposure, the effect of LRA is markedly less for the former, making it preferred to EBT3 for doses > 10 Gy.

Evaluation of Gafchromic EBT-XD film, with comparison to EBT3 film, and application in high dose radiotherapy verification

Phys. Med. Biol. **60** (2015) 8741–8752

Antony L Palmer^{1,2}, Alexis Dimitriadis^{1,3,4}, Andrew Nisbet^{1,3}
and Catharine H Clark^{1,3,4}

In comparison to EBT3, EBT-XD gave improved evaluation results for the SRS-plan, had improved calibration curve gradients at high doses, and had reduced lateral scanner effect.

LRA Summary

- Determine if it's a problem for your application
 - Small field SBRT/SRS likely won't be a problem (but XD film is still preferred!)
 - Larger field head and neck cases could be

LRA Summary

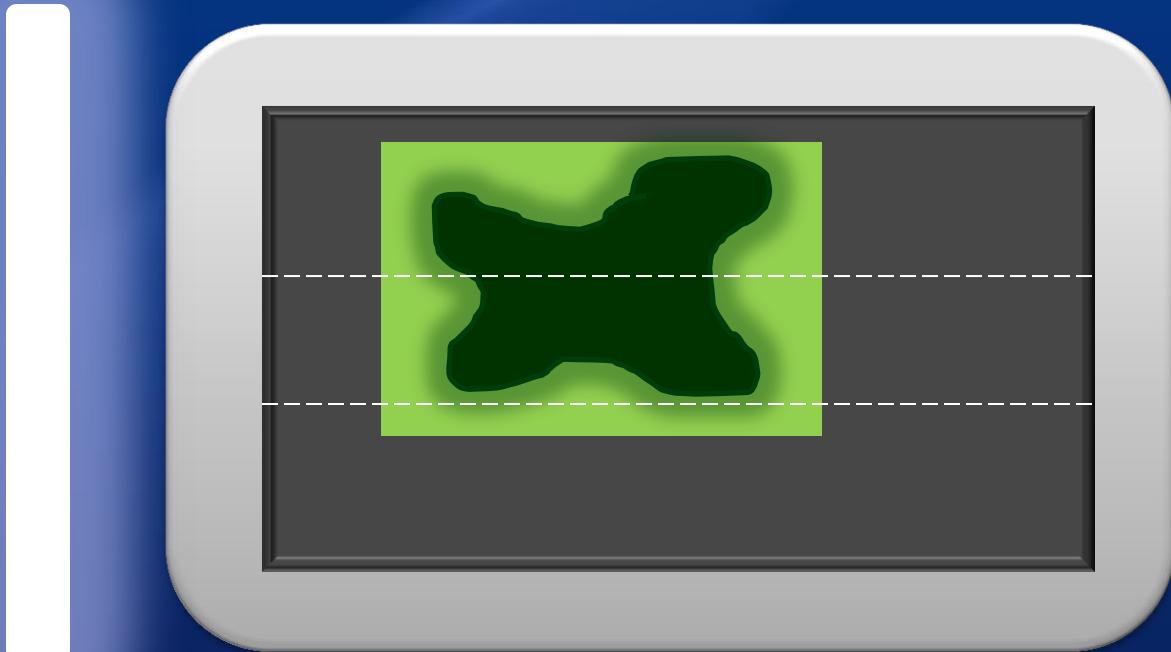
- There are lots of publications out there which have devised methods to correct for the LRA

Correcting lateral response artifacts from flatbed scanners for radiochromic film dosimetry

David Lewis and Maria F. Chan

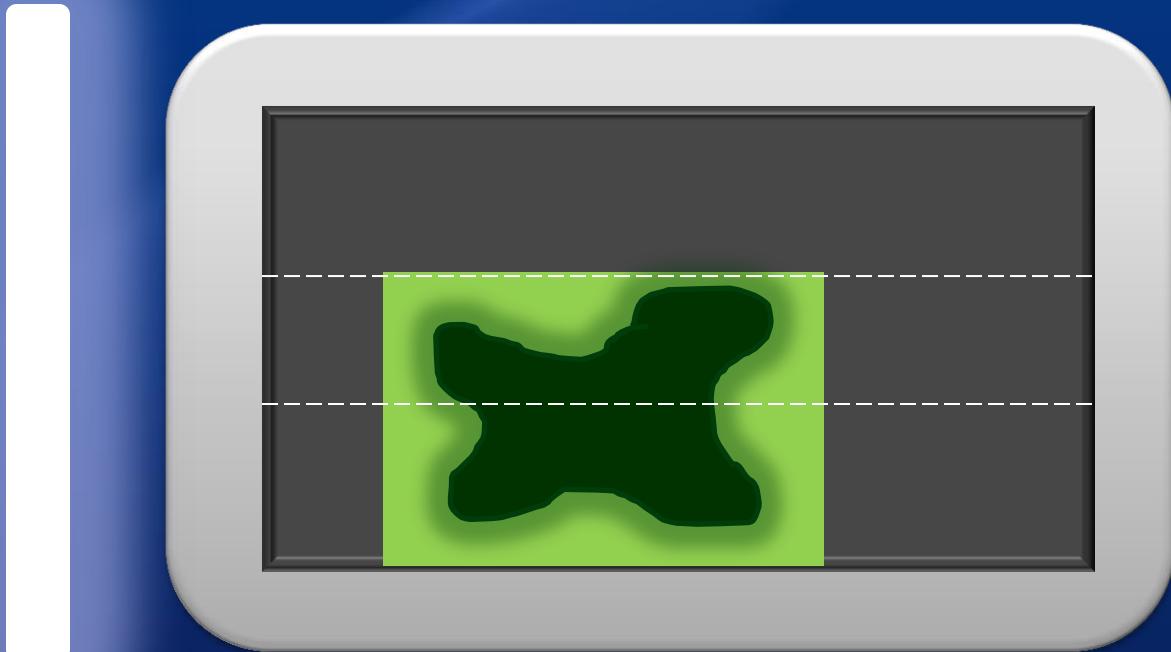
Medical Physics 42, 416 (2015):

- Most of my measurements involve relatively small fields, and the larger ones are low dose (~2-3 Gy) so we don't correct for it (but you MUST be aware of it!)
- A simple solution is to just scan the film twice and shift each side of the film to the center



} Scanner “sweet spot”

If you feel the LRA might be a problem, you can always scan the film twice: Once each with each half of the dose distribution centered within the scanner’s “sweet spot”



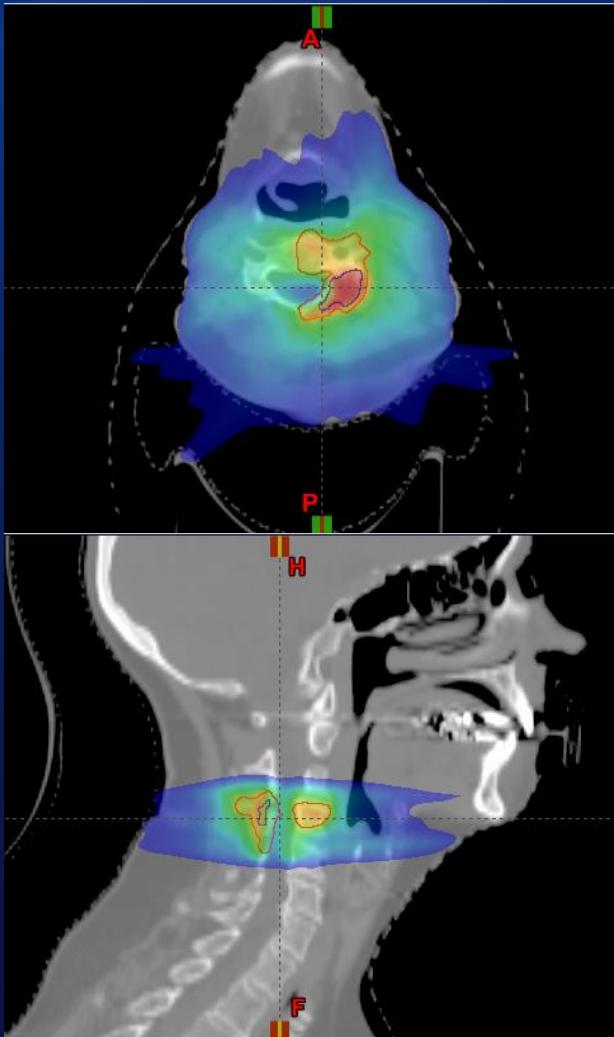
} Scanner “sweet spot”

If you feel the LRA might be a problem, you can always scan the film twice: Once each with each half of the dose distribution centered within the scanner’s “sweet spot”

IMRT QA

- Our primary reason for wanting film in our clinic was for IMRT QA
- We were frustrated by some of the drawbacks of the MatriXX ion chamber array
 - Needs an angular correction
 - Have to warm up electronics
 - Can't hit the electronics with radiation
 - *Poor spatial resolution*

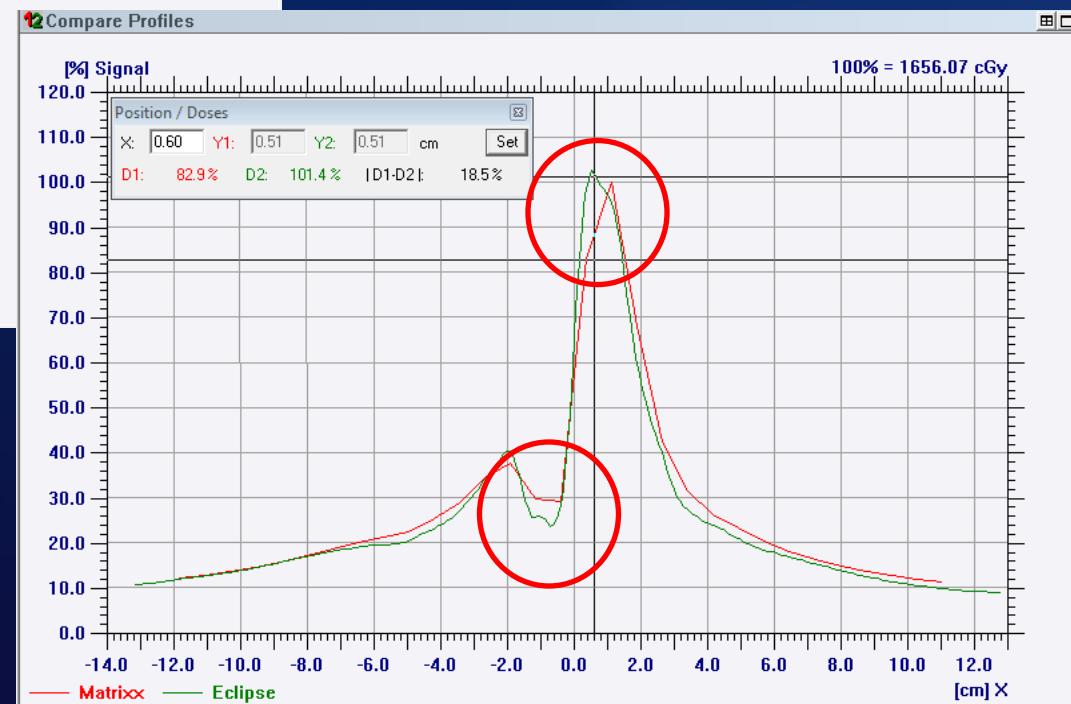
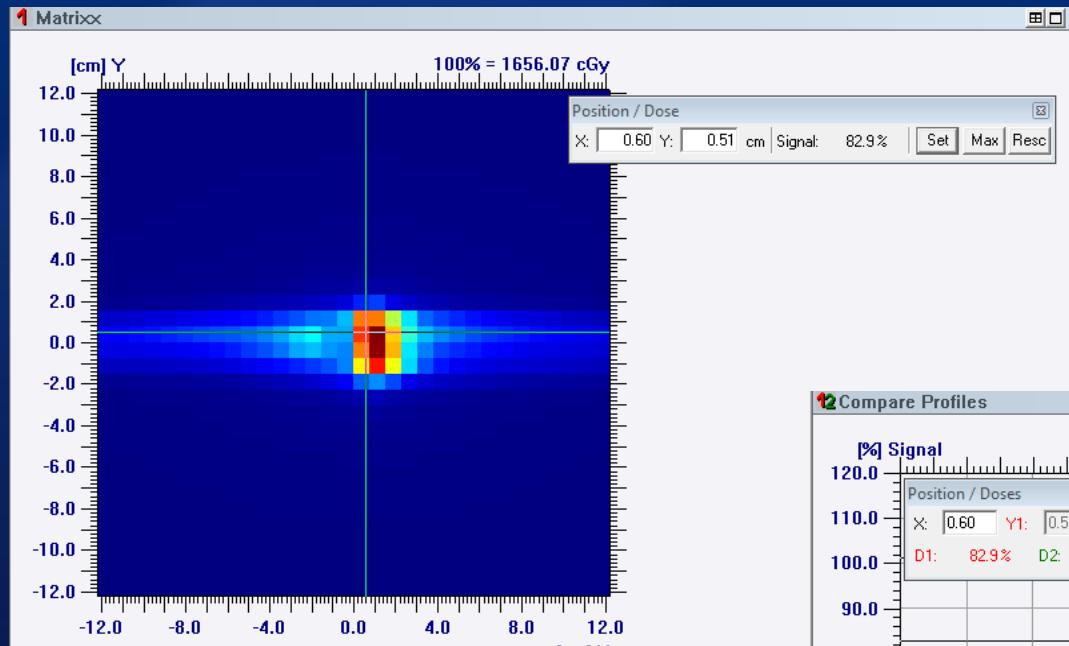
Clinical Example – Spine SBRT



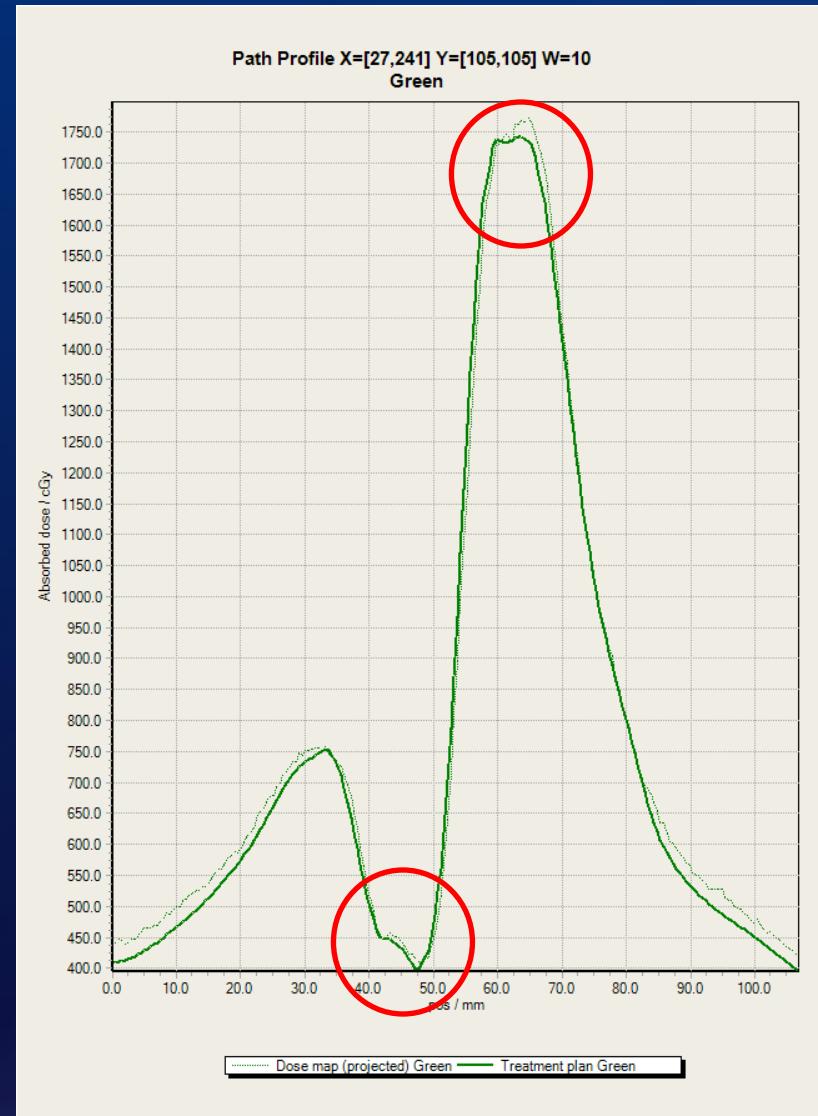
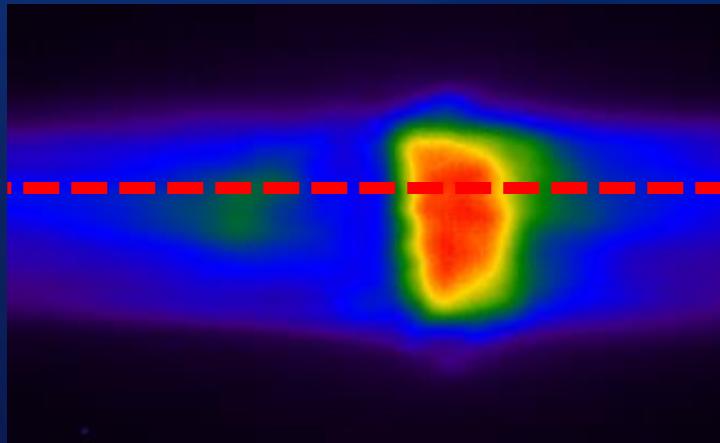
C-Spine SBRT
24 Gy in 1 fx

PTV measures
2 cm x 1 cm x 1 cm

Clinical Example – Spine SBRT



Clinical Example – Spine SBRT

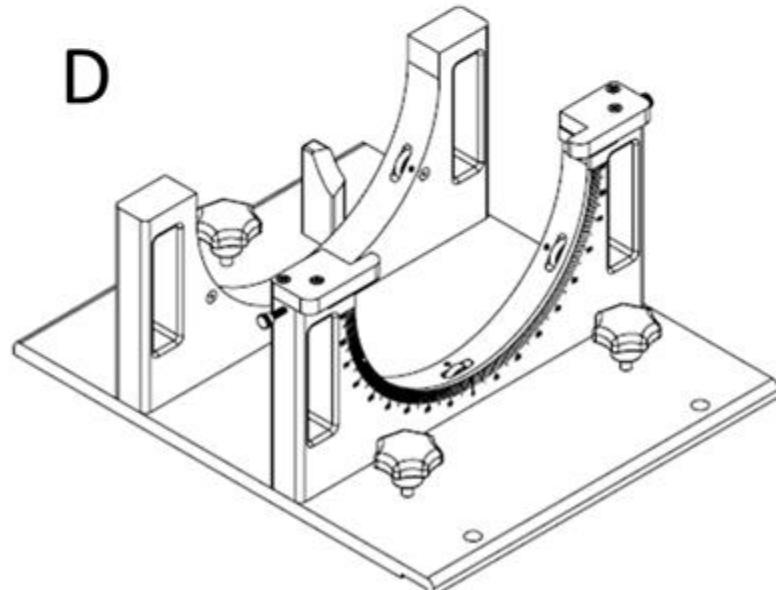
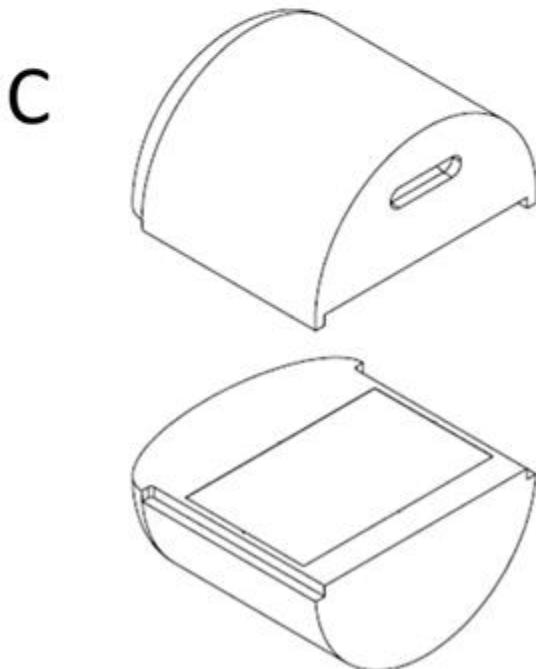
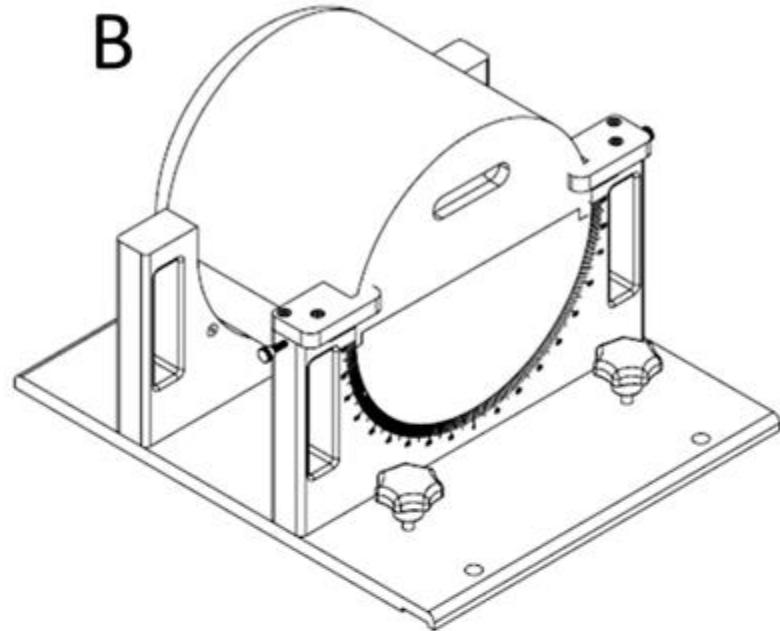
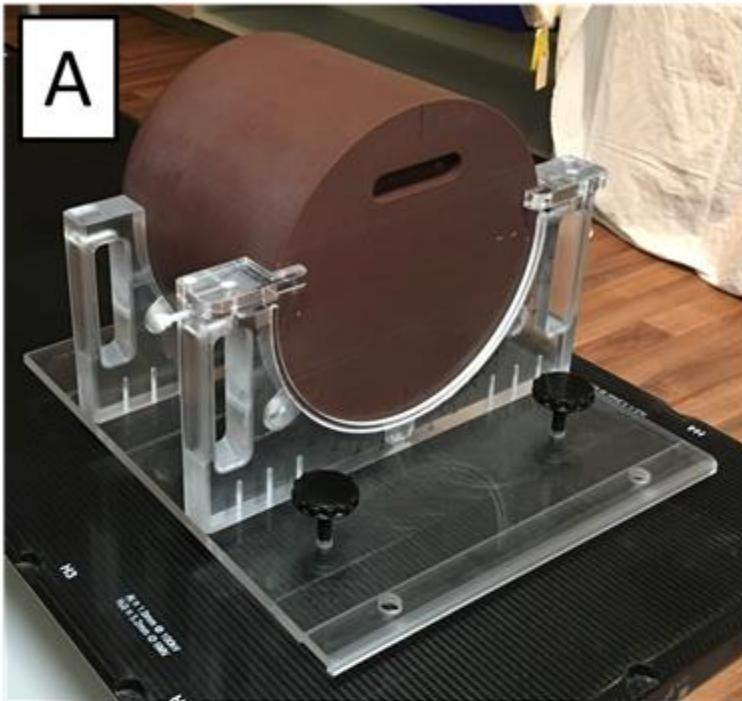


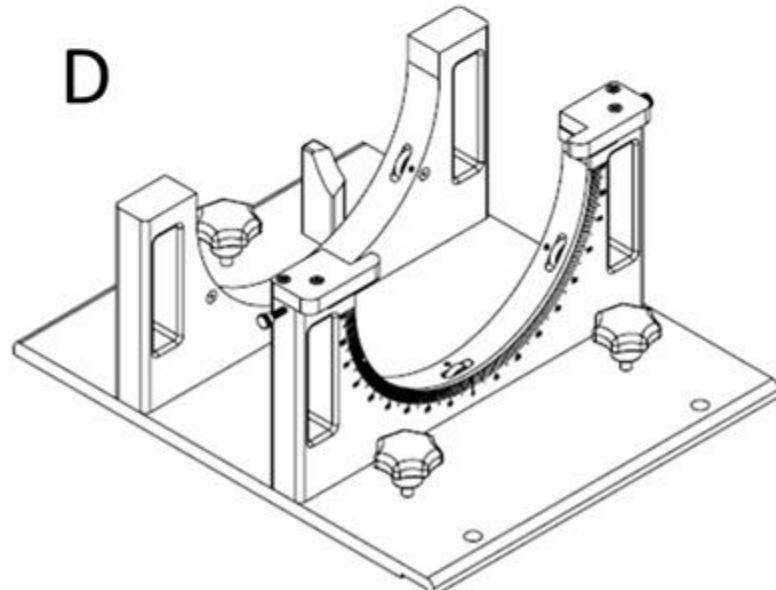
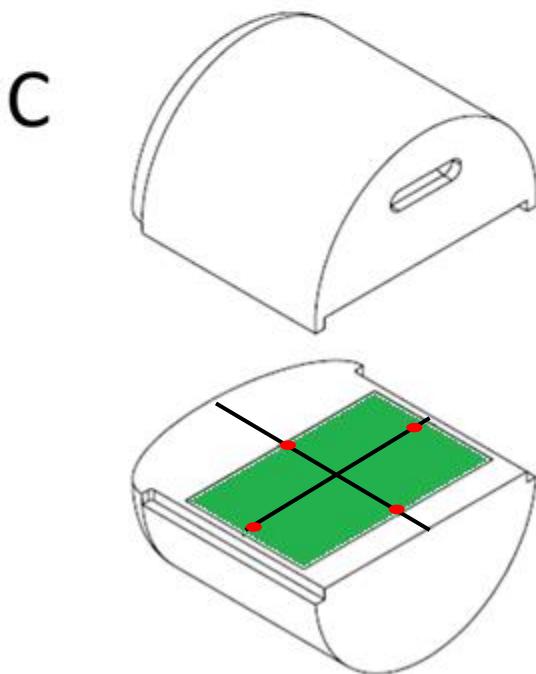
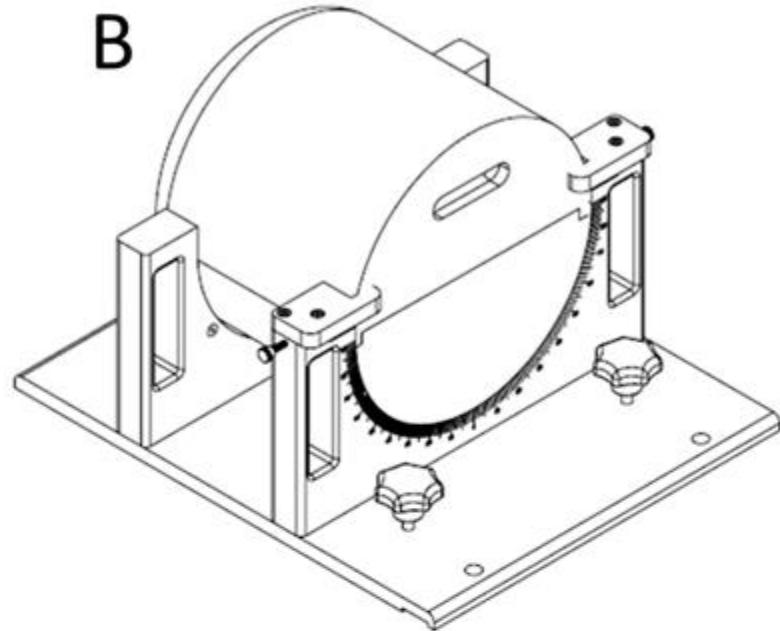
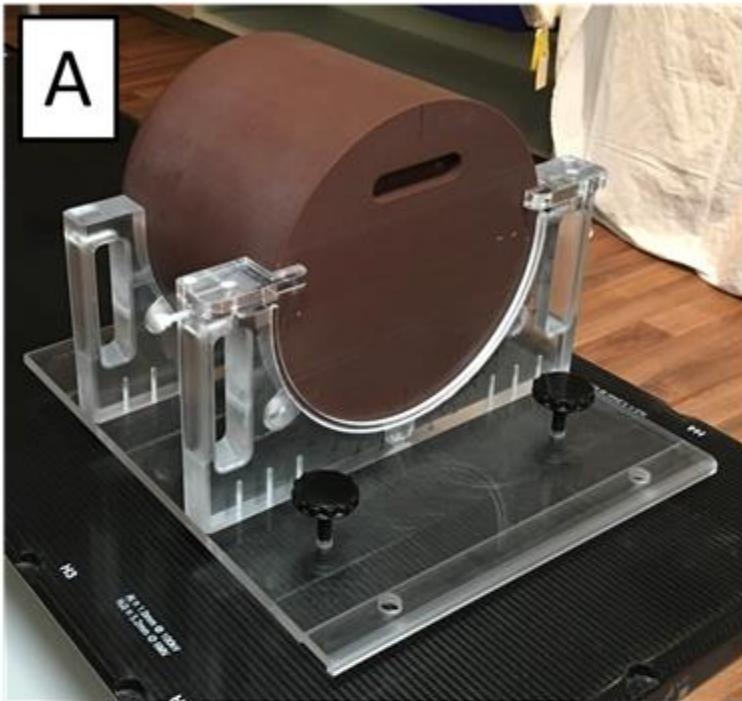
IMRT QA

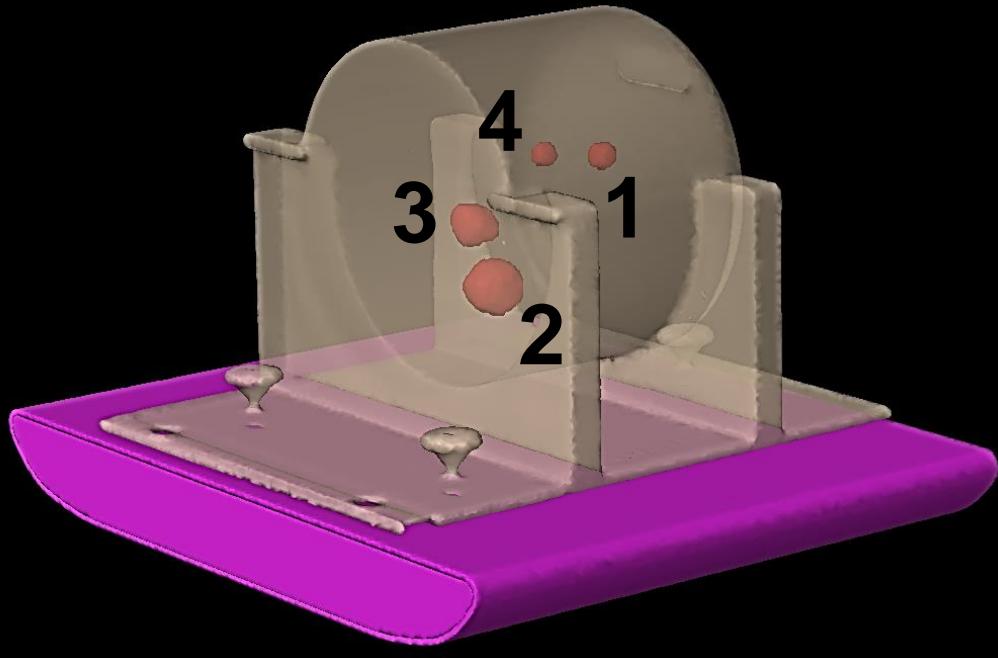
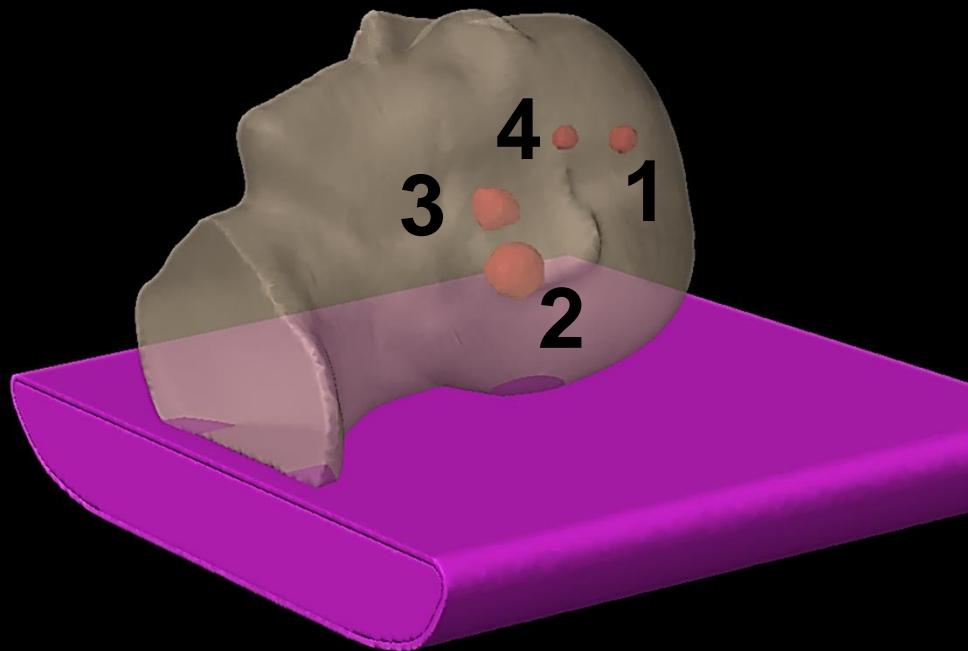
- In our clinic we use film for IMRT QA measurements of
 - Any plan where the target is <2 cm in any direction
 - All spine SBRT plans
 - All SRS/SRT plans
 - Plans with couch kicks
 - Any plan where the physicist wants to use film, or wants a 2nd measurement to complement the MatriXX

IMRT QA – Our Process

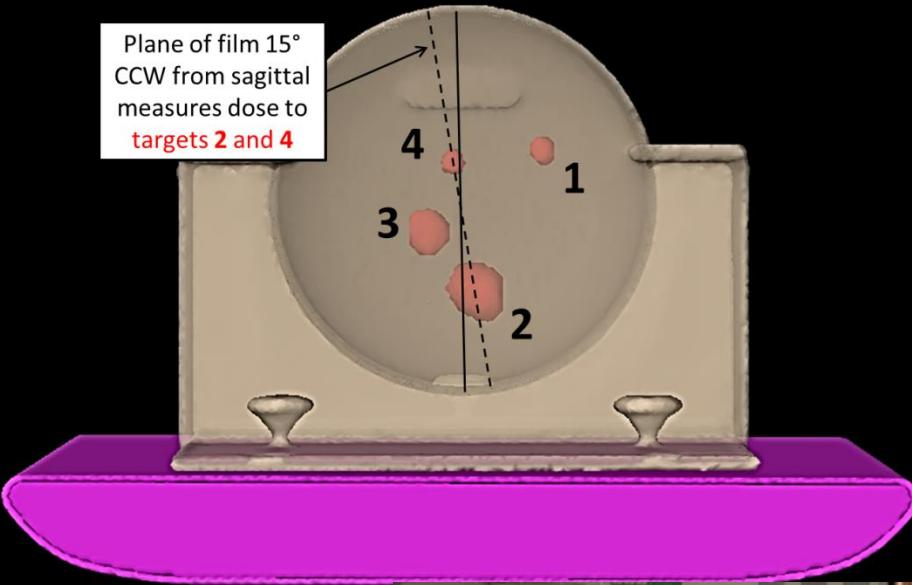
- We have developed an in-house phantom called the “Fong Phantom” for most of our film measurements
 - Cylindrical
 - Rotates 360°
 - Accommodates a half sheet of film



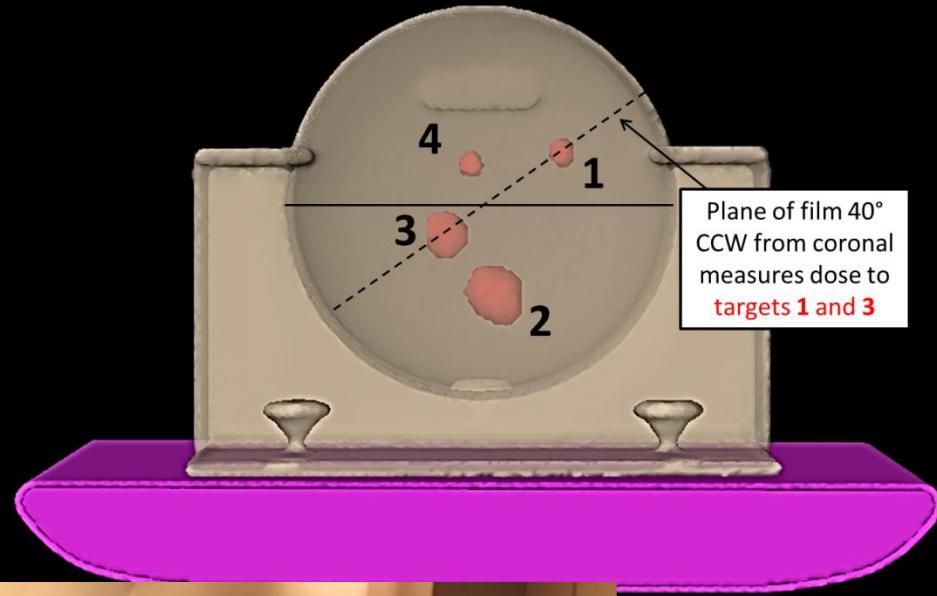




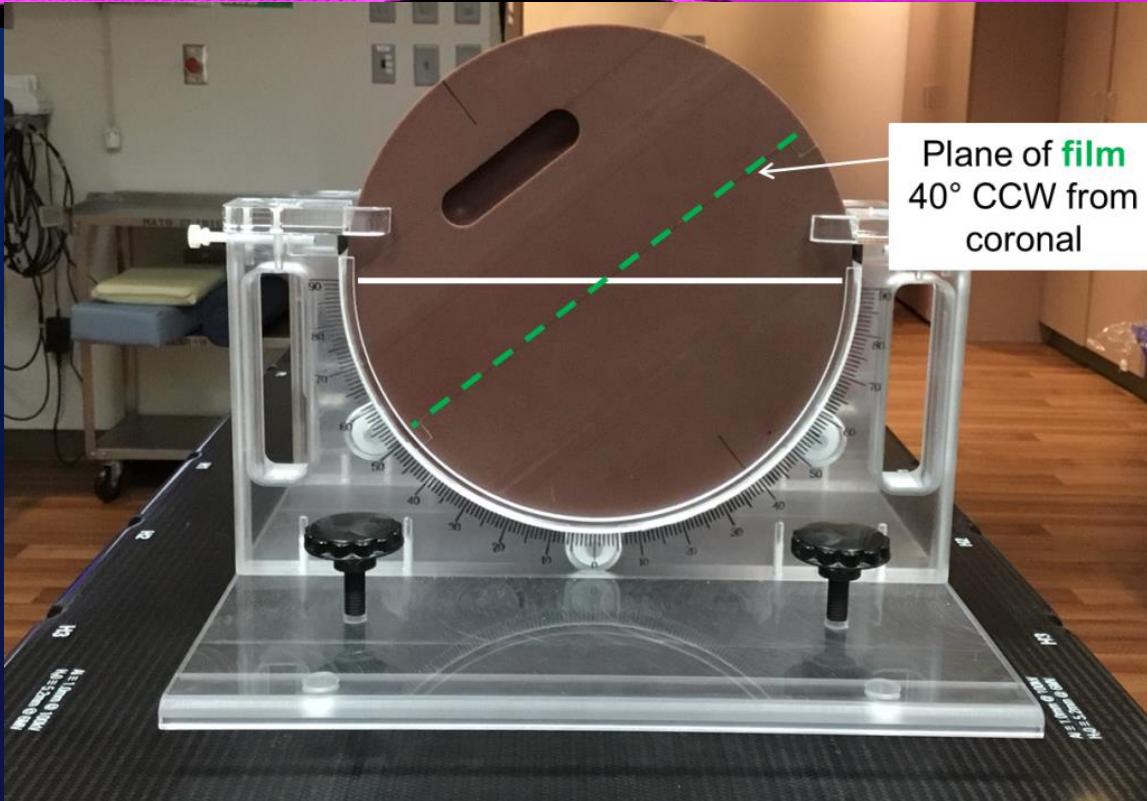
Plane of film 15°
CCW from sagittal
measures dose to
targets 2 and 4

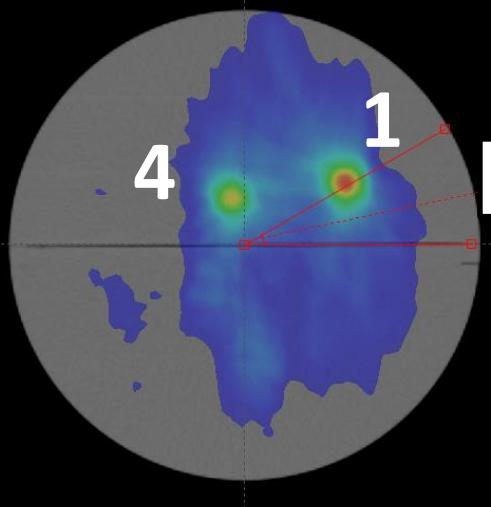


Plane of film 40°
CCW from coronal
measures dose to
targets 1 and 3

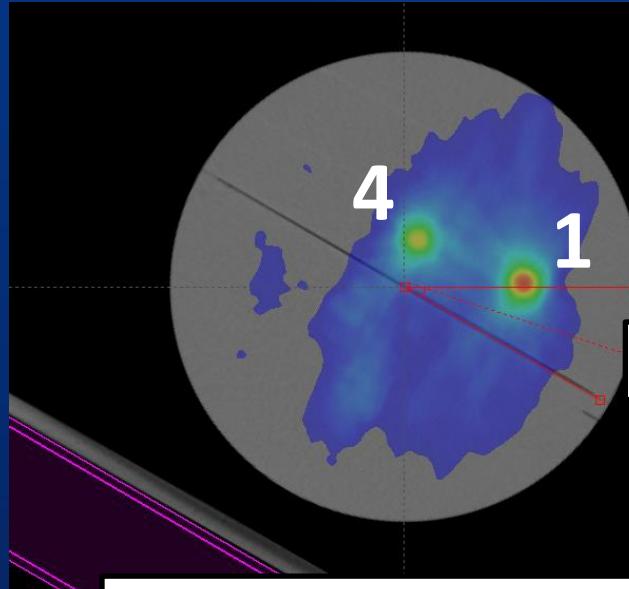


Plane of **film**
40° CCW from
coronal

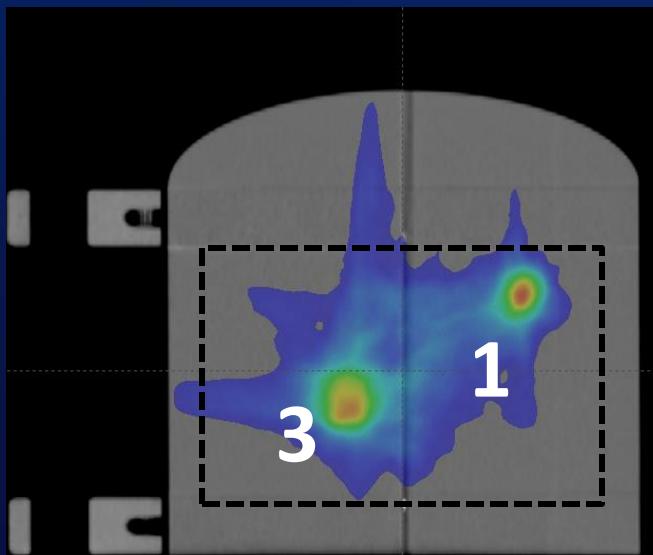




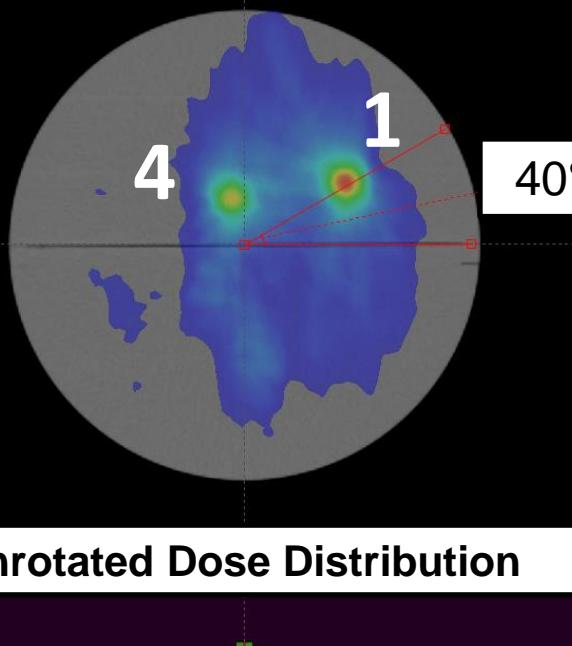
Unrotated Dose Distribution



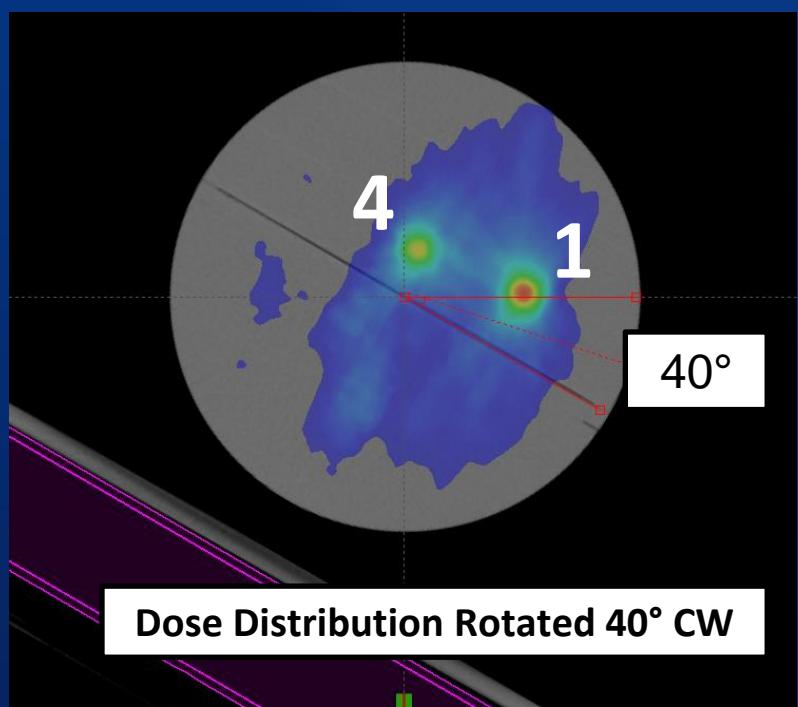
Dose Distribution Rotated 40° CW



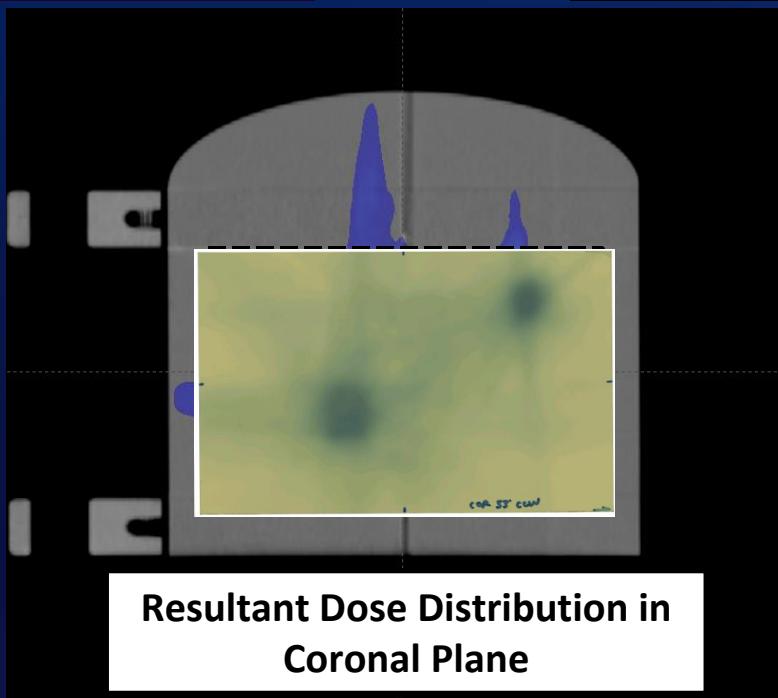
Resultant Dose Distribution in
Coronal Plane



Unrotated Dose Distribution

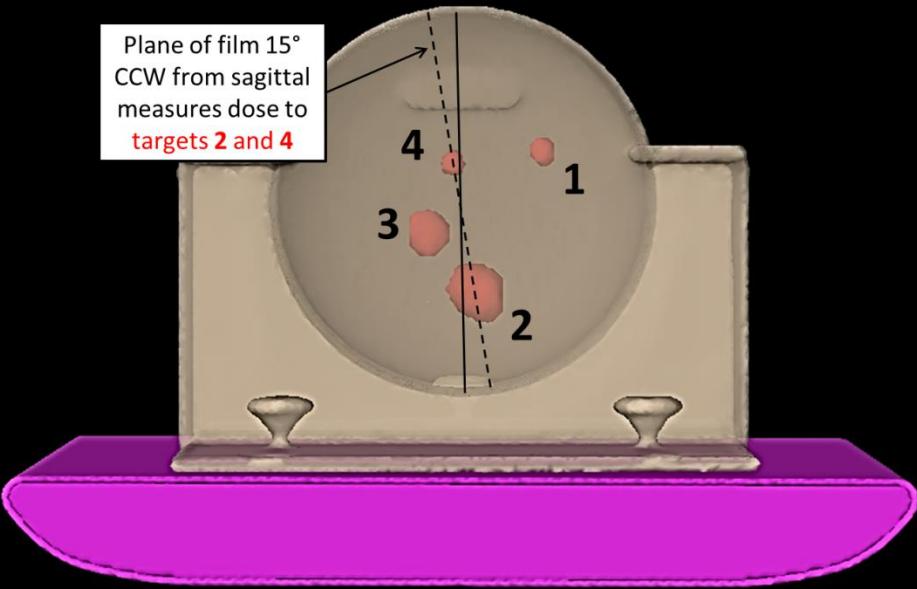


Dose Distribution Rotated 40° CW

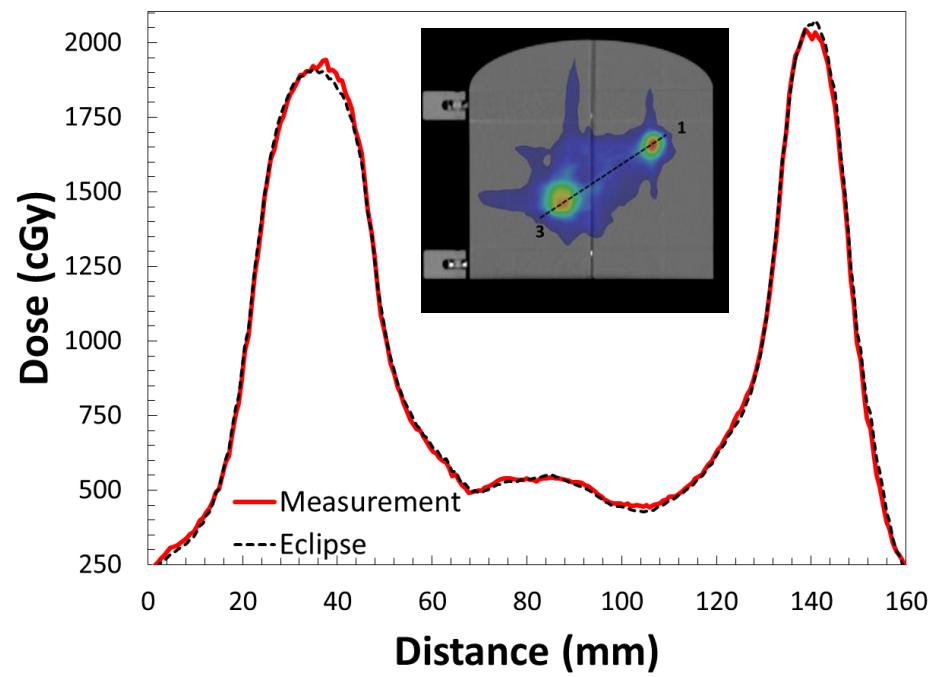
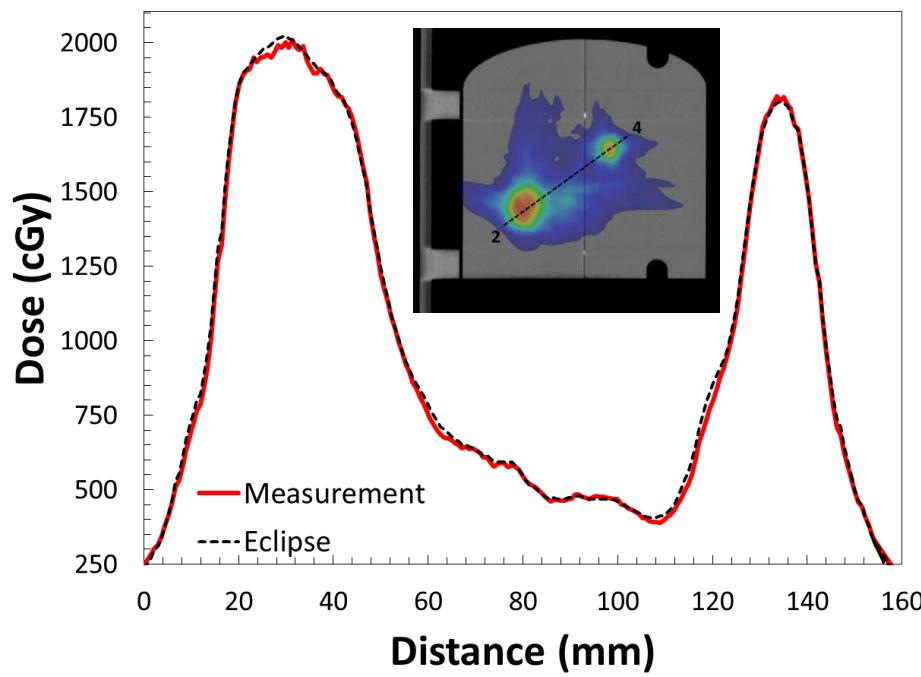
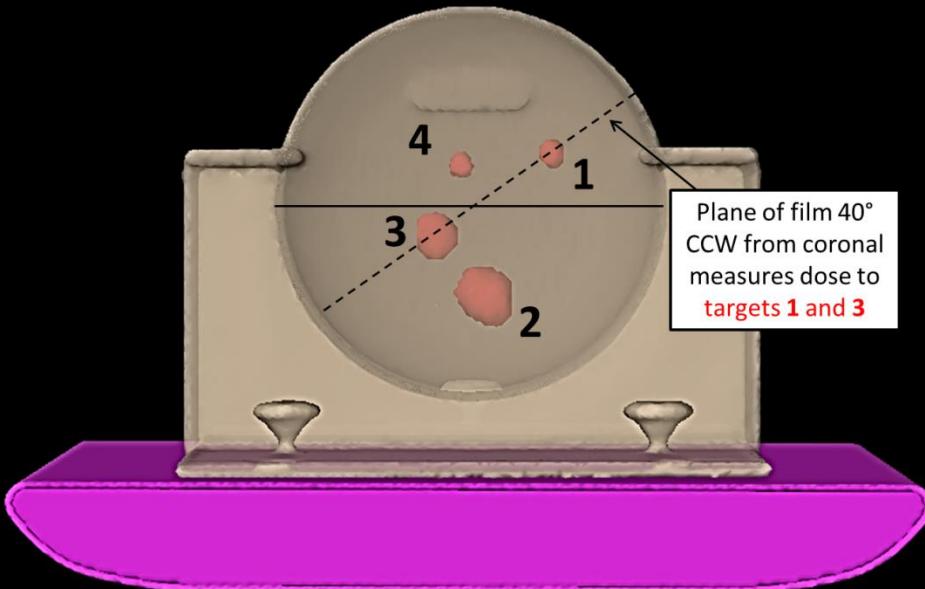


Resultant Dose Distribution in
Coronal Plane

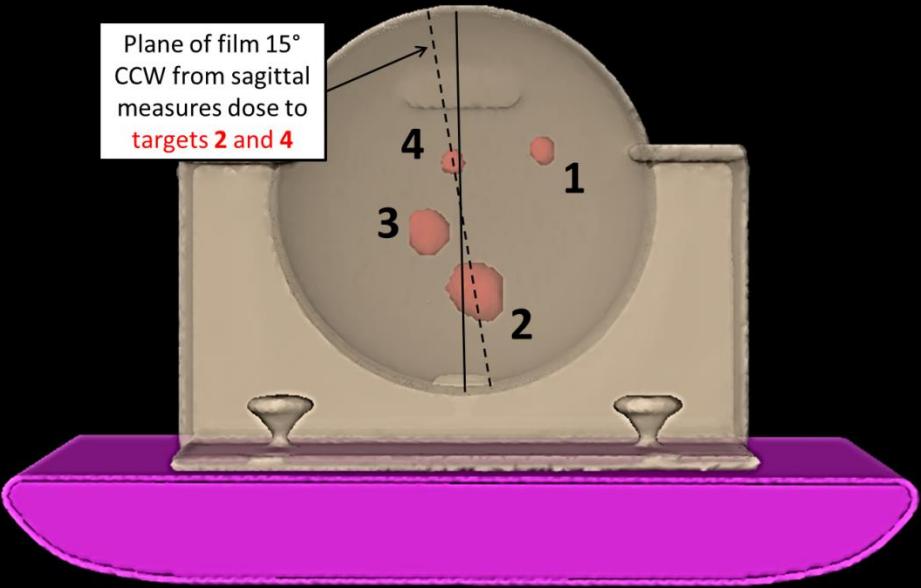
Plane of film 15°
CCW from sagittal
measures dose to
targets 2 and 4



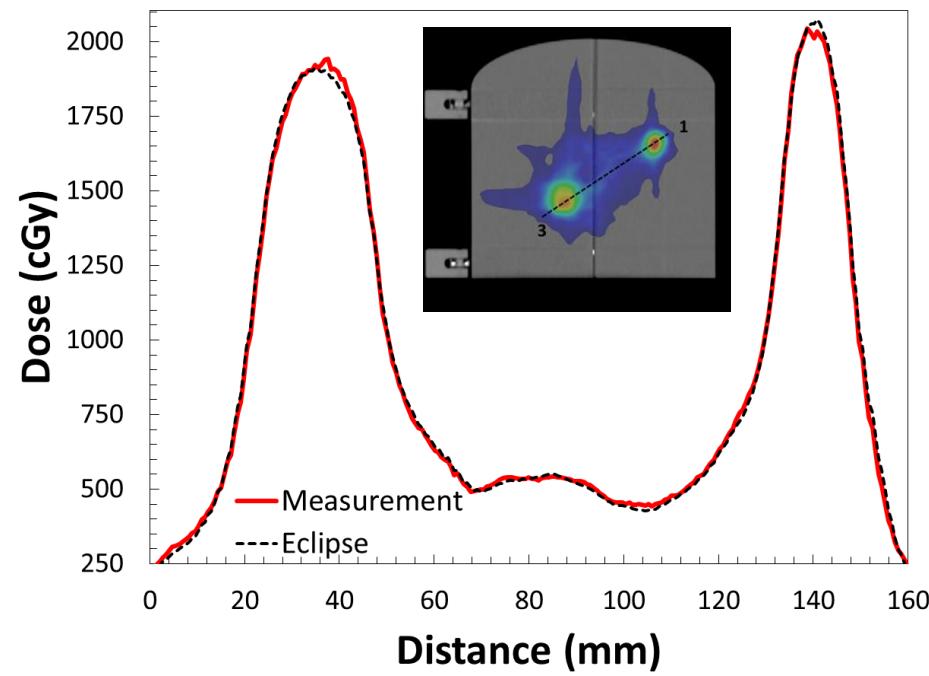
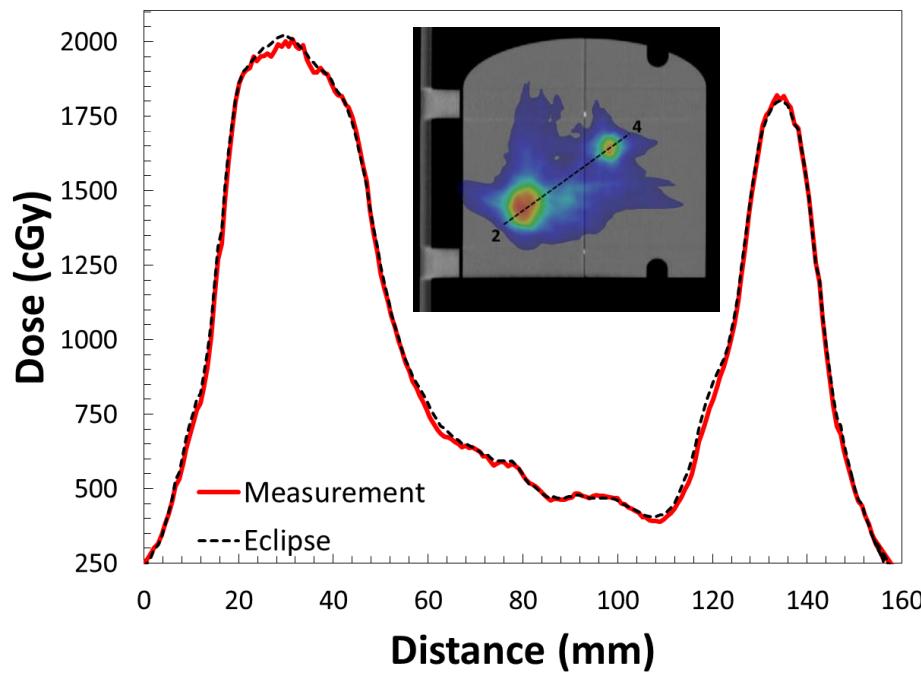
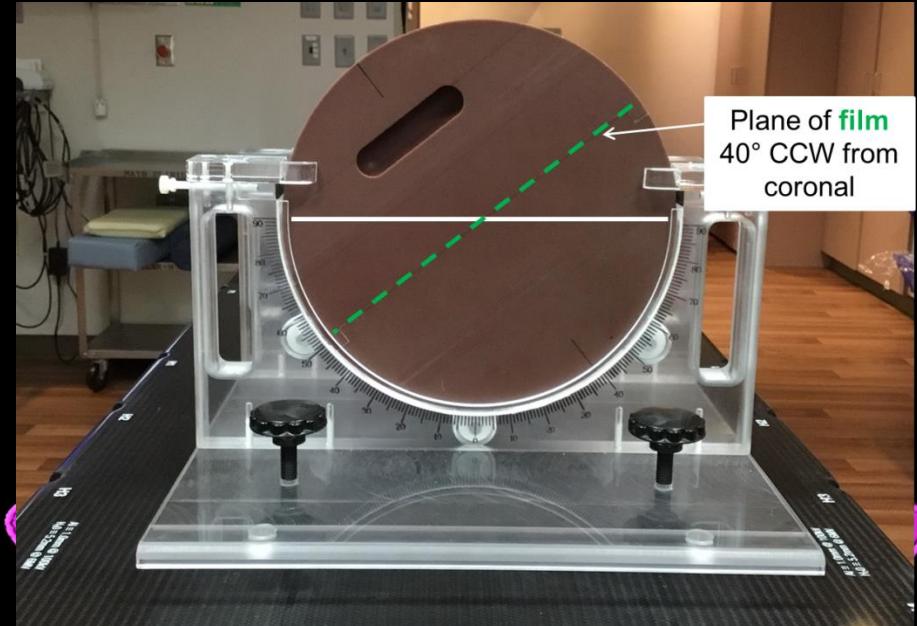
Plane of film 40°
CCW from coronal
measures dose to
targets 1 and 3



Plane of film 15°
CCW from sagittal
measures dose to
targets 2 and 4

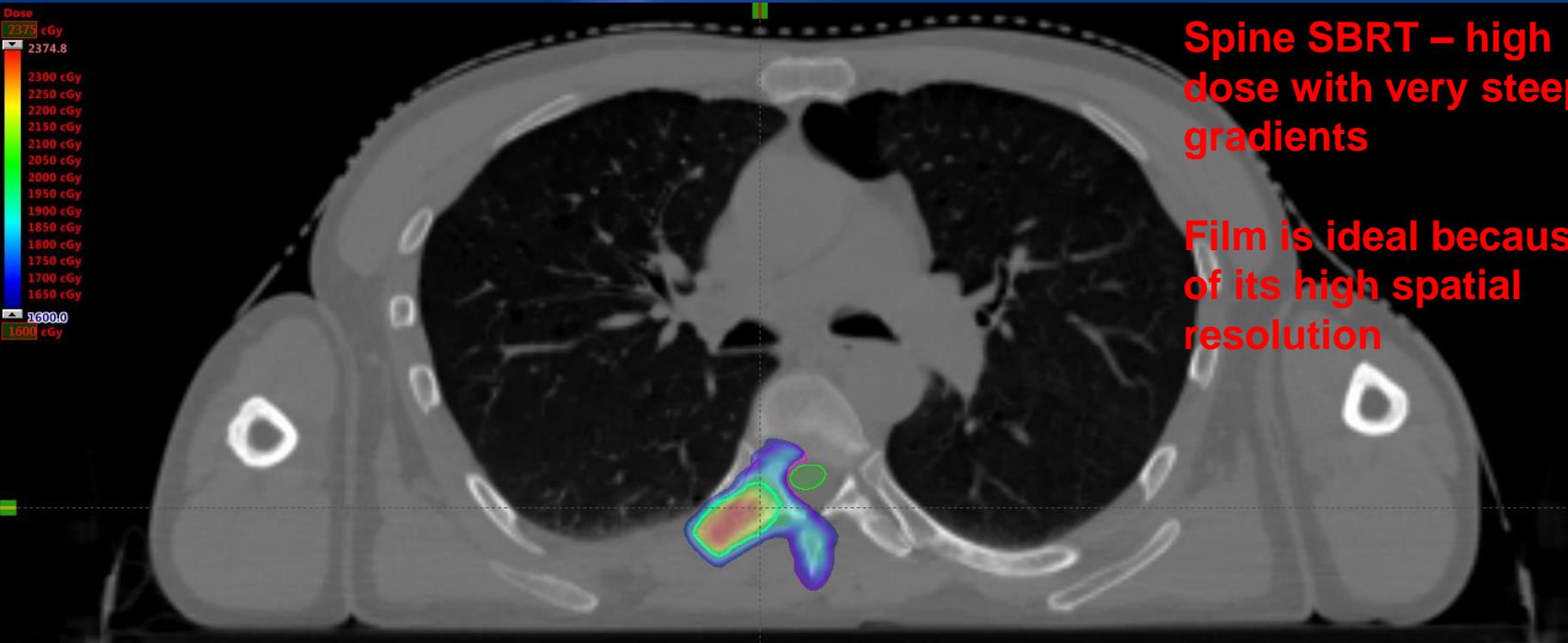


Plane of **film**
40° CCW from
coronal

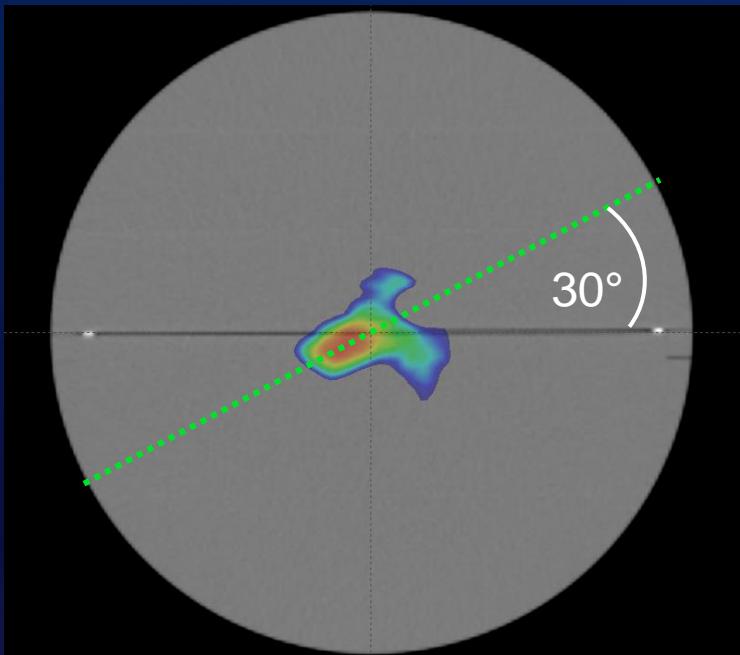


Spine SBRT – high dose with very steep gradients

Film is ideal because of its high spatial resolution



Want to measure in this rotated plane in order to catch the high dose PTV, low dose PTV, and the cord all in one measurement



Patient

Id

Site

none

Facility

N/A

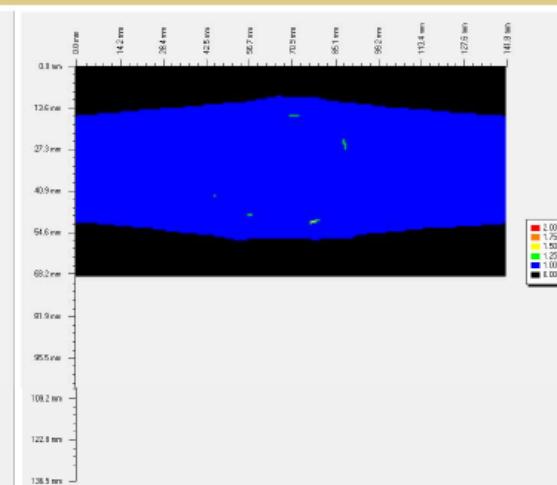
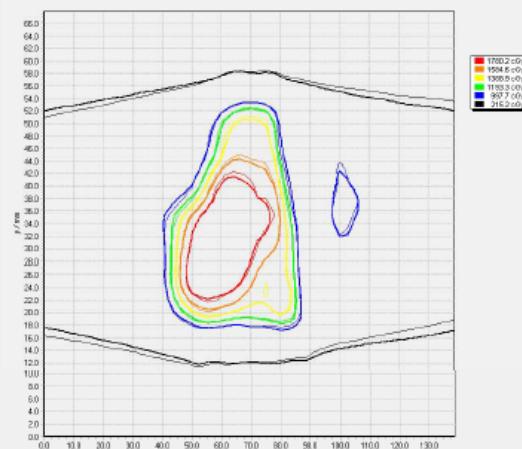
Plan

T7

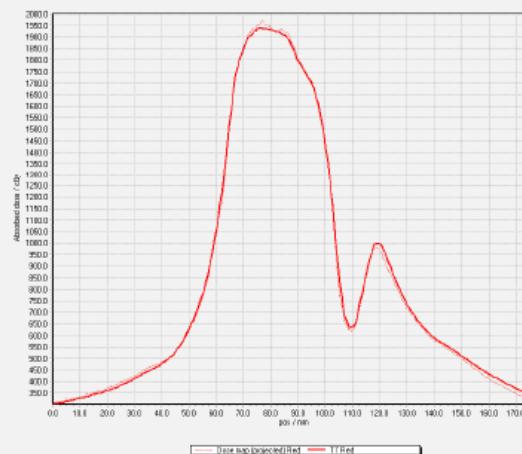
Physician

Grams, Michael Ph.D.

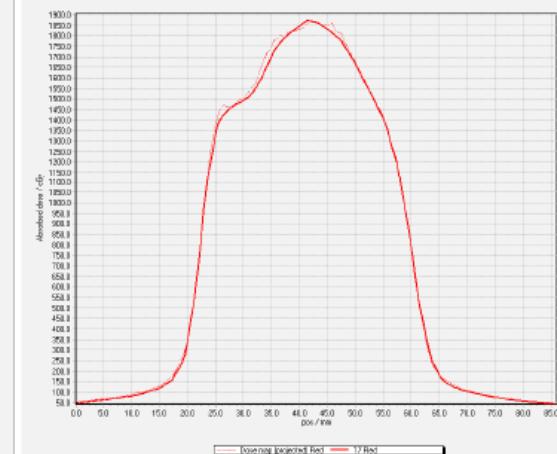
Charts: 'Gemma' map



isodose R



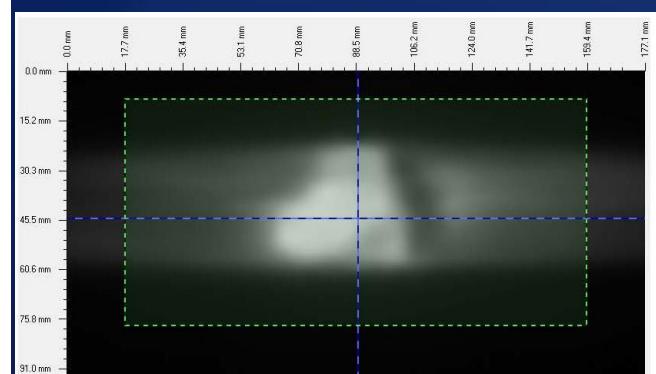
isodose R



horizontal profile R

vertical profile R

IMRT QA Report



	Gemma
Criterion	2.0 %, 2.0 mm

	Differential Delta
	2.0 %

	Distance to agreement
	2.0 %, 2.0 mm

|--|--|

	Passing rate R
	99.9 %

	Passing rate R
	81.9 %

	Failing rates R
	-0.1,+0.1 %

	Failing rates R
	-10.2,+7.9 %

	Mean R
	34.9 %

	Mean R
	1.1 %

	Sd dev R
	18.4 %

	Sd dev R
	1.1 %

	Distance to agreement
--	-----------------------

|--|--|

	Passing rate R
--	----------------

	Passing rate R
--	----------------

	Failing rates R
--	-----------------

	Failing rates R
--	-----------------

	Mean R
--	--------

	Mean R
--	--------

	Sd dev R
--	----------

	Sd dev R
--	----------

The One Scan Protocol

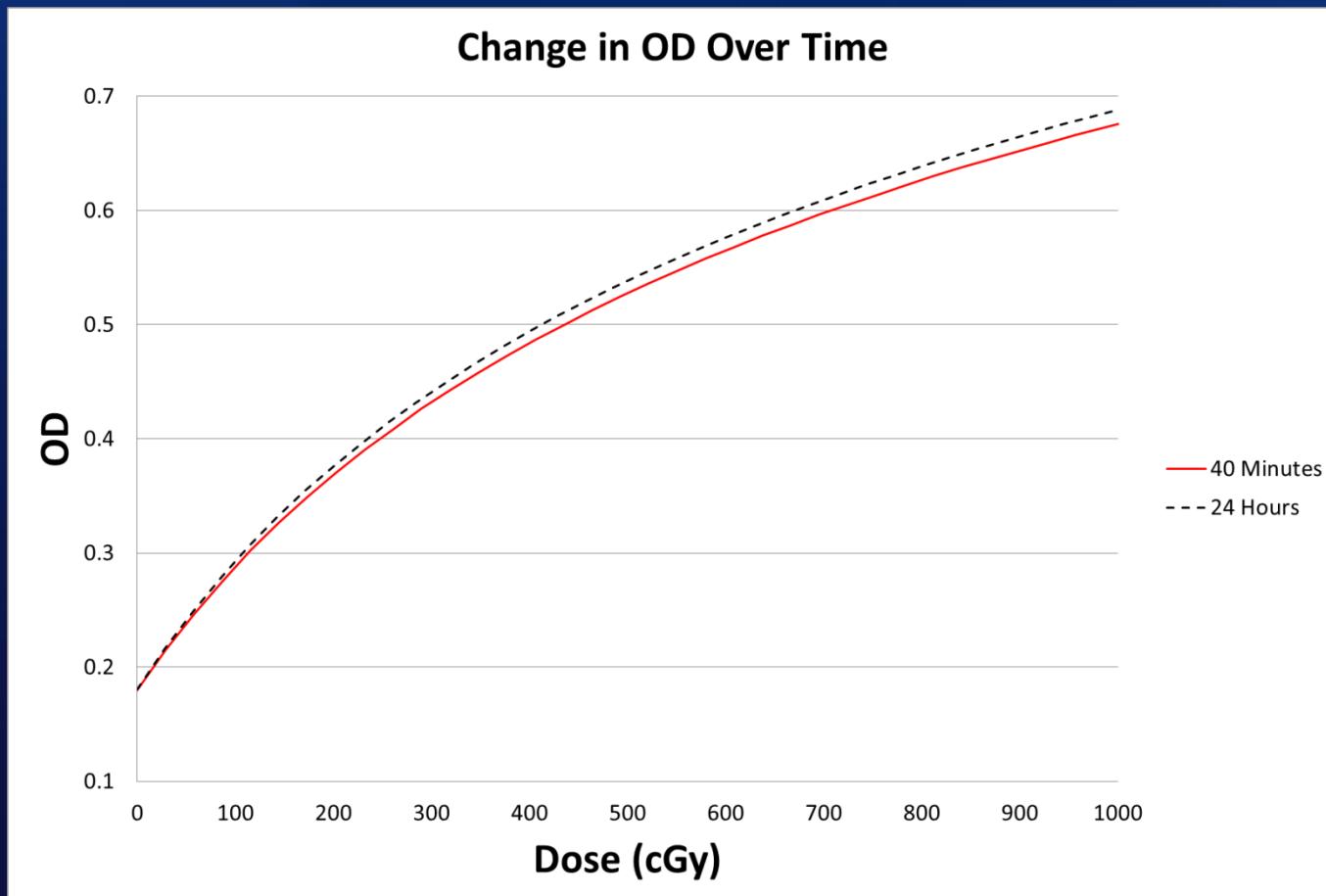
- FilmQA Pro has a really nice feature called the “one scan protocol” which speeds up the film process and also makes it more accurate
- We would never have been able to adopt film in our clinic without it
- You scan a reference strip, an unexposed piece of film, and the measurement film all at the same time
- Scanning all at the same time removes scan to scan variability

The One Scan Protocol

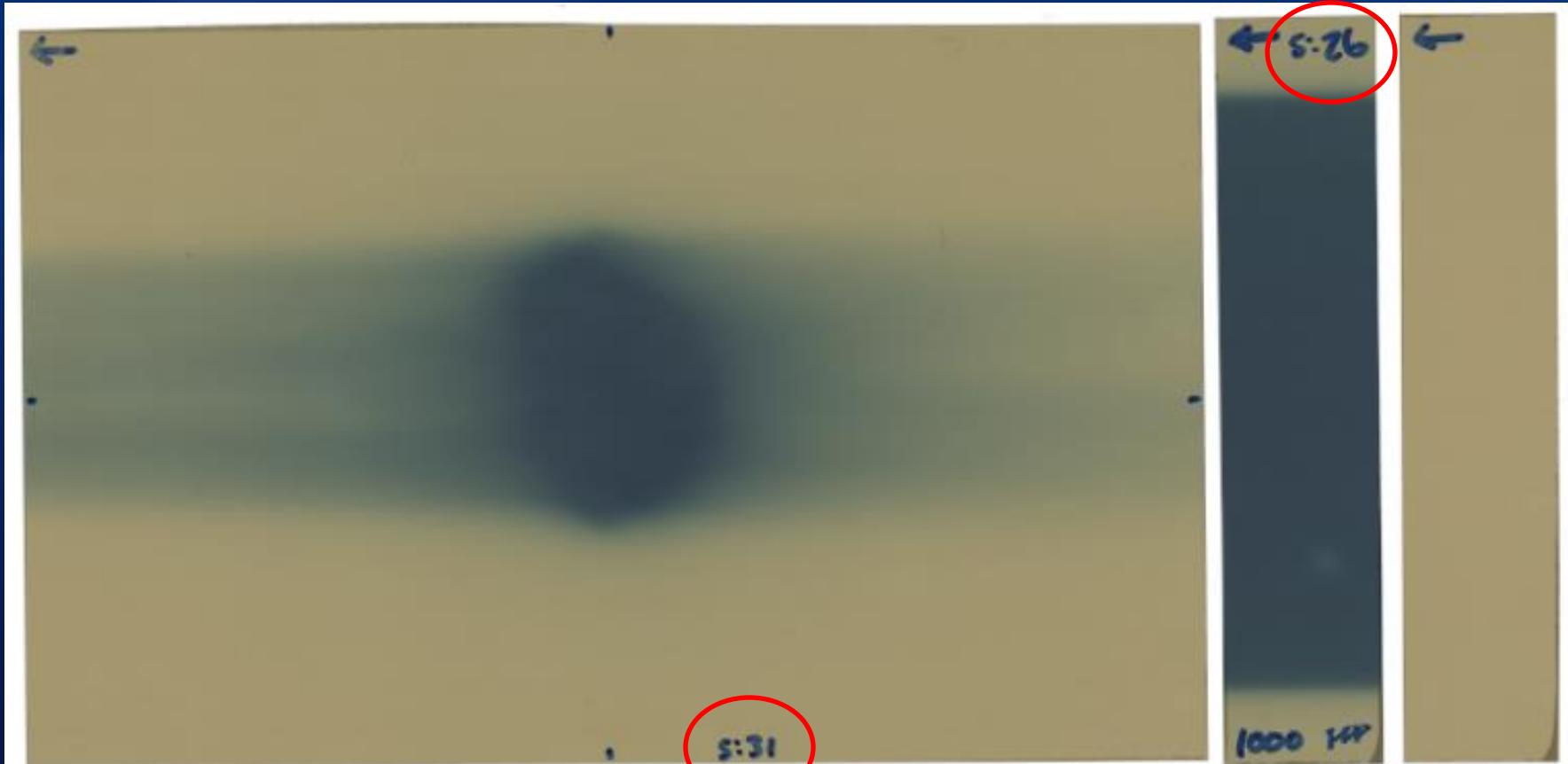
- At some point either before or after your measurement, a 2nd film must be exposed to a known dose ~80-90% of the maximum dose you expect to measure
- If a time Δt elapses between exposure of the measurement film and the reference strip, you need to wait $4\Delta t$ before scanning and analyzing.

Why do you need the reference strip?

- The purpose of the reference strip is to “re-scale” the calibration curve and speed up the analysis process



1000 cGy
Reference
exposed at
5:26 pm



Patient specific QA film exposed at 5:31 pm

Unexposed
Film

$4\Delta t = 20$ minutes, should wait until
at least 5:51 pm to scan...

 Report

 [REDACTED]...Rochester.2016-12-12.Case

6/19/2017 5:56 PM

6/19/2017 5:55 PM



An efficient protocol for radiochromic film dosimetry combining calibration and measurement in a single scan

David Lewis, Andre Micke, and Xiang Yu

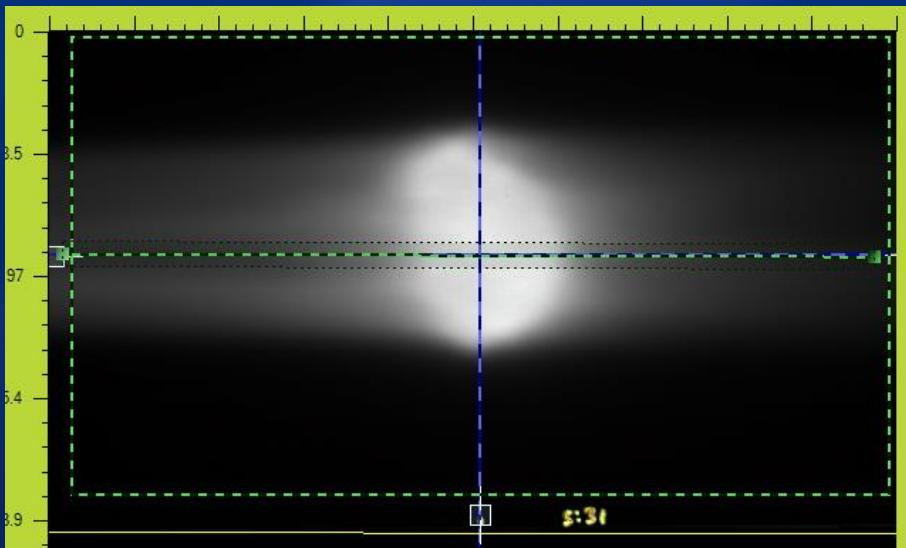
Advanced Materials Group, Ashland Inc., 1361 Alps Road, Wayne, New Jersey 07470

Maria F. Chan^{a)}

Department of Medical Physics, Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, 136 Mountain View Boulevard, Basking Ridge, New Jersey 07920

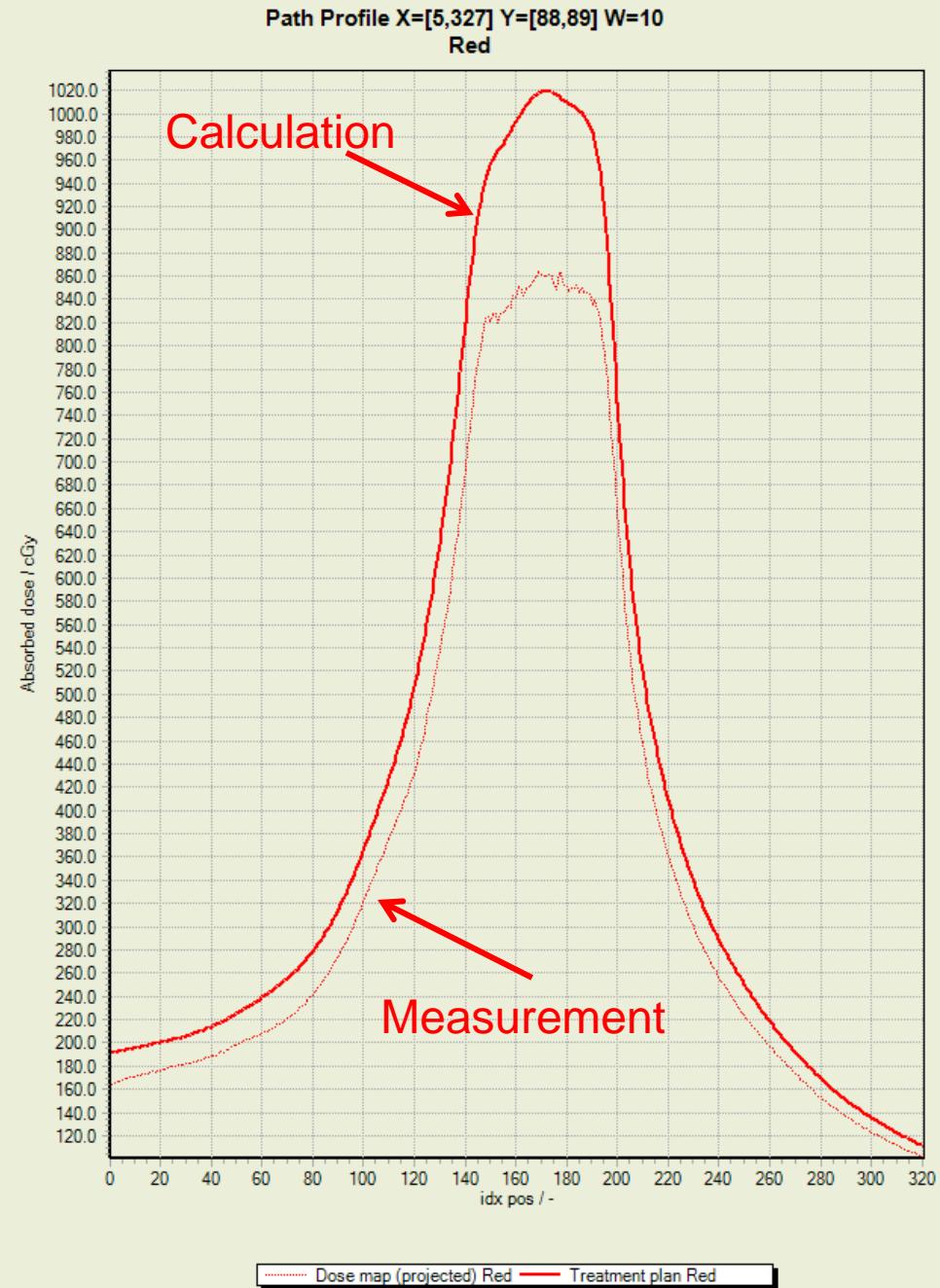
6339 Med. Phys. 39 (10), October 2012

But does it work?

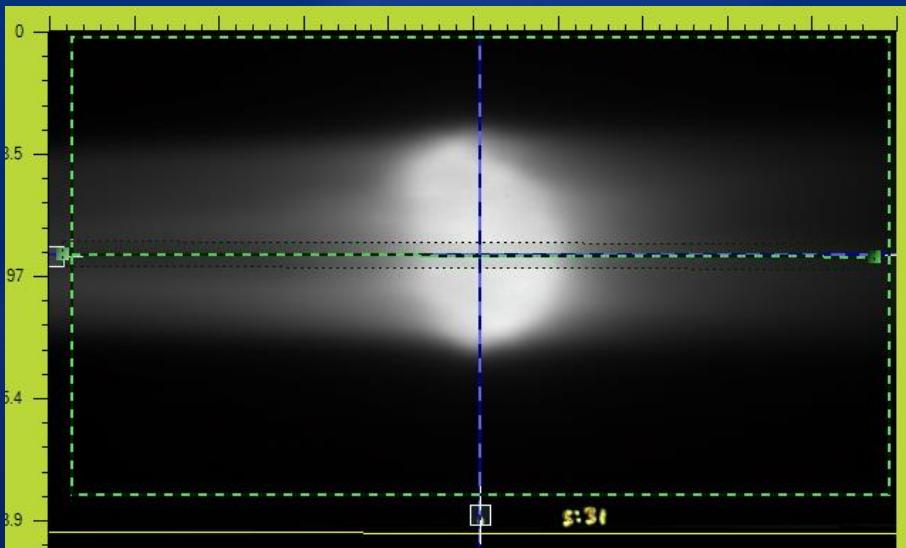


Scan 24 minutes after exposure
WITHOUT dose-rescaling

2%/2mm gamma = 57.06%

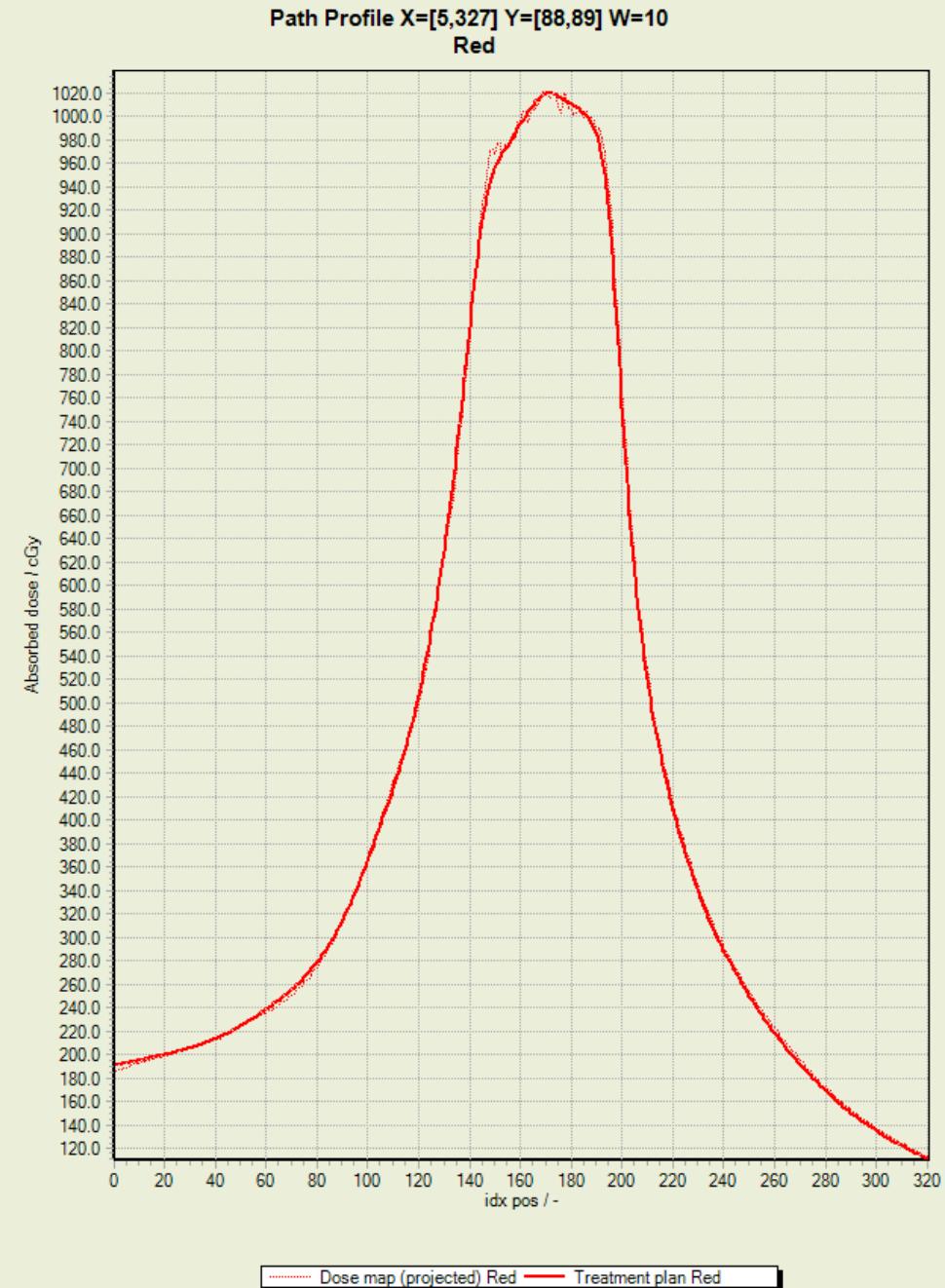


But does it work?



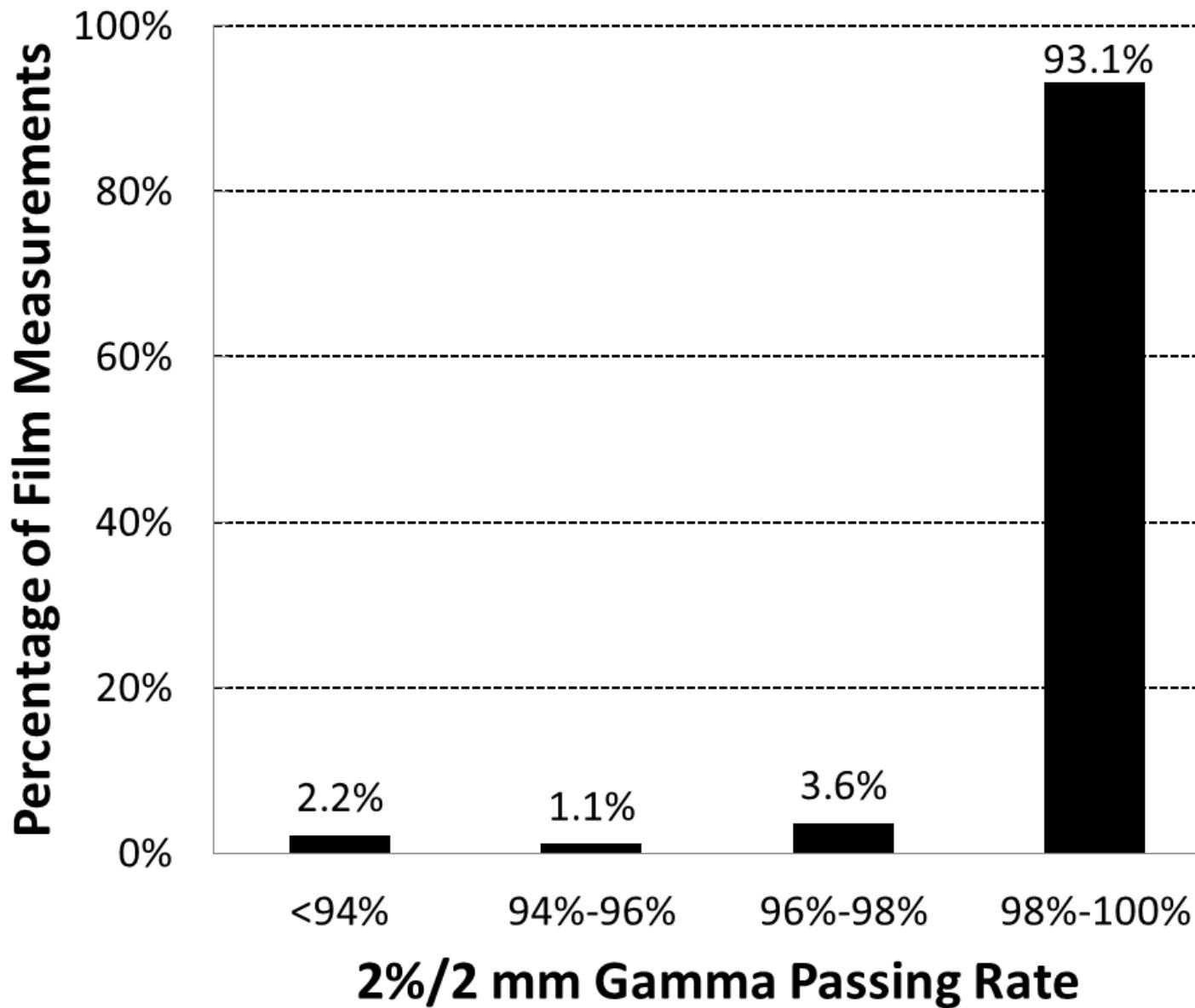
Scan 24 minutes after exposure
WITH dose-rescaling

2%/2mm gamma = 99.95%



How well does the entire process work?

- In 2016, we made 276 IMRT QA measurements using the Fong phantom and FilmQA Pro software
- EBT3 used for doses <10 Gy, EBT-XD otherwise
- We use a 2% (global)/2 mm gamma criteria
 - Avg gamma = 99.3%
 - 72 of 276 measurements were rotated
 - Avg gamma = 99.4%



Summary

- Get a good calibration and ensure its accuracy over your intended dose range
 - Use simple fields to deliver known doses and check
 - If you don't get good accuracy for the simplest cases, stop and figure out why
- Always keep the films flat on the scanner
 - Use a glass sheet to push them flat
- Always keep the films centered on the scanner
- Establish your working procedure and stick to it
 - No shortcuts or deviations!

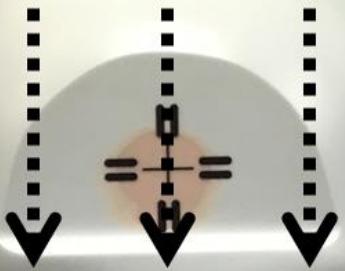
Thank you!

Questions?



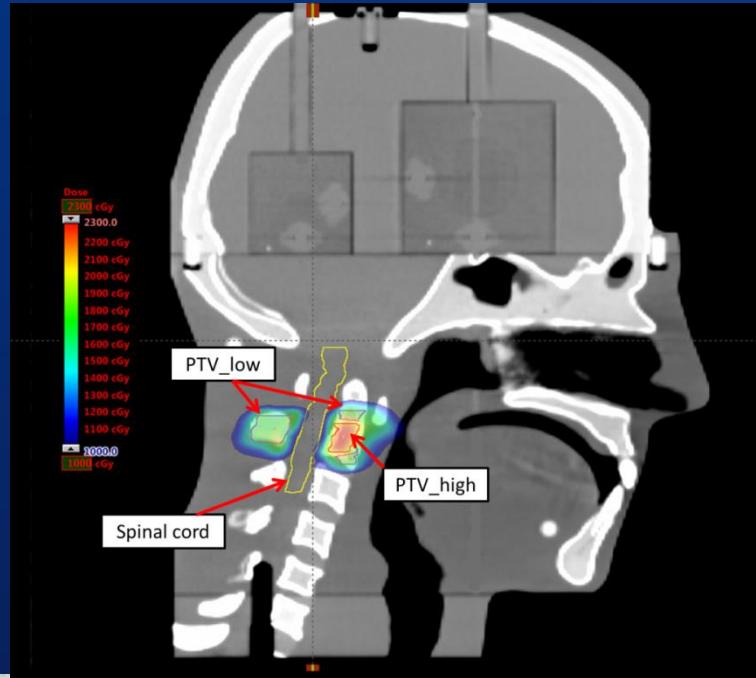
What have we used film for?

Sagittal Planes for Film

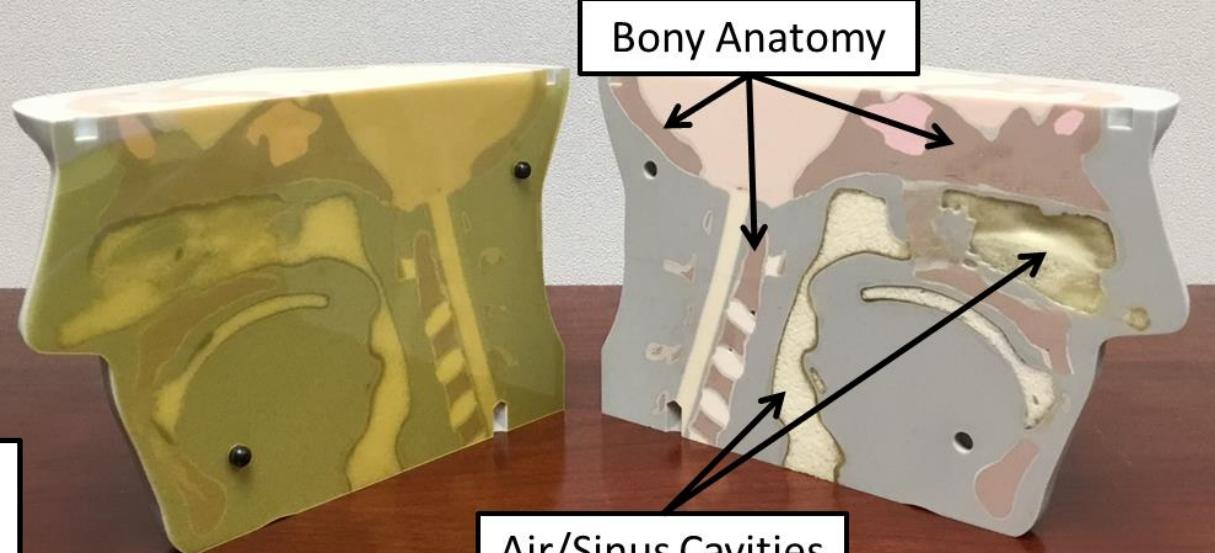


MAX-HD Phantom from IMT

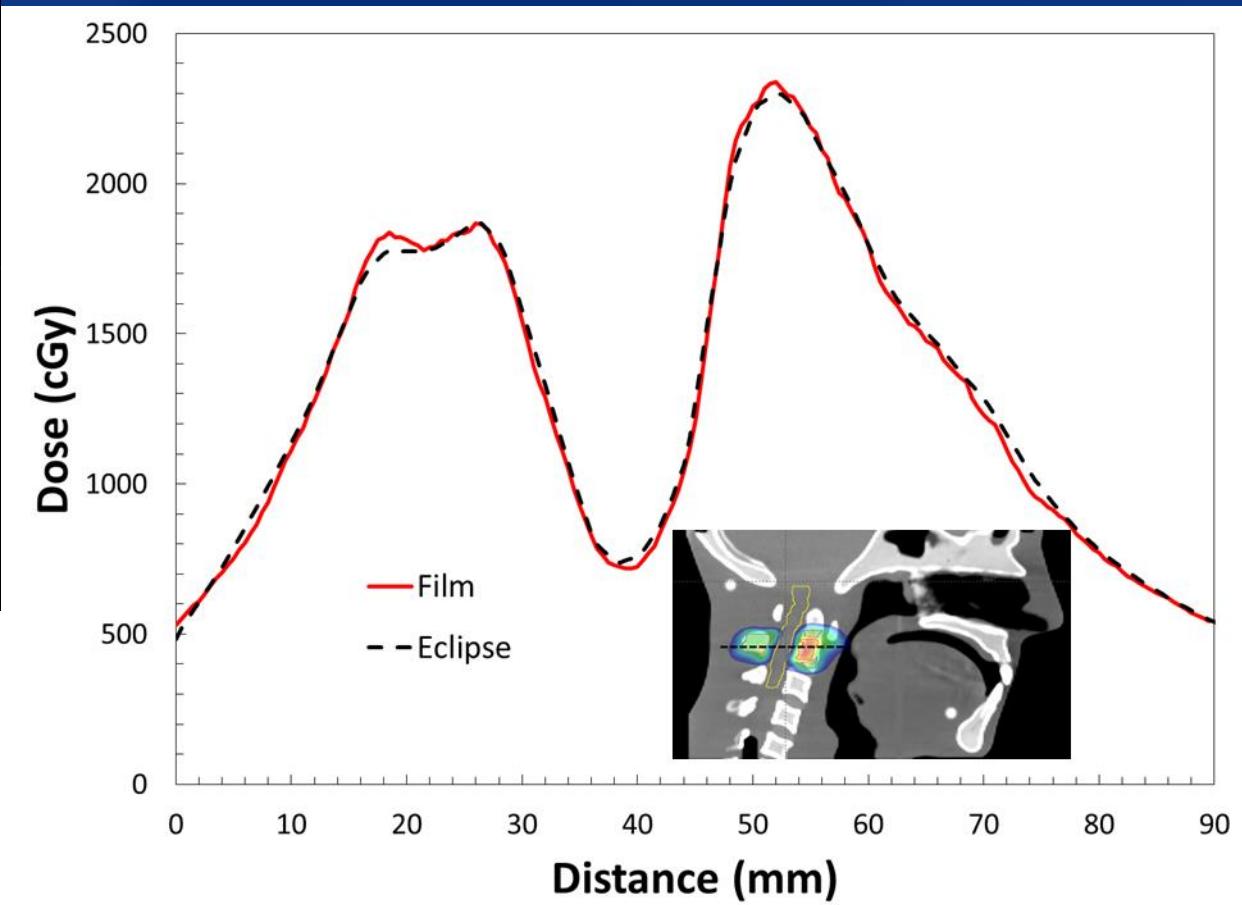
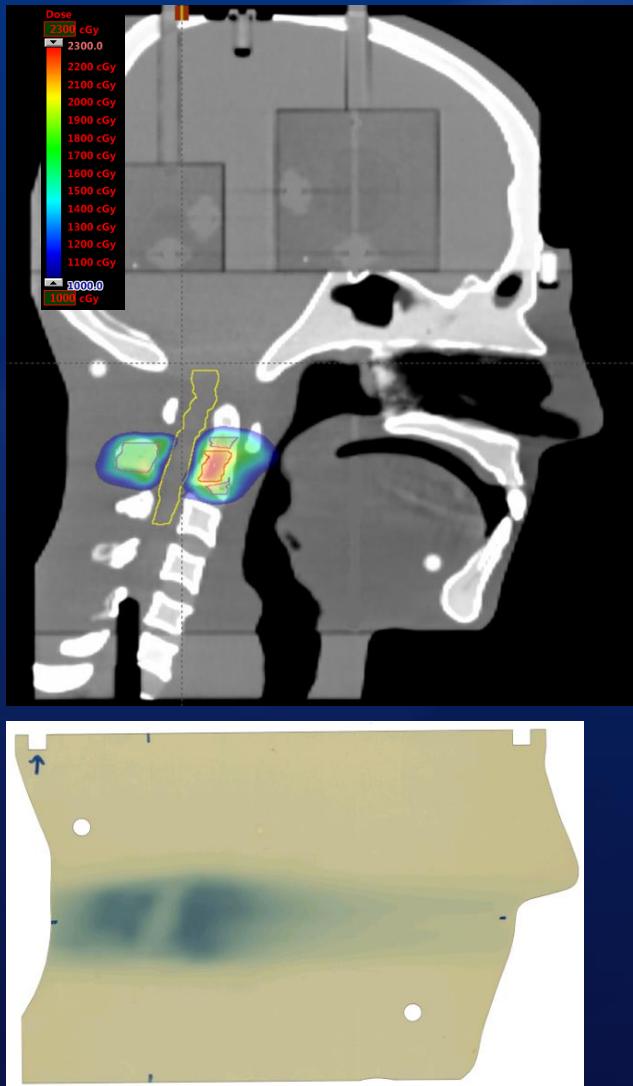
10FFF Commissioning
(E2E testing)

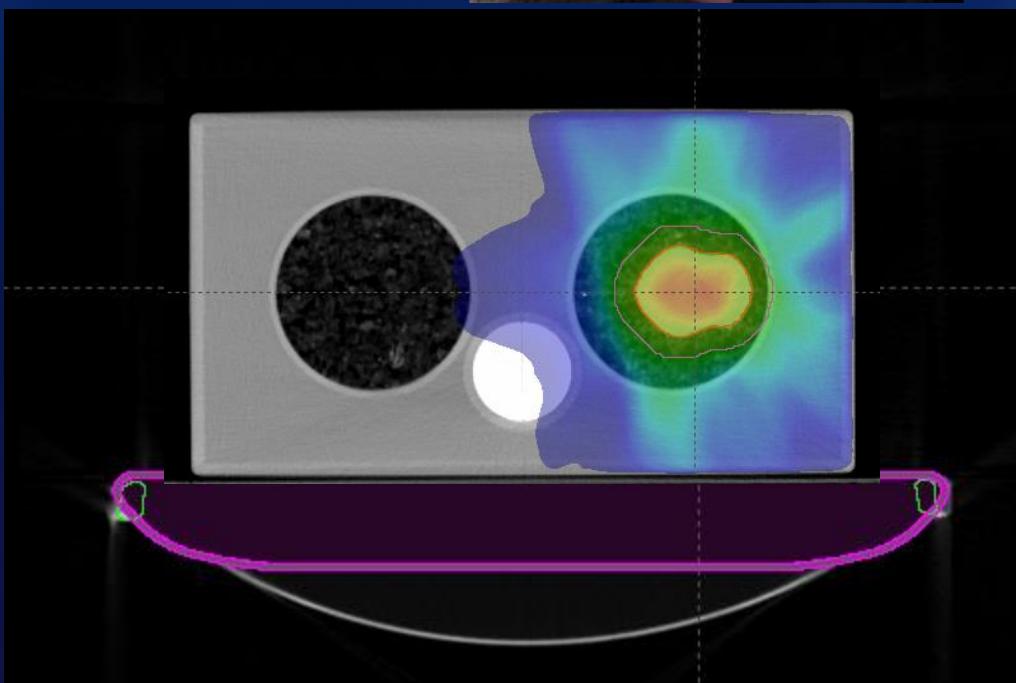


Bony Anatomy



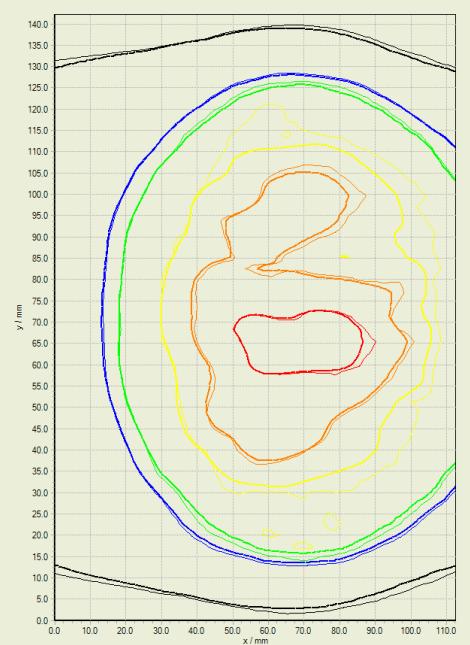
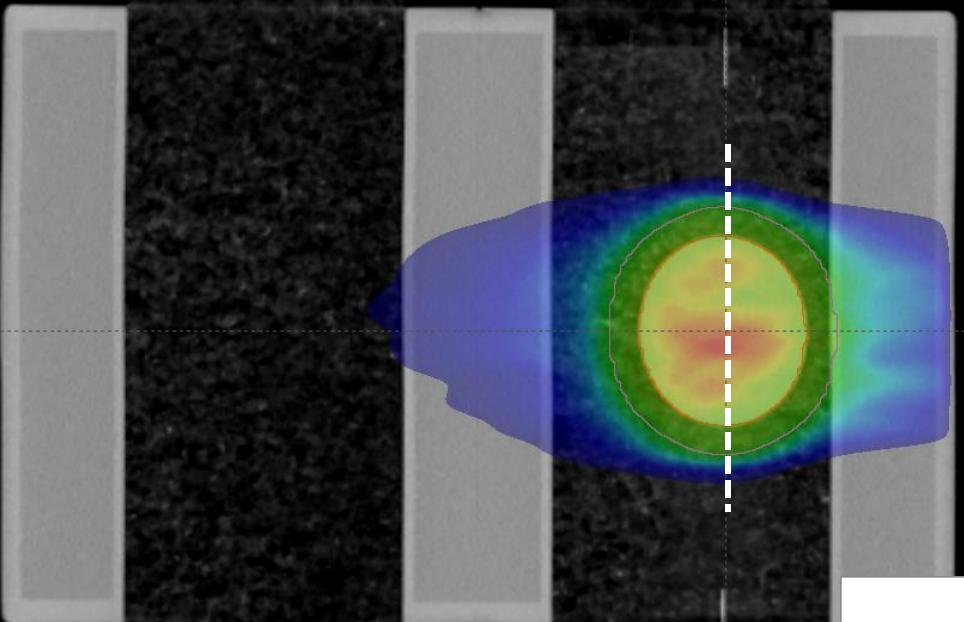
Air/Sinus Cavities



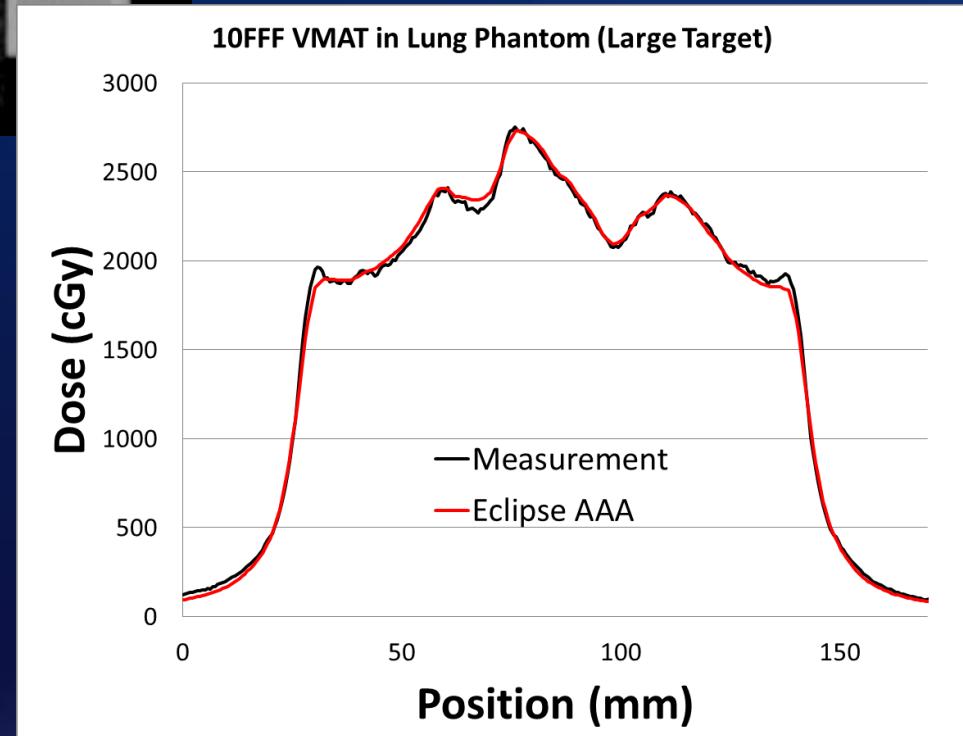


10FFF
Commissioning

Comparisons of
AAA and
Acuros in “lung”

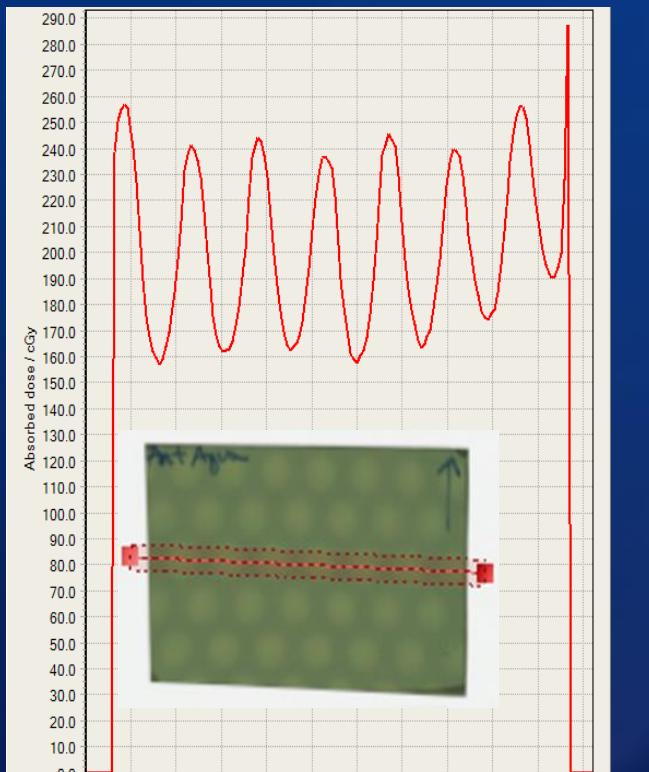
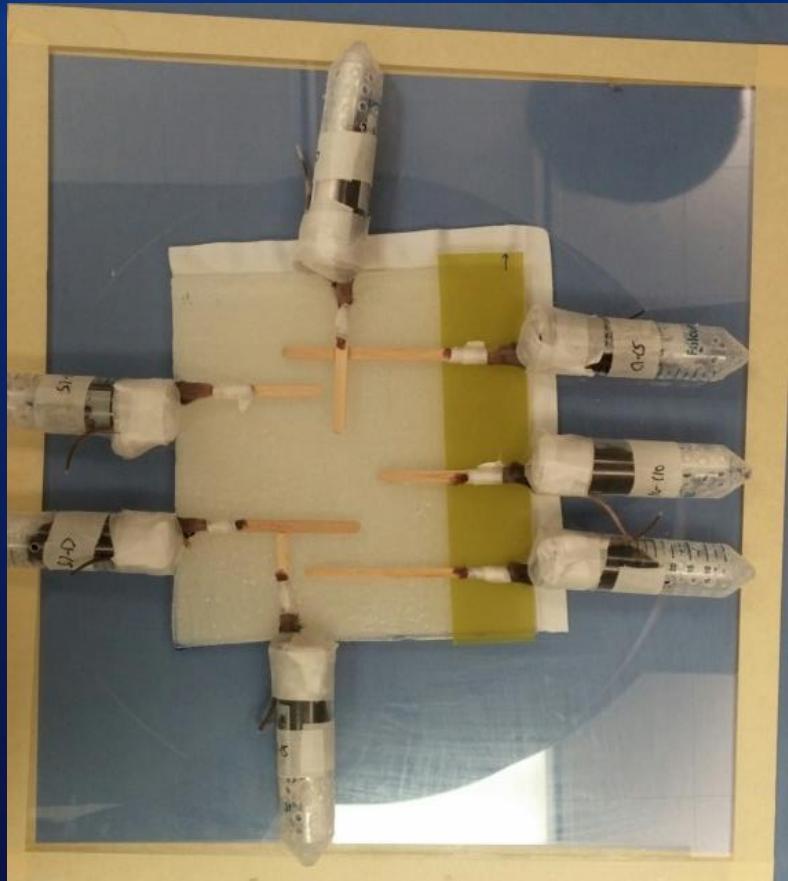


99% gamma passing
rate at 2%/2mm



Surface dose measurements under masks

Small animal irradiation



The scanner

- The scanner is the weakest link in the film dosimetry process, it will try to mess you up every chance it gets!
- Don't let the scanner software alter the scanned images
- Do turn all color corrections, sharpening, etc. off
- Don't turn the scanner off.
- Do always leave the scanner on and warm up the lamp with several preview scans

