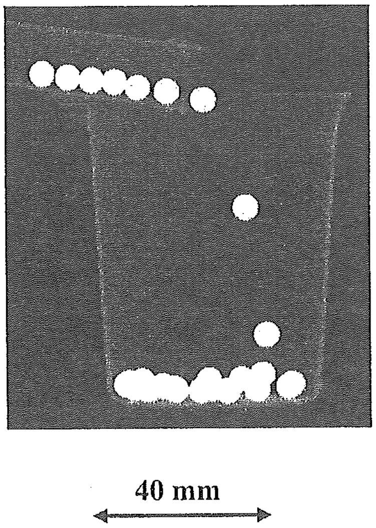

Figure 9: Radiogram of plastic bullets falling into polypropylene beaker from a plastic test tube.

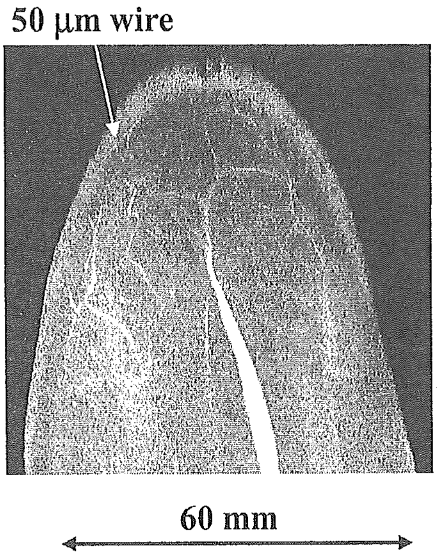

Figure 10: Angiogram of a rabbit ear.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND OUTLOOK

We obtained fairly intense and clean K lines from a weakly ionized linear plasma x-ray source, and Kα lines were left by absorbing Kβ lines using the nickel filter. In particular, the higher harmonic x-rays were produced from the plasma. Assuming that the harmonic rays are produced by the x-ray resonation (Fig. 11), the estimated spectra are shown in Fig. 12. In cases where a nickel target is employed, fractional harmonic x-rays are absorbed by the x-ray window and the air. In cases where weakly ionized linear plasma is employed, intense and clean K-series characteristic x-rays can be obtained. However, it is not easy to produce high-photon-energy K-series characteristic x-rays because the plasma transmits high-photon energy bremsstrahlung x-rays. Therefore, high-photon-energy plasma flash x-ray generator utilizing angle dependence of bremsstrahlung x-rays are very useful to produce K photons of molybdenum, silver, cerium, tantalum, and tungsten.

In this research, we obtained sufficient characteristic x-ray intensity per pulse for CR radiography, and the generator produced number of characteristic K photons was approximately 1×10^8 photons/cm^2 at 1.0 m per pulse. In addition, we are very interested in producing steady-state clean K rays and their higher harmonic hard x-rays using a similar tube in near future.

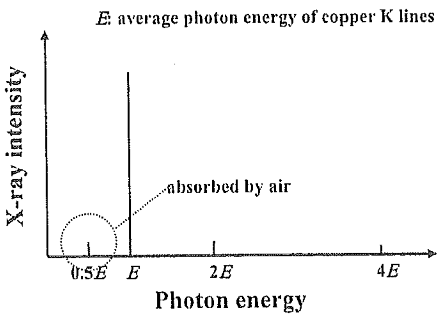

Figure 11: X-ray resonation without using a resonator.

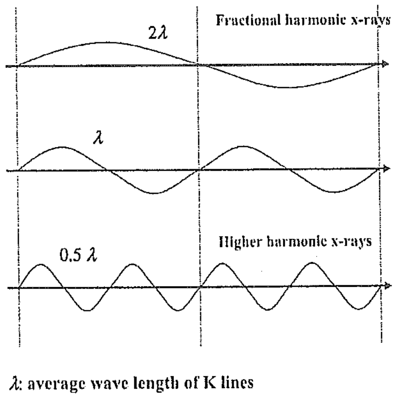

Figure 12: Estimated x-ray spectra under resonation.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This work was supported by Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research (13470154, 13877114, 16591181, and 16591222) and Advanced Medical Scientific Research from MECSST, Health and Labor Sciences Research Grants (RAMT-nano-001, RHGTEFB-genome-005 and RHGTEFB-saisei-003), Grants from the Keiryo Research Foundation, The Promotion and Mutual Aid Corporation for Private Schools of Japan, Japan Science and Technology Agency (JST), and the New Energy and Industrial Technology Development Organization (NEDO, Industrial Technology Research Grant Program in '03).

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*dresato@iwate-med.ac.jp; phone +81-19-651-5111; fax +81-19-654-9282

Superposition of x-ray spectra using a brass-target plasma triode

Haruo Obara*[a], Eiichi Sato[b], Yasuomi Hayasi[b], Etsuro Tanaka[c], Hidezo Mori[d], Toshiaki Kawai[e], Takashi Inoue[f], Akira Ogawa[f], Kazuyoshi Takayama[g] and Hideaki Ido[h]

[a] Department of Radiological Technology, College of Medical Science, Tohoku University, 1-1 Seiryocho, Sendai 980-0872, Japan
[b] Department of Physics, Iwate Medical University, 3-16-1 Honchodori, Morioka 020-0015, Japan
[c] Department of Nutritional Science, Faculty of Applied Bio-science, Tokyo University of Agriculture, 1-1-1 Sakuragaoka, Setagaya-ku 156-8502, Japan
[d] Department of Cardiac Physiology, National Cardiovascular Center Research Institute, 5-7-1 Fujishirodai, Suita, Osaka 565-8565 Japan
[e] Electron Tube Division #2, Hamamatsu Photonics K. K., 314-5 Shimokanzo, Iwata 438-0193, Japan
[f] Department of Neurosurgery, School of Medicine, Iwate Medical University, 19-1 Uchimaru, Morioka 020-8505, Japan
[g] Shock Wave Research Center, Institute of Fluid Science, Tohoku University, 2-1-1 Katahira, Sendai 980-8577, Japan
[h] Department of Applied Physics and Informatics, Faculty of Engineering, Tohoku Gakuin University, 1-13-1 Chuo, Tagajo 985-8537, Japan

ABSTRACT

In the plasma flash x-ray generator, a 200 nF condenser is charged up to 50 kV by a power supply, and flash x-rays are produced by the discharging. The x-ray tube is a demountable triode with a brass target containing 65% copper and 35% zinc by weight, and the turbomolecular pump evacuates air from the tube with a pressure of approximately 1 mPa. Target evaporation leads to the formation of weakly ionized linear plasma, consisting of metal ions and electrons, around the fine target, and intense characteristic x-rays are produced. At a charging voltage of 50 kV, the maximum tube voltage was almost equal to the charging voltage of the main condenser, and the peak current was about 15 kA. When the charging voltage was increased, the linear plasma formed, and the K-series characteristic x-ray intensities of zinc Kα, copper Kα, and copper Kβ lines increased substantially. However hardly any zinc Kβ lines were detected. The x-ray pulse widths were approximately 700 ns, and the time-integrated x-ray intensity was approximately 1.2 mGy at 1.0 m from the x-ray source with a charging voltage of 50 kV.

Keywords: flash x-ray, plasma x-ray, weakly ionized linear plasma, characteristic x-rays, x-ray superposition

1. INTRODUCTION

Conventional flash x-ray generators[1] utilize high-voltage condensers and cold-cathode x-ray tubes and produce extremely short x-ray pulses with durations of less than 1 μs. Because the high-voltage durability substantially increases under the pulsed operation, the maximum photon energy of flash x-rays has been increased to 1 MeV or beyond so as to perform military applications utilizing surge Marx generators in conjunction with diodes.

In order to perform biomedical radiography, we have developed several different flash x-ray generators[2-5] corresponding to specific radiographic objectives, and we have succeeded in producing clean K-series characteristic x-rays of nickel and copper from weakly ionized linear plasma using a plasma triode.[6-9] Subsequently, because we have confirmed the irradiations of clean K-series characteristic x-rays of molybdenum using a compact flash x-ray generator with a disk-cathode diode,[10,11] an intense plasma diode have been developed to produce high-photon-energy characteristic x-rays of molybdenum, cerium,[12] tantalum, and tungsten. In particular, the tantalum K rays[13] have been applied to high-speed K-edge angiography using gadolinium-based contrast media.

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(SPIE, Bellingham, WA, 2005) · 0277-786X/05/$15 · doi: 10.1117/12.620207

On the other hand, we are very interested in the superposition of characteristic x-rays[14] using weakly ionized plasma in order to perform wide-photon-energy or energy subtraction radiography. In particular, the absorption of K rays in the plasma consisting of electrons and two-element metal ions should be investigated. Furthermore, because we have confirmed the irradiation of higher harmonic hard x-rays using nickel and copper targets, the x-ray spectra with photon energies beyond the K edges should be measured.

In this paper, we describe a plasma flash x-ray generator utilizing a brass-target radiation tube, used to perform a preliminary experiment for the superposition of K-series characteristic x-rays in weakly ionized plasma and for producing their higher harmonic hard x-rays.

2. GENERATOR

2.1 High-voltage circuit

Figure 1 shows a block diagram of a high-intensity plasma flash x-ray generator. The generator consists of the following essential components: a high-voltage power supply, a high-voltage condenser with a capacity of approximately 200 nF, a turbomolecular pump, a krytron pulse generator as a trigger device, and a flash x-ray tube. In this generator, a low-impedance transmission line is employed in order to increase maximum tube current (Fig. 2). The high-voltage main condenser is charged up to 50 kV by the power supply, and electric charges in the condenser are discharged to the tube after triggering the cathode electrode with the trigger device. The plasma flash x-rays are then produced.

2.2 X-ray tube

The x-ray tube is a demountable cold-cathode triode that is connected to the turbomolecular pump with a pressure of approximately 1 mPa (Fig. 3). This tube consists of the following major parts: a pipe-shaped graphite cathode with a bore diameter of 10.0 mm, a trigger electrode made from copper wire, a brass focusing electrode, a stainless-steel vacuum chamber, a nylon insulator, a polyethylene terephthalate (Mylar) x-ray window 0.25 mm in thickness, and a 4.0-mm-diameter rod brass target containing 65% copper and 35% zinc by weight. The distance between the target and cathode electrodes is approximately 20 mm, and the trigger electrode is set in the cathode electrode. As electron beams from the cathode electrode are roughly converged to the target by the focusing electrode, evaporation leads to the formation of weakly ionized linear plasma, consisting of metal ions and electrons, around the fine target.

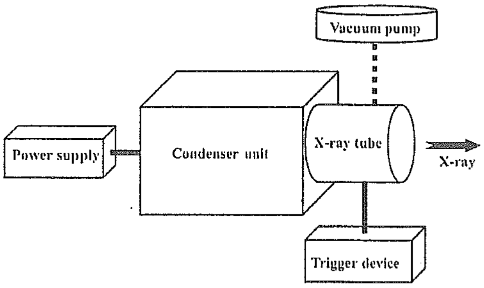


Figure 1: Block diagram of the high-intensity plasma flash x-ray generator.

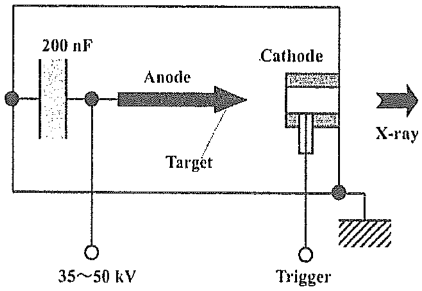


Figure 2: Circuit diagram of the flash x-ray generator.

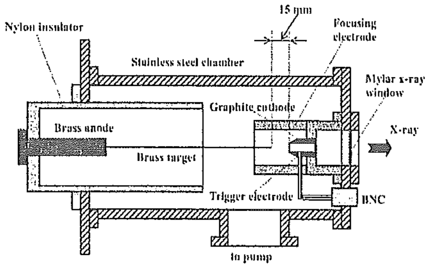


Figure 3: Schematic drawing of the flash x-ray tube with a brass target.

3. CHARACTERISTICS

3.1 Tube voltage and current

Tube voltage and current were measured by a high-voltage divider with an input impedance of 1 GΩ and a current transformer, respectively. Figure 4 shows the time relation between the tube voltage and current. At the indicated charging voltages, they roughly displayed damped oscillations. When the charging voltage was increased, both the maximum tube voltage and current increased. At a charging voltage of 50 kV, the maximum tube voltage was almost equal to the charging voltage of the main condenser, and the maximum tube current was approximately 15 kA.

3.2 X-ray output

X-ray output pulse was detected using a combination of a plastic scintillator and a photomultiplier (Fig. 5). The x-ray pulse height substantially increased with corresponding increases in the charging voltage. The x-ray pulse widths were about 700 ns, and the time-integrated x-ray intensity measured by a thermoluminescence dosimeter (Kyokko TLD Reader 1500 with MSO-S elements without energy compensation) had a value of approximately 1.2 mGy at 1.0 m from the x-ray source with a charging voltage of 50 kV.

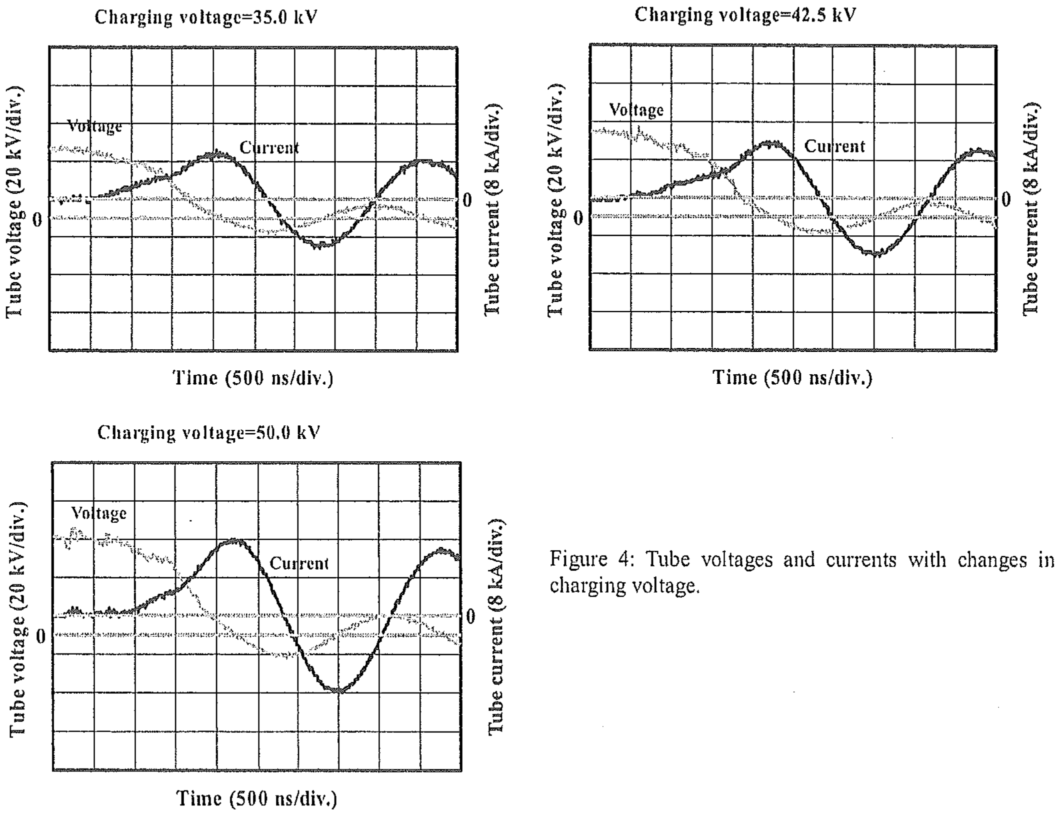


Figure 4: Tube voltages and currents with changes in the charging voltage.

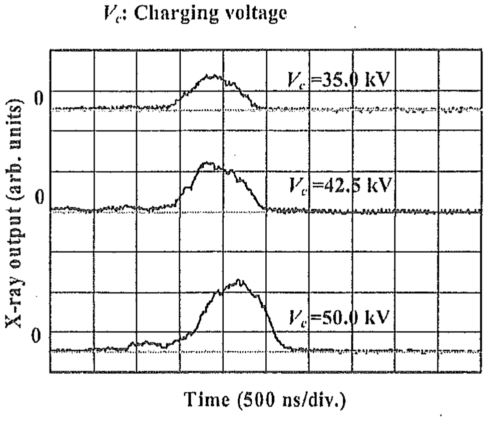


Figure 5: X-ray outputs at the indicated conditions.

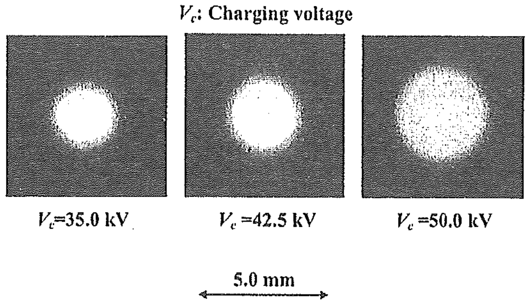
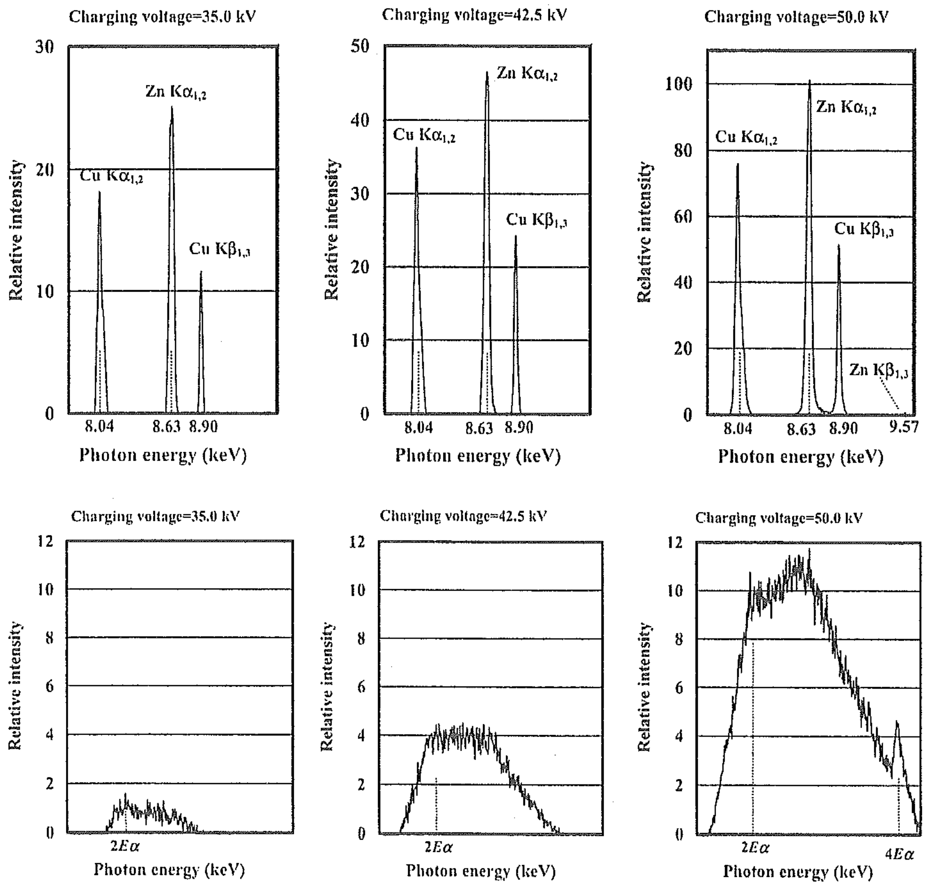


Figure 6: Images of plasma x-ray source.



Eα: Photon energy of copper Kα

Figure 7: X-ray spectra at the indicated conditions.

3.3 X-ray source

In order to roughly observe images of the plasma x-ray source in the detector plane, we employed a 100-μm-diameter pinhole camera and an x-ray film (Polaroid XR-7) (Fig. 6). When the charging voltage was increased, the plasma x-ray source grew, and both spot dimension and intensity increased. Because the x-ray intensity is the highest at the center of the target, both the dimension and intensity decreased according to both increases in the thickness of a filter for absorbing x-rays and decreases in the pinhole diameter.

3.4 X-ray spectra

X-ray spectra from the plasma source were measured by a transmission-type spectrometer with a lithium fluoride curved crystal 0.5 mm in thickness. The spectra were taken by a computed radiography (CR) system[15] with a wide dynamic range, and relative x-ray intensity was calculated from Dicom digital data.

Figure 7 shows measured spectra from weakly ionized metal plasma. We observed sharp lines of K-series characteristic x- rays of copper Kα, copper Kβ and zinc Kα lines. However, zinc Kβ and bremsstrahlung rays were hardly detected. The characteristic x-ray intensity substantially increased with corresponding increases in the charging voltage. In the high-photon-energy region, higher harmonic hard x-rays with photon energies of approximately $2E_\alpha$ and $4E_\alpha$ were observed. Here, E_α is the average photon energies of copper Kα lines.

4. RADIOGRAPHY

The plasma radiography was performed by the CR system (Konica Regius 150) without using a filter, and the charging voltage and the distance (between the x-ray source and imaging plate) were 501 kV and 1.2 m, respectively.

Figure 8 shows radiograms of tungsten wires coiled around a pipe made of polymethyl methacrylate. Although the image contrast increased with increases in the wire diameter, a 50-μm-diameter wire could be observed. Next, the image of aluminum grains falling into a polypropylene beaker from a glass test tube is shown in Fig. 9. Because the x-ray duration was approximately 700 ns, the stop-motion image of grains could be obtained.

Figures 10 and 11 show angiograms of a rabbit heart and a thigh, respectively. In angiography, iodine-based microspheres of 15 μm in diameter were used, and fine blood vessels of about 100 μm are clearly visible.

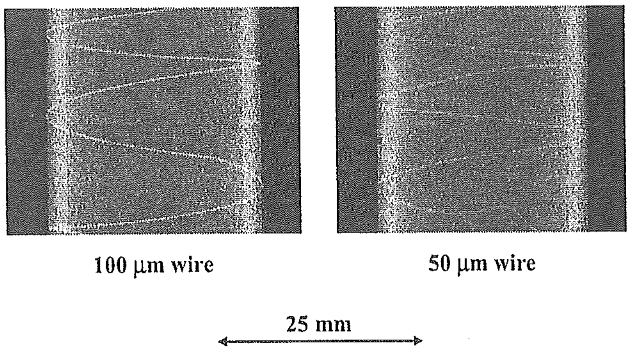

100 μm wire **50 μm wire**

Figure 8: Radiograms of tungsten wires coiled around pipes made of polymethyl methacrylate.

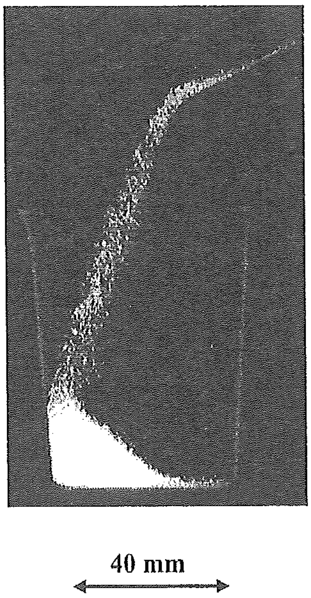


Figure 9: Radiogram of aluminum grains from a glass test tube.

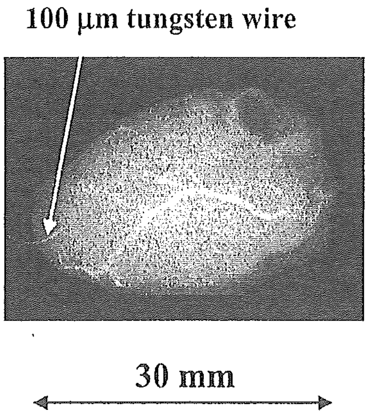


Figure 10: Angiogram of a rabbit heart.

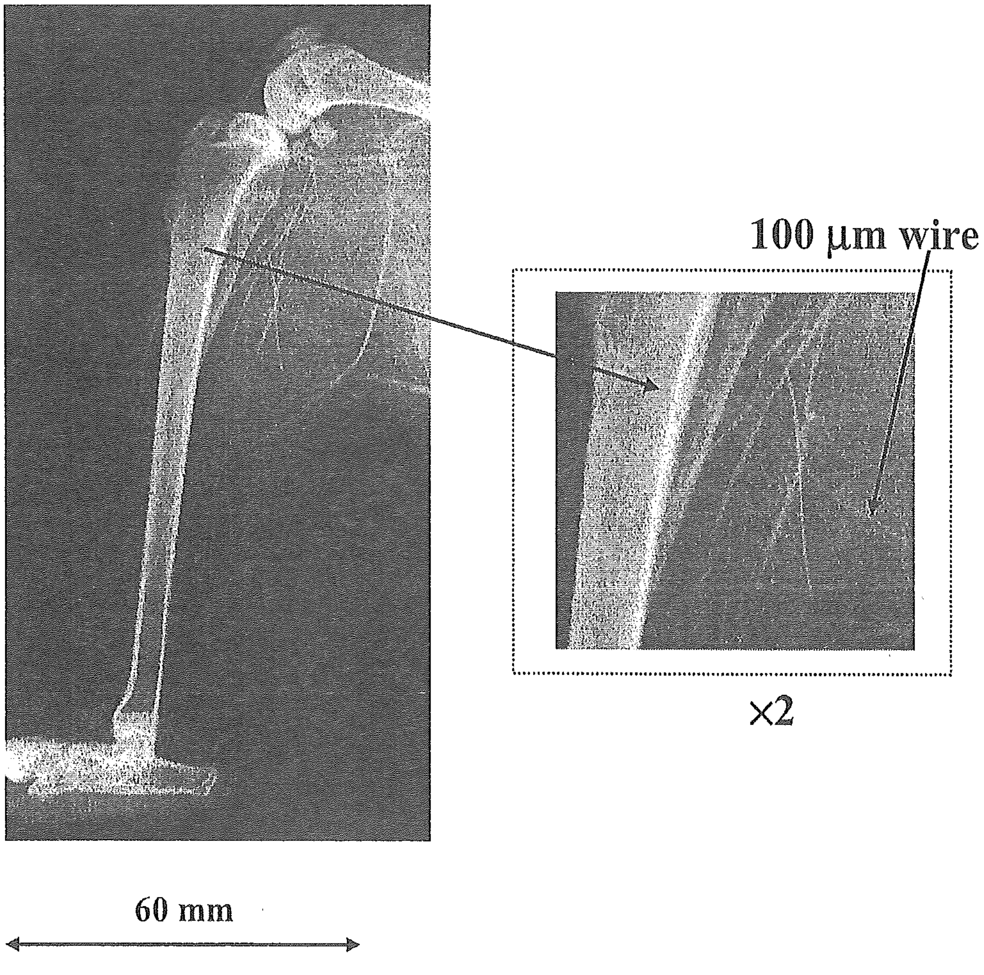


Figure 11: Angiogram of a rabbit thigh.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND OUTLOOK

Regarding the spectrum measurement, although we confirmed clean copper Kα, copper Kβ and zinc Kα lines, zinc Kβ lines were hardly observed. Because weakly ionized zinc plasma (ion) transmits zinc Kβ lines easily, the lines were absorbed by copper plasma. In high-photon-energy region, although we could not observe clean higher harmonics, bremsstrahlung x-rays with photon energies approximately $2E_\alpha$ and $4E_\alpha$ were left in cases where a high charging voltage of approximately 50 kV was applied.

From the experimental results, because the x-ray spectra with photon energies just beyond copper K edge are absorbed effectively by the copper plasma, zinc Kβ rays are useful to produce copper fluorescent rays. In addition, we are very interested in the results using a capillary-type target for forming weakly ionized linear plasma.

In this research, we obtained sufficient characteristic x-ray intensity per pulse for CR radiography, and the generator produced number of characteristic photons was approximately 1×10^8 photons/cm^2 at 1.0 m per pulse. In addition, since the photon energy of characteristic x-rays can be controlled by changing target elements, various quasi-monochromatic high-speed radiographies, such as flash energy subtraction radiography using a metal filter and wide-photon-energy radiography, will be possible.

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*obara@rad.cms.tohoku.ac.jp; phone +81-22-717-7941; fax +81-22-717-7944

Enhanced K-edge plasma angiography achieved with tungsten Kα rays utilizing gadolinium-based contrast media

Eiichi Sato*[a], Yasuomi Hayasi[a], Rudolf Germer[b], Koji Kimura[c], Etsuro Tanaka[d], Hidezo Mori[e], Toshiaki Kawai[f], Takashi Inoue[g], Akira Ogawa[g], Shigehiro Sato[h], Kazuyoshi Takayama[i] and Hideaki Ido[j]

[a] Department of Physics, Iwate Medical University, 3-16-1 Honchodori, Morioka 020-0015, Japan
[b] ITP, FHTW FB1 and TU-Berlin, Blankenhainer Str. 9, D 12249 Berlin, Germany
[c] Department of Physiology, Tokai University School of Medicine, Boseidai, Isehara 259-1193, Japan
[d] Department of Nutritional Science, Faculty of Applied Bio-science, Tokyo University of Agriculture, 1-1-1 Sakuragaoka, Setagaya-ku 156-8502, Japan
[e] Department of Cardiac Physiology, National Cardiovascular Center Research Institute, 5-7-1 Fujishirodai, Suita, Osaka 565-8565 Japan
[f] Electron Tube Division #2, Hamamatsu Photonics K. K., 314-5 Shimokanzo, Iwata 438-0193, Japan
[g] Department of Neurosurgery, School of Medicine, Iwate Medical University, 19-1 Uchimaru, Morioka 020-8505, Japan
[h] Department of Microbiology, School of Medicine, Iwate Medical University, 19-1 Uchimaru, Morioka 020-8505, Japan
[i] Shock Wave Research Center, Institute of Fluid Science, Tohoku University, 2-1-1 Katahira, Sendai 980-8577, Japan
[j] Department of Applied Physics and Informatics, Faculty of Engineering, Tohoku Gakuin University, 1-13-1 Chuo, Tagajo 985-8537, Japan

ABSTRACT

The tungsten plasma flash x-ray generator is useful in order to perform high-speed enhanced K-edge angiography using cone beams because Kα rays from the tungsten target are absorbed effectively by gadolinium-based contrast media. In the flash x-ray generator, a 150 nF condenser is charged up to 80 kV by a power supply, and flash x-rays are produced by the discharging. The x-ray tube is a demountable diode, and the turbomolecular pump evacuates air from the tube with a pressure of approximately 1 mPa. Since the electric circuit of the high-voltage pulse generator employs a cable transmission line, the high-voltage pulse generator produces twice the potential of the condenser charging voltage. At a charging voltage of 80 kV, the estimated maximum tube voltage and current were approximately 160 kV and 40 kA, respectively. When the charging voltage was increased, the characteristic x-ray intensities of tungsten Kα lines increased. Using an ytterbium oxide filter, the Kα lines were clean, and hardly any Kβ lines and bremsstrahlung rays were detected. The x-ray pulse widths were approximately 60 ns, and the time-integrated x-ray intensity had a value of approximately 50 μGy at 1.0 m from the x-ray source with a charging voltage of 80 kV. Angiography was performed using a film-less computed radiography system and gadolinium-based contrast media. In angiography of non-living animals, we observed fine blood vessels of approximately 100 μm with high contrasts.

Keywords: angiography, gadolinium-based contrast media, characteristic x-rays, monochromatic x-rays, tungsten Kα rays

1. INTRODUCTION

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Monochromatic parallel beams from synchrotron orbital radiation have been employed in phase-contrast radiography[1,2] and enhanced K-edge angiography.[3,4] In particular, the parallel beams with photon energies of approximately 35 keV have been employed to perform iodine K-edge angiography, because the beams are absorbed effectively by iodine-based contrast media with a K-absorption edge of 33.2 keV. Without using a synchrotron, we have developed an x-ray generator utilizing a cerium-target tube,[5,6] and have performed cone-beam K-edge angiography achieved with cerium Kα rays of 34.6 keV.

Gadolinium-based contrast media with a K-edge of 50.2 keV have been employed to perform in MRA, and the gadolinium density has been increasing. In view of this situation, ytterbium Kα rays (52.0 keV) are useful for enhanced K-edge angiography, because the Kα rays are absorbed effectively by gadolinium media. As compared with angiography using iodine media, the absorbed dose can be decreased considerably utilizing angiography achieved with gadolinium media. However, because ytterbium is a lanthanide series element and has a high reactivity, Kα rays of tantalum (57.1 keV) and tungsten (58.9 keV) are also useful to perform angiography.

In order to perform high-speed biomedical radiography, several different flash x-ray generators[7-10] with photon energies less than 150 keV have been developed, and plasma flash x-ray generators[11-13] have been developed to perform a preliminary experiment for producing hard x-ray lasers. From weakly ionized plasma, clean K-series characteristic x-rays of nickel and copper and their higher harmonic hard x-rays have been produced. Furthermore, high-photon-energy monochromatic flash x-ray generators[14-17] have been developed to produce K-series characteristic x-rays of molybdenum, cerium, ytterbium, tantalum, and tungsten, because bremsstrahlung rays are not emitted in the opposite direction to that of electron trajectory in Sommerfeld's theory.

In this article, we describe an intense monochromatic plasma flash x-ray generator with a tungsten target tube, and used it to perform a preliminary study on angiography achieved with tungsten Kα rays using an ytterbium oxide filter.

2. PRINCIPLE OF K-EDGE ANGIOGRAPHY

Figure 1 shows the mass attenuation coefficients of gadolinium at the selected energies; the coefficient curve is discontinuous at the gadolinium K-edge. The average photon energy of the tungsten Kα lines is shown just above the gadolinium K-edge. The average photon energy of tungsten Kα lines is 58.9 keV, and gadolinium contrast media with a K-absorption edge of 50.2 keV absorb the lines easily. Therefore, blood vessels were observed with high contrasts.

3. GENERATOR

3.1 High-voltage circuit

Figure 2 shows a block diagram of a high-intensity plasma flash x-ray generator. The generator consists of the following essential components: a high-voltage power supply, a high-voltage condenser with a capacity of approximately 150 nF, an air gap switch, a turbomolecular pump, a thyratron pulse generator as a trigger device, and a flash x-ray tube. In this generator, a coaxial cable transmission line is employed in order to increase maximum tube voltage using high-voltage reflection. The high-voltage main condenser is charged up to 80 kV by the power supply, and electric charges in the condenser are discharged to the tube through the four cables after closing the gap switch with the trigger device.

3.2 X-ray tube

The x-ray tube is a demountable cold-cathode diode that is connected to the turbomolecular pump with a pressure of approximately 1 mPa (Fig. 3). This tube consists of the following major parts: a ring-shaped graphite cathode with an inside diameter of 4.5 mm, a stainless-steel vacuum chamber, a nylon insulator, a polyethylene terephthalate (Mylar) x-ray window 0.25 mm in thickness, and a rod-shaped tungsten target 3.0 mm in diameter. The distance between the target and cathode electrodes can be regulated from the outside of the tube, and is set to 1.5 mm. As electron beams from the cathode electrode are roughly converged to the target by the electric field in the tube, evaporation leads to the formation of weakly ionized plasma, consisting of tungsten ions and electrons, around the target. Because bremsstrahlung rays are not emitted in the opposite direction to that of electron acceleration (Fig. 4), tungsten Kα rays can be produced using an ytterbium oxide filter with a surface density of 20 mg/cm^2.

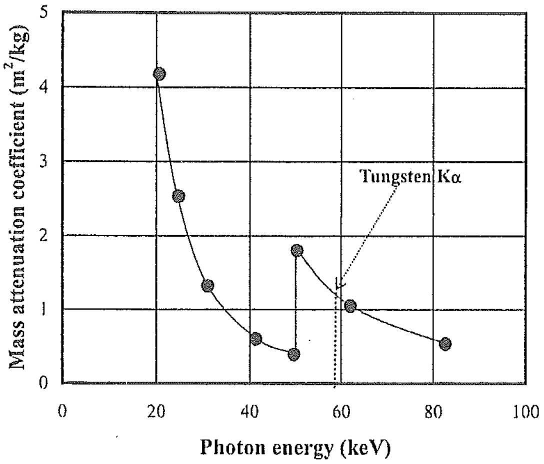

Figure 1: Mass attenuation coefficient of gadolinium and the average photon energy of tungsten Kα lines is shown above gadolinium K edge.

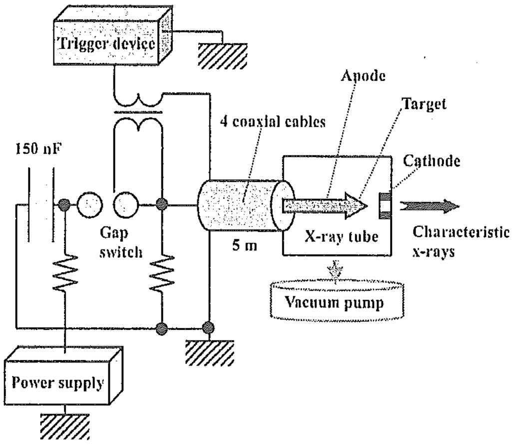

Figure 2: Block diagram including high-voltage circuit of the intense monochromatic plasma flash x-ray generator with a tungsten-target tube.

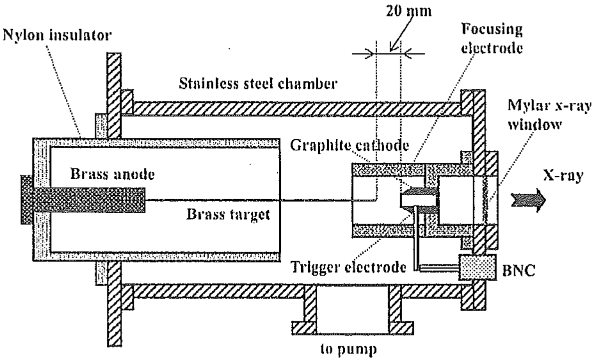

Figure 3: Schematic drawing of the flash x-ray tube with a rod-shaped tungsten target.

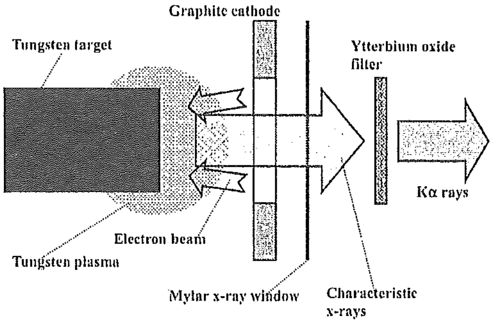

Figure 4: Irradiation of K-series characteristic x-rays of tungsten.

4. CHARACTERISTICS

4.1 Tube voltage and current

In this generator, it was difficult to measure the tube voltage and current since the tube voltages were high, and there was no space to set a current transformer for measuring the tube current. Currently, the voltage and current roughly display damped oscillations. When the charging voltage was increased, both the maximum tube voltage and current increased. At a charging voltage of 80 kV, the estimated maximum values of the tube voltage and current were approximately 160 kV (2 times the charging voltage) and 40 kA, respectively.

4.2 X-ray output

X-ray output pulse was detected using a combination of a plastic scintillator and a photomultiplier (Fig. 5). The x-ray pulse height substantially increased with corresponding increases in the charging voltage. The x-ray pulse widths were approximately 60 ns, and the time-integrated x-ray intensity measured by a thermoluminescence dosimeter (Kyokko TLD Reader 1500 having MSO-S elements without energy compensation) had a value of approximately 50 μGy at 1.0

m from the x-ray source with a charging voltage of 80 kV.

4.3 X-ray source

In order to observe the Kα x-ray source, we employed a 100-μm-diameter pinhole camera and an x-ray film (Polaroid XR-7) (Fig. 6). When the charging voltage was increased, the plasma x-ray source grew, and both spot dimension and intensity increased. Because the x-ray intensity is the highest at the center of the spot, both the dimension and intensity decreased according to both increases in the thickness of a filter for absorbing x-rays and decreases in the pinhole diameter.

4.4 X-ray spectra

X-ray spectra were measured using a transmission-type spectrometer with a lithium fluoride curved crystal 0.5 mm in thickness. The x-ray intensities of the spectra were detected by an imaging plate of a computed radiography (CR) system[18] (Konica Minolta Regius 150) with a wide dynamic range, and relative x-ray intensity was calculated from Dicom original digital data corresponding to x-ray intensity; the data was scanned by Dicom viewer in the film-less CR system. Subsequently, the relative x-ray intensity as a function of the data was calibrated using a conventional x-ray generator, and we confirmed that the intensity was proportional to the exposure time. Figure 7 shows measured spectra from the tungsten target. We observed clean Kα lines, while Kβ lines and bremsstrahlung rays were hardly detected. The Kα intensity increased with increases in the charging voltage.

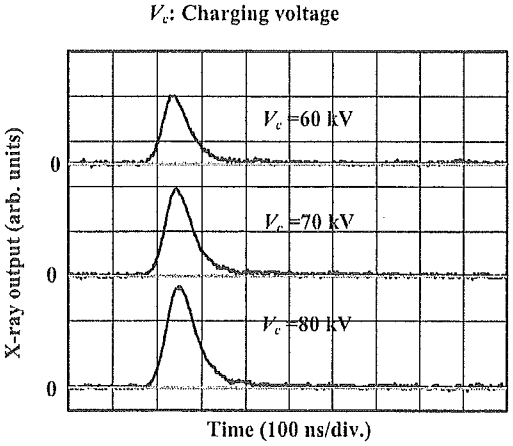

Figure 5: X-ray outputs detected using a combination of a plastic scintillator and a photomultiplier.

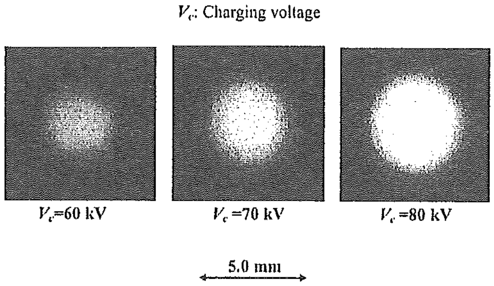

Figure 6: Images of Kα-ray source obtained using a pinhole camera with changes in the charging voltage.

5. ANGIOGRAPHY

The flash angiography was performed using the CR system and the filter at 1.2 m from the x-ray source, and the charging voltage was 80 kV.

Firstly, rough measurements of spatial resolution were made using wires. Figure 8 shows radiograms of tungsten wires in a rod made of polymethyl methacrylate (PMMA). Although the image contrast decreased somewhat with decreases in the wire diameter, due to blurring of the image caused by the sampling pitch of 87.5 μm, a 50 μm-diameter wire could be observed.

The image of water (20% gadolinium oxide suspension) falling into a polypropylene beaker from a plastic test tube is shown in Fig. 9. The diameter of gadolinium oxide powder ranges from 1 to 10 μm. Because the x-ray duration was about 60 ns, the stop-motion image of water could be obtained.

Figure 10 shows an angiogram of a polytetrafluoroethylene (Teflon) tube in a PMMA case using a contrast medium which contains approximately 65% gadodiamidehydrate, and a high-contrast tube with a bore diameter of 1.0 mm is observed. Figures 11 and 12 show angiograms of a rabbit ear and head using gadolinium oxide powder, and fine blood vessels of approximately 100 μm were visible.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND OUTLOOK

We succeeded in producing tungsten Kα rays and in performing K-edge angiography using gadolinium contrast media with a K-edge of 50.2 keV, and this K-edge angiography could be a useful technique to decrease the dose absorbed by patients. In angiography, we employed tungsten Kα (58.9 keV) rays by absorbing Kβ rays (approximately 67 keV) using the ytterbium oxide filter, and L-series characteristic rays were also absorbed.

We obtained sufficient x-ray intensity per pulse for CR angiography with x-ray durations of approximately 60 ns, and the intensity can be increased by increasing the charging voltage at a constant target-cathode space. Currently, the x-ray duration increased with increases in the target-cathode space. In this research, the generator produced instantaneous number of Kα photons was approximately 1.5×10^8 photons/cm^2 per pulse at 1.0 m from the source.

Because the dimensions of the x-ray source are primarily determined by the target diameter, the diameter should be minimized in order to improve the spatial resolution, and can be reduced to approximately 0.5 mm. Because the x-ray intensity is the highest at the center of the spot, the effective focal spot size decreased during x-ray absorption in an object. Subsequently, the sampling pitch can be decreased to 43.8 μm using a CR system (Konica Minolta Regius 190) to observe fine blood vessels of approximately 50 μm in diameter.

Using this flash x-ray generator, enhanced K-edge angiography using iodine contrast media and a cerium target can be also performed. In addition, steady-state monochromatic x-rays can be produced by a similar tube utilizing a hot cathode and a constant high-voltage power supply. Using a tungsten or a molybdenum target, fine focusing can be realized, and these x-ray generators could be employed to perform quasi-monochromatic phase-contrast radiography for edge enhancement.

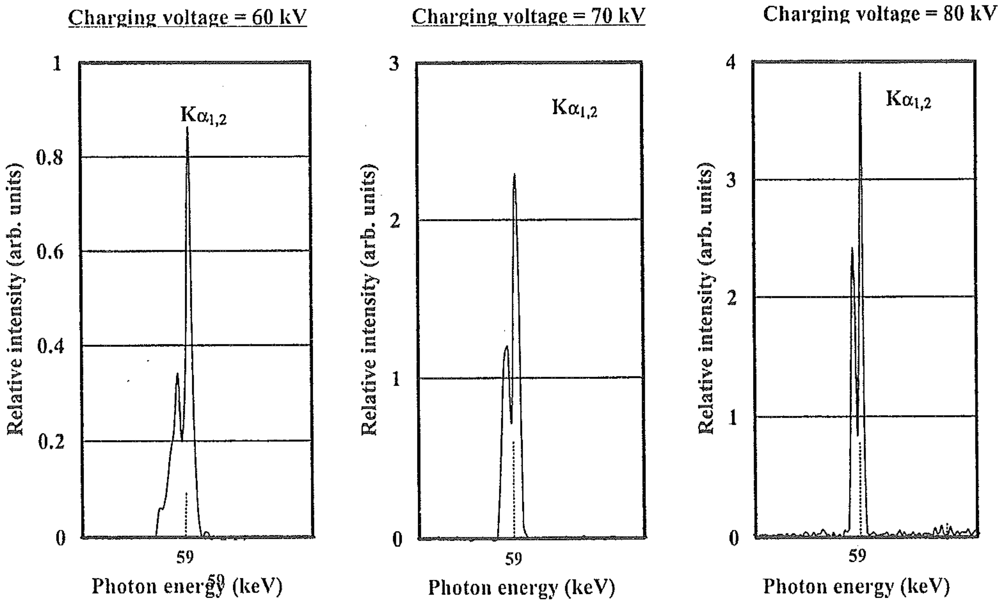

Figure 7: X-ray spectra from a tungsten target. The spectra were measured using a transmission type spectrometer with a lithium fluoride curved crystal.

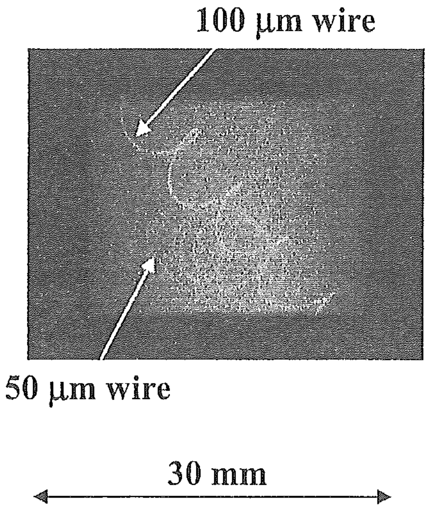

Figure 8: Radiograms of tungsten wires in a PMMA rod. gadodiamidehydrate.

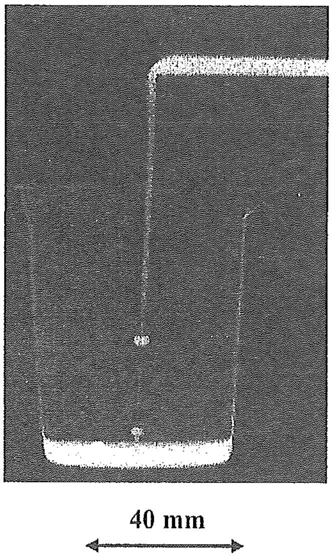

Figure 9: Radiogram of water falling into a polypropylene beaker from a glass test tube.

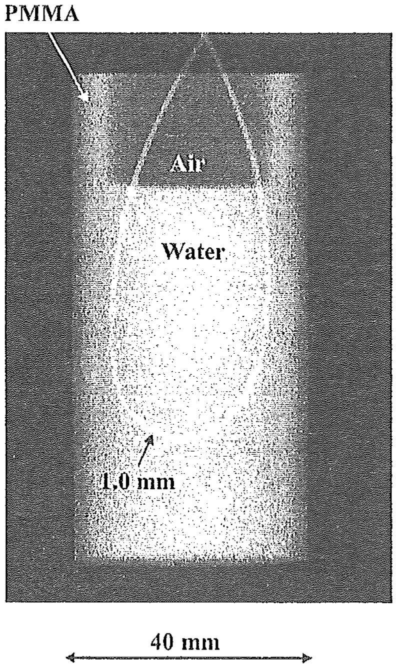

Figure 10: Angiography of a Teflon tube using a contrast medium which contains approximately 65% gadodiamidehydrate.

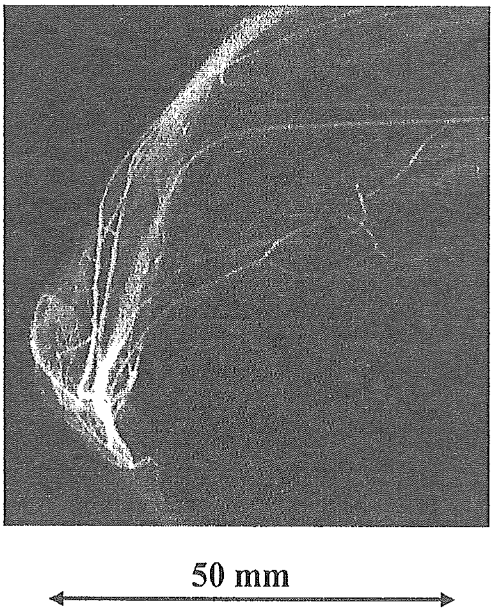

Figure 11: Angiography of a rabbit ear using gadolinium oxide powder.

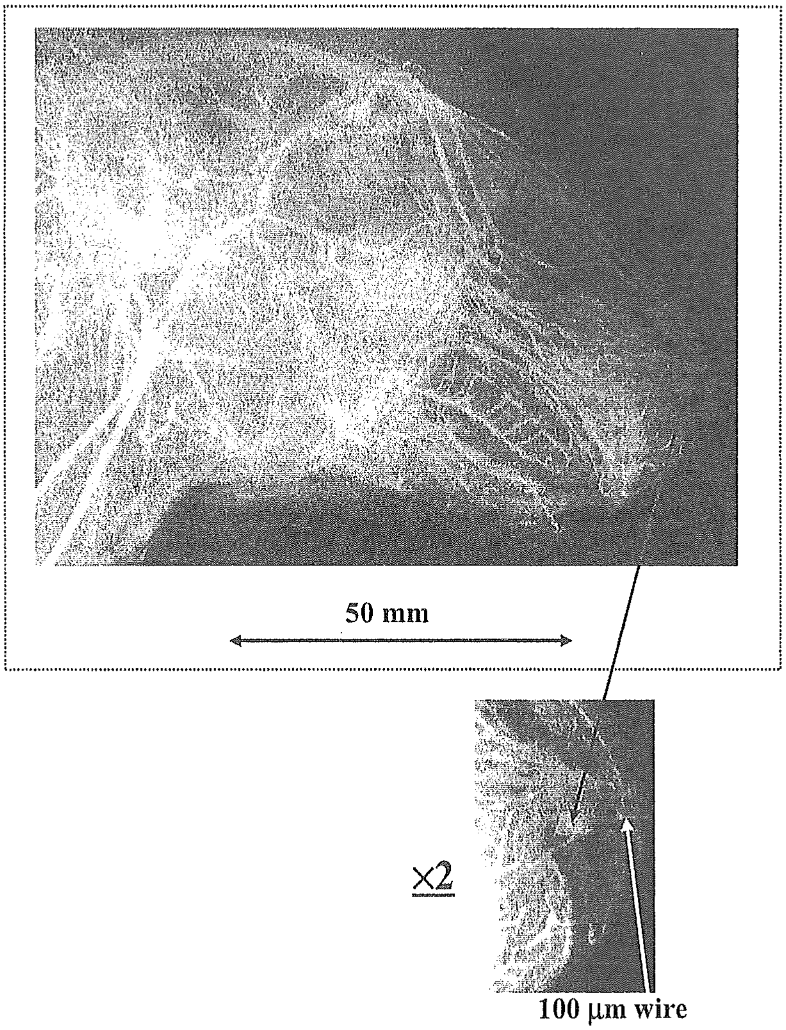

Figure 12: Angiography of a rabbit head using gadolinium oxide powder.

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*dresato@iwate-med.ac.jp; phone +81-19-651-5111; fax +81-19-654-9282

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Monochromatic flash x-ray generator utilizing a disk-cathode silver tube

Eiichi Sato, MEMBER SPIE
Yasuomi Hayasi
Iwate Medical University
Department of Physics
Morioka 020-0015, Japan
E-mail: dresato@iwate-med.ac.jp

Rudolf Germer
ITP
FHTW FB1 and TU-Berlin
D 12249 Berlin, Germany

Etsuro Tanaka
Tokyo University of Agriculture
Department of Nutritional Science
Faculty of Applied Bioscience
Setagaya-ku 156-8502, Japan

Hidezo Mori
National Cardiovascular Center Research Institute
Department of Cardiac Physiology
Osaka 565-8565, Japan

Toshiaki Kawai, MEMBER SPIE
Hamamatsu Photonics K. K.
Electron Tube Division 2
Iwata 438-0193, Japan

Takashi Inoue
Akira Ogawa
Iwate Medical University
Department of Neurosurgery
School of Medicine
Morioka 020-8505, Japan

Sigehiro Sato
Iwate Medical University
Department of Microbiology
School of Medicine
Morioka 020-8505, Japan

Toshio Ichimaru
Hirosaki University
Department of Radiological Technology
School of Health Sciences
Hirosaki 036-8564, Japan

Kazuyoshi Takayama, MEMBER SPIE
Tohoku University
Shock Wave Research Center
Institute of Fluid Science
Sendai 980-8577, Japan

Jun Onagawa
Hideaki Ido
Tohoku Gakuin University
Department of Applied Physics and Informatics
Faculty of Engineering
1-13-1 Chuo, Tagajo 985-8537
Japan

Abstract. The high-voltage condensers in a polarity-inversion two-stage Marx surge generator are charged from −50 to −70 kV by a power supply, and the electric charges in the condensers are discharged to an x-ray tube after closing gap switches in the surge generator with a trigger device. The x-ray tube is a demountable diode, and the turbomolecular pump evacuates air from the tube with a pressure of approximately 1 mPa. Clean silver Kα lines are produced using a 30-μm-thick palladium filter, since the tube utilizes a disk cathode and a rod target, and bremsstrahlung rays are not emitted in the opposite direction to that of electron acceleration. At a charging voltage of −70 kV, the instantaneous tube voltage and current are 90 kV and 0.8 kA, respectively. The x-ray pulse widths are approximately 80 ns, and the instantaneous number of generator-produced Kα photons is approximately 4×10^7photons/cm^2 per pulse at 0.3 m from the source 3.0 mm in diameter. [DOI: 10.1117/1.2049248]

Subject terms: x-ray source; x-ray tube; x-ray spectra; rapid imaging; x-ray beam filtration; monochromatic x-rays.

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1 Introduction

Energy-selective monochromatic radiography is a useful method for medical radiography, and quasimonochromatic x-rays have been produced using a K-edge filter when conventional medical x-ray tubes are employed. In contrast, monochromatic parallel x-ray beams have been produced using synchrotrons in conjunction with silicon single crystals, and have been applied effectively to enhanced K-edge angiography,[1–3] achieved with x-rays with a photon energy of approximately 35 keV.

In high-speed radiography, we have developed several different flash x-ray generators[4–9] utilizing cold cathode x-ray tubes, and intense and clean K-series characteristic x-rays have been produced from the axial direction of weakly ionized linear plasma[10–14] of nickel and copper using a plasma flash x-ray generator. In the plasma, bremsstrahlung spectra with photon energies of higher than the K-absorption edge are effectively absorbed and are converted into fluorescent x-rays. The plasma then transmits the fluorescent rays easily. Subsequently, the photon ener-

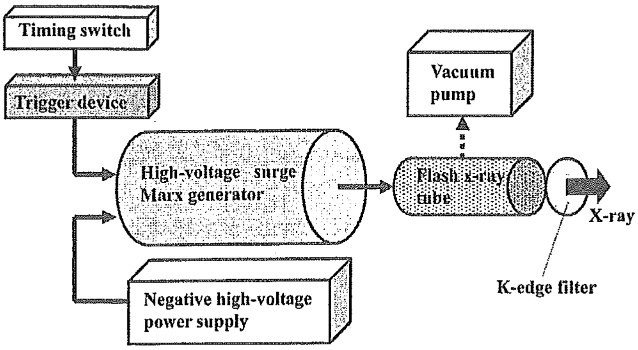

Fig. 1 Block diagram of the compact quasimonochromatic flash x-ray generator.

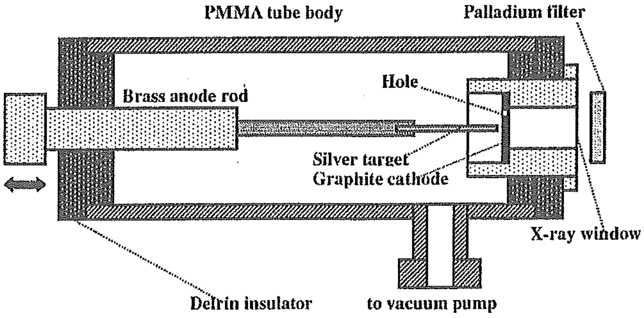

Fig. 3 Schematic drawing of the flash x-ray tube.

gies of the characteristic x-rays are determined by the target element, and the tube voltage should be increased in cases where the high-photon-energy characteristic x-rays are selected. However, it is difficult to increase the photon energies, since the maximum tube voltage is approximately 60 kV without using a high-voltage gap switch.

To increase the maximum tube voltage, a multistage surge Marx generator[15,16] is useful, because the output voltage is equal to the value of the condenser charging voltage multiplied by the stage number. In addition, characteristic x-rays can be produced by considering the angle dependence of bremsstrahlung x-rays when a cold cathode diode, in conjunction with the surge generator, is employed.

In this study, we developed a compact flash x-ray generator utilizing a silver-target radiation tube, and used it to perform a preliminary experiment for producing clean monochromatic x-rays.

2 Experimental Setup

2.1 *High-Voltage Circuit*

Figure 1 shows a block diagram of a compact monochromatic flash x-ray generator. This generator consists of the following components: a constant high-voltage power supply, a surge Marx generator with a capacity during main discharge of 425 pF, a thyratron trigger device for the surge generator, a turbomolecular pump, and a flash x-ray tube. Since the electric circuit of the high-voltage pulse generator employs a polarity-inversion two-stage Marx line[13,14] (Fig. 2), the surge generator produces twice the potential of the condenser charging voltage. When two condensers inside of the surge generator are charged from −50 to −70 kV, the ideal output voltage ranges from 100 to 140 kV.

2.2 *X-ray Tube*

The x-ray tube is a demountable diode type, as illustrated in Fig. 3. This tube is connected to the turbomolecular pump with a pressure of approximately 1 mPa and consists of the following major devices: a rod-shaped silver target 3.0 mm in diameter, a disk cathode made of graphite, a polyethylene terephthalate (Mylar) x-ray window 0.25 mm in thickness, and a polymethyl methacrylate (PMMA) tube body. The target-cathode space was regulated to 1.0 mm from the outside of the x-ray tube by rotating the anode rod, and the transmission x-rays are obtained through a 1.0-mm-thick graphite cathode and an x-ray window. In Sommerfeld's theory,[17] because bremsstrahlung rays are not emitted in the opposite direction to that of electron trajectory (Fig. 4), silver Kα rays can be produced using a 30-μm-thick palladium K-edge filter. In the K-series characteristic x-ray irradiation, Kα rays are left by absorbing Kβ rays to perform the preliminary experiment for producing clean monochromatic x-rays and to confirm the filtering effect.

3 Results and Discussion

3.1 *Tube Voltage and Current*

Tube voltage and current were measured using a high-voltage divider with an input impedance of 10 kΩ and a

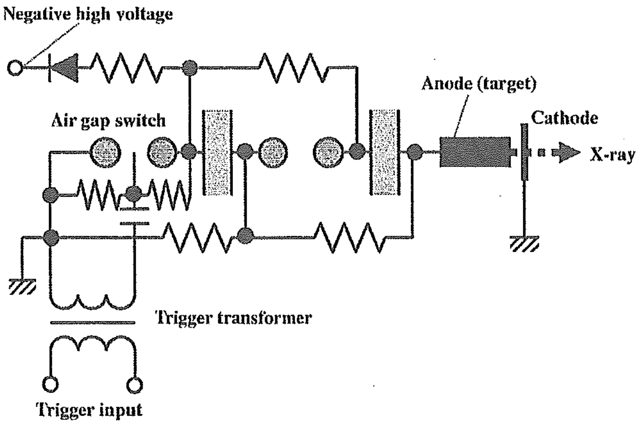

Fig. 2 Circuit diagram of the flash x-ray generator.

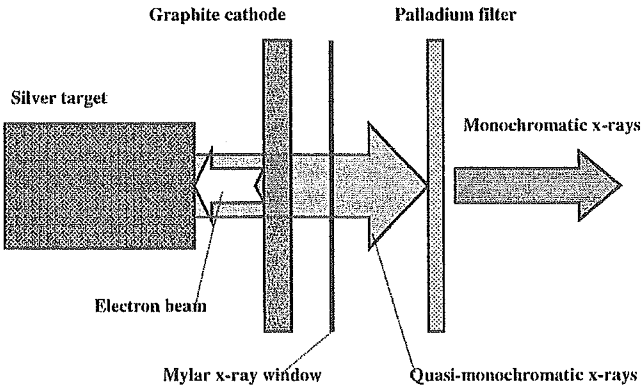

Fig. 4 Irradiation of silver Kα rays using a palladium K-edge filter.