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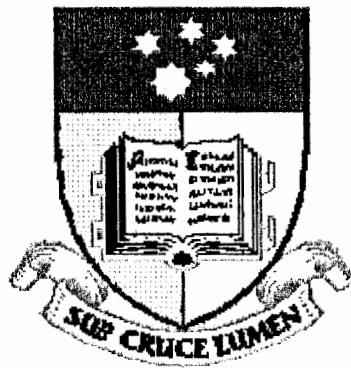
Characteristics of Clinical Electron Beams: Current and Optimal

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ABSTRACT

This thesis presents the results of two investigations into the characteristics of electron beams for application in radiation therapy. The first investigation involves the modelling of the interactions between the tertiary collimation system (applicator) of a Siemens Mevatron KD2 linear accelerator, and the electron beam produced by that accelerator. EGS4 Monte Carlo code is used to simulate the transport of 6 MeV, 12 MeV and 18 MeV electron beams from the accelerator waveguide, through the electron scattering foils and air to the applicator assembly, in order to determine primary beam electron and photon spectra. Narrow beams are then simulated incident on sections of applicator trimming plate edges (edge elements) in order to investigate the characteristics of scattering off these edges. It is found that electron scattering is dependent on the energy of the primary beam and the material of which the edges are made, as well as the angle of incidence of the primary beam to the edge. Primary beam photons are scattered minimally. A model for scatter from irregular apertures is developed based on a superposition of scatter *kernels* from edge elements. This model is evaluated using several regular and a single irregular applicator/cutout combinations, and found to give central-axis depth dose and profile data consistent with measured results. The model is also used to obtain detailed information of the characteristics of particles scattered from the electron applicator.

The second investigation involves evaluating the characteristics of electrons in an electron beam which would produce dose distributions in homogeneous media which most closely approximate specified dose distributions. For this purpose, optimal electron beam properties are determined by inversion of desired dose distributions using a simulated annealing optimisation method. This technique is used for several regular desired dose distributions, and various intuitive results are obtained regarding the effects electron energy and angular modulation have on resulting dose distributions. The technique is also used for several complex desired dose distribution, indicating the relative influence energy and angular modulation can have on dose conformation with electrons. For a suitably selected electron energy, modulation of electron incidence angle can be used to control the variation in dose with depth in order to increase dose conformity, and to reduce dose deposition within desired low-dose regions adjacent to and underlying desired high-dose regions.

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	i
DECLARATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	v
CONTENTS	ix
FIGURES.....	xiv
TABLES	xviii
SYMBOLS USED (IN MAIN TEXT)	xix
ABBREVIATIONS USED	xxiii
CHAPTER 1. GENERAL INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1. Radiotherapy - Contemporary Philosophy	1
1.2. Aims of Current Investigation.....	2
1.3. Thesis Outline	3
CHAPTER 2. MODELLING PARTICLE TRANSPORT	5
2.1. Particle Transport	5
2.1.1. Fundamental Quantities	5
2.1.2. Electron Transport	6
2.1.2.1. Collisional Losses.....	7
2.1.2.2. Radiative Losses	8
2.1.2.3. Total Losses	9
2.1.2.4. Scattering.....	10
2.1.3. Photon Transport	13
2.1.3.1. Photon Interaction Processes	13
2.1.3.2. Attenuation, Energy Absorption, and Energy Transfer	14
2.1.4. Relating Absorbed Dose to Kerma	15
2.2. Monte Carlo Particle Transport - EGS4	16
2.2.1. Monte Carlo Particle Transport	16
2.2.2. EGS4 Monte Carlo	16

2.2.2.1. Particle Transport in EGS4.....	17
2.2.2.2. EGS4 Code Structure.....	20
2.2.3. Characteristics of Current Implementation.....	21
2.2.3.1. Usercode RTPCYL.....	21
2.2.3.2. Usercode RTPCART_XYZ.....	22
CHAPTER 3. ELECTRON BEAM RADIOTHERAPY	25
3.1. Generation of Electron Beams.....	25
3.1.1. Linear Accelerators.....	25
3.1.1.1. Electron Acceleration.....	26
3.1.1.2. Electron Beam Formation.....	26
3.1.1.3. Final Beam Collimation.....	29
3.1.2. Other Accelerators and Developing Techniques.....	31
3.2. Clinical Applications and Limitations	32
3.2.1. Electron Beam Dose Distributions.....	32
3.2.1.1. Depth Dose Curves.....	32
3.2.1.2. Dose Profiles.....	37
3.2.1.3. Contour and Surface Plots.....	40
3.2.1.4. Pencil Beam Dose Distributions.....	40
3.2.2. Current Clinical Application.....	43
3.2.2.1. Clinical Applications of Electron Beams.....	43
3.2.2.2. Optimal Characteristics for Current Applications.....	44
3.2.3. Potential Application.....	46
3.3. Electron Beam Dose Calculation	47
3.3.1. Dose Calculation Algorithms.....	47
3.3.1.1. Pencil Beam Methods.....	48
3.3.1.2. Superposition.....	49
3.3.1.3. Phase Space Evolution.....	49
3.3.1.4. Monte Carlo.....	50
3.3.1.5. Macroscopic Monte Carlo Methods.....	51
3.3.1.6. Superposition Based Monte Carlo Methods.....	52
3.3.2. Requirements for Accurate Dose Calculation.....	52

2.2.2.1. <i>Particle Transport in EGS4</i>	17
2.2.2.2. <i>EGS4 Code Structure</i>	20
2.2.3. Characteristics of Current Implementation	21
2.2.3.1. <i>Usercode RTPCYL</i>	21
2.2.3.2. <i>Usercode RTPCART_XYZ</i>	22
CHAPTER 3. ELECTRON BEAM RADIOTHERAPY	25
3.1. Generation of Electron Beams	25
3.1.1. Linear Accelerators	25
3.1.1.1. <i>Electron Acceleration</i>	26
3.1.1.2. <i>Electron Beam Formation</i>	26
3.1.1.3. <i>Final Beam Collimation</i>	29
3.1.2. Other Accelerators and Developing Techniques	31
3.2. Clinical Applications and Limitations	32
3.2.1. Electron Beam Dose Distributions.....	32
3.2.1.1. <i>Depth Dose Curves</i>	32
3.2.1.2. <i>Dose Profiles</i>	37
3.2.1.3. <i>Contour and Surface Plots</i>	40
3.2.1.4. <i>Pencil Beam Dose Distributions</i>	40
3.2.2. Current Clinical Application.....	43
3.2.2.1. <i>Clinical Applications of Electron Beams</i>	43
3.2.2.2. <i>Optimal Characteristics for Current Applications</i>	44
3.2.3. Potential Application	46
3.3. Electron Beam Dose Calculation	47
3.3.1. Dose Calculation Algorithms.....	47
3.3.1.1. <i>Pencil Beam Methods</i>	48
3.3.1.2. <i>Superposition</i>	49
3.3.1.3. <i>Phase Space Evolution</i>	49
3.3.1.4. <i>Monte Carlo</i>	50
3.3.1.5. <i>Macroscopic Monte Carlo Methods</i>	51
3.3.1.6. <i>Superposition Based Monte Carlo Methods</i>	52
3.3.2. Requirements for Accurate Dose Calculation.....	52

CHAPTER 4. APPLICATOR SCATTER MODELLING - CURRENT BEAM CHARACTERISTICS	55
.....	55
4.1. Modelling the Clinical Beam.....	55
4.1.1. Accelerator Design & Effects on Clinical Beam	55
4.1.1.1. <i>General Effects of Filters & Collimation</i>	56
4.1.1.2. <i>KD2 Specific Design and Observed Effects of Applicator Scatter</i>	60
4.1.2. Electron Beam Modelling.....	65
4.1.2.1. <i>Analytical / Empirical Models</i>	65
4.1.2.2. <i>Numerical / Monte Carlo Approaches</i>	71
4.2. Characteristics of Applicator Scattering	80
4.2.1. Introduction.....	80
4.2.2. Primary Beam Modelling.....	81
4.2.3. Method - Edge Simulations	84
4.2.4. Results and Discussion	86
4.2.5. Conclusions	100
4.3. Superposition Model.....	101
4.3.1. Introduction.....	101
4.3.2. Model Description	102
4.3.3. Evaluation Method.....	106
4.3.4. Results	109
4.3.5. Discussion.....	121
4.3.6. Conclusions	123
4.4. Characteristics of Applicator Scattered Particles.....	124
4.4.1. Introduction.....	124
4.4.2. Analysing Phase Spaces.....	125
4.4.3. Results	125
4.4.3.1. <i>Fluence Distributions</i>	125
4.4.3.2. <i>Energy Spectra</i>	127
4.4.3.3. <i>Angular Spectra</i>	127
4.4.3.4. <i>Spatial Variation in Energy</i>	127
4.4.3.5. <i>Spatial Variation in Angle</i>	127
4.4.3.6. <i>Angular Variation in Energy</i>	132

4.4.4. Discussion.....	133
4.4.5. Conclusions.....	134
4.5. Conclusions / Summary.....	135

CHAPTER 5. THE POTENTIAL UTILITY OF ELECTRON BEAMS - OPTIMAL

CHARACTERISTICS	137
5.1. Optimisation in Radiotherapy	137
5.1.1. Optimisation Philosophy.....	137
5.1.2. Degrees of Freedom in Radiation Delivery	138
5.1.3. Tests of Conformity: Physical vs Biological Objectives.	142
<i>5.1.3.1. Physical vs Biological Objectives.....</i>	<i>142</i>
<i>5.1.3.2. Optimal Solutions</i>	<i>144</i>
5.1.4. Dose calculation.....	145
5.1.5. Mathematical Optimisation Techniques	147
<i>5.1.5.1. Optimisation Using Mathematical Programming</i>	<i>147</i>
5.1.5.1.1. Exhaustive Search.....	147
5.1.5.1.2. Feasibility Search.....	148
5.1.5.1.3. Linear and Quadratic Programming.....	149
5.1.5.1.4. Singular Value Decomposition Analysis	150
5.1.5.1.5. Expert Systems.....	150
<i>5.1.5.2. Optimisation Techniques Employing Numerical Inversion.....</i>	<i>151</i>
5.1.5.2.1. Optimisation by Direct Inversion.....	151
5.1.5.2.1.1. Solutions for Cylindrically Symmetric Targets	151
5.1.5.2.1.2. Direct Inversion by Fourier Deconvolution	152
5.1.5.2.2. Deterministic Iterative Search Inversion.....	153
5.1.5.2.2.1. Gradient Methods.....	155
5.1.5.2.2.2. Comprehensive Pencil Beam Optimisation with Biological Objectives.....	157
<i>5.1.5.3. Random/Stochastic Iterative Search Inversion.....</i>	<i>158</i>
5.1.5.3.1. Simulated Annealing.....	158
5.1.5.3.1.1. Genetic Algorithms	164
5.1.5.3.1.2. RONSC	165
<i>5.1.5.4. Searching Universal Phase Space</i>	<i>166</i>
5.2. Current Optimisation Investigation.....	167
5.2.1. Introduction - Aims of Investigation.....	167

5.2.2.1. <i>Optimisation Technique</i>	170
5.2.2.2. <i>Dose Calculation and Kernel Generation</i>	173
5.2.2.3. <i>Dose Distributions Considered</i>	176
5.2.2.4. <i>Phase Space Restrictions</i>	178
5.2.2.5. <i>Sinogram Representation of Intensity Distributions</i>	179
5.2.3. Results	180
5.2.3.1. <i>Rectangular Distributions (Distributions A-C)</i>	180
5.2.3.2. <i>Complex Distribution (Distribution D)</i>	197
5.2.3.3. <i>Wedge-shaped Distribution</i>	204
5.2.3.4. <i>Paraspinal Muscle Irradiation</i>	211
5.2.4. Discussion	217
5.2.4.1. <i>Advantages of Degrees of Freedom</i>	218
5.2.4.2. <i>Effects of Degrees of Freedom</i>	221
5.2.4.3. <i>Practical Implementation</i>	225
5.3. Conclusion / Summary - The Merits of Degrees of Freedom	227
CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSIONS	231
6.1. Summary of Main Findings	231
6.2. Possible Future Research and Application	232
APPENDIX A: EXAMPLE INPUT FILE TO RTPCYL	235
APPENDIX B: EXAMPLE INPUT FILE TO RTPCART_XYZ	237
APPENDIX C: POLYGON CLIPPING ROUTINE FOR PARTICLE INTERCEPTION CHECKING	239
APPENDIX D: DERIVATION OF INCIDENCE AND OBLIQUITY ANGLES	241
APPENDIX E: APPLICATOR SCATTER SUPERPOSITION PROGRAM	243
APPENDIX F: SIMULATED ANNEALING PROGRAM	247
APPENDIX G: ENERGY SINOGRAMS FOR DISTRIBUTION D AT DISCRETE ANGLES OF INCIDENCE	251
APPENDIX H: COMPANION PAPER - TUMOUR CONTROL PROBABILITY	253
REFERENCES	263