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Chapter 1

Electric characterization

1.1 Electric scheme and description

Development of electric scheme used to build Plasma Coagulation Controller is highly influenced by the need of flexibility in output and mobility for wound treatment. To produce plasma as DBD, in air with Helium or Argon as ignition gasses, it is necessary to apply high electric fields in little space, while to permit easy medical application the design of the head must be compact with particular attention to electric safety measurements. It is common to produce electric fields with fast voltage pulses for various uses, including jet or DBD plasma production ([11], [3], [2]), the scheme used in this study outputs a voltage pulse with an amplitude up to 10 kV and frequencies up to 60 kHz.

A representation of power and signal lines is in figure 1.1. The circuit is divided mainly in two parts : the controller, with alimentation and settings controls, and the head, where the discharge happens and plasma is emitted.

The line divides in:

- **Alimentation** : the 220 V DC power line goes in a transformer that gives a 22 V tension to the head, passing through a diode bridge. This tension alimnts the Driver Circuit on the head.
- **Arduino and trigger** : the power line is reduced to 12 V necessities to aliment an Arduino controller and a laser. From an analogical output of the Arduino a PWM wave goes to the laser trigger, it transmits information on the wave, frequency and duration, with an optical fiber that ends with a photodiode installed on the driver circuit. Wave frequency is setted by the Arduino, wave duration is setted giving the opening time of the MOSFET that passes the signal to be amplified and sent to the head's transformer. With this setup the high-voltage line is entirely decopuled from the controller, so there are not problems of signal reflection on the power line or the Arduino.
- **Head** : the Driver Circuit receives a power line of 22 V and an optical trigger that defines frequency and duration of the voltage pulse. When the trigger gives the start

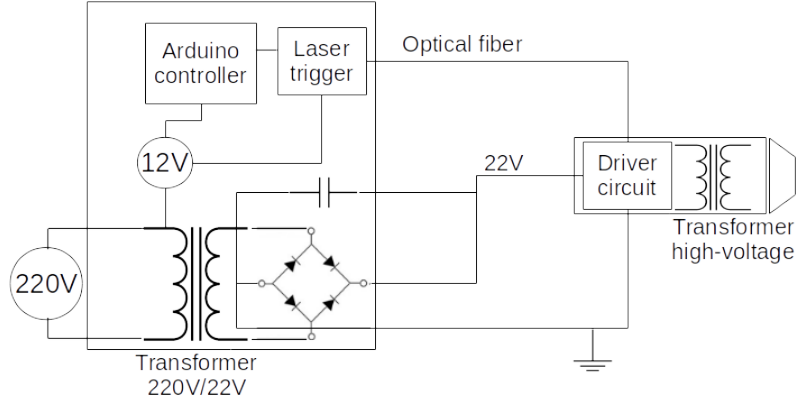


Figure 1.1: Scheme of the general electric line to produce high voltage, the controller on the left and the head on the right.

signal, the transformer on the head receives on primary circuit a voltage of hundreds V and outputs from secondary circuit a voltage of thousands V. Connected to the output there is the electrode inside a capillary tube of dielectric material.

To understand signal propagation is presented a simulation in figure 1.2, obtained with a simplified scheme with Spice. As shown, once the PWM trigger starts, tension on the primary goes from alimentation value to 0, when the PWM signal ends (after $6\mu\text{s}$, it has a pulse with amplitude of 150 V (width of $1.2\mu\text{s}$) and a pulse of -5000 V at the output of secondary circuit. A longer PWM implies a longer charging time, so an higher pulse. Ultimately, amplitude of the pulse is proportional to the width of the PWM signal and to know working conditions of the source it is necessary to study the relation between opening time and amplitude output on the actual circuit.

During this thesis study were built two sources, with two controllers and heads, the first one will be called source A, the second one source B. From an electrical perspective the two models are almost identical, the second one comes with a low-pass filter on the driver circuit (to diminish high frequencies noise) and higher amplitude capabilities thanks to a different turns ratio of head's transformer. The characterization of electric features is made measuring output tension and current with different settings for the pulse.

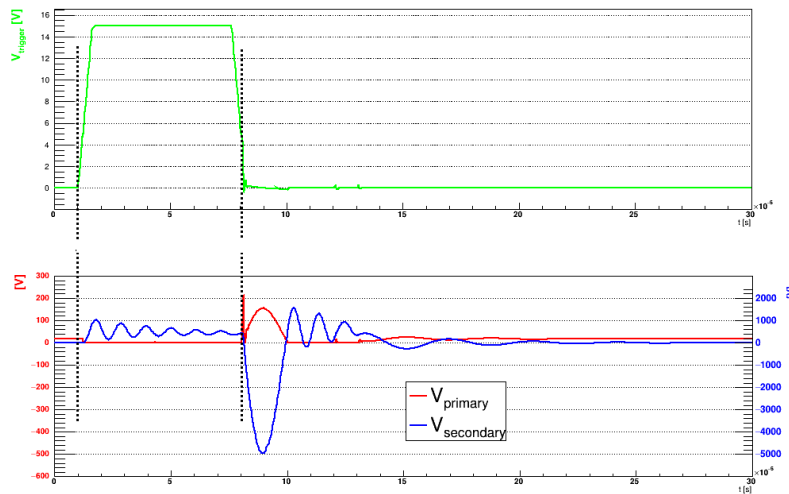


Figure 1.2: Scheme of signal propagation. Up, in green, there is the optical trigger, down, in red, the voltage of primary circuit in the head with axis on the left, in blue, the voltage of secondary circuit with axis on right.

1.2 Output characterization

Plasma ignition and discharge features are regulated by electric field generated in the circuit head and power deposition to flowing gas, so the parameters involved are pulse amplitude and frequency arriving on the electrode, settable in the circuit. Medical application of plasma requires low current intensity, in this study it's measured the current flowing on a copper plate targeted by the plasma plume at a certain distance. Ultimately the different parameters for the measures are: Δt , opening time of the trigger that defines amplitude of the pulses, and f , frequency of the pulses.

Voltage signal are taken with an high-voltage probe, attenuation $\times 1000$, current signal with a *Tektronix CT2* probe that gives a 1 mV for a current of 1 mA. All signals are measured with a *Yokogawa DL9040* oscilloscope, from which is saved the waveform of voltage and current.

Measures are taken without gas flowing, to see the output voltage of the circuit, and with an helium flow of 2 L/min, to measure the actual output with different amplitude and frequencies. It's also measured an effective current intensity, i.e. a mean value in a time period, to evaluate plasma application's effects on biological tissues.

Every lenght measure is done with a decimal caliper, giving an uncertainty of 0.1 mm.

1.2.1 Measures without gas

It's used the hv probe to pick tension difference between secondary circuit output and ground. Once a work frequency, f , is set, we take voltage wave shape for different values of opening time of the circuit, Δt , in the selectable range. To assure that a voltage pulse ends before another starts, this range is different for different frequencies: higher work

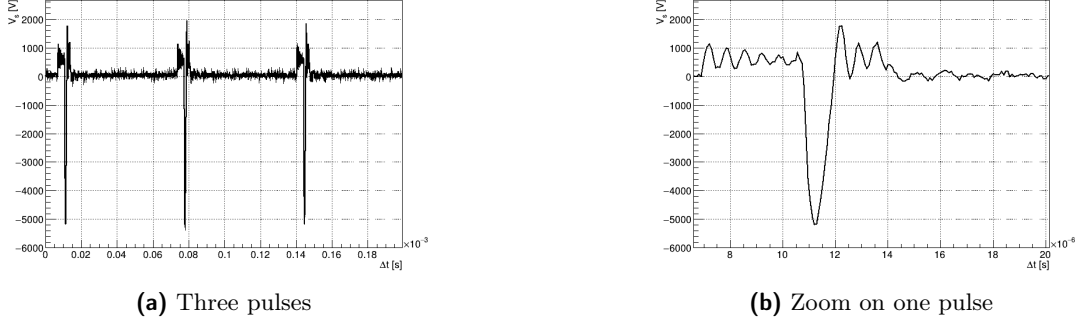


Figure 1.3: Example pulses with source B for $f = 10$ kHz and $\Delta t = 2$ μ s

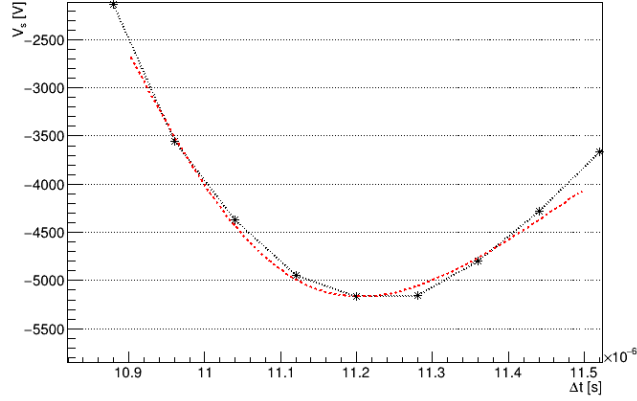
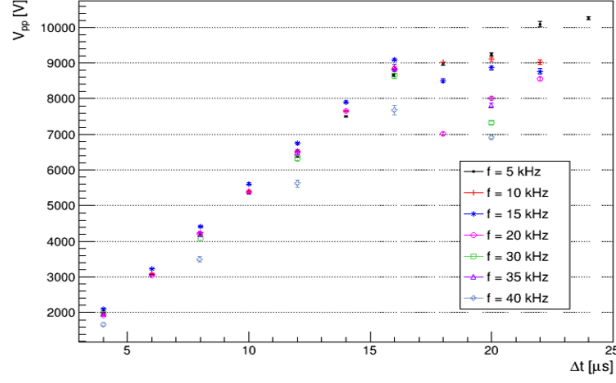


Figure 1.4: Example fit with source B for $f = 10$ kHz and $\Delta t = 2$ μ s

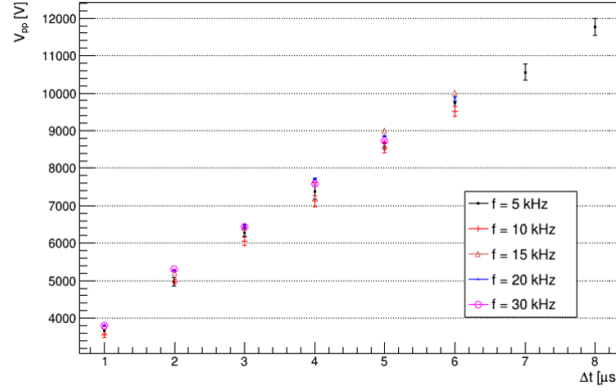
frequencies means more pulses in a given time, taking into consideration pulse oscillations time width, proportional to opening time, the range of possible Δt is smaller at higher frequencies. A typical obtained measure is shown in figure 1.3.

The main purpose of the measures is to study proportionality between amplitude of the peak and opening time, for different frequencies. Those signals are analyzed evaluating their Fourier Transform (using ROOT C++ libraries [7]) and reconstructing the signal without higher frequencies, to exclude noise fluctuations. The reconstructed peak is an asymmetric function as in figure 1.4, it's possible to interpolate it with a Landau function [1] and obtain peak value and position. The error from the fit function is added quadratically to the error given by the cut of high Fourier frequencies, evaluated as the square root of the mean square error between reconstructed and original signal for every point included in the fit range.

Results are shown in figure 1.5 for the two sources. In source A we can see a linear behavior for $4 \leq \Delta t \leq 16$ μ s, with tensions from 2.02 ± 0.01 to 9.25 ± 0.05 kV; for greater Δt data loses linearity. The upper limit on chosen Δt is given by the need of



(a) Source A



(b) Source B

Figure 1.5: Absolute peak's value of secondary circuit in function of Δt at different f , for both sources.

a minimum time interval between two pulses. Also in source B we can see a linear behavior, but tension values are larger: for $1 \leq \Delta t \leq 8 \mu s$ tension goes from 3.66 ± 0.06 to 11.76 ± 0.22 kV. With this source the upper limit for Δt is given by voltage output, measures are taken only for tension needed to have plasma in a DBD regimen, higher opening times would only stress more circuit components. Both sources have near the same output for different frequencies, to confirm it data are fitted with a linear function in the range $0 - 16 \mu s$ for source A and range $0 - 8 \mu s$ for B. Evaluated parameters are compared, as shown in figure 1.6. The values are displaced with random distances from the mean value, so it can be concluded that the behavior is not defined by the frequency.

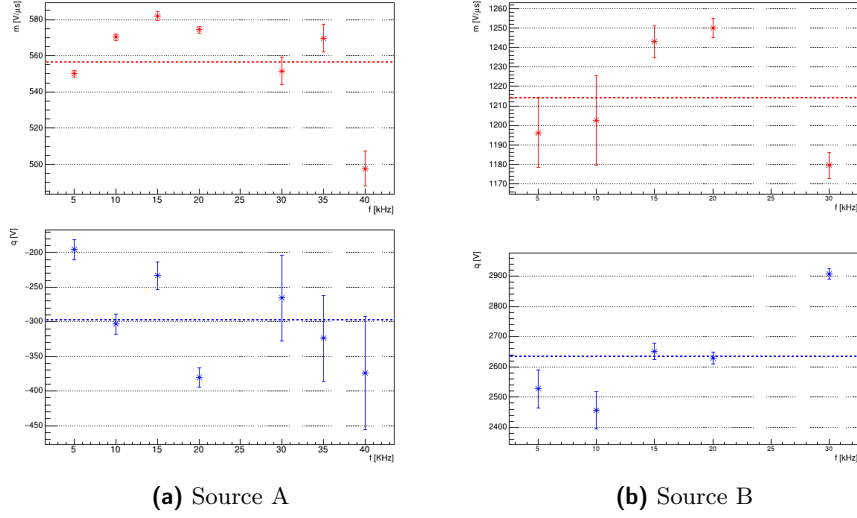


Figure 1.6: Voltage peak are fitted with a linear function $V_{peak} = m\Delta t + q$, in figure we see fit parameters at different frequencies for both sources, in dashes the mean value.

1.2.2 Measures with gas

Introduction of an helium flow at the end of the head will produce plasma ignition, tension will be different, and it will be possible to measure intensity of the current carried by plasma. To assure safety of plasma application, that cells aren't damaged by plasma, it must be avoided a large current intensity and arc formation. Studies of conditions for DBD discharges and arc transitions ([4], [8], [9]) suggests that maximum current values are in the order of of ten mA.

Current intensity is measured using a copper sheet with dimensions $10 \text{ mm} \times 10 \text{ mm} \times 1 \text{ mm}$. Plasma plume impacts on the sheet, the current probe is connected to it and send the signal to the oscilloscope, with cable shielding to lessen interferences. Current intensity and target distance relation is studied in[6], in this study the distance between target and electrode is chosen around typical value for treatments permitted by head's sources geometry: 10 mm for source A and 15 mm for source B (a bit longer due to electrode position in the head).

In figure 1.7 can be seen a typical measure for $\Delta t = 8 \mu\text{s}$ and $f = 5 \text{ kHz}$ with source B. For both sources there is a current peak in correspondence of voltage pulse that increase with tension, however for source B there are measures where the peak is so low that it is covered by noise.

Data analysis is done as before, cleaning measures from noise, estimating the peak and it's error. Results are shown in figures 1.8 and 1.9, measures where the current peak is not distinguishable are excluded from the plot.

Tension peaks are slightly lower then values without gas, as expected seeing the plume as an additional load at the end of the circuit ([5]), but the linear behavior for

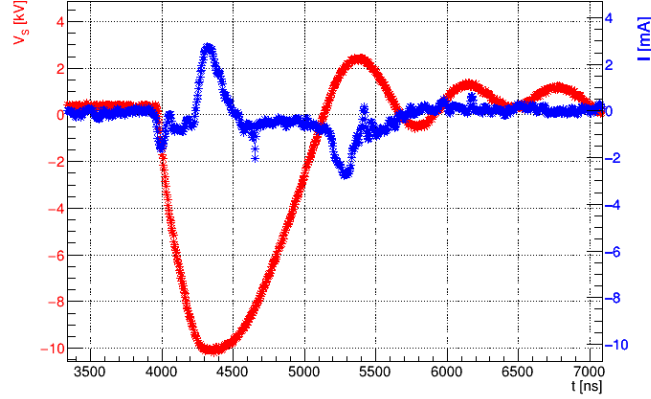


Figure 1.7: Example measure with source B for $f = 5 \text{ kHz}$ and $\Delta t = 8 \mu\text{s}$

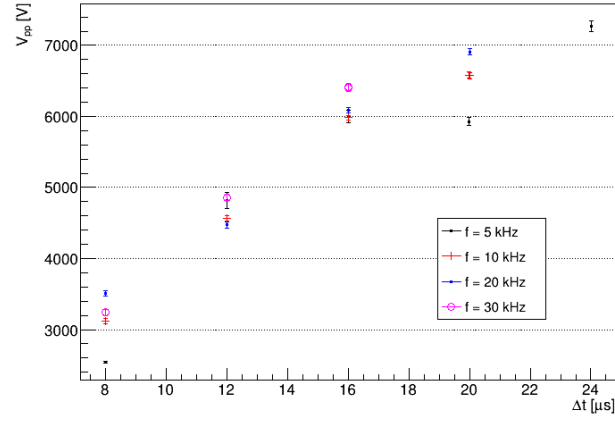
$V_{pp} \leq 10 \text{ kV}$ remains and we can compare linearity for different frequencies. Current intensities grows with tension and are higher for source A, but it can be explained by different distances electrode-target. Analysis of linearity also for those measures can show if there is a different behavior changing pulse frequency or source. Figures 1.10 and 1.11 shows results of the linearity study at different frequencies. Tension values, for both sources, are scattered around the mean value parameter, confirming independence of voltage growth from pulses frequencies. For source A we find a slope parameter $m_V = 0.366 \pm 0.001 \text{ kV}/\mu\text{s}$, for source B $m_V = 1.145 \pm 0.008 \text{ kV}/\mu\text{s}$, larger due to the different circuit, as mentioned before and as can be seen from figures. Current values shows a different behavior: in source A we find a steady increase of parameters with higher frequencies, in source B data are more scattered and we couldn't extrapolate a behavior. However current slope is in the same range of values for the sources, with a maximum for source A of $m_I = 1.10 \pm 0.01 \text{ mA}/\mu\text{s}$ and for source B of $m_I = 1.04 \pm 0.17 \text{ mA}/\mu\text{s}$. Due to low signal to noise ratio in measures for source B, it is not possible to esclude a relation between current slope (how much current intensity grows increasing opening time) and pulse frequency, however it is established a maximum limit value to take into consideration when using the device.

1.2.3 Plasma impedance

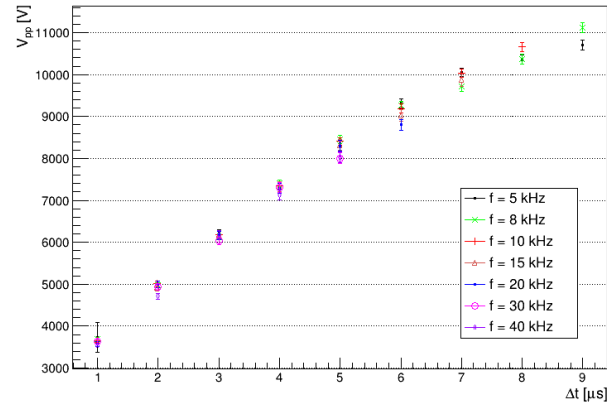
From tension and current measurements we can define plasma's electric behavior, in this subsection are used source B measures to estimate plasma impedance. Tension output from secondary circuit of head's transformer can be modelized as a dumped sine wave around the peak, as in equation 1.1.

$$V_S = V_0 + V_{\text{pulse}} \sin(2\pi f_{V_s} t) e^{-t/\tau} \quad (1.1)$$

This formula gives an explicit parameter f_{V_s} that is an estimation of the frequency of the single pulse (the frequency that defines rise and fall of the pulse, different from

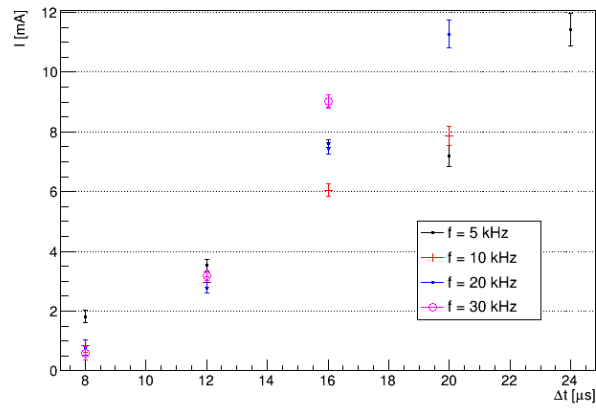


(a) Source A

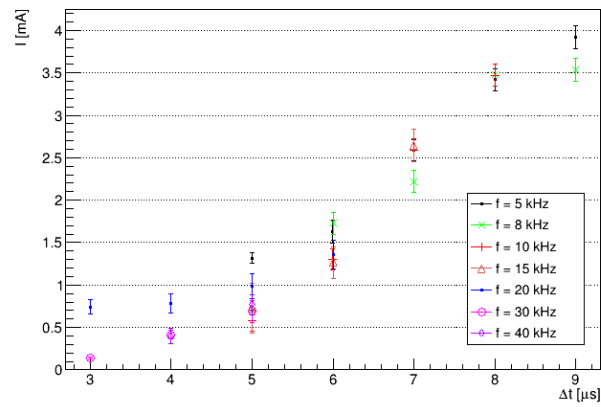


(b) Source B

Figure 1.8: Absolute peak's value of secondary circuit in function of Δt at different f , with an helium flux of 2 L/min, for both sources.



(a) Source A



(b) Source B

Figure 1.9: Absolute peak's value of current intensity on copper target with an helium flux of 2 L/min, in function of Δt at different f , for both sources.

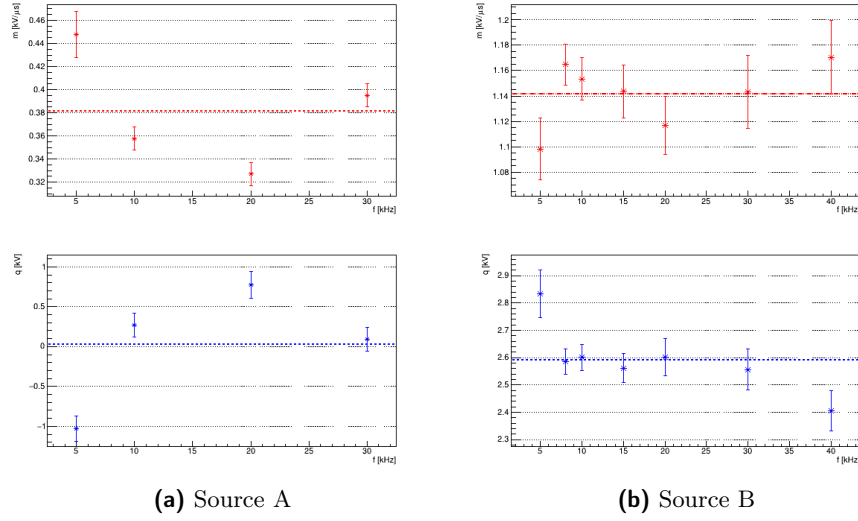


Figure 1.10: Voltage peak are fitted with a linear function $V_{peak} = m\Delta t + q$, in figure we see fit parameters at different frequencies for both sources, in dashes the mean value.

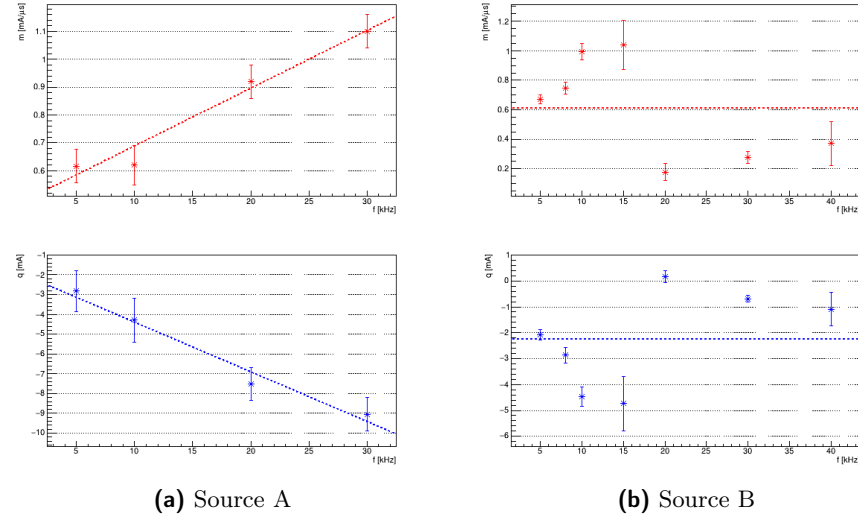


Figure 1.11: Current peak are fitted with a linear function $I_{peak} = m\Delta t + q$, in figure we see fit parameters at different frequencies for both sources. For source A we see in dashes a linear fit, for source B the mean value.

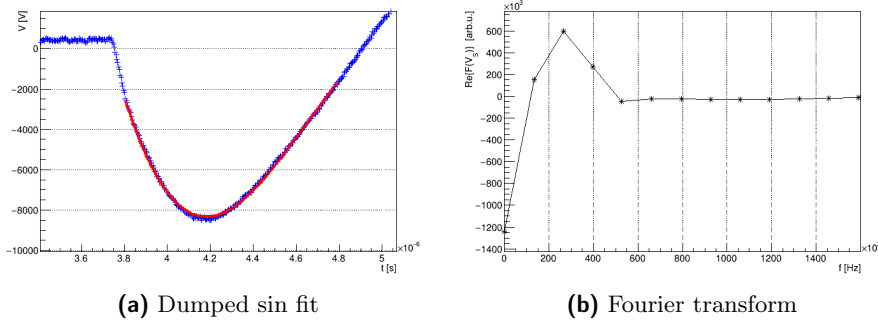


Figure 1.12: On the left example fit of a tension peak, $f = 8$ kHz $\Delta t = 5$ μ s with function 1.1; on the right the fourier transform of the measure in the interval $[4 - 6 \mu$ s] that shows the frequency peak f_{V_s}

the work frequency of different pulses imposed by Arduino, called f). This parameter is important because plasma's electric behavior depends on this frequency, analyzing signal with different frequencies it's possible to understand plasma's parameters. Frequency pulse it's different for every opening time of the circuit, Δt , but it's constant when changing frequency of the pulses, as explained before analyzing tension output at different frequencies. In figure 1.12 and 1.13 are an example of a peak fitted with the function in formula 1.1, it's fourier transform to show peak frequency corresponding to f_{V_s} for that specific Δt and different resulting parameters for different Δt .

Fit parameters follows always those presented: as expected, with higher opening times V_{pulse} grows and τ lowers, while f_{V_s} has it's own behavior that depends from tension secondary output V_s . To estimate plasma's impedance it's useful to observe that voltage peak is quite large: it varies of 3% of peak's value in 150 ns around it. As tension and current peaks times differs always by a time interval $|t_{V_p} - t_{I_p}| \leq 150$ ns, it's possible to assume $V_{t_{I_p}} \simeq V(t_{V_p})$, i.e. that tension during the current peak maximum is equal to tension's peak value. With this approximation, it makes sense to plot tension's peak values against current's peak values, as in figure 1.14, and given a Δt it's possible to give an estimation of impedance module as $Z = \frac{V_p}{I_p}$. Results are shown in figure 1.15, vs opening times and vs frequency of single pulse f_{V_s} .

From the graphs it's possible to extrapolate that plasma impedance goes from 2.98 ± 0.11 M Ω to 11.82 ± 2.19 M Ω , with near constant values in the range of opening times 7–9 μ s. From a deeper analysis and specific measures it could be possible to expand the analysis here presented and estimate plasma's electrical resistance, capacitance or inductance.

1.2.4 Effective current

Current effects in applications on biological tissues have to take into consideration current intensity in a time interval typically larger then the pulse widths used in our sources ([10], [6]). It's possible to estimate an effective current that is more appropriate to take into consideration when evaluating damage due to currents, as a mean of current intensity in

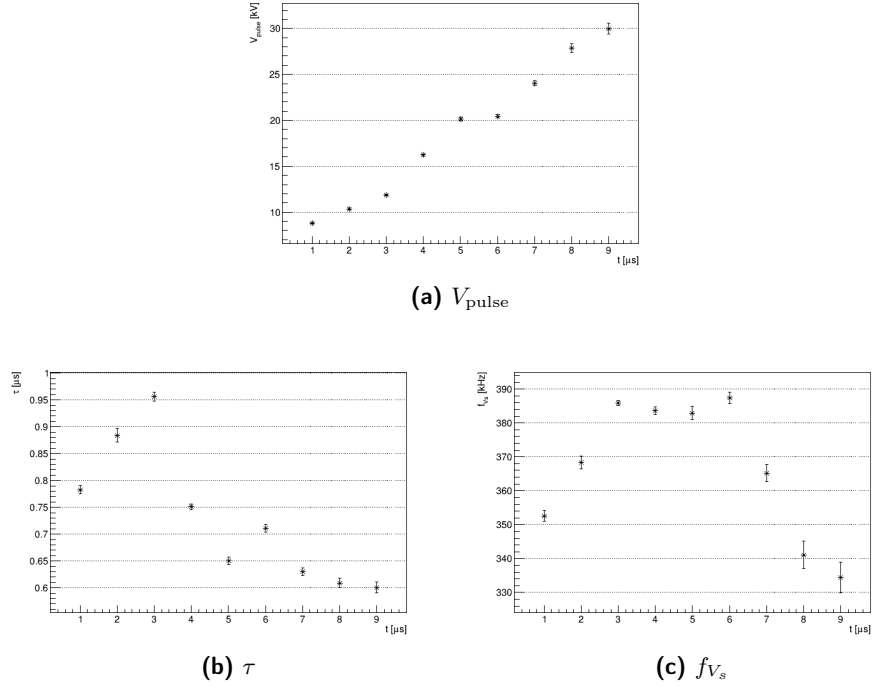


Figure 1.13: Fit parameters of pulses with $f = 8$ kHz for different Δt .

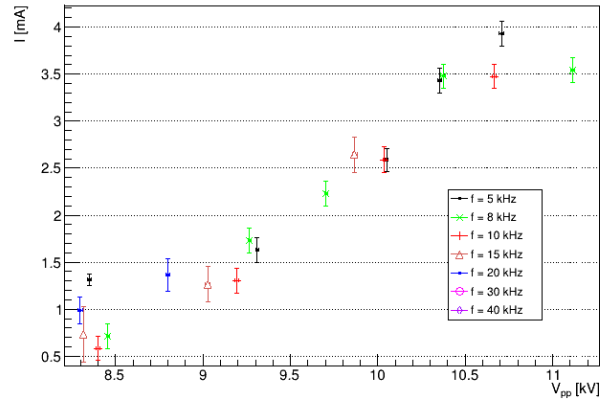


Figure 1.14: Tension's peak values against current's peak values for different Δt and frequencies.

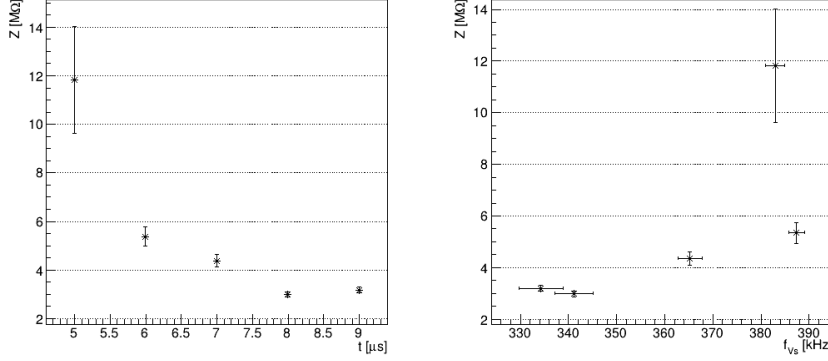


Figure 1.15: Impedance module estimation for different opening times (left) corresponding to different frequencies (right).

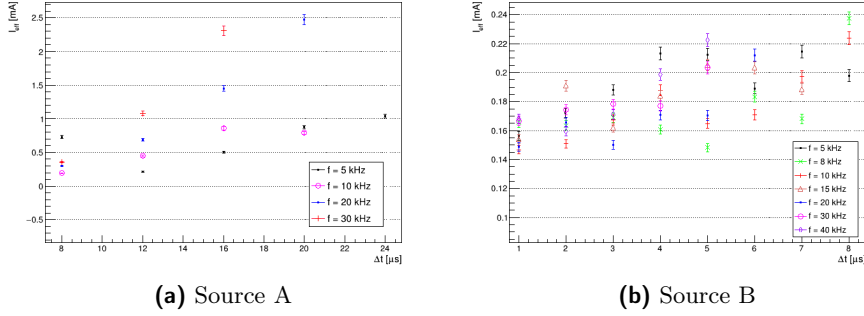


Figure 1.16: Effective currents in a time interval of 1 ms.

a defined time interval calculated with 1.2, taking $t_2 - t_1 = 1$ ms. The effective current takes into consideration that current values are very small for all the time between two pulses.

$$I_{eff} = \frac{1}{(t_2 - t_1)} \sqrt{\int_{t_1}^{t_2} I^2 dt} \quad (1.2)$$

Figure 1.16 shows effective currents measured for both sources. Values are significantly smaller than maximum peak values, especially for source B where oscillations after the main peak are smaller.

1.2.5 Time intervals

Time width of signal affects reaction's probabilities (chapter ??) and plasma's power deposition (chapter ??), here we try to give an estimate of this time interval. It can be defined as the FWHM of measured peaks, evaluated as the time when we measure

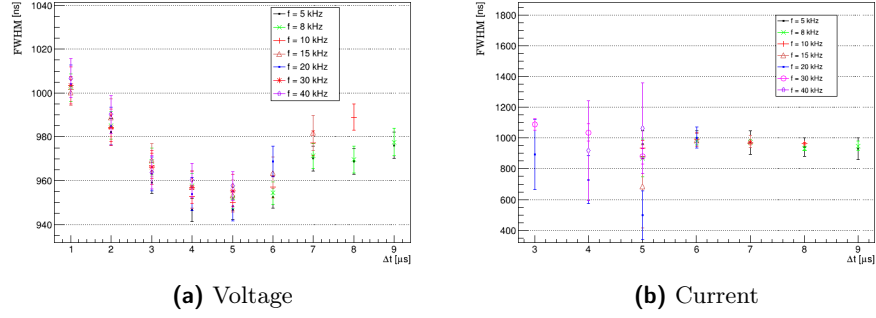


Figure 1.17: FWHM of tension and current peaks varying opening time, for different frequencies.

half of tension or current maximum value. As the characterization of the sources shows an almost equal behavior, this study is made only for the latest version of the source, that's the only one used in the following chapters. Results are shown in figure 1.17. For every frequency there is an unexpected quadratic behavior of tension widths with a minimum for a $\Delta t = 5 \mu s$. It is possible to give an estimation of pulse width with a mean value between this minimum and maximum values obtained for $\Delta t = 1 \mu s$, it is $T_V = 963 \pm 15 \text{ ns}$. For currents, widths have great uncertainty where the peak is low, but it is possible to evaluate a mean value for $\Delta t \geq 6 \mu s$, and it is $T_I = 968 \pm 28 \text{ ns}$. Values for the two measures are compatible and they are a good estimation of pulse time duration.

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