

**The Future of Radiofrequency Ablation is Looking BETA**  
**Short and Long Term Studies of Bimodal Electric Tissue Ablation**  
**(BETA) in a Porcine Model**

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Surgery

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## Table of Contents

	<b>Page Number</b>
<b>Title</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Table of Contents</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Figures and Tables</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Thesis Abstract</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Declaration</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Preface</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Chapter 1--Literature Review</b>	<b>12</b>
1.1 Introduction	12
1.2 Radiofrequency Ablation	12
1.2.1 Principles of Radiofrequency Ablation	13
1.2.2 Tissue Responses to Heat	15
1.2.3 Clinical Uses	16
1.2.4 Associated Morbidity and Mortality	17
1.2.5 Experience with Colorectal Liver Metastases	18
1.2.6 Experience with Hepatocellular Carcinomas	22
1.2.7 Experience with Other Tumours	26
1.2.8 Comparison with Other Commonly Used Ablative Modalities	28
1.2.8.1 Microwave Coagulation Therapy	28
1.2.8.2 Laser-Induced Interstitial Thermotherapy	30
1.2.8.3 High Intensity Focussed Ultrasound	32
1.2.8.4 Cryotherapy	35
1.2.8.5 Percutaneous Injection Therapy	36
1.2.9 Factors Associated with Local Recurrence	39
1.2.9.1 Tumour Size	39
1.2.9.2 Tumour Position	41
1.2.9.3 Tumour Type, Differentiation and Number	42
1.2.9.4 RFA Delivery Technique	43
1.2.9.5 Electrode and Generator Type	44
1.2.9.6 Other Factors Related to Local Recurrence	45
1.2.10 Overcoming Recurrence	46
1.2.11 Conclusion	48
1.3 Electrolysis	49
1.3.1 History	49
1.3.2 The Chinese Experience	50

1.3.3	The University of Adelaide Experience	53
1.3.4	Mechanism of Action	56
1.3.5	Electrochemical Changes	56
1.3.6	Tissue Ischaemia	58
1.3.7	Movement of Water	59
1.3.8	Other Considerations	62
1.3.9	Clinical Experience with Liver Tumours	63
1.3.10	Conclusion	64
1.4	Bimodal Electric Tissue Ablation	65
<b>Chapter 2--Study Aims and Hypotheses</b>		<b>69</b>
2.1	Experiment 1	69
2.2	Experiment 2	70
2.3	Experiment 3	70
<b>Chapter 3--Materials and Methods</b>		<b>72</b>
3.1	Materials	72
3.1.1	RFA generator	72
3.1.2	AC/DC Power Adaptor	72
3.1.3	Electrodes	73
3.1.4	Bimodal Electric Tissue Ablation (BETA) Circuit	75
3.1.5	Animals	76
3.1.6	Grounding Pads	78
3.2	Experimental Methods	79
3.2.1	Experiment 1	79
3.2.2	Experiment 2	83
3.2.3	Experiment 3	89
<b>Chapter 4--Results</b>		<b>93</b>
4.1	Experiment 1	93
4.1.1	Time of Procedure	93
4.1.2	Ablation Zone Size	93
4.1.3	Other Findings	94
4.1.4	Morphology	95
4.1.5	Histology	96
4.2	Experiment 2	99
4.2.1	Blood Results	99
4.2.2	Morbidity and Pathology Results--2 Day Pigs	105
4.2.3	Morbidity and Pathology Results--2 Week Pigs	109
4.2.4	Morbidity and Pathology Results--2 Month Pigs	112
4.2.5	Morbidity and Pathology Results--4 Month Pigs	114

4.3	Experiment 3	116
4.3.1	Procedure Findings	116
4.3.2	Autopsy Findings	117
4.3.3	Ablation Findings	119
<b>Chapter 5--Conclusions</b>		<b>121</b>
5.1	Size Comparison--BETA versus RFA	121
5.2	Pathological Changes--Short Term	123
5.3	Pathological Changes--Long Term	126
5.4	BETA related Morbidity	127
5.4.1	Blood Results	127
5.4.2	Associated Morbidity	128
5.5	Study Limitations	132
5.6	Suggested Areas of Further Research	134
5.7	Concluding Remarks	136
<b>Bibliography</b>		<b>137</b>

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## Figures and Tables

	Page Number
Figure 1.1	14
Figure 1.2	61
Figure 1.3	66
Figure 3.1	73
Figure 3.2	73
Figure 3.3	74
Figure 3.4	75
Figure 3.5	76
Figure 3.6	78
Figure 4.1	96
Figure 4.2	97
Figure 4.3	98
Figure 4.4	99
Figure 4.5	99
Figure 4.6	101
Figure 4.7	102
Figure 4.8	103
Figure 4.9	104
Figure 4.10	106
Figure 4.11	107
Figure 4.12	108
Figure 4.13	109
Figure 4.14	110
Figure 4.15	111
Figure 4.16	113
Figure 4.17	113
Figure 4.18	115
Figure 4.19	115
Figure 4.20	117
Figure 4.21	118
Figure 4.22	119
Table 1.1	21
Table 1.2	25
Table 4.1	95
Table 4.2	105
Table 4.3	120

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## **Thesis Abstract**

### Introduction

Radiofrequency ablation (RFA) is a popular method of treating unresectable liver tumours by the use of a high frequency, alternating electrical current that heats and destroys tumour cells. The size of the ablation is limited by localised charring of adjacent tissue that prevents further conduction of the radiofrequency current. In the clinical setting, this results in increased rates of local recurrence in tumours that are greater than 3 cm in diameter as multiple, overlapping ablations need to be performed to treat the one tumour.

To overcome this problem, a modified form of RFA called Bimodal Electric Tissue Ablation (BETA) has been created. BETA adds a direct electrical current to the alternating radiofrequency current, thus establishing its bimodal character. When direct currents are used in biological tissues, water is transferred from anode to cathode by a process called electro-osmosis. By attaching the cathode to the radiofrequency electrode, water is attracted to the area thus preventing tissue desiccation and charring.

The BETA circuit has been constructed and tested using a porcine model. The aims of the studies are to confirm that larger ablations can be produced with the BETA system and that it is safe to use in an animal model. Three studies have been performed to test these aims in porcine liver.

### Methods

The first study was designed to compare sizes of the ablation produced between standard RFA and the BETA circuit. This was followed by a long-term study to assess associated changes to liver function and pathological changes within the liver as well as identifying

any other treatment related morbidity. The third study assessed the difference in ablation size and safety aspects when the positive electrode of the direct current circuitry was moved from small surface area under the skin to a large surface area on the skin.

## Results

Ablations with significantly larger diameters are created with the BETA circuit using a multi-tine needle (49.55 mm versus 27.78 mm,  $p < 0.001$ ). This finding was confirmed in the third experiment using a straight needle (25 mm versus 15.33 mm,  $p < 0.001$ ). Ablations produced by the BETA circuit induce coagulative necrosis within the treated liver and the injury heals by fibrosis in a manner similar to other thermal therapies. Significant rises in some serum liver enzymes are seen within 24 hours of treatment but these return to normal within 4 days. An electrolytic type injury can be produced at the site of the positive electrode. By increasing the surface area of this electrode, the risk of tissue damage is decreased but ablations are significantly smaller (18 mm versus 25 mm,  $p < 0.001$ ).

## Conclusions

The BETA circuit consistently produces significantly larger ablations than RFA. The treatment appears safe but positioning of the positive electrode of the direct current requires careful consideration. Injuries produced behave like other thermal therapies with coagulative necrosis followed by fibrotic healing. As larger ablations are consistently produced, it is hypothesised that with further refinements, tumours greater than 3 cm in diameter could be treated with lower rates of recurrence.

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## Statement

I declare that this thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree in any university and that to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text. I consent to this thesis being made available for photocopying and loan if applicable and if accepted for the award of the degree.

Christopher Dobbins

01/12/2007

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