

**The Pursuit of Noninvasive Glucose: “Hunting the Deceitful
Turkey”**

By John L. Smith

Ninth Edition: Revised, Expanded, and Final

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Preface to the Ninth Edition

The hopeful prediction that the sixth edition might have been the final update this subject needed was extremely incorrect, but age and health will make this edition my very last. I would like to see someone carry on this tradition, and I will provide whatever assistance I can to anyone who is willing to try.

While much of the new effort has indeed been directed toward continuous “wearable” glucose monitoring, there has been no decrease in the number of new attempts to end this pursuit. The arrival of COVID-19 in early 2020 and its extension into 2022 certainly reduced the number of groups surviving, as it has affected many other areas of our lives. It has also provided some degree of excuse for groups whose progress has not been up to expectations, and allowed a few of the groups to pursue activities with even greater press appeal than this topic—a few examples are provided.¹

For 35 years, I have championed noninvasive glucose measurements. I have worked hard to help make technologies (mine and others’) work, only to see them all fail. I have repeatedly been misled, lied to, followed false leads, and had my hopes dashed along with those of everyone else who thought someday this grand idea could work. As in all previous editions, there have been numerous new patents, publications, and press releases in all the areas covered below, including breath, RF impedance, near-infrared, mid-infrared, photoacoustic, PPG, Raman, saliva, sweat, and tears. There is no attempt to list all of these, that would take a much larger and less interesting manuscript. Instead, only the truly new, the very loud, and any promising ones are described here.

As before, all new content has been entered in colored type (simple editing corrections are not so indicated). Because I am older and less patient, I have decided to do away with

¹ An egregious example of a glucose company going into questionable areas is that of Decision Diagnostics, a company that manufactures “generic” test strips to work in others’ meters, and that was twice in litigation with LifeScan related to this activity. In mid-2020, the company said it had adapted its glucose testing technology to measure COVID-19 antigens, and could do so with a fingerstick blood test strip called “GenViro!™”. The stock price shot up twentyfold, but the statements were not true, and in addition to investor lawsuits against the company, as of this writing, CEO Keith Berman was still awaiting criminal trial for securities fraud.

the index. This is a pdf document, and everyone should know by now how to use “control-f” to find any word in such a document (you will have to spell it correctly, though, which may present a challenge for some of the newer companies like Mymonx).

A growing trend in the past decade has been the increase in attempts to mine the pulse wave (see “PPG” below) for both glucose and noninvasive blood pressure information—indeed, several groups appear to have migrated primarily to the pursuit of the latter after not succeeding with the former, but to date, results have been no more promising. Another trend that has intensified in recent years is the use of radio frequency measurements—whether by impedance, absorption, or changes in other parameters, but a strong concern remains that all these approaches will be severely complicated by variations in hydration that affect bulk properties of tissue (please see the section on water redistribution under “Specificity”).

The tests (at least for a spectroscopic method) way below have been augmented from the ones in the earlier editions. Ignore these at your own peril!

Emphasis on the large players in the broader tech field (Apple, Google, Samsung, and Microsoft) has continued, and even though the furor surrounding the Last Big Event (Google’s touted but ill-fated contact lens) has abated, others have leaped into that void.

After too many years of looking into noninvasive glucose technologies, I will repeat below what may be an overly skeptical classification system for new ideas (this section has been re-inserted by popular request):

1. Holy cow, not this again! This technology has been investigated before (maybe five or ten times), and the investigators have always run up against the same roadblocks.
2. This is an old idea revived by researchers who think they have discovered that the earlier investigators “quit too soon,” or think they have a unique insight into why an idea investigated multiple times before failed each time.
3. This is a new and possibly unique idea, but there is no scientific basis on which it could reasonably provide accurate glucose measurements.

4. This is something that has not been explored before, has a reasonable basis in science, and there is no *a priori* reason why it could not yield glucose results. I live for these; examples were FoviOptics, (where I came out of retirement to spend two years of my life and gained a substantial long-term capital loss tax carryforward as a result of exercising options for founders' stock before learning why it did not work), GlucoLight, with a new perspective on a previously investigated technique, and Zyomed's re-investigation of near-infrared spectroscopy with dramatically-enhanced signal-to-noise measurement techniques. The point is that these *could* have worked!

5. This will work!

To date, I have seen hundreds of ideas that fall into categories 1 and 2, quite a few that fit into category 3, and four or five in category 4. I am still waiting to hear of something in category 5, but a large number appear each year where each instigator feels strongly they are.

["Will the Noninvasive Glucose Monitoring Revolution Ever Arrive?"](#)¹

To aid those still determined to try, my guidance of the disciplines where in-depth knowledge is required for a reasonable chance at success is repeated here:

- The engineering disciplines related to your primary technology, e.g., optics, electronics, software, mechanical engineering, etc.
- Biochemistry, especially knowledge of the glucose molecule and its relation to the chosen field of technology.
- Physiology, especially the distribution of glucose in fluids and tissue.
- Metabolism, especially glucose sources and sinks.
- Diabetes, especially aspects of the disease that will affect your technology—the more understanding of endocrinology, the better.

¹ A note about Internet links. At the risk of reading like a [Wikipedia](#) entry, the first appearance of companies, groups, and systems that were current or have persistent links as of 2022 were provided with links that mostly survive into the .pdf edition you are reading. Many of these groups are ephemeral, and some don't survive beyond a single initial press release, so please accept the reality that quite a few of these will be dead ends. Any that were known to have already disappeared by the time of writing have been deleted.

- The history of noninvasive investigations, especially in your technology field—what didn't work and why.
- The regulatory requirements for a diagnostic device, and the evolving structure of the market for existing and new devices.

The most optimistic evaluations of earlier investments indicated the need to spend a minimum of five years and raise 25-30 million dollars to be ready to place a device on the market. No matter how rapidly the market would embrace a new noninvasive device, time and money that must be allocated for regulatory approval, manufacturing scale-up, establishing a distribution network, and educating both patients, providers, and insurers about the new system, which will all require additional resources and funding. Business plans that ignore these realities may seem attractive, but will not withstand the scrutiny of experienced investors.

As a guide, here is a possible hierarchy of glucose measurement systems, ranked by user desirability (green font=actually exists/existed):

1. Wearable, totally noninvasive, factory calibrated, never replaced, no consumables (ideal for patients, but possibly the worst version for a manufacturer unless it sold for at least \$10,000).
2. Tabletop, totally noninvasive, factory calibrated, no consumables.¹
3. Wearable, minimally invasive (CGM style), factory calibrated, not replaced.
4. Wearable, minimally invasive, factory calibrated, replaced every 14 days (DexCom G6/G7 Abbott Libre 2/3).
5. Wearable, minimally invasive, user fingerstick calibrated, not replaced.
6. Wearable, minimally invasive, user fingerstick calibrated, replaced every 3-7 days (Medtronic Guardian; DexCom STS, Seven, G4-5; Abbott Navigator).
7. Wearable, totally noninvasive, user fingerstick calibrated, replaced daily (Nemaura, if it works as advertised).
8. Wearable, minimally invasive, user fingerstick calibrated, replaced daily (Nemaura, if it has some skin irritation).

¹ Maybe not this highly rated, we'd need to see one that actually works.

9. Inserted under skin, factory calibrated, not replaced.
10. Inserted under skin, factory calibrated, replaced every six months.
11. Inserted under skin, daily user fingerstick calibrated, replaced every 3-6 months (Senseonics Eversense).
12. Tabletop, daily user fingerstick calibrated, no consumables.
13. Tabletop, daily user fingerstick calibrated, consumable (Dream Beam, Integrity Applications, if either worked).
14. SMBG fingerstick, meter, factory calibrated strips. (beginning ~1982)
15. SMBG fingerstick, meter, user calibrated strips (Eyetone, Ames Reflectance Meter). (1964)
16. SMBG, fingerstick, strips visually read. (Dextrostix)(1964)
17. Urine test strips. (1941)
18. Hospital lab test. (earlier)

For all the wearable versions, wristwatch/button size is great, 2" x 2" x 1/2" is OK, the size of a deck of cards is marginal. For all the fingerstick calibration systems, calibration once every 6 months is great, calibration once/month is OK, once/week is marginal, and once/day would generally be viewed as unacceptable.

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¹ [Glenn Elert](#), who will probably be writing the wonderfully instructive and readable [Physics Hypertextbook](#) as long as he is alive, taught me to add this statement. He also suggested including the Latin phrase *Opus in profectus*: “work in progress.”

Foreword

This is a compilation of experiences and investigations, now stretched over 35 years and born of a combination of scientific curiosity, dedication to people affected by a chronic, life-threatening disease, and dogged determination to find a solution to the most difficult technical challenge encountered in a long career. It is not, perhaps, as difficult or fraught with problems as realizing time travel or finding the final “grand unifying theory” of physics¹, but it is the more tantalizing because it has seemed for decades that the solution was always “just around the corner,” or at most, “just over the horizon.”

Although much of the content is now quite dated, it is still included for new readers as a historical perspective of the duration of this pursuit. I participated in development and evaluation of many of the older technologies (and even a few of the new ones) described here while employed at several companies directly or peripherally involved in glucose measurement, and I have consulted for the inventors or investors of many others. In the text, I will describe many of the technologies, their capabilities and (especially) their limitations for measuring glucose. I will articulate three very important “Laws of Noninvasive² Glucose” (one with several subsections), and list tests which can be applied to spectroscopic and other techniques. Much of the description is technical, since it is the subtle technical failings of the approaches that generally lead to their demise.

Nontechnical readers should still try to read through these—the conclusions are valid, some of the reasoning may be helpful, and there is certainly value in them as cautionary tales. Where companies have made a splash, or serve to illustrate the behaviors that were exhibited by many of those in this field, they will be described in some detail. In other cases, simple lists of the investigators will serve to illustrate how many times a similar approach has been attempted.

¹ The long-sought system for reconciling General Relativity and quantum mechanics that caused Einstein so much heartache in his later years.

² Although I will try to follow the punctuation rule that short prefixes such as “un-” and “non-” are generally unhyphenated unless confusing, the term appears equally often as “non-invasive,” and this can complicate searches, depending on the sophistication of the search process used. When searching patents, for instance, both forms must be included for most search engines.

Although I do not (yet) have a diagnosis of diabetes, it has reached epidemic proportions in this country, and is, as the standard of living rises elsewhere, increasingly felt more equally around the world. After spending years devising instruments that measure blood glucose and participating in the explosive growth of the home blood-glucose monitoring industry in the 1990s, the need for a device that would allow people to measure their glucose without pain or trauma is as clear to me as it is to people who would use it. As will be described here, it is not through lack of effort, creativity, entrepreneurialism, or funding that no solution has yet been found. Nor is it due to a deficiency of craftiness, manipulation or chicanery. The immense market size (still estimated worldwide at well over ten billion dollars in 2022), together with the pent-up demand by millions of patients, will promise a financial success for the organization that finally solves this problem. A device of acceptable accuracy, of reasonable size, and at reasonable cost, would still be a medical and commercial success, but see all the cautions that follow below. For these reasons, hope springs eternal in the hearts of scientists, entrepreneurs, opportunists and charlatans alike.

One of the most disturbing aspects of this field has been perennial announcements by fledgling companies that the problem has been solved, and that people with diabetes will no longer have to stick their fingers.¹ These have been premature and, almost without exception, were meant to generate “hype” in order to increase awareness of a company that is trying to raise money, but even more frequently, they raise false hopes in people who need the product. News media have never been able to resist reporting these “end-of-finger stick-testing” stories, and they have a fresh audience each year, as hundreds of thousands of people are newly diagnosed with diabetes. Each group gradually tires of the premature announcements and develops a level of cynicism. As I will detail, no successful device has yet been developed, and any real prospects for one remain in the future. Another cause for concern in this field is that, in all too many cases, the same technology has been picked up and investigated after others have determined that it will not succeed. Because there has been little previous accounting of these multiply-

¹ It brings to mind the continued appearance of articles in popular science magazines about the soon-to-be affordable car that converts into an airplane to fly swiftly over traffic jams. See <https://www.popularmechanics.com/technology/infrastructure/g2021/history-of-flying-car/>.

investigated approaches, investigators and investors alike have few guideposts to direct them.

This book will be of interest primarily to those who have participated in this enduring quest, those who seek to invest in the field, or perhaps to those who have heard too many false promises about the “coming noninvasive revolution.” Many of the illustrations, (and no small amount of the information presented here) have been “borrowed” from the experiences and websites of others who have preceded me in this field, most notably David Mendosa, who maintained for many years an accurate list of participants in the noninvasive glucose field while chronicling the history of glucose monitoring.

This book is not intended as an “exposé” or as a “tell-all;” the personal experiences detailed here are provided for the purpose of providing deeper insight into the thoughts and processes of those who have engaged in this corner of scientific exploration and as guidance for those who may follow. It is also not intended to be an encyclopedic accounting of every group or every technique explored—some never crossed my path, while others are simply repetitions of those detailed here. The breadth of those described, however, should indicate the extreme range of investigations in this field.

I am forever indebted to my late wife, Susan, for her expert editing and for enduring my tormented existence over the entirety of this pursuit, and to my reviewers: Keichi Aoyagi, [Sam Perone](#), [Jennifer Hahamian](#) and the late [David Mendosa](#). The content is as accurate as memory and retrospective research will allow. There is undeniably bias, and the strong emotions arising from many failed attempts (mine and others’) cannot be denied. Where there are errors, they are exclusively mine. Some of the stories may bring a degree of chagrin or embarrassment to those involved; the details are included only to provide full flavor for what transpired. If anyone described here feels he has been wronged, misrepresented, or insulted, I apologize, but I do not recant.

[Author’s note: “Hunting the Deceitful Turkey” is a short story by Mark Twain (Samuel Clemens) that describes his boyhood experience of pursuing a turkey who allows him to repeatedly approach her, only to rush off as he comes near. It is appended to the main text.]

Table of Contents¹

Preface to the Ninth Edition	ii
Foreword	vii
Introduction and Background	1
A Brief History of Blood Glucose Monitoring	2
“IDM”	14
Why is Noninvasive Such a Big Deal?	17
Noninvasive Glucose: Background and Definitions	20
Resources	27
Know the Enemy	32
A Few Notes about Regulations	36
Wellness Devices	39
Patents	42
It Ain’t Necessarily So	45
Measurement Techniques	47
Spectroscopic Techniques	47
Near-infrared	49
The Reference Problem	57
Mid-Infrared Emission	59
Mid-Infrared	61
Stimulated Emission/Stimulated Raman	63
Raman Spectroscopy	64
Terahertz Spectroscopy	68
Photoacoustic Spectroscopy	69
Magic (for comic relief)	72
Optical Rotation	72
Optical Rotation in Tissue	80
Light Scattering	81
Transdermal Techniques (and other trans-membrane techniques)	83
The Retina	90
Saliva	104
Breath	107
Hypoglycemia Monitors	113
Tying Ideas to New Technologies	116
Why Does It Keep Going On?	119
What Makes Everyone Think Their Approach Works?	122
Oral Glucose Tolerance Tests	122

¹ This monograph has now been edited using the following versions of Microsoft Word: 2003, 2007, 2010, 2013, 2016, and 2019. As anyone with experience using multiple revisions of this application knows, some of the features that were incorporated in earlier versions become problematic in later revisions. Every attempt has been made to make the page numbers accurate, but some oddities, such as the formatting of the table of contents, will likely remain.

Correlation	124
Clarke Error Grid	127
Emotional Considerations	134
Tests of Technologies	137
Individual Regression	142
More about Calibration	143
Individual vs. Universal Calibration	146
Clinical Studies	147
Why Don't People Communicate the Results of their Work?	149
Technologies and Groups	150
Near-Infrared: The 800-Pound Gorilla	151
Other Approaches	188
Transdermal Measurements	188
Pulse Oximetry Related Measurements	193
Pulse Wave	194
Nuclear Magnetic Resonance (or MRI)	205
Microwave Spectroscopy	205
Subdermal Reporters	206
Radio Frequency/Impedance	210
Microporation	226
Optical Coherence Tomography	228
Thermal and "Combination" Techniques	234
Evanescent Wave Spectroscopy	241
Fringe Players	247
Summary	251
Appendix A	253
About the Author	255

Introduction and Background

John Whitehead, grandson of the founder of what was then the world's largest clinical laboratory instrument company (named at that time "[Technicon Instruments](#)"), was visibly excited. The year was 1982, and the picture he was holding was a wristwatch, displaying "Blood Glucose = 107." "Wouldn't that be great!" he bubbled, "No more trips for diabetics to the doctor to measure blood sugar, no more need to stick a needle in your finger to make measurements at home." The only problem then, and for at least the next 40 years, was that it didn't work.

To understand the background and driving force for this elusive technology, it is necessary to understand the nature and impact of the disease that created it. Diabetes is a condition in which the body's natural control of blood sugar (glucose) has been lost. Whether it's termed type 1 (previously known as "juvenile-onset"), type 2 ("adult-onset"), or the gestational diabetes that is a complication of pregnancy, the end result is the same—glucose may be present in the blood in dangerously low ("hypoglycemic") or high ("hyperglycemic") amounts, and without a means of measuring glucose, treatment is a dangerous guessing game of taking pills, injecting insulin, or deciding how much and what kind of food to eat.

Since diabetes touches almost every family at some time, most people are familiar with the long-term complications of the disease: eye damage, kidney damage, loss of feeling in the extremities, slow healing of wounds and frequently, amputations of toes, feet, or legs; and often most seriously, cardiovascular disease. If type 2 patients adhere strictly to a proper diet, exercise, medication and make measurements of blood glucose where needed to adjust medication dosages and make themselves aware of the results of these efforts, they are able to maintain their health, and indeed, lead relatively normal lives. If simple, inexpensive, reliable and painless tests were available, they could make those measurements as well and as often as required.

A Brief History of Blood Glucose Monitoring

The disease has been known since ancient times, and because high levels of blood glucose will also cause the kidneys to spill glucose into the urine, it's said that Chinese physicians used to test for the disease long ago by seeing if ants were attracted to sugar in a patient's urine. Testing urine for glucose as a diagnosis for diabetes has been done for over a century (before modern chemical techniques, *tasting* a urine sample was even a valid test), but allowing patients to test their urine as a means of monitoring blood glucose is more recent. In 1941, the Ames Division of Miles Laboratories (the division name reportedly came from that of the president, a physician named Walter Ames Compton), in Elkhart, Indiana, introduced a tablet based on a standard chemical test for certain sugars involving copper sulfate, called Benedict's solution. One of these "Clinitest" tablets could be added to a few drops of urine, and the resulting color, from bright blue to orange, compared to a series of printed colors on the instruction sheet and the approximate level of glucose in the urine estimated.¹



Urine testing for glucose, however, has very serious problems. When a person first develops diabetes, the level of glucose in urine is a reasonable indication of excessive

¹ These tablets are still sold in the U.S. but may be more commonly used today by winemakers to measure the amount of "residual sugar" in a fermented wine than to determine sugar in urine. Sugars in wine include both glucose and fructose, which are both determined by the reaction used in these tablets. In 1997, I completed an extension course in winemaking at UC Davis, and had a question from a professor there about using glucose test strips to measure residual sugar in wine. I advised him that the Miles/Bayer Encore QA was the only test strip that would give accurate results including both glucose and fructose because it used the "hexokinase" enzyme (almost all other test strip using glucose oxidase or dehydrogenase enzymes would measure glucose but not fructose), but it would need calibration because wine composition is very different from blood. When he asked my qualifications to answer his question, I told him "I'm the chief

amounts in the blood; however, because both normal and low blood glucose levels result in no glucose in urine, it is never possible to assess those blood levels using urine tests. As the disease progresses over time, it becomes much less reliable as a marker of high blood glucose. Even early on, it's never an accurate measure, and even though improved testing devices ("dipsticks") have been developed over the years, it's never been more than a "semi-quantitative" test. To get accurate values, it's necessary to measure the amount of glucose in the blood itself, and this has long been done in doctors' offices and laboratories. However, for people with diabetes to maintain healthy levels of glucose, there has always been a need for simple, accurate tests they could perform at home.

In 1964, after developing many dipstick tests for urine, Ernest Adams of Ames developed a practical test strip for measuring glucose in blood named Dextrostix, after dextrose, another name for glucose. Instead of using a chemical reaction to measure glucose, as Clinitest had done, Dextrostix used a biochemical reaction with an enzyme called glucose oxidase, which reacted with glucose to produce hydrogen peroxide. The hydrogen peroxide produced a color from another chemical called o-tolidine, and the amount of color on the strip after exposing it to a drop of blood was a good measure of the amount of glucose present. At first, the amount of color was simply compared to a series of printed colors on the package label, and the glucose concentration was estimated by color comparison. The procedure was not trivial but could be mastered for home use by people with reasonable dexterity and visual acuity:

- Freely apply a large drop of capillary or venous blood sufficient to cover entire reagent area on printed side of strip.
- Wait **exactly 60 seconds**. (Use sweep second hand or stopwatch for timing.)
- Quickly wash off blood (in 1 or 2 seconds) with a sharp stream of water, using a wash bottle and blot **once** gently on a lint-free paper towel.
- Read result within **1 or 2 seconds** after washing. Hold the strip close to the Color Chart. Interpolate if necessary.

scientific officer of the world market-leading blood glucose company, Adjunct Professor of Chemistry at San Jose State University where I teach a course called "The chemistry of wine," and owner of a small winery in California's Sierra Foothills." The Encore QA was only on the market for a short time; it was rumored to have shelf-life limitations.



The major limitation to this approach, aside from the blood volume, the timing and manipulation involved, is that visual acuity and the ability to perceive color accurately decrease with age. And since people with diabetes are especially prone to cataracts (darkening and solidification of the lens in the eye), those who most needed to perform the test were least able to do it without assistance.

As it turned out, Dextrostix were good enough that better accuracy could be obtained by making an electronic measurement of the amount of color on the strip, and at least three meters were developed to do so. The first, developed at Ames by Anton Clemens, was called the Ames Reflectance Meter, or A.R.M. According to interviews with Clements, he was ordered to drop the project several times but somehow managed to bring it to the market, and the first electronic blood glucose device could be purchased in about 1970 for about \$400. Unfortunately, it had some reliability problems, mostly from its rechargeable lead-acid batteries, and its use didn't become widespread. It appears that the knob on the right could select among scales with different ranges, as indicated in the lower picture.



The next electronic strip reader to appear was in about 1972, called the Eyetone, and was manufactured by a Japanese company, Kyoto Dai-ichi (which later changed the company name to [Arkray](#)). It also read Dextrostix, but used a plug-in AC adapter for power instead of batteries.



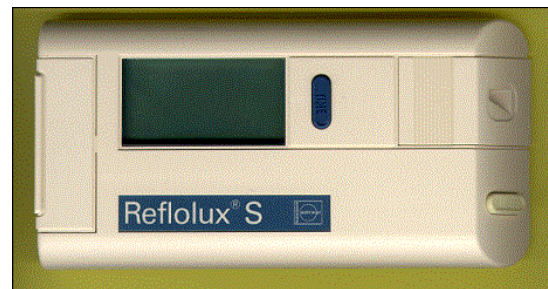
In about 1979, Kyoto Dai-ichi introduced an improved Dextrostix meter with a digital readout, called the Dextrometer.



Around 1981, Miles (the successor name to Ames) introduced the Glucometer, which incorporated a technically correct but overly large “integrating sphere” from the Eyetone

system to make reflectance readings, also with Dextrostix strips. This provided a genericized name that made all such future devices come to be known as “glucometers.”

Boehringer Mannheim, which had developed a parallel blood glucose test strip for visual color comparison called the Chemstrip bG, kept pace by introducing a meter to read the strips, the Accu-Chek bG in about 1982. An early version (that may have read an earlier version of the strip) was developed by the BioDynamics Company in Indianapolis and introduced as the StatTek in 1974, and that company was quickly purchased by Boehringer. The Chemstrip bG was preferred by many over Dextrostix because the blood could be wiped off the strip (with a cotton ball) after a minute’s contact instead of washing off with water. Later versions of the meters were called Accu-Chek in the U.S. and “Reflolux” overseas.



-/-

West J Med. 1982 March; 136(3): 275.

Stat-Tek Glucose Analyzer for Diabetes

QUESTION:

Is intermittent self-monitoring of blood glucose using the Stat-Tek glucose analyzer an acceptable practice for diabetes?

OPINION:

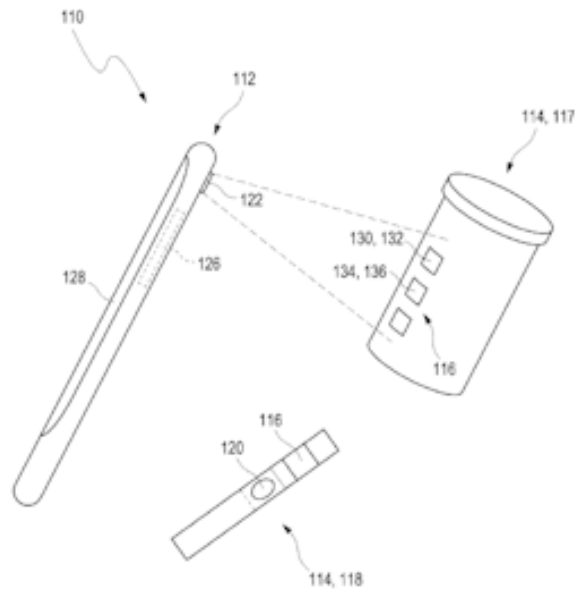
It is the opinion of the Advisory Panels on General and Family Practice, Internal Medicine, Pathology and Pediatrics that home self-monitoring of blood glucose by diabetics can be an effective and acceptable means of stabilizing control of some patients having insulin-dependent diabetes, including pregnant diabetics and others for whom strict control should be achieved. Among the factors to be considered are (1) the motivation and reliability of the patient, (2) the need for periodic quality control checks and (3) cost of various home monitoring systems.

THE WESTERN JOURNAL OF MEDICINE 275



There was a problem with Chemstrip bG, though. Some people (especially those with eye damage from diabetes) couldn't match the colors on the vial with the color of the strip after a test to get their blood glucose result. A recent patent application published by Roche (the successor to Boehringer), US 2020/0242809, solves that problem in a way

that wasn't available in that era—you take pictures of the vial and the strip with a smartphone and have that device calculate the best match to give a glucose result.¹



LifeScan² entered the market in about 1981, with a meter (first called Glucocheck, then GlucoScan) developed in England by Medistron and with test strips developed in Japan by the Eiken corporation—the first product in which the meter wasn't preceded by a strip intended for visual comparison³. That product was also intended to have blood washed off the strip, but on the night before introduction of the product at a national diabetes meeting, it was discovered on testing the first strips delivered by the reagent manufacturer that the blue dye formed from glucose also washed off the strip with the

¹ The use of smartphones to measure optical test strips was further developed by researchers at the National University of Taiwan (and iXensor Co. Ltd.) with their “PixoTest,” described in US20200080942 and [“Design, fabrication, and feasibility analysis of a colorimetric detection system with a smartphone for self-monitoring blood glucose,”](#) Journal of Biomedical Optics 24(2), 027002 (February 2019).

² LifeScan's original company name was Diabetech—that name resurfaced with [a company in Dallas, TX](#), making wireless monitors and diabetes management systems. The company moved to Sausalito, CA, and in 2009, marketed the [Glucomon](#) system. It reappeared again in 2015 as “Diabetech” with two “ts”, apparently out of the U.K., with a blog and a tagline “WHERE DIABETES AND TECHNOLOGY MEET.”

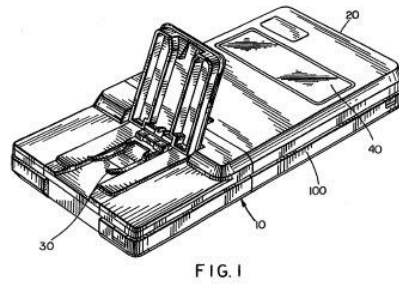
³ Interestingly, LifeScan's original business plan was to produce test strips for use in meters offered by other companies. The irony of this became evident when two companies began to sell strips in 1993 that worked in LifeScan's One Touch meters. Since the strips infringed LifeScan's patents, extended patent infringement litigation, in which I was intimately involved, resulted in their effective removal from the market, but not before one of the companies sold over \$100 million worth of test strips in just a year. Ironically, this was repeated twenty years later in 2012-2014, when two different companies brought out test strips that worked in LifeScan's One Touch Ultra electrochemical systems.

blood! Ray Underwood, the founding vice president of engineering, experimented with blotting paper he found in his hotel room and found that acceptable results could be obtained if the strip was blotted with *just the right amount* of pressure.



Some of the early GlucoScan meters had their own reliability problems, but they sustained the company until it was purchased by Johnson & Johnson in 1986 and introduced radically new technology in 1987 with the One Touch meter and strip.¹ The meter shown below at the left is the original One Touch meter, with the One Touch II, then the One Touch Basic (No photographs of the original One Touch meter have been located, but the picture below came from [U.S. Patent 5,379,238](#).)

¹ One of the reasons the One Touch was so successful, in addition to its freedom from user technique variations, was that it was the first meter to provide truly accurate measurements in the critical low end of glucose concentrations, where patients are in acute danger from hypoglycemia. While a glucose value of 70 mg/dL is considered normal, 60 mg/dL can mean that the patient is hypoglycemic and nearing dangerously low levels. Most of the earlier measuring systems (and many of the later ones) provided poorer accuracy in this critical region, while the One Touch, where the meter examined every test strip before blood was applied to it, gave accurate results even at very low levels.



The One Touch was the first of what LifeScan termed “second generation” blood glucose meters, in that no timing, wiping, blotting, or washing of the blood was required. A strip was inserted into the meter, a drop of blood was placed on the strip with “one touch,” and the result was displayed in 45 seconds. Another “second-generation” meter in this category the same year was unique in that it used an “electrochemical” measurement (a reaction with glucose in blood that generated an electrical current related to the glucose concentration) instead of the “photometric” (color measurement) approach of all the earlier ones. It was called the Exactech, with a strip developed in England, manufactured by MediSense and marketed originally in the U.S. by Baxter, and came in the form of either a slim pen or a credit-card sized, thin plastic package. Early versions of the device had both accuracy and reliability problems, which hampered its early market acceptance.



Major suppliers of insulin have also shown interest over the years in both glucose monitoring and noninvasive measurements. Eli Lilly introduced a meter in about 1988, called the Direct 30-30. It used an electrochemical system with a membrane that

supposedly lasted for 30 days and completed a test in 30 seconds. It was withdrawn from the market a year or two later¹.

Throughout the 1990s, the blood glucose monitoring business was dominated by an oligarchy of four companies: LifeScan, Roche, Bayer, and Abbott; the “Big Four.”

Novo Nordisk, another large insulin company, acquired a number of technologies during the 1990s to provide a system for measuring glucose, including an electrochemical meter with a renewable surface, where a fresh layer of a carbon-paste electrode was exposed after each test by “shaving” off the old surface with a built-in blade².

Meters and strips have continued to evolve, with test times being reduced to only a few seconds, and blood samples as small as 0.3 microliters (Dextrostix used a drop of about 50 microliters, so the reduction in blood drop size has been about a factor of 150).

Although the market contraction described below has deeply impacted all these companies, Bayer was the first to formally exit by selling its glucose testing business to a division of Panasonic and changing its name to Ascensia. Panasonic had manufactured meters and test strips Bayer sold for decades. Roche has long rumored to be also spinning out its BGM business. LifeScan maintained a shrinking business until J&J sold it off to Platinum Equity (a private equity firm) in 2018, and had even rebranded J&J’s Animas insulin pump (which linked to the DexCom CGM systems) as “One Touch,” before discontinuing that product and exiting the insulin pump business in 2017.

All the leading systems today are based on electrochemistry, with subtle differences in technology of interest primarily to electrochemists. Meters and strips are still reimbursed at reduced rates by Medicare and virtually all insurers, and the “category,” as it’s called in the wholesale and retail drugstore business, is the modern equivalent of the original

¹ There were two conflicting versions of its market withdrawal. Lilly said that it was not sufficiently resistant to electrostatic discharges, while the original inventors claimed that the membrane was much too robust, lasted too long, and provided only a minimal income trail for Lilly.

² One of my last activities at LifeScan before retirement was to travel to Denmark to look at the technologies Novo Nordisk had acquired and was now preparing to abandon in order to focus on its core insulin business. LifeScan chose not to pursue any of them.

“razor/razorblades” paradigm with its meters, which are given away or sold at a loss, and the consumable strips, which still generate the (reduced) profits.

Consumers had long suspected that the test strips were extremely profitable, but it was only unintentionally acknowledged when J&J initiated a policy of placing its companies’ products in the “company stores” (where employees could buy baby shampoo and “Band-aid® Brand Adhesive Bandages,” (as the company insisted the product be referred to in print) at the product’s “standard cost,” the amount it cost to manufacture the product. One Touch strips appeared in these stores nationwide (J&J had at that time over 170 companies) for about five cents each, and the awareness of consumers of the level of profit involved was viewed with grave concern by LifeScan. Since the strips retailed at that time for sixty-five to seventy cents, a number of J&J employees were tempted into becoming minor entrepreneurs by re-selling test strips, until the policy was modified and a company store price closer to the wholesale price was established.

Recent Trends (as of 2023)

After at least two decades of studies urging people with type 2 diabetes to test their glucose regularly to prevent complications, the practice has been recently de-emphasized to a substantial extent. In addition to the increased acceptance of continuous glucose monitoring systems (“CGM”), the combination of cost containment, where lower levels of reimbursement are provided for diabetic supplies, together with the development of drugs which more effectively manage glucose levels¹, has contributed to a reduction in testing across the type 2 population. In addition, chain drug stores have begun to promote “private-labeled” blood glucose monitors made for them which carry the “CVS” or “Wal-Mart” Reli-On brands at lower prices, further lowering sales and margins for the established suppliers. While glucose monitors and strips were once a very profitable business (LifeScan’s net profit margin among Johnson & Johnson companies was exceeded only by the purely pharmaceutical operations in the glory days of the 1990s),

¹ These include “glucagon-like peptide,” or GLP-1 agonists like [Bydureon](#) from AstraZeneca, [Trulicity](#) and the long-awaited [tirzepatide](#) (Mounjaro) from Lilly, and [Victoza](#) and the new oral [Rybelsus](#) from Novo Nordisk; “dipeptidylpeptidase inhibitors” or DPP-4 drugs like [Januvia](#); as well as the “sodium-glucose transporter” or [SGLT2](#) inhibitor drugs like Farxiga and Jardiance from several suppliers.

the market contraction since about 2005 has resulted in less research, reduced sales forces, and more intense price competition among the established companies.

At one time, strips which cost no more than a few cents to manufacture sold for as much as \$1.00 each, but in 2013, the Medicare reimbursement was reduced to 21 cents/strip, and strip purchases under Medicare were subject to [competitive bidding](#), which together effectively placed a cap on strip prices. In 2016, the rate was further decreased to just under 17 cents per strip. It is likely that the decreased profitability of these companies will make it even harder for new blood glucose monitoring ideas to gain support and funding, and reduce the likelihood that a big company would be willing to acquire a promising startup (even a non-invasive monitor) company, at least unless such a technology were viewed as a threat to ongoing business or an irresistible opportunity for market share expansion. Either situation would require a much more well-developed technology than has appeared to date.

The two market leaders in CGM have recently shown interest in analytes other than glucose. For DexCom, US 2021/0267506 A1 “Evaluation of Data to Provide Decision Support for a Ketogenic Lifestyle,” coupled with this blurb “[DexCom plots course to bring real-time blood glucose data to Garmin fitness devices](#).” For Abbott, US 2021/0219885 A1 “Sensor Array Systems and Methods for Detecting Multiple Analytes, confirmed by “[CES 2022: Abbott CEO Robert Ford Announces New Biowearables Line For Consumers, Paving The Way From Measuring Glucose To Ketone, Lactate, Alcohol](#).” These explorations provide impetus for the often-touted “other analyte” capabilities of noninvasive technologies, but none of them approach the interest or potential sales volume of glucose.

“IDM”

As “big data” (the computerized, algorithmic analysis of data aggregated from many sources) has advanced, an even more fundamental change has appeared, which for a few years went by the term “[integrated diabetes management](#),” or IDM (sometimes also called “interconnected diabetes management”). While much of health care has been historically focused on treatment of diseases, and has gradually moved to prevention of

complications, effort shifted further to “outcomes,” where the patient’s long-term health is paramount, and health care providers integrate approaches which reduce cost both now and from future effects of disease.¹

Much of this effort was driven by increasingly large health-care insurance companies, who strive to stay profitable in the face of ever-rising costs, but also with the increasing involvement of government agencies, particularly Medicare, deciding what they will reimburse, and by how much. As the incidence of type 2 diabetes continues to rise, efforts have been initiated by government, health insurance companies, and even employers, to maintain a population with the best outcomes, and of course, least expensive health care. As type 2 diabetes is managed this way, it has become apparent that once-daily glucose tests are of decreased value. Yes, they give some guidance about how yesterday’s food was metabolized and how high glucose levels are after a night’s rest, but their value for altering behavior or adjusting medication types and dosages is minimal. Like every big data pursuit, what is needed is more information, and the way that is obtained is through continuous glucose monitoring (CGM).

[DexCom](#), which is the current leader in subcutaneous CGM systems, made headlines in 2016 by being the first company whose glucose results are allowed by the FDA to be used to set insulin dosages (the first “replacement” labeling, where CGM instead of finger stick results are allowed). In the same year, Abbott’s long-delayed CGM system, The FreeStyle Flash (also known since as the FreeStyle Libre) also received FDA clearance, and until the advent of DexCom’s G6 system, it was the only CGM advertised as “factory calibrated” so it didn’t require daily finger-stick calibration by the user. The clearance of its sensors for use up to 14 days further enhances the Libre’s marketability.

Even though earlier CGM sensors (DexCom G4, G5, and existing [Medtronic](#) systems) still needed to be calibrated by daily finger stick testing, they all provide a great deal of information for people with type 1 diabetes, where the need for testing is much more

¹ Several insulin pump manufacturers have linked their systems to the Dexcom G6 and G7 sensors to achieve a true closed-loop “artificial pancreas,” and the term “AID” (automated insulin delivery) has gained recent acceptance. Abbott’s second-generation Libre2 was introduced in 2020 **without** FDA clearance for AID, **but [it and the Libre3 system now have FDA clearance for inclusion in AID systems, and will be similarly linked up.](#)**

frequent as well as more urgent. At present, CGM is only widely reimbursed for people with type 1 diabetes, but with the increasing emphasis on “more results, more often,” the extension of this technology to type 2 diabetes is almost inevitable. DexCom made much of their cooperative relationship with Google Life Sciences (renamed “[Verily Life Sciences](#)”), and several patent applications (e.g., US20160235346, US20160235365) for that company’s “[bandage](#)” glucose sensor—~~that were rumored to be~~ (but turned out not to be) DexCom’s “G7” system—have appeared. If this approach can someday meet its ambitious cost-reduction goals, it could combine with IDM trends to demand inclusion of reimbursement for people with type 2 diabetes.

Adding up all these trends: less daily fingerstick testing, lower test-strip reimbursement, CGM, IDM, and AID, it is clear that the future of the traditional “strip-and-meter” glucose monitoring business is not bright. But there is a further, important implication for the noninvasive monitors described here—any which are intended for occasional, “episodic” use will become increasingly less favorably viewed, and it is reasonable to gamble a prediction that only continuous, “wearable” noninvasive monitors will have a real chance of being successful in the extended future.

Why is Noninvasive Such a Big Deal?

Everyone has had an experience, most of them unpleasant, involving sharp objects and blood.¹ Before home blood glucose testing became common, the only lancing device available was a sharp piece of stamped steel that made a painful and fairly deep cut in the fingertip.



In parallel with the development of blood glucose meters, lancing devices also evolved. Both small, disposable units and reusable “pens” with replaceable tips became commercially available, and these had the added advantage that the sharp point was hidden from view. They were also spring-loaded, so pushing a button replaced one’s own “stabbing” motion that was previously required to pierce the skin.² Another attempted

¹ I have never been a fan of needles, and the first day I went to work in 1962 at what was then the Pitman-Moore Division of Dow Chemical Company (which made human and veterinary pharmaceuticals), the company nurse dug around in my arm looking for a vein until I passed out. For a long time after that, I was reluctant to have blood drawn or have an injection for anything, so I was less than enthusiastic when Pitman Moore began to eye the burgeoning market for clinical chemistry (“diagnostic”) reagents. The first product requested was a solution of copper sulfate for use by the Red Cross at [blood donation](#) sites. When a drop of blood is gently placed into a deep-blue copper sulfate solution of just the right concentration, if the patient’s hemoglobin is high enough, it will be heavier than the solution and sink to the bottom (copper in the solution reacts with proteins in the blood to form an enclosing “bag” around the drop so it can float or sink without dispersing). I made the solution but resisted my supervisor’s request that I stick my finger to test it. Because I was never able to do it, the carefully-prepared flask of copper sulfate solution sat on a bench top in my laboratory until after I departed for graduate school in 1965.

² The first one I used was LifeScan’s original Penlet®, which used a single spring to both direct the point toward the skin and return it after penetration. While it seemed like a good idea for low cost and ease of manufacture, there was an unexpected consequence of the single spring: the lancet oscillated back and forth after firing, which could cause the sharp point to penetrate the skin several times before the motion finally stopped. I had seen this in my own finger (multiple tiny cuts in the tissue could be seen under a microscope after lancing with the device), and had to prove it to skeptical engineers by moving the device rapidly

“improvement” in lancing was a laser-based device originally developed in Russia and marketed here by Cell Robotics, but it was quite bulky, made a loud noise when used, and did not gain widespread acceptance.¹

Modern lancing devices have improved further, and most now feature adjustments to control depth of penetration of the needle (people who labor with their hands need a deeper puncture to find blood than office workers). Needles are smaller and sharper, and devices have been approved for “alternate site testing,” (obtaining blood from the forearm, upper arm, palm, thigh or calf); but ask those who test their blood glucose and many will say those sites sometimes hurt and can cause bruising. Add the natural dislike of needles to the actual pain produced, to the social unacceptability of droplets of blood and bloody test strips and meters (and concerns about blood-borne diseases), and it’s easy to understand why people have long looked for a measurement that doesn’t involve blood.

In the blood glucose monitoring industry, it is well accepted that there are three “C” terms that drive people’s willingness to test: Cost, Comfort and Convenience. The comfort (pain) advantage of a noninvasive technology is easily understood, and since very few proposed noninvasive approaches need a test strip that is consumed every time a test is performed, there is a possible cost advantage for both customers and insurance companies alike. The cost of meters, however, would most likely increase with a successful noninvasive approach—the projected cost for common noninvasive approaches varies from several hundred to many thousands of dollars.² Convenience includes such issues as how long a test takes, how obtrusive or visible the apparatus is, and whether a visible drop of blood is required to perform the test. This issue is more subjective and deals with the comfort level people have about testing in public, letting everyone know they have diabetes, and concerns about the sight of blood.

across a pad of writing paper as it was fired. When the top sheet of paper from the pad was held up to the light, multiple holes from the needle tracing the path of movement were clearly visible.

¹ In addition, one of my colleagues from LifeScan says he will never forget the faint smell of burning flesh and discomfort that accompanied its use.

² Most medical insurers, including Medicare, now reimburse patients for the cost of meters and test strips (usually with different reimbursement levels for type 1 and type 2 diabetes), and there are suppliers who will provide testing supplies to Medicare patients at no cost.

LifeScan's attitude toward noninvasive measurements was initially motivated by appropriate, if not entirely noble reasons.¹ The company's growth had been driven by a powerful technological breakthrough, the One Touch strip and meter, and the company figured that invasive measurements would be the next barrier to fall. As a result, they aggressively pursued every noninvasive opportunity, with the rule that anyone picking up a technology they abandoned would need to spend at least ten times what LifeScan had invested to bring it to reality. As the candidates fell away one after the other, and the same technologies were recycled by new groups who did not know why an approach had failed before, LifeScan began to adopt an attitude much like the other companies: "First, it might be a real opportunity, and it would certainly grow the market for us if we got it; but for sure, if one of the other companies gets it, it will devastate our business. Second, we have a very good, very profitable business, and we're not sure how we would make the same kind of money without a trail of consumable test strips." A similar perspective probably evolved in all the major companies, into more of a defensive posture: "We don't think anyone will ever make it work, but we have to be aware of what all the groups are doing, just in case." This resulted in new technology groups making the rounds of the "Big Four," describing their approach to increasingly skeptical technical management teams.

Naturally, there was suspicion on the part of the small companies struggling to develop the technologies that a big outfit like J&J might buy up a successful device and simply put it on the shelf to prevent it from destroying the very profitable business they had built. This concern was heightened because no big company will ever sign an agreement that requires them to market a successful technology coming from a collaboration or acquisition—they might indeed judge the damage to their bottom line to be more than the benefit to customers (or, they might succeed with *two* technologies and need to market the better one and shelve the other). To date, all of this is for naught, since no practical noninvasive device has yet been demonstrated.

¹ I was on the Management Board of the company from the launch of the One Touch until 1998, and I participated in the discussions and decision-making regarding LifeScan's attempts to access these technologies, as well as in their evaluation.

The dream of many of the inventors and startup companies is still to prove that their technology works well enough to be acquired by one of the big companies, who would then take it to the market, making the founders wealthy. As mentioned, the prospects for such a scenario have dimmed substantially in recent years.

Noninvasive Glucose: Background and Definitions

As home blood glucose monitoring became more commonplace from the early 1980s through the early 21st century, there was still resistance to its acceptance by many people, largely for the reason that, no matter how fast the test or how small the blood drop, there was no way to obtain a sample other than to stick a needle-sharp lancing device into part of the body to get blood. For all but a few, this causes pain, fear, apprehension, revulsion or other negative emotions, and many people just won't do it!¹

Considering the romantic notion of devices like Star Trek's Medical Tricorder, with its diagnostic scanner wand that instantly detected and reported everything that was wrong with a damaged crewman or alien, together with the dramatic recent advances in scanning and noninvasive medical therapies, it's easy to see why people have naturally expected that, by now, they'd be able to measure blood glucose without the need to draw blood. The reason they can't is that this has turned out to be one of the most difficult, recalcitrant, obstreperous, and devious problems that has challenged science and engineering.

With the increase in television advertising by some of the major players in the field, many people who do not use the devices mistakenly believe that the problem has been solved. In an attempt to make the devices appear more attractive in the ads, no customer is ever shown lancing a finger to obtain the drop of blood; instead, the meter is merely shown counting down and displaying a glucose result. "Spokespersonalities" like Patti

¹ There was at least one trained scientist who spent decades working for a blood glucose company conducting clinical trials, including evaluating a variety of lancing devices. As he approached retirement, he was diagnosed with type 2 diabetes. On a strict diet, he religiously took his blood glucose lowering medication, but would not stick his finger to perform a blood glucose test.

LaBelle and the late B.B. King still needed to stick their fingers (or forearms) every time they used a LifeScan One Touch meter!

Before launching into the history of noninvasive glucose, it's necessary to provide some classification of the various technologies. There are quite a few where clear categorizations can be made, some where the similarity is a little strained, and some that just fit no category at all. The technical descriptions will be beyond the understanding and outside the interest of some readers, but they are included to provide the backdrop for the way various attacks were mounted and why they failed. Readers who don't enjoy technology should skim the next few technical sections to get to the adventures and story-telling that follow.¹

Also, clarification is needed here to understand what will, and what will not, be described. There have been a large number of attempts to extend traditional invasive monitoring into *the most minimally invasive* technologies imaginable. Where the attempts have masqueraded as true noninvasive techniques, they will be covered for completeness. Where researchers have pursued the many implantable sensors, coated wires, "microneedles," and enzyme-covered skin piercing devices, those approaches will be excluded from this discussion. This is not meant as a slight, but as an attempt to place emphasis and scope properly on truly noninvasive approaches.²

¹ During my tenure at Technicon Instruments (now part of Siemens), Baker Instruments (now disappeared in a series of acquisitions by Serono, Amersham, and likely others), LifeScan, a total of more than 20 years consulting for many companies in the area before and after a brief stint at Fovioptics, I estimate that I have evaluated the approach of almost two hundred groups pursuing noninvasive glucose measurements. Granted, there were not nearly as many *unique* technological approaches to solving the problem, but there were more than that number of researchers, academics, scientists, engineers, startup companies, and others who took a tilt at this windmill over the same period. Wherever possible, I've tried to be generous to those who tried their best but failed, but it's not possible to be as kind to those whose motives were not as pure. This is of necessity a highly personal (and therefore biased) recounting of all I've seen in this arena, and it's impossible to be fair to all. Also, most of it is filtered through an increasingly imperfect memory and colored by the strong emotions that inevitably accompany any titanic struggle.

² For example, I first met George Wilson (now Distinguished Professor Emeritus at the University of Kansas) in graduate school at the University of Illinois in the late 1960s. I saw his implantable coated-wire continuous-sensing glucose technology at the iSense Corporation of Wilsonville, OR in 2004 (and later as both a focal point in a protracted patent infringement battle between AgaMatrix and Dexcom and a commercial device marketed by WaveForm Technologies), and I commend him for the decades of dedication, perseverance, and tenacity it took to get the technology to that point. Isense was sold to Bayer

To be clear about the definition, while insertion of a coated wire under the skin may be minimally invasive, and while it can give continuous glucose readings, it cannot be classified as noninvasive. A recurrent technological theme that inevitably goes by the code name “mosquito,” where *really tiny* needles (e.g., Molecular Devices, Kumetrix—(long gone), Sano Intelligence (acquired by [One Drop](#)), Sahara Energy, Inc., (renamed M Pharmaceutical Inc. in 2014—with the “eMosquito,”), possibly [KWatch](#), and Rosedale, (renamed [Intuity](#) Medical¹ and promoting a different approach to blood glucose determination) are inserted into the skin to withdraw small samples of blood or interstitial fluid, should similarly not be classified as noninvasive, and will not be addressed here.

It is also important to distinguish between monitors that can provide continuous readings and those where some patient activity is necessary to perform a test. While some noninvasive approaches seek to perform continuous measurements (*i.e.*, most all the “wristwatch” designs that will be described later), many are too large to wear or would require some preparation on the part of the patient: those are usually referred to as “episodic” (or “intermittent”) monitors. A lot of press has been generated in recent years by companies such as Abbott (TheraSense), Medtronic and DexCom for continuous (CGM) devices where the sensor is implanted under the skin. The advantage of this approach is that, like a wristwatch, it was eventually connected to an insulin pump to achieve the long-sought “artificial pancreas”²—a device that senses blood glucose and administers the amount of insulin necessary for normal control.

Continuous implantable sensors have had their own set of “teething” problems, but DexCom G6/G7 systems and Abbott’s Libre2 and 3 systems have since been proven reliable enough to connect to a pump and form a “closed-loop” system that can function

in 2008, reappeared as an independent company again in 2013. After an announcement of an apparently-failed exclusive licensing agreement with Debiotech in 2015, the patents, technology, and the former iSense facility were sold in early 2016 to AgaMatrix of Nashua, NH, and that company was subsequently renamed WaveForm Technologies, Inc.

¹ In 2016, Intuity finally gained FDA clearance for an all-in-one invasive blood glucose system, with lancing, strips and meter in one case, called “Pogo.” The product was launched in 2021.

² In September of 2013, Medtronic received FDA approval for the earliest version of a partial artificial pancreas (MiniMed 530G with Enlite system) with a “low-suspend” system that stops insulin delivery from a pump when the continuous monitor senses blood glucose values heading toward the hypoglycemic range.

as an artificial pancreas.¹ As described under the section on “reporter molecules,” anything inserted into the body that does not cause an immediate rejection reaction (this is helped by constructing it from “biocompatible” materials) will be quickly coated with a layer of protein. As the protein layer builds up, it can gradually reduce the amount of glucose the sensor “sees,” and cause a slower and generally lower response than the actual glucose level. At best, this effect limits the number of days a sensor will function reliably in tissue, and formerly required that the sensor be recalibrated at frequent intervals with a finger-stick meter. Also, there is frequently a period of time before the injury to tissue from insertion of a sensor resolves, delaying the time when reliable glucose results can be obtained. This time varies from one design to another, and possibly from one patient to another.

Once the response has stabilized, most of these devices still show periods of time when no valid results are generated, usually called “dropouts.”² The sensor operates properly when bathed in the fluid between cells (called “interstitial fluid”), and if it comes into firm contact with tissue, due to movement or postural changes, access to either glucose or oxygen (needed by DexCom systems, not by Abbott) from interstitial fluid can be restricted or cut off. When this happens, the sensor might report very low or even zero values for glucose and generate a false alarm for hypoglycemia. The convenience of continuous measurements (especially at night, when hypoglycemic episodes are usually not detectable by the patient) is significant, but unless a person is subject to these rapid swings, the cost of sensors and the need to replace them frequently has, to some extent, limited acceptance and continued use. Also, as patients have reported in trials, it may provide “too much information”—most minor glucose variations do not need attention, and as one patient remarked about alarms from the GlucoWatch, “It’s like having your wife or husband tell you you’re twenty pounds overweight—every five minutes!”

¹ The Insulet Omnipod insulin pump system, which at one time had an integrated blood glucose meter for test-strip testing, was also “open-loop.” In 2020, Insulet and Dexcom announced an agreement to integrate glucose sensors into Insulet’s Horizon system to make it into a closed-loop system, as was Tandem Diabetes Care’s much-anticipated Control-IQ system with a Dexcom G6 sensor in 2019.

² A number of patent applications have appeared, primarily from the three named companies, where mathematical algorithms have been devised to replace the missing data with re-calculated or “projected” glucose values.

As the first edition of this book was being written in 2006, many of the existing companies were in the process of changing strategy to pursue a new marketplace: post-surgical or post-traumatic monitoring in critical care units of hospitals. A practice that had been in place for some years, (known widely as the “[Portland Protocol](#)”) gained traction in about 2004. It indicated that patients, even those without diabetes, experience wide swings in glucose levels after serious damage to the body from trauma or surgery, and that recovery rates could be improved (and most important to the insurers, hospital stays could be reduced) if patients’ glucose was monitored continuously and the glucose level tightly controlled by what came to be called “IIT” (intensive insulin therapy).

At least the following companies began directing at least part of their efforts in this direction, often abandoning noninvasive monitoring for invasive techniques where a sensor (or a catheter inserted into a vein) is changed frequently: Luminous Medical (spun off from InLight Solutions), OptiScan Biomedical (now in [Chapter 11 bankruptcy](#)), Glumetrics, Glucon, and Echo Therapeutics (originally “Sontra”). None of these companies are still longer in operation, and some that [survived](#)¹ diverted their efforts toward a product for the European market, where regulatory hurdles are lower. This is partly because there have been reports of increasing risks to intensive care unit patients from hypoglycemia², including increased death rates, when blood glucose is aggressively controlled, and also partly because of increased restrictions placed on the approval of these systems by the FDA.

Techniques such as blister formation, abrasion of the skin to cause fluid leakage, and the like will also not be covered in these pages (with the exception of “microporation” techniques like that from SpectRx that generated a lot of interest). A closely related technology, reverse iontophoresis, will be described, because it *could* have been noninvasive, and the “GlocoWatch” created by far the greatest regulatory stir and patient

¹ Smith, J., Rice, M. [Why Have So Many Intravascular Glucose Monitoring Devices Failed?](#), J Diabetes Sci Technol. 2015, Vol. 9(4) 782–791.

² See NICE-SUGAR Study Investigators, Finfer S, Chittock DR, et al. [Intensive versus conventional glucose control in critically ill patients](#). N Engl J Med. 2009;360(13):1283-1297.

awareness of any noninvasive technique with the possible exception of the “Great Biocontrol Fiasco” (see below).

Another problem is that, what is noninvasive to one person is invasive to another. Consider, for example, a frequently-pursued approach: place a small amount of a compound under the skin whose (pick one) color, intensity, or fluorescence changes with the amount of glucose in nearby tissue. If it worked, the detection could be done noninvasively, but the act of inserting the compound is invasive, whether it’s tattooing or surgical implantation. These will be covered, but they mark the outer allowed boundary of invasiveness for these technologies.¹ By way of a definition, then, noninvasive blood glucose monitoring should be limited to a technique which produces no pain or discomfort to perform the test, involves no blood or other body fluid obtained by piercing the skin (more on this later), and does not require or cause any tissue damage, injury, or pain.

As mentioned, should someone succeed with a truly noninvasive glucose measurement, the payoff, although probably reduced from earlier estimates for reasons discussed above, would still be huge. Partly for that reason, almost every known analytical or physical measurement technique that could be used to infer the concentration of a substance has been applied to the noninvasive measurement of glucose. In addition, however, there seems to be an unnatural attraction for the obscure, esoteric or unusual approaches. Either in the specific, as described below, or in general, the less well-known a technique is, the more likely it seems to wind up being applied to the perpetual search for a valid noninvasive glucose measurement. This has led to everything from descriptions of technologies that the presenter clearly didn’t understand, to explanations that *no one* could understand, to clear attempts to obfuscate and confuse. There have been only a few serious examples of illegal or inappropriate activity connected to regulatory compliance or fundraising, and the marketplace eventually eliminates those with nothing real to offer.

¹ Note—it is devilishly hard to organize the presentation of what has been tried and why it didn’t work. Where only initial investigations have been reported, or a technique only popped up once, I’ll include the company or group name in the preliminary discussion of the technology. Where a technology has been multiply investigated, or has been the subject of controversy, I’ll give more detail in a later section.

There is another, slightly perverse driving force that keeps companies going in search of this “Holy Grail” past the point where their technological possibilities have been exhausted. Venture capitalists are a strange breed¹ and are motivated by receiving large returns on their investments, both for themselves and the limited partners who invest in their funds, and by their reputations among their peers and investors for selecting the most promising new investment areas (having the “Midas touch”). They are cautious, hesitant and unwilling to enter uncharted territory—unless another one has just ventured there. If a prominent firm makes an investment in a company in a new area, other new companies with aspirations in the same “space” receive an unexpected boost in their fortunes as many other investors attempt to jump on the bandwagon. An unfortunate comparison with the fabled behavior of lemmings is common.

Another aspect of the strange behavior of this subspecies is that some, once they have invested, are quite unwilling to admit a mistake, and will provide encouragement for the investigators to continue the pursuit even when the probability of success has plummeted. “Has the opportunity changed?” they will ask, and when the company’s CEO replies that it hasn’t, they’ll often say “Then, keep on trying.” In many cases, they will continue to make follow-on investments in a company to continue the pursuit, in hopes that they may eventually succeed by either developing a product, by selling the company to one of the giants in the industry, or by an initial public offering (IPO) of stock, where they can transfer their losses to new shareholders.

¹ My favorite joke about venture capitalists features one of the breed who died and was confronted by Saint Peter shaking his head at the pearly gates. “You probably weren’t aware of this,” he said, “but we have a quota system in heaven, and we’re currently at our limit for venture capitalists this month, so I’ll have to send you below.” the newcomer was told. Nonplussed, the sharp-witted investor saw an opportunity: “If I can create an opening by getting another venture capitalist to leave, can I take his place?” Saint Peter said he didn’t see why not, so the VC asked to use the Heavenly Microphone to address the angels. In a booming voice, he called out, “The cure for cancer has just been discovered in the southeast corner of Hell!” Immediately, a parade of VCs began running down the stairway in pursuit of a great new investment opportunity. As the last one passed, the new arrival fell in line and pursued them down the stairs. Saint Peter grabbed his arm, asking “Where are you going? I thought you wanted to create a place here in heaven?” “Yes,” he replied, but when I saw people from Kleiner Perkins, MedVenture, and Khosla Ventures going by, I decided there must be something to it!”

Resources

There are lots of sources, especially on the Internet, where noninvasive devices are described. Unfortunately, most of these are not actively maintained and list outdated descriptions of prototypes or press releases from years past. One that was carefully updated was *Mendoza on Meters*, part of a comprehensive set of websites put together by David Mendoza, who was a freelance writer and consultant. David had type 2 diabetes, but made no pretense of being a technical expert, and his website still has a badly outdated list of companies in this area.¹

There are other good sources of information that require subscriptions. The first is “[Diatribes - making sense of diabetes](#)” (free!), written by Kelly Close, a financial analyst and consultant to the healthcare industry, who also has type 1 diabetes. Another is [Diabetes Mine](#), created by Amy Tenderich. For those serious about the subject, there is also a paid subscription publication, [Closer Look](#). Another is [The Diabetic Investor](#) (\$950 for one year), written by David Kliff, an investment advisor, who was diagnosed with diabetes in 1994. David has followed the history of noninvasive monitoring and writes with quite a cynical eye toward claims made by companies participating in this market area, especially those with noninvasive technologies. One of his well-known assertions about this field is that “you can steal more money with a good PowerPoint presentation than with a gun.”

There are several publications that attempt to inform people about progress in noninvasive testing, but most have a poor track record for accurate or timely reporting. It is recommended that any report in either the popular press or diabetes magazines be viewed with jaundice, since most have been written either by paraphrasing an overly-enthusiastic press release or following an interview with a researcher excited by the early promising results of a new technique. Similarly, since a search of the YouTube site for “noninvasive glucose” will yield a number of video demonstrations of supposedly

¹ He also generously hosted the electronic version of this book on his website for over ten years and referred numerous inquiries from inventors and companies to me. His passing in 2015 was a loss to all people with diabetes.

working systems, these definitely need to be viewed with skepticism, especially ones where the inventor sticks his finger into a cardboard box and a glucose number appears on an attached laptop computer (such as <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RLZhSC-qsUg>).

A book was published in 2010: *In Vivo Glucose Sensing (Chemical Analysis: A Series of Monographs on Analytical Chemistry and Its Applications)*, edited by David Cunningham of Abbott and Julie Strenken of the University of Arkansas, which has thorough descriptions of many of the problems involved in developing both indwelling and noninvasive glucose sensors. It has an especially thorough description of the “foreign body response” to materials inserted into the body that is of special interest to those investigating indwelling sensors. Another book, published in 2006, that focuses on one specific technique is *Topics in Fluorescence Spectroscopy Volume 11 Glucose Sensing*, by Chris D. Geddes and Joseph R. Lakowicz, both at the University of Maryland. Another excellent reference published in 2009 is *Handbook of Optical Sensing of Glucose in Biological Fluids and Tissues*, edited by Valery V. Tuchin, CRC Press Series in Medical Physics and Biomedical Engineering.

Scientific publications about noninvasive glucose measurements appear in a diverse array of journals, but one that focuses on them is [Journal of Diabetes Science and Technology](#), published by the Diabetes Technology Society, founded in 2001 by David C. Klonoff, MD, Clinical Professor of Medicine at University of California, San Francisco. The society also sponsored an annual conference in San Francisco each October to November, where many of the potential noninvasive technologies were presented. It was often referred to as the “Klonoff Conference.” He has recently published a comprehensive review of minimally- and noninvasive measurement methods: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/19322968211007212>.

A 2020 not-overly-sophisticated review is “[Blood glucose monitoring- an overview of current and future non-invasive devices](#), Anmole S. Bolla, RonnyPriefer.” The article concludes with “Limitations of the study,” well-known to those who attempt this: “Currently, limitations of the study include insufficient amounts of published studies that adequately prove the reliability of certain non-invasive technologies. Additionally, we

was [sic] unable to find adequate amounts of data to support the immediate use of all the proposed noninvasive technologies.”

The American Association for Clinical Chemistry, Inc. and the American Diabetes Association in 2011 published their “[Guidelines and Recommendations for Laboratory Analysis in the Diagnosis and Management of Diabetes Mellitus](#),” David B. Sacks, Ed. They stated “No noninvasive sensing technology is currently approved for clinical glucose measurements of any kind. Major technological hurdles must be overcome before noninvasive sensing technology will be sufficiently reliable to replace existing portable meters, implantable biosensors, or minimally invasive technologies.” and in its key recommendations, gave it a grade of “C (very low).”

A well-researched review is [Sweet Sensation](#), Realizing the dream of noninvasive glucose monitoring by Emily Waltz, Nature Biotechnology Vol. 37, April 2019, 340–344A. A review of optical methods by H. Michael Heise, a long-time researcher in the field is “Non-invasive monitoring of blood glucose using optical methods for skin spectroscopy—opportunities and recent advances”, ([Analytical and Bioanalytical Chemistry volume 411, pages 63–77 \(2019\)](#)). Another is [Review: Non-Invasive Continuous Blood Glucose Measurement Techniques](#) by Nawaz et al.

A now-dated review is “Non-invasive glucose monitoring: Assessment of technologies and devices according to quantitative criteria,” in *Diabetes Research and Clinical Practice* 77 (2007) 16–40 by Andrea Tura *et al.* A more recent review, but with less depth and analysis is by Chi-Fuk So, “[Recent advances in noninvasive glucose monitoring](#),” Medical Devices: Evidence and Research, June 2012 pp. 45–52 © 2012. An important source of authoritative information is the [ClinicalTrials.gov](#) website maintained by the U.S. National Institutes of Health. Clinical trials that will stand scrutiny are generally posted on that site, and “trials” listed by manufacturers that do not appear there are suspect.¹

¹ See, for example, <http://buyersstrike.wordpress.com/2011/12/12/when-is-a-clinical-trial-not-a-clinical-trial-ecte/>

More recent reviews include [“The Quest for Noninvasive Glucose Monitoring” In Optics & Photonic News in October 2022](#), [“The Progress of Glucose Monitoring—A Review of Invasive to Minimally and Non-Invasive Techniques, Devices and Sensors,”](#) by Gonzales et al., and [‘Noninvasive’ Glucose Monitoring for Diabetes: Where Is It Now?’](#) from Diabetes Mine with an appreciated quote from this book’s introduction. [Those intrigued with the benefits of machine learning may wish to look at “Machine learning models for non-invasive glucose measurement: towards diabetes management” in smart healthcare Health Technol \(Berl\). 2022; 12\(5\): 955–970. Published online 2022 Aug 18, doi:10.1007/s12553-022-00690-7. Also, “A Concise and Systematic Review on Non-Invasive Glucose Monitoring for Potential Diabetes Management,” in Biosensors 2022 Nov 3;12\(11\):965. doi: 10.3390/bios12110965.](#)

There are always “market research” companies willing to sell a summary of what they term “recent advances” in noninvasive glucose monitoring. Examples are [Greystone Associates](#), with a price in 2022 of \$2,850, or “The Honest Analytics” Global Non-Invasive Glucose Meter Market 2018, for \$4,000. The latter said its report “has been segmented into Wearable, Non-Wearable” devices, but did publish an unusually sanguine [press release](#) in 2018 “Unprecedented Market Exits a Reality Check for Measuring Glucose Noninvasively” with this conclusion: “We expect the current crop of NGM products to yield two, and possibly three, commercial devices over the next six years. Success will be real but gradual, with total revenue in 2024 equivalent to slightly less than one percent of the total global glucose measurement market.”

A summary of patents in the area [“Non-Invasive Glucose Monitoring Patent Landscape”](#) from 2015 is available for €2,990, and the fact that all the “featured companies” listed on the website are no longer active in the noninvasive glucose field is less important, because patents can have lifetimes of up to 20 years.

The summaries above are generally aimed at the inexperienced business person seeking an opportunity in this area, rather than at the technically knowledgeable, but the standard of arrogance for all of these was set by the market research company Frost & Sullivan, when their “global team of industry experts and consultants” put together a presentation

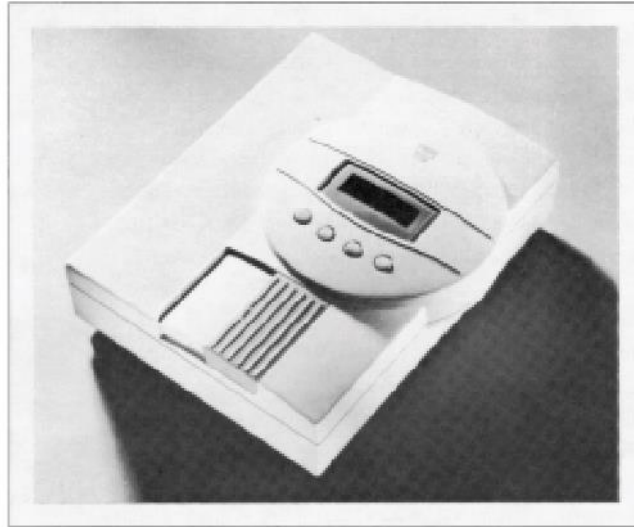
in 2008, with the amusingly plagiaristic title “Noninvasive Glucose: The Elusive Goose” (now removed). That presentation featured a person reading long passages verbatim from the first edition of this book. A similar paraphrasing (but with appropriate credit) is “[Non-invasive blood glucose monitoring is an elusive goose](#),” (a response to a publication), published in the International Journal of Diabetes in Developing Countries 36(4):399–400 (2016).

Another [interesting summary](#) in [Physicsworld Magazine](#) entitled “Just beyond our fingertips,” written by Kate Bechtel (now at Rockley Photonics) in 2017, details why advances in physics have not yet made a noninvasive glucose system possible.¹

A review with the ambitious title “[Everything You Wanted to Know About Noninvasive Glucose Measurement and Control](#)” was published on the un-peer-reviewed journal [arXiv:2101.08996v2 \[physics.med-ph\]](#) 11 Feb 2021. Also very recent is “[Noninvasive Glucose Sensing In Vivo](#),” in *Sensors* 23 Issue 16, doi: 10.3390/s23167057.

An intriguing website is: <http://www.diabetiker-mailbox.com/noninvasive/museum-noninvasives.html>, curated by Hugo R. Vogel, with pictures of many of the devices shown here, but including two versions of a previously unknown instrument. It is identified as “GluControl,” by the “former MedSci, Shown at Medica in 1994:”

¹ The author has pretty accurately described this work, recommending it “If you enjoy your informative materials with a heavy dose of snark...”



And the same device with a “Samsung Fine Chemicals” label, called the TouchTrak Pro 2000:

10. Picture of the TouchTrak PRO 200 from Samsung Fine Chemicals February 1998



These devices do not appear to have not been described elsewhere.

Know the Enemy

Anyone who has seen oxygen saturation measured by a \$15 fingertip pulse oximeter sensor can imagine a similar device placed on the finger, which reads and transmits a signal for glucose to a waiting computer or numeric display. Ah, but the differences

between the two measurements, and the two compounds responsible for them! Oxygen saturation is measured by the ratio of the amount of hemoglobin that has oxygen attached to the amount that doesn't have oxygen (appropriately termed oxyhemoglobin and deoxyhemoglobin), and here, the two compounds are of visibly different colors: bluish “deoxy” becomes the bright red “oxy” when a few molecules of oxygen are attached. And, (together with the closely related myoglobin) it's the only compound in the body with a strong blue or red color. Not only that, but hemoglobin lives almost exclusively inside red blood cells, all of which travel inside blood vessels in well-defined paths through the body, and which are subject to pulsatile flow each time the heart beats, making them easier to detect. To make the measurement even easier, the blood of healthy humans contains something like 14% hemoglobin—that is, each 100 milliliters of blood with just 100 milligrams of glucose contains fourteen *grams* of hemoglobin.¹

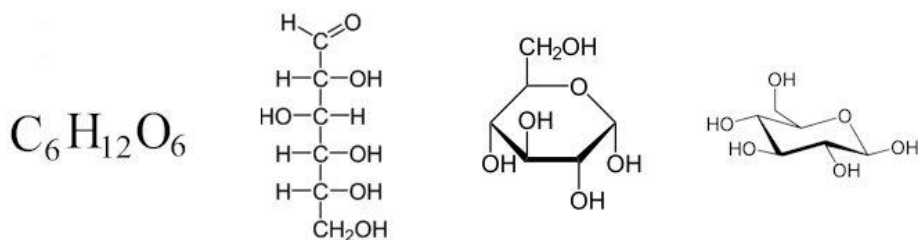
What about glucose? For such an important molecule, it has the most nondescript characteristics imaginable. First of all, glucose is colorless—not just in the visible region where colors are detected, but even with near-infrared vision, it would hardly have enough color to see. While it travels in the blood, and changes in concentration are delivered by the bloodstream, it's also present in all tissues in varying amounts, outside cells, inside blood vessels, and in concentrations which vary from part to part, depending on insulin levels, exercise, and how long it has been since a meal (there is essentially no glucose inside cells in what is termed “intracellular fluid”—after passing across the cell membrane, glucose quickly has a phosphate group added to begin metabolism). The amount? Again, the same 100 milliliters of blood that held 14 grams of hemoglobin normally holds only 0.1 gram (100 milligrams, or a concentration of 100 milligrams per deciliter, usually abbreviated mg/dL²) of almost invisible glucose, and, when the measurement is most critical (in hypoglycemia), as the brain begins to shut down and the body goes into shock, the amount is only half that much. An astounding statistic about

¹ Cercacor has introduced an “[Ember](#)” noninvasive total hemoglobin smart-phone sensor for athletes. They say “Studies have shown that the higher the shift in hemoglobin the more intense the workout,” but dehydration also increases hemoglobin. It is recommended for “elevation training” at high altitudes.

² In many other countries, glucose concentrations are given in millimolar (mM) units. One millimolar is equivalent to 18 mg/dL, and a normal value of 100 mg/dL is about 5.5 mM. An earlier unit with the same numerical values as mg/dL was “mg%.”

the total amount of glucose circulating in the blood is that it is roughly the same amount as the sugar in a packet used to sweeten a cup of coffee (100 mg/dL in 5 liters of blood—50 dL—is just 5 grams of glucose or about one teaspoonful).¹

For the chemically curious, the chemical formulas and structures below represent increasingly accurate representations of the glucose molecule.



The chemical structure of glucose (and thus its visibility when examined in many regions of light) is very similar to many other compounds that are present throughout the body. Many of the compounds that result from the normal metabolism of glucose have similar structures, as do many intermediates of other biochemical reactions. Even worse, glucose attaches itself to almost all the proteins of the body (it is this fondness for proteins that causes many of the complications of diabetes when blood glucose isn't well controlled). Albumin, which makes up about 4% of blood plasma, and hemoglobin, which is 14% of blood, both have glucose attached to about 5% of their molecules (are "glycosylated"²) when a person's glucose is in the normal range, and a similar amount of attachment exists for most proteins. The result is that there are a lot of "glucose-like" molecules in every part of the body, and for most spectroscopic techniques they produce overlapping signals, so it is very hard to tell them all apart. This will be an important consideration when near-infrared spectroscopy and the difficulty in establishing a calibration using it are discussed.

¹ In terms of total free glucose in the body, though, there is almost four times that, or 20 grams, since there is about three times as much interstitial fluid as there is blood, with almost the same glucose concentration.

² Glycosylated hemoglobin, often referred to as HbA_{1c}, (or just "A1C") is measured to determine patients' long-term glucose control. It averages the blood glucose values over two to three months and is an accurate predictor of future complications. It is expressed as the percentage of hemoglobin with glucose attached to the total amount of hemoglobin, and a value over about 6 percent is generally considered suggestive of diabetes, or at least indicative of poor glucose control.

While glucose can be represented chemically as an “aldehyde” (the second structure from the left above), only a very small fraction (less than 0.1%) of the molecules are in that form; the majority are in the “cyclic glucopyranose” form shown at the right of the formulas above. This is important, both metabolically and spectroscopically, because it is the aldehyde form that reacts rapidly in the “glycation” (or “glycosylation”) reaction¹ that allows it to attach to protein molecules. Every protein (a complex, folded polymer of amino acids) has one end that is chemically an “amino” group that reacts with aldehydes such as glucose to form an “addition product.” This is the reaction that creates hemoglobin A1c (glycosylated hemoglobin), as well as similar compounds involving almost all proteins in the body. Where these proteins have a removal mechanism (the way aging red blood cells are scoured from the bloodstream by the spleen, and the hemoglobin converted to breakdown products that include bilirubin), the percentage of these glycated proteins is fairly small and more or less constant. For proteins like collagen in the skin or crystallin in the lens of the eye, there is relatively little (or no²) turnover, and the effect is cumulative. Just as aging lenses of the eye lose the ability to flex and “accommodate,” other reacted proteins generally lose their physiological function, and result in many of the complications from diabetes, including retinal and kidney damage, and probably circulatory problems. These long-lived products are often referred to as “advanced glycation endpoint” compounds (AGEs) that can also cause change to spectroscopic properties, for example, increasing fluorescence of skin.

Noninvasive glucose measurements have been attempted by an incredibly diverse range of technologies; indeed, it seems that almost every technique ever used for analysis has been tried at one time or another. This chapter will later attempt to categorize them according to the technological approach used. This is an imprecise pursuit since different groups use different terms for the same technology and only a few of these are

¹ This is the same “Maillard” reaction that is well known in cooking as the source of browning when meat containing both protein and sugar is heated.

² Lynnerup, N., *et al.*, Radiocarbon Dating of the Human Eye Lens Crystallines Reveal Proteins without Carbon Turnover throughout Life, Plos One, Published: January 30, 2008, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0001529>.

sufficiently well-developed to have standard terminology or nomenclature, but the imperfection of the result should not prevent the attempt.

A Few Notes about Regulations

When the first meters were introduced, there were very few regulations, and they were sold directly by the manufacturers, through doctors' offices, or by diabetes specialists. In 1976, the Medical Device Amendments were passed by Congress, and devices developed after that date fell into two categories regulated by the Federal Food and Drug Administration.¹ First, those that could demonstrate "substantial equivalence" to a device on the market before 1976 would be approved under a "premarket notification" process known as "510(k)," and could be released as soon as 90 days after filing the proper forms and obtaining clearance. For determination of equivalence, a "predicate device" is selected (which may not have been on the market before 1976, but was approved as equivalent to one that was, allowing devices to be "daisy-chained" over many decades). In the FDA's words:

A device is SE [substantially equivalent] if, in comparison to a predicate device it:

- has the same intended use as the predicate device; **and**
- has the same technological characteristics as the predicate device; **or**
- has different technological characteristics, that do not raise new questions of safety and effectiveness, and the sponsor demonstrates that the device is as safe and effective as the legally marketed device.

Devices that do not meet this requirement (including most CGM devices) fall into a much more stringently regulated category, requiring a "premarket approval" or PMA. This approval process requires much more strict quality procedures, submission of many more documents, and generally well over a year to complete. Ordinary blood glucose meters fall under the 510(k) notification, but a few years back, after several abuses and false

¹ These two groups generally correspond to what are termed Class II and Class III devices. There is also a Class I category, such as bandages, examination gloves, and hand-held surgical instruments, which is generally exempt from the clearance or approval process.

starts (see GlucoWatch, Biocontrol, and Futrex below, for examples), the FDA decided that all noninvasive blood glucose meters would be handled via the PMA procedures.¹



Metallic Tractors—Dr. Elisha Perkins' patent metallic tractors, consisting of two rods of brass and iron, were about three inches long and were the earliest recorded fraudulent medical device marketed in the United States. Perkins' tractors were sold to cure diseases by eliminating them from the body. Even George Washington is reported to have purchased a set for his family. By the turn of the 19th century, however, they had been exposed as a fraud. Print courtesy of FDA History Office.

In a 2002 publication, Dr. Steve Gutman, Director, Office of In Vitro Diagnostic Device Evaluation for the FDA, wrote “FDA considers noninvasive and minimally invasive glucose devices that are intended to measure, monitor, or predict blood glucose levels in diabetics to be high-risk medical devices” thus qualifying them not only under PMA, but also as high-risk devices which fall under the Investigational Device Exemption regulations (IDE), as described below:

¹ As Dr. Jean Cooper, an FDA division director told me during a “pre-IDE” informational meeting held with them in Washington, D.C. in 2005 for a noninvasive technology developed by Fovioptics, “You’re welcome to apply for a 510(k) status for your device, and we’ll be happy to cash your second check when you finally submit your application for a PMA.”

Many *in vitro* diagnostic (IVD) devices are exempt from the IDE regulations. Under section §812.2(c) of the IDE regulation, studies exempt from the IDE regulation include diagnostic devices if the testing:

1. is noninvasive;
2. does not require an invasive sampling procedure that presents significant risk;
3. does not by design or intention introduce energy into a subject; and
4. is not used as a diagnostic procedure without confirmation by another medically established diagnostic product or procedure;

The PMA process requires more thorough pre-clinical and clinical testing, and the IDE requirements place additional burdens on investigators to determine that their device is safe to use. The pivotal item is number 3—“introduce energy into a subject”—as will be seen below the vast majority of noninvasive technologies do this, and thus have to be carefully evaluated for safety.

In September of 2013, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration announced it would focus its oversight on apps that turn a phone or tablet into a medical device that is already under government regulation, such as one that measures the amount of glucose in a person's blood or controls the inflation of a blood pressure cuff. If an app like this doesn't work properly, the FDA says, it could result in the wrong diagnosis or treatment and threaten a patient's health. It was feared this could mean more regulatory hurdles for makers of these glucose devices and “apps.”

But in January of 2015, The U.S. Food and Drug Administration allowed marketing of the first set of mobile medical apps, the DexCom Share, which allowed people with diabetes to automatically and securely share data from a continuous glucose monitor (CGM) with other people in real-time using an Apple mobile device such as an iPhone. FDA reviewed data for the DexCom Share system through the *de novo* classification process, a regulatory pathway for low- to moderate-risk medical devices that are novel and not substantially equivalent to any legally marketed device, and said that data provided by DexCom showed the device functioned as intended and transmitted data accurately and securely. This put to rest fears that FDA might require clearance under more stringent 510(k) notifications for devices that receive data but do not make the measurements. Many other such linked devices and “apps” have since been cleared for use in glucose monitoring and diabetes management.

In 2017, the FDA issued revised guidance for what is termed a [De Novo application](#), which can result in a new “device type” where none existed before. This procedure was used for DexCom’s G6 CGM system, and this pathway may someday be tested by [Integrity Applications](#) for their GlucoTrack noninvasive system.¹

A further opportunity for approval was provided by the FDA in 2023, called the [“Breakthrough Devices Program,”](#) with these criteria:

Criteria	Description
First Criterion	The device provides for more effective treatment or diagnosis of life-threatening or irreversibly debilitating human disease or conditions
Second Criterion	The device also meets at least one of the following:
	a. Represents Breakthrough Technology
	b. No Approved or Cleared Alternatives Exist
	c. Offers Significant Advantages over Existing Approved or Cleared Alternatives
	d. Device Availability is in the Best Interest of Patients

Wellness Devices

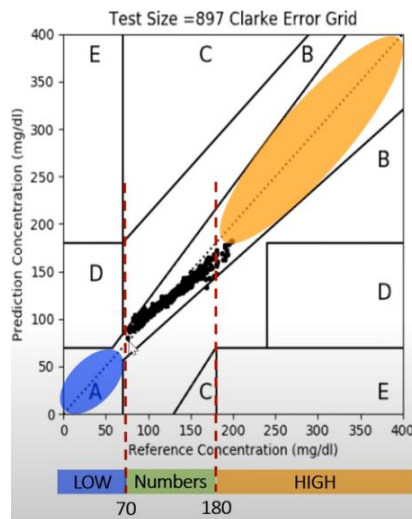
In 2019, FDA issued “guidance” (reflecting the Agency’s current thinking, but not amounting to rules or regulations) about “Low-Risk Wellness Devices.” They are described as “Intended to only be used for general healthy lifestyle, wellness devices

¹ Integrity Applications stated (October 23, 2017) “U.S. FDA Approval--The U.S. remains an important market for Integrity and GlucoTrack. Integrity has been working with regulatory and clinical experts to elucidate the best regulatory pathway for the GlucoTrack. Based on feedback from the FDA, Integrity plans to follow a de novo 510k pathway and expects to commence the U.S. study in early to mid-2018, subject to funding and consultation with the Agency.” As of the company’s latest available quarterly report dated September 2021, they again said “the Company is now focused on the U.S. market as well, including building out its U.S. go-to-market strategy and planning the required FDA clinical trials and field testing to support its entrance into the market.”

present a minimal risk to the safety of the user and to others. This category includes fitness trackers, apps that track fitness and/or diet, exercise equipment and video games.” One group is those that do not make reference to disease or conditions, but instead make general claims, but a second group can refer to specific diseases. FDA says:

“Both subcategories of disease-related general wellness claims should only contain references where it is well understood that healthy lifestyle choices may reduce the risk or impact of a chronic disease or medical condition. Examples of chronic diseases for which a healthy lifestyle is associated with risk reduction or help in living well with that disease include heart disease, high blood pressure, and type 2 diabetes.”

This has led a few producers to develop devices that a.) will only provide advice based on the approximate glucose level, but without reporting actual values or b.) provide glucose results only in the normal range. A presentation by LifePlus shows this graphic:



It is not clear that reporting only a subset of glucose values will keep a device from being regulated by FDA as if it were a traditional blood glucose meter.

In order to test a new device on volunteer subjects, the testing protocol must be reviewed by an approved medical body known as an Institutional Review Board, or IRB. This group also evaluates the “informed consent” form that patients must read and sign before volunteering, so that all potential risks from the device are known to them. Largely because people with diabetes are so eager to adopt a noninvasive device, finding

volunteers to test them is usually not a problem. And while the volunteers agree to keep the details of the device confidential, very few do, and this is one of the most common ways that information is transferred among companies in this field. This practice would, of course, be much more meaningful if anyone were to succeed in this pursuit, but for the more than forty years that this chase has continued, participating companies have actively sought out volunteers from each other's studies to learn as much as they can, usually to no advantage other than knowing no one else is on a direct path to success.

Each institution with an IRB generally assigns a member of its medical staff to be the Principal Investigator, and the PI's responsibility is to help in patient qualification and to provide communication back to the institution. Most are honest professionals who respect the confidentiality of the company's information, but there are a few who share all they know to anyone who will listen, primarily for self-aggrandizement. The word usually spreads about which investigators should not be trusted with confidential information, at least during the early stages before patent applications have been filed to protect the company's intellectual property.

The 510(k) and especially the PMA clearance process place requirements on the design, development and manufacturing of a device that are quite complex. The required quality systems, with reams of paperwork for policies, training, procedures, and record-keeping, place a heavy early burden on a small organization, and require huge overhead expenses in the areas of quality assurance and regulatory compliance personnel. As a result, where a creative group can rapidly invent and develop a consumer electronic product in a relatively short time, any company that intends to participate in this pursuit needs substantially better funding at the outset.¹ There is always a judgment call involved in deciding where "research" ends and product development begins, and creative terminology is sometimes involved, because the FDA has adopted the approach that any "prototype" needs to have a complete record (the "Device Master Record") of how it was designed, developed and tested. For this reason, early versions of a device are often

¹ Apple, among others, has been widely reported as "not being interested" in devices requiring FDA clearance or approval.

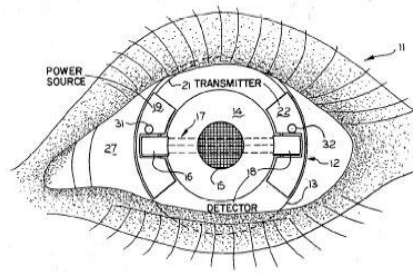
referred to as “benchtop” or “breadboard” research versions, thus avoiding the use of the “p-word” until more certainty of performance is established.

Very early in the process, however, it is necessary to institute a series of procedures called “design controls,” which govern the design, testing and evaluation procedures and establish the basis for the comprehensive quality procedures to follow. Entrepreneurs coming into this field from other areas are often caught unaware by the breadth and depth of these requirements and have difficulties accepting the level of overhead and bureaucracy they place on a small organization. Long before true clinical success is demonstrated, companies also need to plan for manufacturing in an FDA-approved facility, and this adds additional burdens and costs.

Patents

Since patents have played a large part in the pursuit of noninvasive glucose monitoring, and since they are public documents that contain a wealth of information (together with the occasional dose of fiction), throughout this book the patent numbers of issued U.S. patents, or of published U.S. applications, will be listed to which the interested reader can refer for more details. Once the property of a centralized paper collection in Washington, D.C., both patents and published applications are now available on pages under the website <http://www.uspto.gov>, and the search engines “[Google Patents](#)” and [Free Patents Online](#) can find and display most of those in the U.S. patent system, including many published patent applications and most foreign filings. Those unfamiliar with the arcane language and style of patents may find them hard to slog through, but in many cases merely reading the abstracts will give a fair idea of the material they contain.¹

¹ ¹ In European and Patent Cooperation Treaty (“PCT” prefixed with “WO”) patents, an “A” suffix refers to a published patent application, while the same number with a “B” means it is an issued patent. In the U.S., applications (which were first published with a change in patent law in 2001) have a different numbering system, consisting of the year of publication followed by a seven-digit sequential number, then A1. When a U.S. patent issues, it is given a new eight-digit patent number, followed by B1 or B2 if the application was withheld from publication.

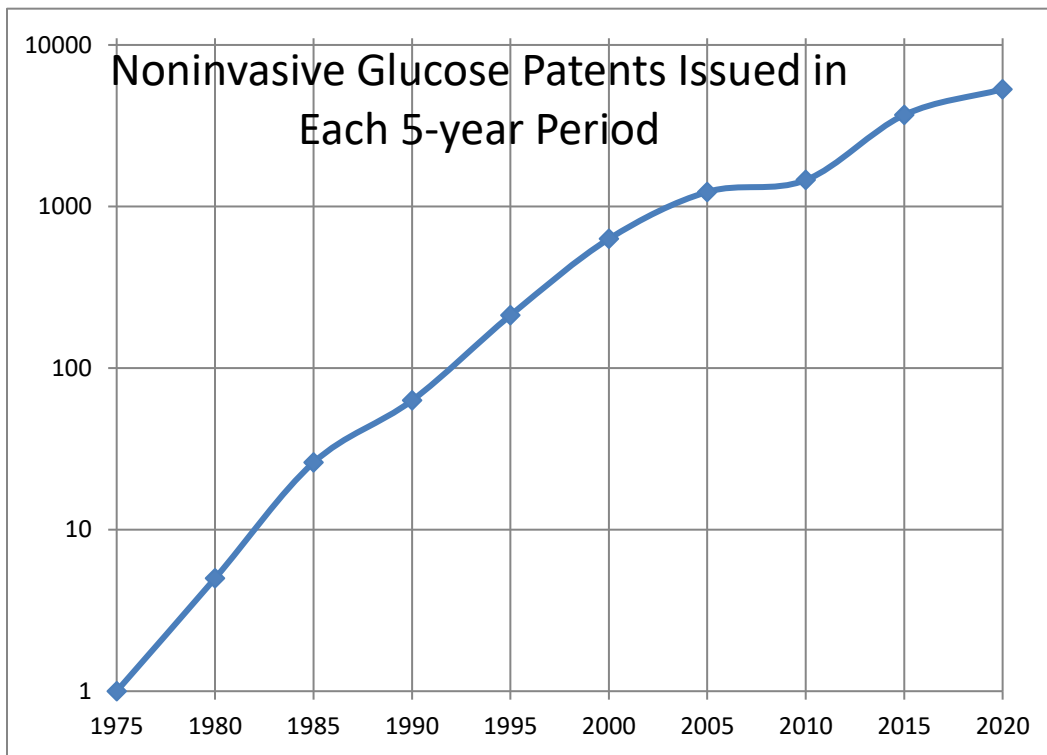


As far as can be determined from the patent records, it all began on November 25, 1974,¹ when Dr. Wayne Front March² filed an application that eventually became U.S. Patent 3,958,560 describing measurement of glucose in the aqueous humor by near-infrared absorption at 975 nm. Amazingly, on the same day, Robert S. Quandt filed a patent application for determination of glucose by another method: rotation of plane-polarized light by glucose in the aqueous humor of the eye! March's patent issued on May 25, 1976, while Quandt's issued on June 15, 1976 as U.S. Patent 3,963,019³. On October 6, 1975, March filed an application for US 4,014,321 (issued in 1977) for determining glucose in the aqueous humor by the same "optical rotation" effect.

¹ But, according to an article by Cahill, et al., "Practical Developments in Diabetes Research." *Diabetes*, vol. 21, suppl. 2, 1972, pp. 703-712. (<https://doi.org/10.2337/diab.21.2.S703>), the idea was first published in 1967 (Reim, M., Lax, F., Lichte, H., and Turss, R.: Steady state levels of glucose in the different layers of the cornea, aqueous humor, blood and tears in vivo. *Ophthalmologica* (Basel) 154:39-50, 1967).

² Dr. March also held the unquestioned record for longevity of publication in this field. What appears to be his last U.S. patent, 7,653,424 "Apparatus for measuring blood glucose concentrations," issued on January 26, 2010. It also describes making a glucose measurement in the aqueous humor.

³ The approach to making the measurement was quite different; I had hoped to someday understand this coincidence of patent filing dates, but Dr. March apparently passed away in 2008, and it may remain forever a mystery.



These were two of only about 6 patents in the field that appeared worldwide between 1975 and 1980. As the graph shows, the increase in patents is a reasonably straight line when plotted on a logarithmic scale. The increase in volume is almost an order of magnitude for each decade that has passed since 1975.¹ However, possibly following the general slowdown in the economy between 2008 and 2012 (and an overall slowdown in U.S. patent activity following recent changes in the law, and will be followed, no doubt, by a pandemic-induced reduction in overall activity), the growth in the number of patents, both applied for and granted, for “noninvasive glucose” began to decline substantially with that period.

¹ This is the result of a series of searches for all patents and patent applications issued worldwide under a pair of search criteria for words in the patent specification: “glucose (and) noninvasive” and “glucose (and) non-invasive.” There are many duplications and many patents in this total that don’t pertain to noninvasive glucose at all, but it shows the overall growth dramatically. U.S. patents make up about 80% of the worldwide total.

It Ain't Necessarily So

Those who are not familiar with patents often expect that if something has received a patent, it must work. The only legal requirements for patenting are that the invention be useful, nonobvious and novel¹—there's no requirement that it actually work. Because a patent gives the inventor a monopoly for fifteen to twenty years in exchange for “teaching” the world how an invention works or is made, there's a requirement that the disclosure be “enabling;” that is, it must contain enough information to allow a person of ordinary skill in the art to reproduce (“practice”) the invention without undue experimentation.

The U.S. Patent system was finally harmonized with the rest of the world in 2011 to give priority to the first person to file a patent, rather than the first to think of it or start working on it. It's certainly not possible to categorically state that no noninvasive patent yet filed will ever yield a commercially successful device, but it is true that none yet has, so it's best to take all the issued patents and published applications with a grain of salt. They more accurately define what can't be owned by another person (because someone else already owns the rights to it), rather than what will actually work. Once the patent “monopoly” expires, the patented material passes into the public domain and may be used by anyone. That monopoly period, which used to be 17 years from the date of issue, has been revised to 20 years from the date of the earliest filing (“priority”) for each patent.

This situation introduces another complication for the first person who develops a successful noninvasive monitor: with so many issued patents, and the complexity of many of the technologies involved, it is likely that the winner would be greeted with a flurry of patent infringement lawsuits², as the unsuccessful look to cash in on their success.

For this reason, the first to succeed will need to have substantial resources to defend the product and might be driven into a relationship with a company with “deep pockets” that

¹ There is also a requirement that the subject matter not pertain to a “[natural law](#),” an area that has gotten increasingly confusing in recent years.

² Or other newer procedures to challenge a newly-issued patent, such as “*Inter Partes* Reviews” or “Post Grant Reviews.”

can afford the legal expenses that could ensue (see the note about an ironic patent infringement lawsuit against [Cercacor](#), below).

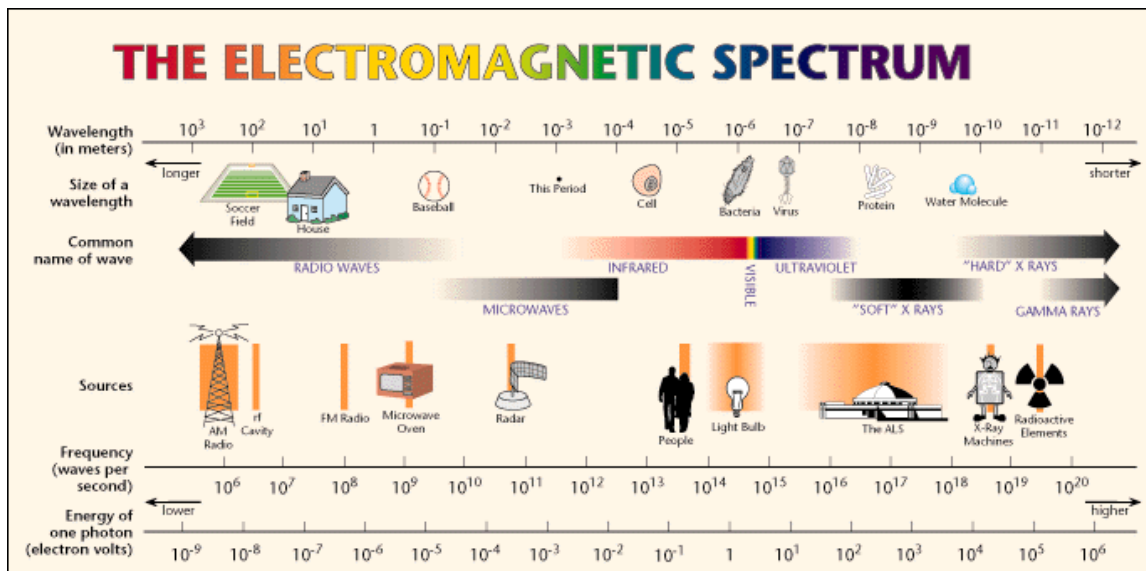
A practice where companies buy up patents to use for leverage, bargaining chips, or “monetization” by litigation has become more prevalent in recent years. Some companies who do this are termed “patent trolls,” but other terms include “patent holding company” (PHC) or “nonpracticing entity” (NPE), while some actually do so to continue the activities of a predecessor company. It illustrates another potential problem raised earlier—because so many thousands of patents have been issued in this area, they could all be used as threats or leverage against a startup company that might achieve success in noninvasive glucose measurement. Defending a patent infringement suit can cost millions of dollars, and small entities without corporate backing might not be able to afford the cost. Even a substantial corporate entity could see itself ensnarled or even impoverished in lawsuits after launching a product.

Patent Litigation

To date, only two patent infringement suits have involved noninvasive glucose measurement. The first, *Masimo Corp. v. Philips Electronics North America Corporation and Philips Medizin Systeme Böblingen GmbH*, Civil Action No. 1:09-cv-00080-JJF-MPT United States District Court for the District of Delaware, involved US Patent No. 5,337,745, which was actually introduced by Philips in a countersuit. The second case, which was filed twice, is described below under Diasense. Both cases were settled with no judgment issued.

Measurement Techniques

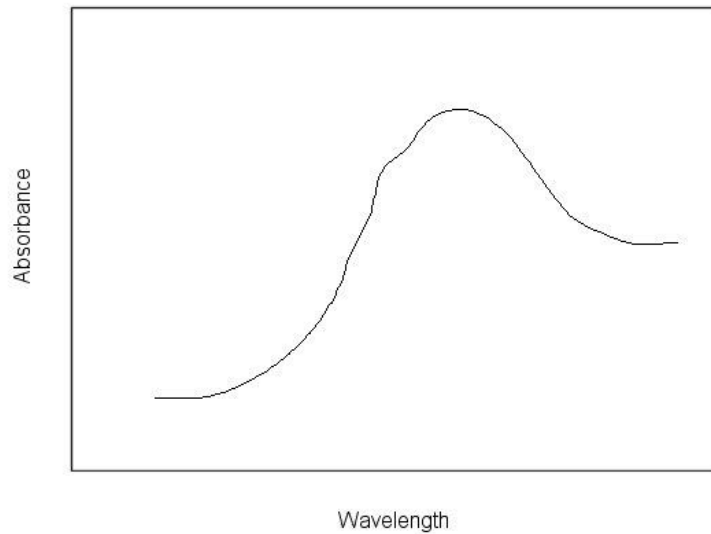
Spectroscopic Techniques



General: Spectroscopic techniques are used to determine the presence or concentration of a substance by measuring how it interacts with light. When light is absorbed in passing through a material, the amount of depletion of the light is measured and termed “absorbance” (this is the inverse of the amount of light passed through, which is referred to as “transmittance”)¹. Under certain circumstances, substances can also give off light, and this is termed “emission.” When the amount of absorption, transmission, or emission is plotted against wavelength, the resulting curve is referred to as a “spectrum.” Each material shows a specific and reasonably unique spectrum, depending on its chemical structure, physical state, temperature (or its “matrix,” the material surrounding it), but the amount of information contained in the spectrum can vary tremendously from one region (and one compound) to another. For instance, when looking for small amounts of water, it’s not a good idea to look at its spectrum in the visible region. Even though water has a very faint blue color, there must be a lot of water in one place in order to see it. At certain

¹ Another process, called “fluorescence,” involves absorbing light of one wavelength and emitting light of a second, less-energetic wavelength—this is the light that is made visible using “black light” bulbs. If the emission of light is delayed for a short time, the phenomenon is termed “phosphorescence.”

parts of the near-infrared or mid-infrared region, water has a very intense absorbance (it has a very dark “color,” even though humans can’t see it at this wavelength), and small amounts of it can be easily detected.



Most of the tissues of the body are too thick to allow enough light to pass through for reliable “transmission” measurements at the wavelengths that need to be used for glucose,¹ so an alternative technique called “reflectance” is often employed. Here, the light is directed at the surface of tissue, travels some distance into it, and some (usually very small) percentage re-emerges at or close to the site where it was first introduced. To complicate matters, there are two kinds of reflectance: “specular” reflectance, where the light bounces off a shiny surface, as in a mirror, and “diffuse” reflectance, where the light penetrates the material to some depth and is “scattered” before it comes back. Glossy white paint acts a lot like a mirror, and the light primarily bounces off at the same angle it hits, resulting in specular reflectance. Flat white paint (even on a smooth wall) yields diffuse reflectance with a reflectance profile termed “Lambertian,” where the reflected light is distributed over much of a full 180 degrees from the surface.

Tissue is even more complex, since light penetrates to a depth where there are many surfaces (collagen fibers, fat, and cells) which scatter the light, and the result is kind of a

¹ The “web” between the thumb and finger, along with the earlobe, are still frequent transmission target areas.

“glow ball” of reflected light that comes from below the surface. The technique is complicated because the top surface of the skin also exhibits some specular reflectance, and since this light hasn’t interacted significantly with the tissue, it contains almost no information about glucose.



Near-infrared Perhaps the most frequently-attempted (and most trouble-plagued) area is near-infrared spectroscopy.¹ As anyone knows who has held a flashlight under fingers in a dark room, red light (and the invisible band just above it in wavelength called “near-infrared” light) will pass through a considerable thickness of skin and tissue. And as people who have tried to see any bone structure from that transmitted light also know, the light that gets through is very badly confused, or scattered. Light of higher wavelength, usually termed “mid-infrared,” is strongly absorbed by water, which constitutes a very large percentage of all tissues and this light generally can’t penetrate even a hundredth as far. In a cruel trade-off by Mother Nature, the mid-infrared region is quite sensitive and contains a great deal of information about the structure and concentration of chemical compounds, so much so that it is often termed the “fingerprint” region of the spectrum, but light in this region can’t penetrate far into tissue. The near-infrared region, where light does penetrate tissue to a reasonable extent, has more of what might be called “glimmers and ghosts” of structural information—technically, the bands here are called “overtone and combination” bands, and their intensity is greatly reduced below those in the mid-infrared. The upshot of this is a lot like looking for lost keys on a dark night. They were likely lost in an area where it’s too dark to see and looking under a streetlight where they might be visible will never locate them. An exaggeration, but a fair

¹ Amazingly, Wayne March’s first US patent (US3958560) attributed a signal in the aqueous humor of the eye to absorption of near-infrared light at 975 nm: “The detected infrared radiation is a function of the sugar content because the hydroxyl in glucose affects the infrared radiation, thereby changing the amount of infrared detected by detector 18.”

introduction to the difficulty that attends looking for a molecule like glucose in this region.

For practical purposes, near-infrared light is often defined as wavelengths of light between about 600 nm and 2500 nanometers (“nm”—a nanometer is one billionth of a meter; a micrometer is one millionth), so this is the same as 0.6 to 2.5 micrometers, or “microns.” Visible light, generally considered to be 400 to 700 nm, overlaps slightly, but the region below 700 nm contains almost no glucose information, and can safely be eliminated in the search for glucose unless a colored compound has been produced by a chemical reaction. As an example, a technique based on neural network analysis has been reported using He-Ne laser visible light at 633 nm, and another, using “[wavelets](#)” and neural networks, but the source of any signal related to glucose at these wavelengths is unknown.

The ultraviolet region below 400 nm is even more impenetrable, and almost no light at these wavelengths can pass through tissue. Not only is more of the light absorbed by the tissue, but a great deal more scattering occurs. Science class taught us that the sky is blue because short-wavelength light (blue) is more scattered than long-wavelength light (red). In fact, the amount of scattering decreases as the fourth power of wavelength, so blue, violet and ultraviolet regions show dramatically increased scattering. Nevertheless, see this attempted use of “[green-turquoise light](#).”

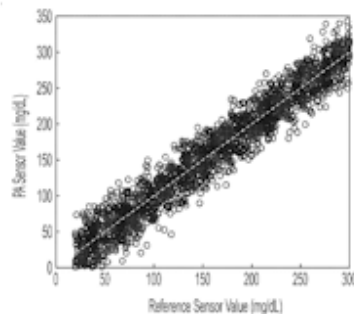
In addition to the difficulties described above in getting light into and out of tissue, there are two other very serious problems that complicate measuring glucose in the near-infrared. First, because the signal related to glucose is quite weak, researchers working in this area have had to rely on sophisticated mathematical techniques to discern any correlation between their measurements and reference values. Known to chemists as “chemometrics” and to mathematicians as “multivariate techniques”¹ (and generally

¹ One expert in the field describes his research as “Harmonious and Parsimonious Multivariate Calibration: The Tao of Analytical Chemistry.” Another memorable presentation was made by an interview candidate at a noninvasive company who titled his presentation “Multivariate Measurement Techniques: In search of the best wrench to hammer in the screw.”

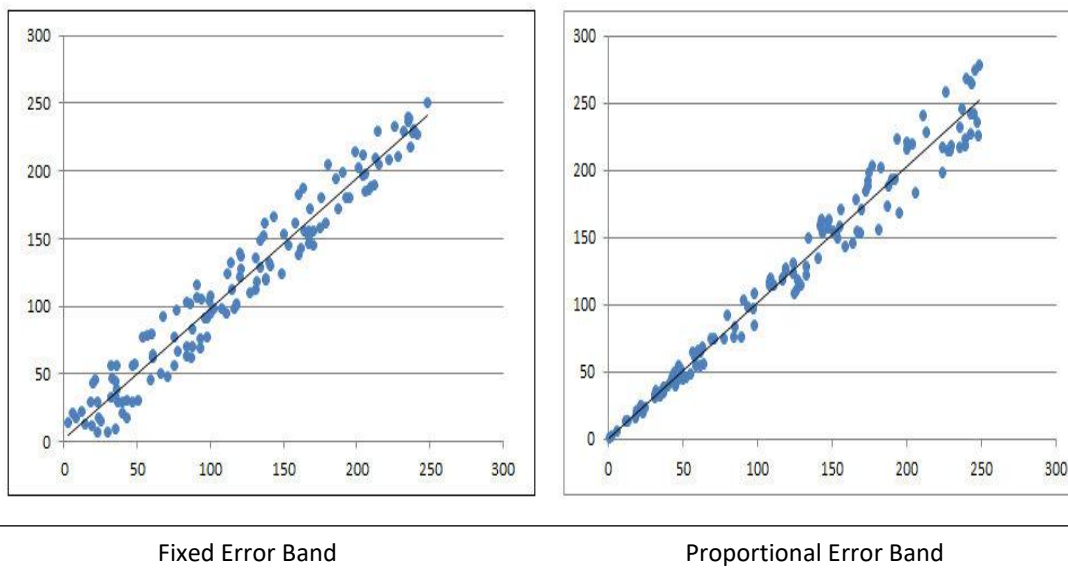
lumped together into the less meaningful term “algorithm”¹), these approaches generally try to separate the variation within a data set into a series of components or curve shapes which account for decreasing amounts of the observed variability. The need for such techniques indicates a relatively weak or obscure relationship between the measured data and the results sought (or the presence of a number of interfering materials) but by no means indicates that the relationship does not exist. It does, however, indicate that there are other variables that must be evaluated or controlled in order for the correlation to be robust.

For instance, a data set obtained with a group of subjects (a “model”) might show reasonable correlation for a parameter like glucose on the day the results were generated. Applying that same model to spectroscopic data for one of the subjects obtained on a different day, when conditions or the patients’ physiology have changed, might give the earlier glucose result or minus 2,000 mg/dL—clearly not a meaningful result, and a good indication that some essential parameters are missing from the calibration model.

Another consideration that is little appreciated by many investigators, is that multivariate techniques necessarily produce an “error band” for the results that has a constant error—that is, if the error at 300 mg/dL is 30 mg/dL (quite acceptable), it will also be 30 mg/dL at 60 mg/dL (not acceptable), and could give results anywhere from 30 mg/dL to 90 mg/dL for a true value of 60 mg/dL. What is desired is a “funnel-shaped” error band, where the error is proportional to the value, rather than constant. This result of multivariate data treatment techniques has defeated a number of approaches that initially looked promising. This is a plot from Medtronic’s US 2020/0253513 A1:



¹ While seeking funding for Fovioptics in 2005, I was congratulated by a potential investor, who said our presentation was the only noninvasive glucose “pitch” he had heard that hadn’t used the word “algorithm.”



In the absence of “sharp” peaks or other spectral features which are easily distinguished from each other, it is generally accepted that these techniques will work well for signals that are on the order of one part in one thousand of the overall signal ($1:10^3$). There have been estimates, though, that glucose contributes at most only a few parts in one million of the overall NIR spectroscopic signal ($1:10^6$).

Second, while glucose is the primary fuel and circulates in perhaps the highest concentration of any sugar-like molecule, there are hundreds of “poly-hydroxy carbon compounds” in the body (both inside and outside cells) that are structurally similar to glucose and, therefore, have strong spectral similarities. Like glucose, these substances vary in concentration—some in concert with glucose, some in inverse relationships, and some randomly. As a result, the near-infrared region is a veritable “jungle” of weak, overlapping, varying signals that come from all these compounds, further complicating the mathematically-based search for the true glucose concentration, and increasing the chances that something whose concentration (if only for a short time) falsely correlates with glucose will confound attempts to isolate it from the overall background. These are known as “spurious” correlations¹ and have cost investigators and their investors untold

¹ Because the signals are inevitably very small, environmental effects turn out to be common sources of spurious correlation. The domination of the near-infrared spectrum by water vapor means that variations in room temperature and humidity were found on many occasions to be the actual source of observed “correlations” with patients’ glucose levels.

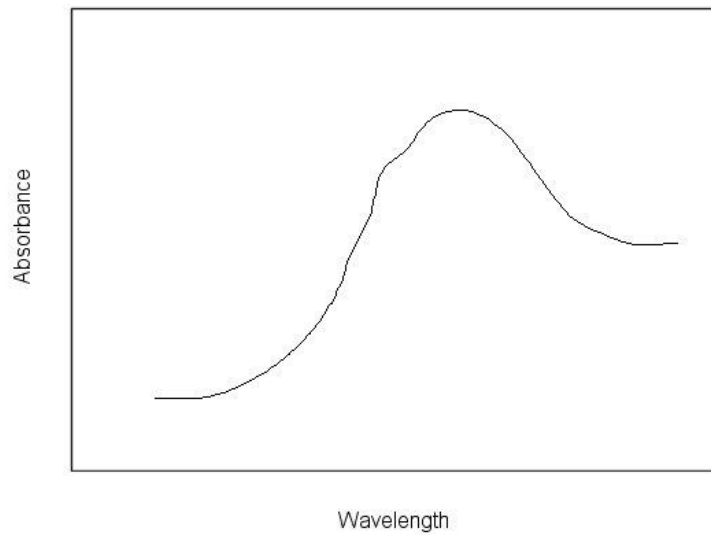
millions of dollars. Further specific examples of issues and problems will be described when the researchers and their preferred techniques are discussed later.

Measurement in the near-infrared region is complicated by the scattering effects of tissue described elsewhere. When light that enters tissue is not fully reflected, the loss may be due to absorbance by glucose (or other compounds), or the light may have been scattered so many times it was not able to return to the surface. Some researchers estimate that as much of 99% of the light lost in tissue is from scattering, rather than by being absorbed.

Absorbance of light by compounds is a function of both how strongly the light is absorbed (the “absorptivity”) and by how far the light has traveled (the “path length”). Depending on the degree of hydration, electrolyte balance, or even temperature, the same tissue site can exhibit varying degrees of scattering, and it is exceptionally difficult to separate out the light lost by scattering from that absorbed by glucose molecules. Worse yet, the effective path length of light in tissue is altered by the amount of scattering, so variations in scattering can alter the effective amount of glucose that is “seen” by the light and can cause variation in the apparent glucose signal that is not related to concentration.

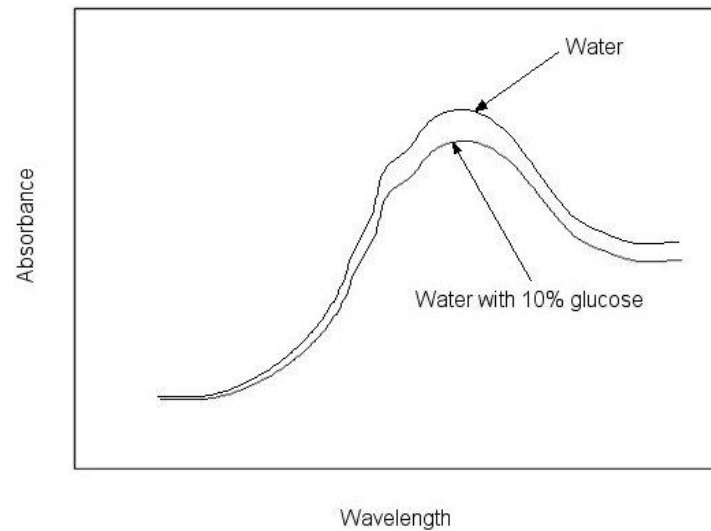
Generally, however, the spectrum of tissue in the near-infrared region is dominated by the spectrum of water, and since living tissue can be seventy to eighty percent water (and since glucose and water have similar “absorptivities” in this region, which means that the same number of atoms of each will absorb about the same amount of light), this is a major reason a glucose signal is hard to see. The concentration unit that determines the absorption is “molar,” and while glucose has a normal concentration of 0.005 molar, water is present in tissue at about 30 molar—this puts glucose at a disadvantage of about 6,000:1 in absorbing near-infrared light.

The picture below is an idealized version of the near-infrared spectrum of water (artistic license has been taken for emphasis).

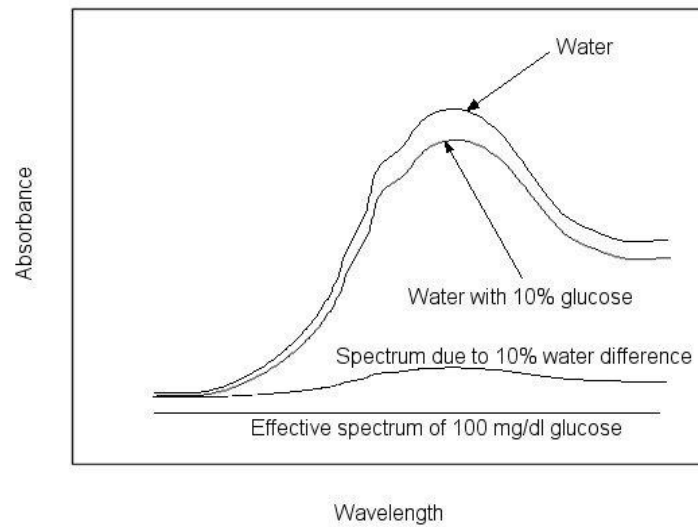


Idealized spectrum of water in the near-infrared

If a solution is prepared containing 10% glucose in water (100 g/l, which equals 10,000 mg/dL or 100 times the amount in blood), a representation of the resulting spectrum is shown below.

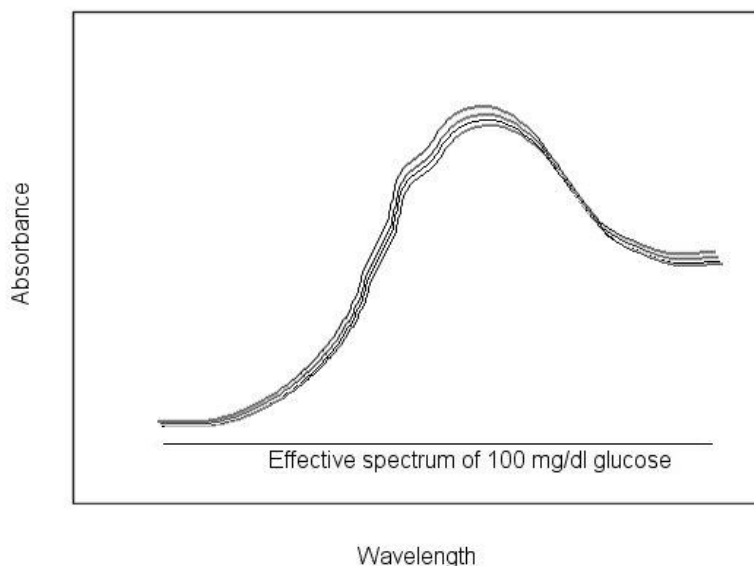


It is evident that, while there is a difference between the two spectra, by far the biggest difference is a decrease in the amount of water, not the presence of glucose. This can be demonstrated by subtracting the spectrum with glucose from the one for 100% water, and examining the difference:



The difference has the same general shape as the water spectrum, showing that there is very little effect from glucose. In fact, on the same scale where 100% water shows a peak most of the way up the graph, the normal 100 mg/dL concentration of glucose in blood or tissue is invisible and would trace out as the straight line shown at the bottom.

Moreover, in practice, the situation is even more difficult because even in the same person, minor variations in location on the skin, temperature of the skin, or small differences in the pressure of a sensing element applied to the skin (or even how long it has been in place) can cause substantial variation in the appearance of the spectrum.



Here, four spectra are shown with overall variations of about 5%; experience has shown that on multiple days or in multiple subjects, the actual variation is often many times greater. Again, the contribution to the spectrum from glucose is not only less than the normal variation seen in repeated spectra, it is in fact thinner than the ink line used to trace out each one—almost an invisibly small effect. The result is that there are sources of variation in the spectra that are many times (in fact, many orders of magnitude) larger than the variation due to glucose. Some variations are from other compounds, as described, but even if those didn't vary, because the concentration of water is more than 6,000 times the concentration of glucose, the change from a small shift in hydration will overwhelm variations of glucose.

With inanimate, nonvarying samples (semiconductor wafers, gasoline mixtures, or a sample of exhaust gas), changes as small as the glucose effect have been teased out in this spectral region using sophisticated multivariate mathematical techniques, but the fact that glucose measurements must be made on live humans, with their inherent movement, plus variations in biochemistry and physical states, has colluded with the small magnitude of the actual signal to prevent an accurate, reproducible near-infrared glucose measurement to date.

Not all compounds are as hard to measure in the near-infrared as glucose. Ethanol, or ethyl alcohol (which taunts us again by being easily measured in breath), which can be at times present at about the same molar concentration in tissue fluids as glucose, has a much stronger absorbance in a region of the spectrum where few other molecules complicate the measurement, and has often been used as a demonstration of the capability of measuring glucose.¹ It is also a smaller molecule and quite different in its physiological behavior, because it freely passes across the body's membranes and appears in saliva in amounts comparable to that in blood². Several investigators (generally after failing to measure glucose in tissue) have developed reasonably accurate

¹ More than one investigation for blood glucose measurement has been undertaken because alcohol, unlike glucose, was easily detected across the skin or in saliva.

² In the 1980s, LifeScan had developed a saliva alcohol monitor called AlcoScan, using test strips and a meter similar to that of its glucose monitor. It worked well, but the market opportunity was much smaller than that for glucose, and it was abandoned after the unprecedented success of the One Touch glucose systems in the marketplace.

alcohol monitors using near-infrared spectroscopy, but interestingly, none has yet been commercially successful.

Probably because of the large dependence of near-infrared signals on temperature, several groups discovered that better results could be obtained if the tissue was warmed before measuring, either to increase the flow of blood to the area or to remove differences in glucose levels among different tissue fluid compartments. It also has a significant drawback, as stated in J&J's European Patent EP0577684B1:

Unexpectedly, it was found that if the temperature of the blood in the cuvette was elevated to around 40°C, the amplitude of the light beams transmitted to the photodetector 7 increased considerably for both the test and the reference beam. This is extremely beneficial in terms of sensitivity of measurement of glucose concentration in the blood sample, and a cuvette heater 10 was therefore incorporated in the apparatus. However, to meaningfully compare sample with sample, the temperature at which the measurement is made has to be constant and identical in each case.

The Reference Problem

Another complication of measuring glucose in tissue is what to compare the result with. When a finger stick measurement is made for a reference glucose value, the glucose concentration there is that of the actual blood glucose (there is a small difference between glucose levels in blood in arteries and veins, with capillary glucose generally being closer to arterial), while the glucose level in the tissue that surrounds the capillaries in tissue regions outside the fingertip will often be different, with changes more slowly followed. The glucose level equilibrates slowly from blood to tissue, depending on the level of circulation and movement because of distance from capillaries and variable diffusion rates.¹ The majority of glucose in tissue, rather than being contained in blood, is in the “interstitial fluid” outside the blood vessels and in between cells, and the concentration there changes somewhat more slowly and thus can be different from the blood glucose value. In about 2000, TheraSense (now part of Abbott Diabetes Care) was among the first

¹ The vast majority of peripheral circulation in tissue serves to maintain temperature in the extremities rather than supplying nutrients such as glucose and oxygen—ambient temperature variations can cause substantial variations in the amount of blood flow and perfusion of tissue, and thus variations in the rate of equilibration between blood and interstitial fluid glucose.

to obtain permission from the FDA for what is called “alternate site” testing—drawing blood samples from the arm, leg, or abdomen instead of the more sensitive fingertip¹ (because so much sensory information is obtained from the fingertip, that area is well perfused with blood, but also has a very large concentration of sensory nerves). The required disclaimer for testing glucose from these locations is that it should not be done shortly after eating, vigorous exercise, or administration of insulin, due to the expected differences in glucose concentration under these circumstances. In addition, alternate-site testing draws blood from capillaries near the surface of the skin as well as the interstitial fluid surrounding them, and the fluid analysed for glucose there is probably a mix of these two liquids.

Near-infrared (and other spectroscopic techniques that measure tissue) will “see” mostly the glucose in interstitial fluid,^{2,3} not blood, and since it is very difficult to measure the glucose concentration of interstitial fluid, there will always be an unknown difference in concentration from either a finger stick or venous glucose reference measurement that will limit the ultimate measured accuracy.^{4,5} To date, no spectroscopic method has been accurate enough to be defeated by this difference, but it must be kept in mind for any tissue glucose measurement.

Misinformation. A company selling near-infrared spectrometers ([Pyreos](#), now at the Heriot Watt Research Park in Heriot Watt Research Park, Edinburgh), was proud to

¹ One researcher, who was instrumental in the development of LifeScan’s One Touch system before moving to TheraSense, suggested an advertising pitch that was never adopted; “Give us your arm, and give those other companies the finger!”

² Interstitial fluid is often thought of as being a uniform fluid slightly different from plasma, but in fact, it is a collection of immobile fluids, of sometimes very different composition, that surround the cells throughout the body.

³ In most tissue, about four times as much ISF as blood is visible for examination by light.

⁴ If there are two sources of error when determining overall accuracy (such as comparing noninvasive glucose measurements to reference glucose measurements), the errors don’t add together, but combine in what’s called an “RMS” or “root-mean-square” fashion: if the error of a noninvasive measurement was 30 mg/dL, and the error of the reference measurement to which it’s compared was 20 mg/dL, the errors would combine as the “square root of the sum of the squares:” $\sqrt{(30^2 + 20^2)} = 36$ mg/dL, so even a 20% error from a blood glucose meter reference would degrade the measured accuracy of the noninvasive technique just from 30 mg/dL to 36 mg/dL. When making critical measurements of accuracy, this “reference error” should be kept as small as possible to avoid an additional source of inaccuracy.

⁵ Bob Rosenthal, the founder and CEO of Futrex, explained this as an example of what he called Segal’s Law: “If a man has a watch, he knows what time it is. If he has two watches, he’s never sure.”

provide this “Non-invasive Diabetes Monitoring Overview: Infrared spectroscopy is a well-established and documented method of monitoring blood glucose levels. Medical publications document its use with blood, saliva and urine. By reducing the size, cost and weight of infrared spectrometers, Pyreos has enabled their use as personal medical diagnostic products including their use as non-invasive diabetes monitoring devices” Readers who have completed this book (or had any connection to a company trying to make this measurement) might disagree, but Pyreos also has another technology interest: “Our sensor products also enable medical bidets, which can provide instant electronic urine test results, giving detailed, daily pictures of blood glucose levels.”

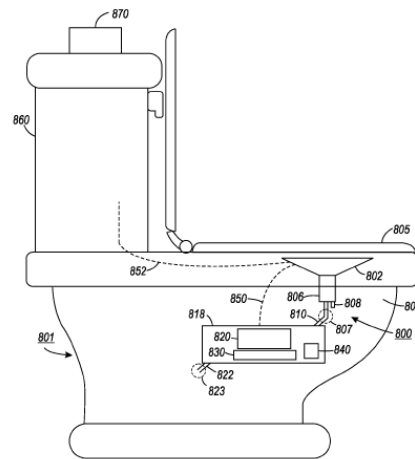


FIG. 8

Urine Testing: A U.S. Patent application was published by researchers at the Palo Alto Research Center, US 2015/0359522, for a “Point of Care Urine Tester and Method.” No details of the detection technology are provided, but the detailed diagram above is provided. A similar device called [Glucosalarm](#), which is smartphone enabled, has also been described. Another similar approach, which is suggested to measure any of perhaps a hundred analytes, is described in a patent application (US 2019/0293627 A1) by Brian Bender of [Bender Tech](#) in Raleigh, NC.

A recent application from Johnson & Johnson Consumer Products (US 2021/0293719 A1) describes an unnecessarily complicated electronic urine testing system

Mid-Infrared Emission

Any material with a temperature above absolute zero emits “blackbody” radiation, and the wavelength region is determined by the object’s temperature. As can be seen on the spectrum chart, “people” are listed as a source for energy in the infrared, with a spectrum peaking about 1000 cm^{-1} (“10 microns”). Since the glucose molecule both absorbs and emits in this region (even though this light doesn’t penetrate skin well for absorption measurements), there is a possibility that variations in the amount of emitted light could contain glucose information. An early investigator who proposed this was [Jacob Wong](#) of Santa Barbara, California. The same Jacob Wong, now CEO of [Airware](#), has several patent applications (such as US 20180143134) that describe measurement of glucose in the near-infrared region.

One of the former long-time survivors, OptiScan Biomedical, originally combined mid-infrared emission with varying the temperature of tissue in order to accentuate small differences in spectra, and Janusz Buchert, with a company named [Infratec](#), promoted a mid-infrared detection approach using emission from the tympanic membrane in the ear canal.¹

Hewlett-Packard has had interest in glucose measurement over the years, and has a PCT application (WO 2019/117966) describing an ear bud that measures glucose at “an infrared or near infrared wavelength,” but lacks clarifying detail.

[GlucoVista](#), about the time it departed from attempts to measure glucose in retinal vessels, filed a U.S. patent application for the measurement of glucose using mid-infrared emission in 2008, and has filed additional applications since then, some describing other approaches for glucose measurement (such as US 2015/0196233 for NIR transmission). They now describe their CGM-305 as a wearable, continuous, noninvasive glucose monitor. [Efraim Landa](#), who maintains an eponymous website, is chairman and CEO of the company, spelling it “[Gluco Vista](#).” Under either spelling, for several years, the

¹ The company that became Integ, an unsuccessful developer of a minimally-invasive approach to monitoring glucose in interstitial fluid, started life as Inomet, which attempted to measure glucose in the tympanic membrane using infrared spectroscopy; but by absorption, not by emission of infrared light.

website (confirmed by [links](#) to it from Landa's site) was "being updated," and the email address listed on it "info@glucovista.com" no longer exists.

Glucomat published a European patent application (EP 3 777 680 A1) for a similar approach which includes a visible or NIR source to heat the tissue prior to emission. It also proposes making measurements at two wavelengths, one of which corresponds to a mid-IR glucose absorption band and one that doesn't. Three individuals without a company: Yen-Chun Yeh, Sheng Yang, San Francisco, CA (US); and Dominik J. Schmidt, Los Altos, CA were granted US 11,103,167 B2 for a similar self-emission glucose monitor.

Sony joined the blackbody radiation measurement group with US 2023/0059061 A1, issued to Ito that includes a Peltier cooler to differentiate rising temperature changes from declining, and a group from Furman University (US 2022/0133186 A1, US 11,259,720 B2), measure blackbody radiation emitted from the eye.

Mid-Infrared

The mid-infrared is usually considered to be light with wavelengths of 2.5 to 16 micrometers, which can also be expressed using a reciprocal unit, wavenumbers, where the wavenumber, recited in reciprocal centimeters (cm^{-1}), equals 10,000 divided by the wavelength in microns. The equivalent region (going from the long to the short wavelength end) is about 600 to 4000 cm^{-1} . The technique has been explored for noninvasive glucose measurements, but so far without success. One entrant in this field was [Alethus](#), in Boston, MA, with U.S. Patent 8,406,856, but the progress detailed on the website ends at 2014, and [Opencorporates](#) lists a "Dissolution Date" of 30 June 2016. Another is indicated by U.S. patent 8,541,743, issued to Roc8Sci Co., renamed Memiray, LLC, but as of late 2019, the website said "Memiray- Further Information is available by application only."

[Tohoku University](#) claimed in 2016 to have measured glucose in the oral mucosa of the inner lip using mid-infrared light, but there appears to have been no clinical follow-up.

Oculir: This company was founded by John Burd, who has long experience in traditional monitors (LXN Corporation) and continuous sensors (DexCom), and has been a longtime observer of the noninvasive glucose world. He both founded and closed down a noninvasive company called Oculir (which attempted to measure glucose in the conjunctiva of the eye by reflectance of mid-infrared light from a quantum cascade laser), and it appears from patent claims that the conjunctiva over the sclera (white of the eye next to the iris) was the preferred target.

In late 2007, Oculir determined that their approach would not yield acceptable clinical results and closed down the company. A 2010 press release issued by “[Brain Tunnelgenix Technologies Corp](#)” (BTT) stated that the PTO had held all claims of Oculir’s U.S. Patent 6,958,039 to be invalid, and that “final rejection” caused the company to close down.¹ BTT was founded based on the discovery of a “new organ” for temperature measurement by Marc Abreu of Yale University. Abreu, an ophthalmologist at Yale University, has many issued patents for noninvasive measurement of glucose in or near the eye, dating back to US 6,120,460 in 2000, and claims to have “worked on spectroscopy culminating with the identification of the Radiation Signature of Glucose within the mid-infrared wavelength irradiated as thermal energy from the body,” but no further information about the measurement is available.

Another company, SMS Swiss Medical Sensor AG, from Baar, Switzerland, also uses the now-popular quantum cascade laser as a source (US 2016/0143564). Here is a passage from that application (Paragraph 0043) with at least four major errors:

“The tuneable excitation source is preferably tuned in a pre-determined spectral region [8.5 μm to 10.5 μm] which comprises one or more peaks in the D-glucose absorption band, preferably in the IR region, since in this region, the glucose absorption bands are sufficiently distinct and the penetration depth of the

¹ While the USPTO Patent Center indicates only that the Oculir patent in question expired due to nonpayment of maintenance fees, an *Ex Parte* Reexamination Certificate 90/008,214 for US 6,958,039 CI states “AS A RESULT OF REEXAMINATION, IT HAS BEEN DETERMINED THAT: Claims 1-7 are cancelled.”

coupled-in radiation is sufficient to reach the capillary vessels at 1.5 μm to 2 μm depth.”

First, almost all the glucose in tissue is in interstitial fluid, not capillaries; second, the capillaries are at depths of 1.5 to 2 millimeters, not microns; third, light of this wavelength range will not penetrate to the depth needed to reach either fluid; and finally, any light of these wavelengths penetrating tissue will be absorbed almost entirely by water, obscuring any glucose signal. As of late 2019, [Moneyhouse](#) reported “SMS Swiss Medical Sensor AG in Liquidation.”

An announced measurement from Scientists at Princeton University (Noninvasive *in vivo* glucose sensing on human subjects using mid-infrared light, Sabbir Liakat, et al., “Noninvasive *in vivo* glucose sensing on human subjects using mid-infrared light,” [Biomedical Optics Express 5:7, 2397](#), was given wide reporting and included the “trending” quantum cascade laser mentioned below. Close examination revealed that the approach, using multivariate techniques, was not likely to yield a noninvasive glucose monitor.

Another technology in this region, using femtosecond pulses, has been patented (EP 3 037 805 A1) by the Max Planck Society and the Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich. The equipment needed to generate these pulses, however, is large and expensive.

A patent application by Mitsubishi (US 2019/0307370) indicates that hope still exists for MIR glucose monitoring, as do both US 2020/0284717 A1 and US 11,035,782 B2 from Ichiro Ishimaru at Kagawa University in Japan, which describe establishing an acoustic standing wave to measure glucose in the earlobe.

Stimulated Emission/Stimulated Raman

These are very exotic spectroscopic techniques that attempt to use the interaction of two wavelengths of light in either the near-infrared or mid-infrared regions. They have been investigated by Paul Steffes, a researcher at [Georgia Tech](#). Jacob Wong also had US Patent 5,370,114 issued for measurement of glucose based on this technology.

In their first patent publication about glucose since the ill-fated contact lens, Google has re-entered this field, using stimulated Raman spectroscopy, in PCT application WO 2023/196388 A2. The results are summarized “Once trained [by machine learning methods], the machine-learned data analysis model can achieve a good accuracy of $R^2=0.84$, which corresponds to approximately 30 mg/dl mean absolute error.” Some might characterize this as a “moon-shot failure.”

Raman Spectroscopy

Raman spectroscopy is a technique which can circumvent, to some extent, the high absorption of water in the mid-infrared region. A laser in the visible or near-infrared wavelength region is used to illuminate the sample, and equivalents of many of the mid-infrared absorbance peaks are seen as small shifts in the light scattered by this different mode, with all peaks still in the near-infrared region. Unfortunately, the signals obtained using this technique in tissue are of much lower intensity than even traditional NIR spectroscopy, and the theoretical advantage has not yet been realized.

A group in San Jose, CA called C8 Medisensors, reported glucose results from near-infrared Raman spectroscopy in a publication in 2009¹ but showed a mean difference from reference measurements of 38 mg/dL, much too high for measurements in the normal or critical low ranges.² At the end of 2011, after a tremendous burst of press coverage which seemed to indicate that C8 had finally “cracked the nut” of noninvasive glucose monitoring, they received a funding round of over \$19M, including an investment by GE Capital and GE Healthcare.³ Shortly thereafter, both the new CEO and

¹ Lipson, J., et al., *Requirements for Calibration in Noninvasive Glucose Monitoring by Raman Spectroscopy* *Journal of Diabetes Science and Technology*, Volume 3, Issue 2, March 2009, pp. 233-241, published on-line at <http://journalofdst.org/March2009/Articles/VOL-3-2-SYM2-LIPSON.pdf>

² Jan Lipson, founder and CTO, died in a tragic bicycle accident in 2010.

³ The participation of funding by big companies with no experience in glucose monitoring is sometimes pejoratively called “dumb money.” In the same way that inventors can become enamored by the prospect of helping people with diabetes (and coincidentally “cashing in” on the result), companies like GE and Motorola have made what turned out to be unwise investments in this area. Apple, Samsung, Google, and Microsoft might seem to be on the same trail, trying to create a watch, phone, or other wearable device that measures glucose noninvasively, but hopefully, these companies have the resources to more thoroughly research the science of the field before making investments.

CTO departed the company, and John Kaiser, famous for his long-term advocacy for and participation on the Board of Directors of Sensys (see below), became the new CEO. There were rumblings of serious problems, and shortly after John Kaiser also passed away in 2013, the entire operation “imploded” and shut down¹. It may have been reconstructed as “Redox Biomedical,” but the listed address was a single-family residence, **and the company no longer exists in 2023.**

Another company, Diramed, LLC, in Columbus, Ohio was also pursuing Raman spectroscopy (together with specialized chemometric data treatment). It was founded by Robert Schlegel, a veteran of the blood glucose and diagnostics industry, and while their website said they were “focusing on non invasive detection and real time monitoring of in-vivo human substances,” little has been heard from them since. The company may no longer be active in this field.

A group² at MIT has worked in this area for some time. As usual, very promising correlations are shown, but no product has resulted. A 2018 publication (Analytical and Bioanalytical Chemistry, Volume 410, Issue 25, pp 6469–6475, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00216-018-1244-y>) is titled “Evaluation of accuracy dependence of Raman spectroscopic models on the ratio of calibration and validation points for non-invasive glucose sensing.” A report [about the technology from Wearables Technology](#) stated “Study Shows MIT’s Non-invasive Blood Glucose Monitor as Accurate as Finger Pricks,” but the correlation coefficients (R value) shown at p. 6473 of the article range from 53% to 69%--not nearly as accurate as finger pricks. A 2020 publication from the same MIT laboratory (but different authors) “Direct observation of glucose fingerprint using in vivo Raman spectroscopy” had similar hopeful statements but discouraging correlation coefficients. **As of August, 2023, a startup in Korea called [Apollon](#) has teamed up with (possibly other) MIT**

¹ One way to see who else is interested in noninvasive glucose is to see where the technical principals go after a company shuts down. An Apple-watching blog, “9 to 5 Mac” reports that Apple hired several experts in the field of noninvasive blood monitoring sensors from C8 MediSensors, and also hired employees who had worked at Senseonics, InLight Solutions, and Masimo. It does not appear that this **has yet been a fruitful pursuit for Apple, but as of 2023, several of those scientists were still at Apple.**

² W. Shih, K. Bechtel, and M. Rebec, [Noninvasive glucose sensing by transcutaneous Raman spectroscopy](#), Journal of Biomedical Optics 20(5), 051036 (2015).

professors to develop a Raman-base system, possibly using a surface-enhanced approach.

Another Raman-based device from [RSP Systems](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0197134) in Denmark is called Glucobeam. They have secured both €2.4M grant funding and \$5M venture capital, and reported on progress in a May, 2018 article “,” PLOS ONE | <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0197134> May 11, 2018, showing a MARD of 25.8%.

A number of other groups around the world have reported efforts to measure glucose



using Raman spectroscopy, including Nederlandse Organisatie voor Toegepastnatuurwetenschappelijk Onderzoek TNO (US 2016/0235345) in the Netherlands, RSP Systems A/S in Denmark (US 9,380,942), Imec VZW in Belgium (US 9,380,942), Politechnika Gdanska in Poland (EP 3 056 141 A1), Hong Kong Applied Science and Technology Research Institute Co, (EP 3 056 141 A1), and Taiwan Biophotonic Corporation (EP 3 081 163 A2).

Ishan Barman of Johns Hopkins University, 2019 winner of the “Emerging Leader in Spectroscopy” award, stated his work in Raman spectroscopy is “bringing us ever closer to the ultimate goal, and, given the recent pace of advances, a noninvasive sensor may be a reality in the not too distant future.”¹



A newer contender in this technology field is [Kaligia Biosciences](#)² in Florida, who stated: “Our system works beyond merely considering spectral measurements through the skin; It recognizes the proven correlation of other variates with blood glucose values. These information significantly increases the accuracy of glucose predictions.”³

[Atonarp](#) a company in Japan specializing in small mass spectrometers, has an issued patent (US 10,517,516) that covers several modes of Raman measurements.

BioSpex is a small company in San Jose with several patent applications for this approach, using time-resolved measurements (US 2021/0010865 A1, US 10,876,892 B2).

Metamaterials, Inc. (with the same leadership as Glucowise and Mediwise), has a US patent (US 11,513,077 B2) and an equivalent PCT patent application (WO 2022/081753

¹ This is approximately when Joel Robinson will be exiled to the Satellite of Love on Mystery Science Theater 3000 and forced to watch bad science fiction movies with his sentient robot colleagues.

² Not to be confused with Kaligia, the cigar-store statue of a Native American immortalized by Hank Williams.

³ In what has become a trend for noninvasive companies, Kaligia has developed a “COVID-19 Screener.” Their website (which otherwise no longer features glucose monitors) said “The non-invasive point of care device uses a laser directed at the patient’s small saliva sample to test for the presence of the COVID-19 virus. Based on the successful technology used in Kaligia Biosciences’s non-invasive Glucose monitoring device, the COVID-19 Rapid Screener is able to analyze the saliva spectrum by leveraging machine learning to quickly detect the virus.”

A1) by their Chief Technology Officer, Jonathan Waldern, based on “Surface-Enhanced Raman Scattering,” but states that the “biosensor can also be configured for use in wireless devices for medical diagnostics and monitoring, such as a non-invasive consumer glucose monitor currently being developed by MediWise Ltd. which operates in the 40GHz (radio wave) band” (previous patents and publications had put their frequency range around 60 GHz). There is no other mention of glucose, and the only analyte mentioned in the claims or abstract of either document is COVID-19.

Terahertz Spectroscopy

Few of the wavelength regions above the mid-infrared have been extensively explored, with the exception of what is now termed “terahertz spectroscopy.” With a wavelength range between about 1 and 0.1 mm, this region can yield meaningful data for pure compounds or mixtures in large amounts but has yet to be applied successfully to complex biological samples. Researchers at [Cambridge University](#) published papers indicating that glucose might be measured in this spectral region, and the Spire Corporation in Massachusetts also explored it for glucose measurements, but neither appeared to succeed.

Intel Corporation has filed for a patent (WO 2016/048624 A1) for a noninvasive glucose measurement in the terahertz region, and [Advantest Corporation](#) in Tokyo has filed a pair of U.S. applications (US 2016/0095540 A1 and US 2016/0095533) for the measurement of glucose in tears in this region.

Epitronics out of Singapore published a patent application (US 2020/0221969) which contends that the helical sweat glands 1) have electromagnetic properties resembling helical antennas; 2) actively radiate 0.1-1 THz radiation; and 3) always contain conductive sweat that alters the radiated energy. If, as contended below, glucose in sweat does not correlate well with glucose in blood, then this phenomenon will not be a reliable way to monitor glucose.

Millimeter Wave

It wouldn't be fair to leave out the part of the spectrum that creates the greatest airport-scanner visibility into our private lives, and a combination of groups at UCLA, Cal Tech, NASA Jet Propulsion, THZ global, National Chiao Tung University in Taiwan, and Glaxo Smith Kline have published an [article](#) titled "Compact Non-Invasive Millimeter-Wave Glucose Sensor," where measurements of anesthetized rats' ears at 33-37 GHz showed "a strong reduction in MMW power absorption through the rat ear with increasing glucose levels in the blood." Skeptics might anticipate that this, like many other RF and microwave impedance measurements, could be just a response to bulk properties of tissue fluid without specificity for glucose.

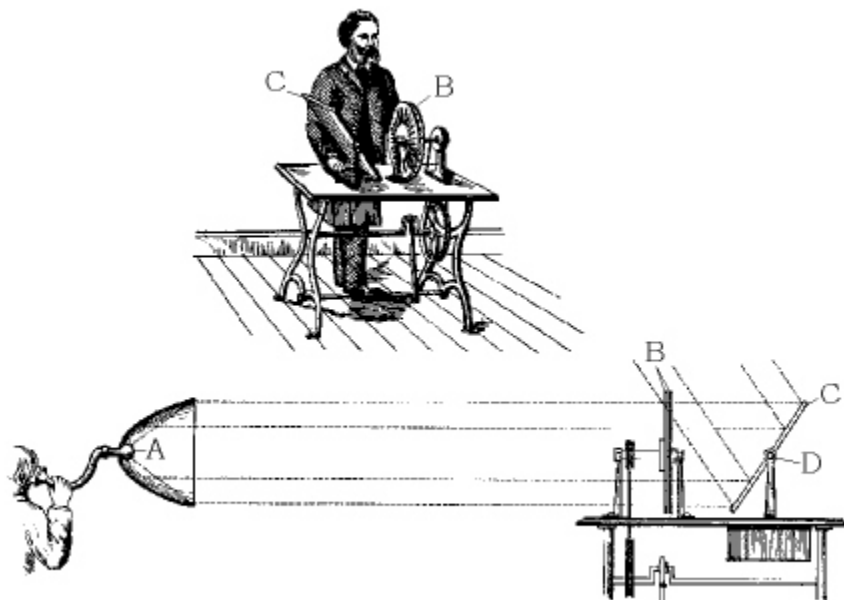
The authors of that paper, then aligned with Cal Tech and Huntington Medical Research Institutes, were issued US11,229,383 in early 2022, continued from a provisional patent application filed in 2014. It claims glucose measurements in a range of frequencies between 27 and 40 GHz, but without persuasive results.

Photoacoustic Spectroscopy

Photoacoustic Spectroscopy is a scientifically fascinating, but so far not particularly useful technique. Developed by Alexander Graham Bell in the 19th century, it has been largely a solution looking for a problem since that time.¹ Briefly put, when materials absorb visible light, they give it off as heat, through the energy conversion system (common as the "greenhouse effect") called "vibronic coupling," where light energy (more energetic photons) absorbed by a material is given off as infrared or heat energy (less energetic photons). In early versions of the technique, a modulated light beam was used to illuminate a sample contained in a sealed chamber with a sensitive microphone. The release of the infrared energy heats and cools the air at the frequency of modulation, and the "hum" from the sample grows louder in wavelength regions where the sample absorbs more light and softer where it doesn't. By plotting the intensity of sound against wavelength, a reasonable version of an absorbance spectrum can be generated. More modern systems use pulsed laser light, which is much more intense, and also use more

¹ During the time I was at Princeton Applied Research Corporation, the company briefly marketed a photoacoustic spectrophotometer. Several companies offered similar devices during a brief resurgence of devices using the technique in the 1970s that found use primarily in academic research programs.

sophisticated signal processing techniques to determine the presence or measure the concentration of a substance.



Perhaps because of its exotic name, this technology has been explored (or at least suggested) by the following groups: Herriot-Watt University in Edinburgh, Scotland; [Richard Caro](#) at Serraya in San Francisco; the [Oulu University in Finland](#); TRW (now Northrup-Grumman); Fluent Biomedical; and Glucon, Or-Nim, and Nexsense, all three based in Israel. Samsung Electronics of Korea and researchers at the Zurich Institute for Quantum Electronics in Switzerland, who combined this technique with a quantum cascade laser, along with others at the Institut für Biophysik in Frankfurt am Main, Germany, [In Vivo Noninvasive Monitoring of Glucose Concentration in Human Epidermis by Mid-Infrared Pulsed Photoacoustic Spectroscopy](#), *Anal. Chem.*, 2013, 85 (2), pp 1013-, who also used this combination of techniques.

Also, [Daylight Solutions, Inc.](#), of San Diego has a patent application (WO 2016/077633 A1) using a pair of lasers for “double photoacoustic” measurement, and Nippon Telegraph and Telephone (NTT) has an issued patent for the same subject (US 9,198,580). New publications in this field include NTT’s US 2021/0088478 A1, based on the difference between absorption at two different NIR wavelengths between 1,400 and

2,100 nm, with complex mathematical expressions, but with no in-vivo glucose measurement data.

Similarly, US 2020/0326274 A1 from Humboldt University of Berlin describes use of Mid-IR wavelengths of 6-12 microns, but no glucose data.

Hyundai Kia (US 2020/0359904 A1) combined ultrasonic and photoacoustic waves for use in a vehicle, possibly using an in-ear sensor, but also without measurement results.

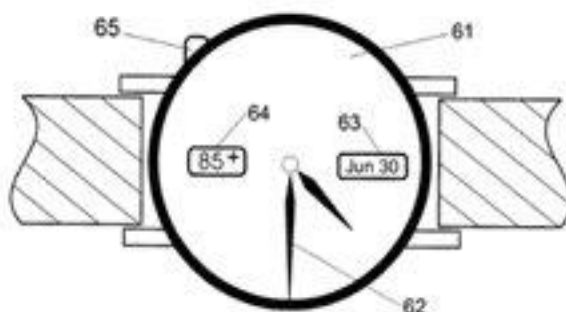
Surprisingly, Medtronic has several published patent applications for this technology, often combined with electrical impedance spectroscopy and thermal techniques: US20200253513A1, US20200352450A1, and US20200352484A1.

Another company that appears to have passed through this technology is [Diamontech](#). The inventors, Otto Hertzberg and/or Werner Mäntele, began with US 2006/004330, based on a technique called “attenuated total reflectance” (ATR) in the mid-infrared region that was expected to detect the presence of glucose. In 2013, they had moved on to photoacoustic spectroscopy, and in 2017, their US 2017/0146455 indicated an approach based on “photothermal deflectometry,” (explained [here](#)) in which a probe laser beam is deflected when mid-infrared light from a quantum-cascade laser is absorbed by substances in tissue. As with other mid-IR techniques, it must demonstrate that it can show specificity for glucose and provide sustained calibration intervals. Diamontech has recently initiated a clinical study in Germany: <https://clinicaltrials.gov/ct2/show/NCT05169034>, but no related publication has appeared.

Diamontech has dramatically expanded its patent holdings in recent years, with at least four issued U.S. patents, nine applications, and sixteen PCT applications. Recent filings have included methods for compensation for interference from lactate, as well as improving contact between tissue and the optical system.

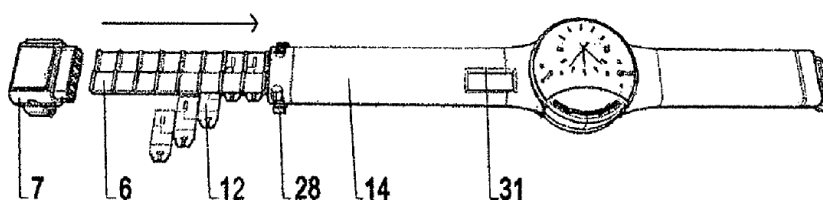
Interestingly, another company has also patented a very similar photo-thermal approach, Arun Ananth Aiyer with US 11,141,087. He was previously with Applejack 199 L.P. of Milpitas, CA.

Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose—in 2005, U.S. patent application 20050054907A1,¹ based on photoacoustic spectroscopy, was published (possibly from Fluent Biomedical), and it included this illustration of a wristwatch glucose meter:



Magic (for comic relief)

From an inventor in Tehran, Iran, a patent appeared in 2020 (US 10,705,486), entitled “Magic Gluco-wrist Watch (MGW).” Instead of a noninvasive device named after a



sudden attack of honesty, it turned out to be an actual watch with adaptations to read electrochemical test strips (12) that were contained in a combination test strip holder and lancing device (7).

Optical Rotation

While glucose has no color in the visible region, it has a characteristic shared with some other organic molecules (and a few inorganic ones) that causes rotation of polarized light. This is again a fascinating area of science, heavily stressed in training organic chemists, and has intrigued investigators for decades that it might be used to measure glucose in the eye. The amount of rotation of light by a compound is called its specific rotation, and for

¹ The application was subsequently abandoned at the U.S. Patent Office.

glucose, the figure is $+56.2 \text{ degrees (g/dl)}^{-1} \text{ dm}^{-1}$. This means that a concentration of one gram of glucose in one deciliter (100 ml), with a path length of one decimeter (10 cm or 100 mm), will rotate plane polarized light to the right by 56.2 degrees. One g/100 ml (1000 mg/l) is a factor of 10 higher than normal glucose levels of 100 mg/dL, so normal glucose levels would rotate the light by only 5.6 degrees with a path length of 100 mm. Since a normal path length in living tissue (or the eye) is about one or two millimeters, it's necessary to divide by another factor of 100 to get the amount of rotation in one millimeter: 0.056 degrees for the entire signal. Detecting a change in concentration of 10 mg/dL would require an accuracy of measurement of 0.0056 degrees. This is a very small amount of rotation, but this limitation has not deterred the determined, as will be described below.

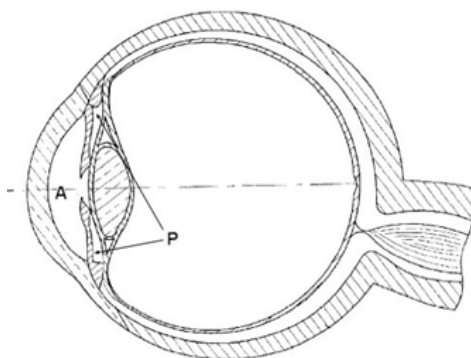
The most common location to look for glucose with this technique (and probably the second most-pursued of *any* noninvasive technique), is in the anterior chamber of the eye (the space between the cornea and the iris), where a clear fluid exists that is still known by the archaic name of “aqueous humor.” Because the cornea (the hard front surface of the eye) is transparent, it is theoretically possible to pass polarized light through it to measure how much it is rotated by glucose present in the fluid (although the measurement is also complicated by the cornea, since it is “birefringent,” which means that it exhibits multiple refractions of polarized light and scatters the light into two paths). An investigation into this using ellipsometry (US 6999808) does not appear to have simplified the measurement.

Perhaps more important, there are dynamics of formation and mixing of the aqueous humor that dramatically complicate any measurement for glucose made in this medium. In an 84-page comprehensive review by R.F. Brubaker, entitled “Flow of Aqueous Humor in the Human Eye” (Trans Am Ophthalmol Soc. 1982; 80: 391–474), the author states the following:¹

¹ In fact, on page 433, Table XIV summarizes nineteen studies performed over a thirty-year time span, in which the flow rate was estimated at between 1.9 and 3.4 microliters/minute for all studies.

In a series of 113 normal subjects¹⁰⁹ ranging in age from 20 to 83 years, the mean (\pm SD) value of the anterior chamber loss coefficient of fluorescein was $1.5 \times 10^{-2} \pm 0.43 \times 10^{-2} \text{ min}^{-1}$. The volume of the anterior chamber in these eyes was $186 \pm 37 \text{ }\mu\text{L}$. The calculated rate of clearance of fluorescein from the anterior chamber was $2.7 \pm 0.6 \text{ }\mu\text{L/min}^{-1}$. The rate of aqueous humor flow through the anterior chamber was calculated to be $2.4 \pm 0.6 \text{ }\mu\text{L/min}^{-1}$.

This means that the amount of fluid produced *per minute* is approximately one one-hundredth the total volume of the aqueous humor, and the glucose concentration of the aqueous humor changes at most one one-hundredth as fast as that of the blood. The calculations that give the amount of time for a new blood glucose value to equilibrate in the aqueous humor are complicated, but the result is a delay of about 45 minutes to one hour between a measurement of glucose in blood and an accurate reading of a changed glucose value in the anterior chamber, which would be much too long a delay for a person whose glucose level was approaching dangerously low levels, and could probably never be able to monitor short-term glucose trends.¹ Depending on the optical system used, either the anterior chamber (just the volume between the cornea and the iris, indicated as “A” on the figure) or the total volume of aqueous humor contained in the anterior chamber and the posterior chamber (the space between the iris and lens, “P”) may be examined. The total volume (anterior and posterior) is about 300 microliters, while the anterior chamber itself is just under 200 microliters.



¹ There have been reports that people with diabetes might have a shorter equilibration time due to leakage of glucose that occurs in the ciliary process (like the “blood-aqueous barrier”) where aqueous humor is made from plasma. Other reports indicate that flow of aqueous humor is reduced in patients with diabetes.

Therefore, even if the glucose inside the anterior chamber could be measured accurately (and so far, no one has managed accurate measurements in more than forty years of pursuit), it seems unlikely to yield clinically acceptable glucose monitoring results. However, this longest lived of approaches has been explored by at least the following groups (besides March and Quandt, above): Gerard Côté¹, Martin Fox and Brent Cameron (University of Connecticut and Texas A&M), Tecmed, Ed Stark, Vitrophage, Roche Diagnostics, Abbott, Fuji Zerox, Chromologix LLC, and MicroOptx. The last group published a patent application (WO 2017/083610 A1) with this figure and commentary about measurements in a Yucatan "mini-pig" with a sensor implanted into the sclera, following an intravenous bolus of glucose:

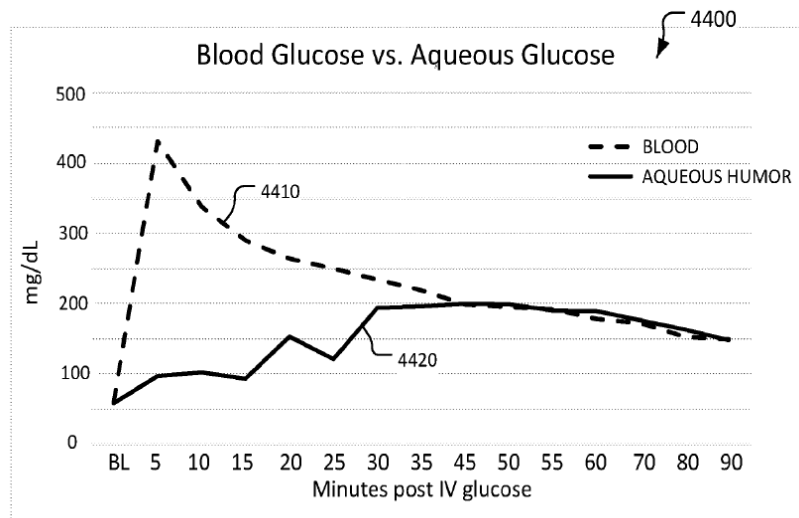


FIG. 4A

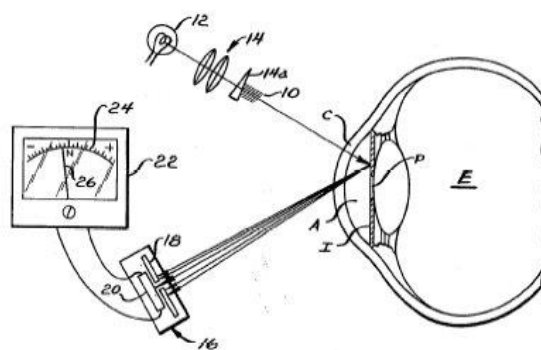
“As shown by line 4420, this study showed a correlated rise in aqueous humor glucose concentration levels resulting from the large injection of glucose (while lagging behind the more responsive blood glucose concentration data of line 4410). This was to be expected as aqueous humor production is about 2-4 μ l/minute in these animals, so the initial spiked ultra filtrates are initially diluted

¹ Côté published a paper in 2001 (Measurement of the Glucose Transport Time Delay Between the Blood and Aqueous Humor of the Eye for the Eventual Development of a Noninvasive Glucose Sensor, Diabetes Technology & Therapeutics 3, 201-207, 2001) where he followed the production of aqueous humor in New Zealand white rabbits, and concluded that the glucose equilibrium time could be as short as five minutes. The measurements were made by withdrawing fluid, and this process may have altered the rate of production and led to a shorter estimate of the equilibration time. In a private communication in 2020, he raised the issue that active or “facilitated” diffusion might bring glucose into the fluid at a greater rate than either this bulk fluid flow or passive diffusion. Identification of “glucose transporter proteins” within the ciliary body might support this idea.

in the baseline anterior chamber aqueous humor of 0.5- 1.0 cc volume...As such, once aqueous humor glucose concentration levels caught up with blood glucose levels at around 45 minutes as shown in graph 4400, both blood and aqueous humor glucose concentration levels returned towards baseline homeostasis levels at a similar rate and with quite striking similarity.”

The pursuit continues today with Fujifilm’s patent application, somewhat redundantly titled “Concentration Measuring Method of Optically Active Substance and Concentration Measuring Device of Optically Active Substance” (US 2023/0213436 A1).

Brent Cameron (University of Toledo) helped to form Freedom Meditech (San Diego, CA) to pursue measurement of glucose in aqueous humor. As of 2018 (but gone by 2020), the company’s website still had a page describing their proposed I-SugarX optical glucose monitor, but seemed to be focusing more on a screening technique for diagnosing diabetes based on cross-linking in the lens of the eye (the Clearpath DS-120 instrument) that was an early approach of the Laser Atlanta Optics company that was a predecessor of SpectRx. Assets of Freedom Meditech were acquired by Sinocare/Trividia Health in 2017, and there has been no further report of the use of their proposed approach for monitoring glucose. See US 11,651,488 B2.



Related technologies, based on variations in refractive index rather than optical rotation of the aqueous humor, were being pursued by at a company originally named Visual Pathways in Anthem, AZ, Ansari (U.S. Patent 6,704,588), and by Lein Applied

Diagnostics in the UK¹. The investigator at Visual Pathways, [Thomas Cornsweet](#), who, until his death in 2017, was the Chief Scientist at Quantum Catch in Prescott, AZ (renamed as “Brien Holden Vision Institute”), and had a patent application issue in 2014 directed to the same basic technology.

A previous company, Visualant, has become a newer company, [Know Labs](#), with a [YouTube video](#) showing similar results in a two-hour test of a single subject, one of the co-inventors of their sensor. They say that their ChromaID and Bio-RFID technologies are used to identify, detect, or diagnose substance markers or biomarkers that may be invisible to the human eye (see RF/Impedance section below for more). Investigation of their patent holdings, though, showed that they include Cornsweet’s patents for glucose measurement in the eye among other diverse applications.

In the five years that passed between the first and second editions of this book, the visible progress on Lein’s website was limited to an artist’s rendering of a cell-phone-sized instrument. A patent from Lein— US 9,026,188—appeared in May of 2015, suggesting measuring glucose as a function of thickness variations of the cornea, which can be measured optically.

Lein Applied Diagnostics reappeared in late 2021, re-funded with £2.85 and with a new name, “[Occuity](#).” Recent publications assigned to Lein include US 9,952,394 B2 with no mention of glucose, **but a report in the [Health Tech World](#) in November, 2022, said that an ex-Apple employee at Lein “has turned his focus on creating a non-invasive glucose meter that works by taking a simple scan of the eye.”**

A company called Q-Step (originally in Southern California, but later in San Ramon near the Silicon Valley) proposed making measurements of the iris of the eye that could change with glucose variations in the aqueous humor that surrounds the iris. Although it was active as late as 2007, the company appears to have disappeared after a series of

¹ Lein is, like Robert Rosenthal’s “Trebor”, a reverse-eponymous version of part of the founder’s first name, Daniel John Daly.

management changes. The company's patents did not seem to disclose a particular method of measurement of the eye related to glucose.

Another entrant in this field, [IRISense](#), had registered a clinical trial where they state "Previous animal studies done by Dr. Brent Cameron in 2013 at the Univ. of Toledo have shown that glucose present in the fluid in the front of the eye, called the aqueous humor, correlates well with blood glucose. As blood glucose changes, the optical properties of the aqueous humor change, causing a change in the appearance of the iris of the eye. The data collected in this study will be shared with IRISense to assist in validating the algorithm being used to develop the database needed. The data collected so far is in a narrow band of the normal glycemic range (healthy volunteers). We will collect standard digital photographic images of the eyes of subjects with diabetes along with corresponding blood glucose concentrations using the finger stick glucose monitoring method." Unfortunately, the report in October of 2016 was "This study has been terminated. (No positive results were detected)." Unlike so many other investigations, at least the negative information on this trial has been shared with others.

A similar approach has been reported by [EasyGlucose](#) "Users first capture high resolution images of their eye with their smartphone through a custom, low-cost anterior segment iris imaging adapter," which are then analyzed by deep learning techniques using neural networks to detect morphological variations related to blood glucose. The principal investigator, Bryan, "is an undergraduate at UCLA studying Computer Science." A patent application (US 2020/0305709) issued to Bryan Hau-Ping Chiang (a computer science student at UCLA) declares that "iris feature vectors" from an image (such as "crypts and furrows") of the iris are related to glucose.

A group with also incomplete explanation of the science (but with one of the great company names in the field), is Renegade OptoPhysics LLC, out of Centennial, CO. They hope to find glucose in blood vessels or tissues of the eye with goggles and lights with wavelengths between 380 and 2500 nm, as described in US 2020/0281528 A1.

Had the approach investigated by FoviOptics (see below) worked, there was a patent application (US20060183986) that described a monitoring system built into an

intraocular lens. The proposed system used inductively-coupled energy to provide light of varying wavelength to shine on the retina to track its reflectance.

Magic Leap, a highly-touted tech company that flamed out in truly spectacular fashion, patented an optical rotation method in the aqueous humor (US 11,559,228 B2), that issued three years after all the inventors had left the company. It did not improve the measurement of glucose, but did have a truly spectacular image as FIG. 1A.

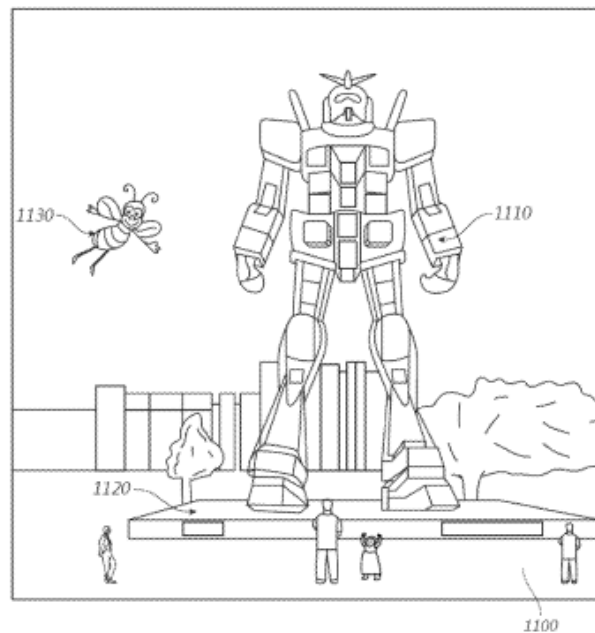


FIG. 1A

Another approach involving the eye uses glasses to measure pupil size for an estimate of glucose level (US 2023/0293061 A1), saying “when blood sugar is too low, the pupil tends to dilate. Additionally, when blood sugar is too high or too low, dilation/contraction may be erratic over time.” They did not include any results to validate this idea.

About as far removed from noninvasive is the intraocular aqueous humor glucose sensor patented by ophthalmic surgical company Glaukos (US9730638B2), which might be better described as a “sharp stick in the eye.”

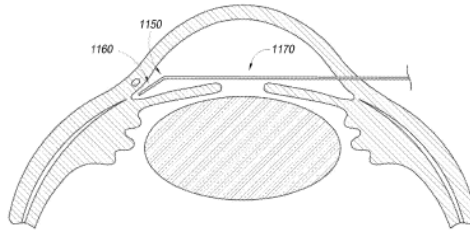
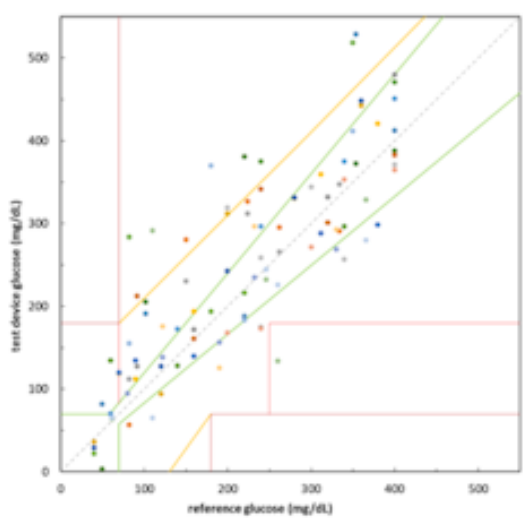


FIG. 12

Optical Rotation in Tissue

The perceived simplicity of this approach lured at least two early groups (Electro-optical Laboratories US 4,901,728) in Tennessee, and Sunshine Medical (U.S. 5448992) in Northern California) into the exploration of optical rotation of light by glucose in tissue. However, every time light reflects (scatters) from a surface there is a change in polarization of light, and after a very short passage through tissue, the polarization of the light is random and chaotic. Neither company was able to achieve acceptable results. A third company has surfaced, called [Socrates Health Solutions](#), in Dallas, TX, which appears to be using a similar approach by measuring polarized light sent through the earlobe, based on U.S. Patent 8,743,355. It was initially the subject of an Indiegogo campaign that raised only \$1,905 of its \$125,000 goal. A special advisor to the company is John Maynard, an alumnus of InLight Solutions and VeraLight, and results from the website in 2020 are below:



Another report of this approach of unknown date (which only appears to be referenced by [Semantic Scholar](#)) is by [Sunghoon Jang, et al.](#), from the New York City College of Technology.

Three companies, all headquartered in Israel, have patents for related technologies: T.G.M Technologies Ltd, in Kiryat Bialik splits a beam of polarized light passed through tissue into two components (US 9,295,419), Judah Gordon of Jerusalem with a technology, described in US 2016/0367175 for measuring small angles of rotation of polarized light through tissue, and Mark Bosin and Seva Brodsky with a similar approach, disclosed in US 9,717,444.

A recent entrant in this field is Evgeny Seider, also of Israel, with PCT application WO 2021/149042 A1, with a single in-vivo experiment conducted in rats.

Light Scattering

As described, when light passes through tissue (or is directed into it and bounces back out as a reflection), it is strongly scattered, and if well-defined rays entered, they would be jumbled and confused when they exited. It has occurred to several researchers to exploit this relationship, based generally on a single phenomenon: much of the scattering occurs at the interface between cells and the interstitial fluid in which they are bathed. Reflection is based, to a large degree, on the difference in refractive index between the fluid and the cell wall, and the refractive index of the fluid depends on, among other

things, the amount of glucose present. In these approaches, as glucose concentration increases, the refractive index increases to become closer to that of the cell wall, and the scattering decreases. The major drawback is that the concentrations of other substances also vary, and those variations also cause changes in the refractive index of the fluid. In addition to temperature, the measurement seems to be particularly sensitive to tissue hydration, and since edema (swelling) is a common symptom of people with type 2 diabetes, this could seriously interfere with the reproducibility of the measurement. Also, as described below, tissue hydration can vary with changes in blood glucose, which may both give rise to this approach and ultimately defeat it because of the nonspecific nature of the measurement.

A slight variation of this theme was employed by a company in Israel named [Orsense](#). They stopped the circulation of blood in a finger for a short time and watched scattering changes over time caused by a proposed agglomeration of red cells inside blood vessels into “roulades” that resemble a roll of coins. They seem to have de-emphasized their glucose instrumentation research, and the last mention of glucose was in a brief repeated section “About Orsense” at the bottom of their press releases that disappeared around 2014, and as of 2018, there was no longer any mention of glucose on their website. The scientists who were conducting the glucose research appeared to have moved elsewhere some time before that.

A further version, also based largely on scattering, is sometimes called “time of flight” scattering, and attempts to separate the photons that go straight through tissue (“ballistic” photons) without being scattered, and which should therefore contain less glucose information, from the other photons that bounced around more and interacted with glucose-containing tissue. As in the mid-infrared region, the equipment to generate the very short femtosecond pulses is large and very expensive. This was given a boost by the availability of optical coherence tomography (OCT—see below) systems which effectively separate photons based on the distance or time they have traveled. Several patents have appeared, but no clinical results.

An increase in the scattering of near-infrared light by red blood cells with increasing glucose levels has been reported by Mark Arnold, a long-term noninvasive glucose investigator at the University of Iowa. He states¹ “The observed increase in scattering with higher glucose concentrations would be consistent with either an increase in the refractive index mismatch between the plasma and red blood cells or a reduction in the effective size of the red blood cells.” Since increasing glucose increases the refractive index of the plasma the cells are immersed in, greater scattering would indicate *an even greater* increase in the refractive index of the cells. He speculates that the higher glucose concentration causes an increase in the product formed inside the red cells from the first rapid, reversible step of the “glycation” reaction between glucose and hemoglobin (a slow rearrangement step follows that produces “glycosylated hemoglobin,” that is measured as hemoglobin A1c). Patent applications² appeared in 2012 from a company named Verifica which use this effect for glucose measurement in combination with “differential scattering spectroscopy and confocal scanning laser Doppler microscopy.”

A number of phenomena attributed to other properties such as absorption of light may actually result from changes in scattering from changes in water distribution with varying glucose levels. In many cases, it has been found that effects attributed to the absorption of NIR radiation are due to changes in the amount of light scattered caused as a result of changes in water content resulting from osmotic effects.

Transdermal Techniques (and other trans-membrane techniques)

Asking a group of people to suggest ways that glucose might be measured noninvasively will inevitably yield suggestions of saliva, sweat and tears, since these are produced in relative abundance and easily accessible. (Ear wax and “nasal exudates,” two other common nominees, are not valid markers of glucose, primarily because of the time period over which they are produced and the fact that they’re not always available for

¹ Analytical Chemistry, Vol. 77, No. 14, July 15, 2005

² WO2012134515A1 and WO2012087319A2

examination.^{1,2}) After all, they reason, if urine can give an indication, at least of high glucose, other fluids might work as well. This reasoning error leads to the Second Law of Noninvasive Glucose (even though it's introduced first, it's less important than the First Law which follows some distance below):

Second Law:

It Is Not Possible to Get a Reliable Measurement of Glucose Across an Intact Cell Membrane.

Here are the reasons: On a simplistic basis, any organism that leaked its primary fuel (glucose) across its external surfaces would be a very inefficient organism and would probably have been eliminated by natural selection long ago. For a more sophisticated description, the amount of any substance that travels from fluid on one side of a membrane to the other (termed “partitioning”) depends on many complex factors—the concentration of the substance on either side, the presence or absence of mediators (which open the cell wall to a substance; insulin is a good example) or transporter molecules (endothelial cells, which line the surface of blood vessels, do not employ insulin to mediate their glucose transport, but either allow either free diffusion of glucose or employ transporter proteins to “carry” glucose across the membrane). In addition, levels of sodium and potassium (“electrolytes”) can greatly alter the permeability of a cell membrane to a variety of substances. In the skin, where most attempts to measure glucose have been focused, there is a surface layer of dead cells compacted to form the “stratum corneum,” that acts as a strong barrier to passage of glucose.

¹ A recent patent (US 10,620,155, to a University of Tokyo researcher), adds a new fluid, suggesting measurements where “the body fluid may be tear, sweat, saliva or *snivel*.” However, in the claims, where more precision is required, the description was changed to “nasal discharge,” following the patent examiner’s exhortation that “It is not understood by the Examiner, that ‘snivel’ is a known body fluid. Appropriate correction is required.”

² Another new glucose (and cortisol) measurement substance is earwax, described in US 2020/0333363 and an [article](#) “Earwax test could help detect type 2 diabetes early.”

The body goes to great lengths to produce fluids with the right compounds in them (salt in tears for tissue compatibility, for example, or digestive enzymes in saliva), and to prevent them from carrying away other compounds. In sweat glands, a large membrane surface area is used to collect water and transport it to the surface to aid in cooling, but glucose and most other molecules other than simple ions like sodium and chloride are largely excluded from the fluid.

When there is a large glucose concentration disparity (up to two orders of magnitude as with tears, sweat, or saliva), and there is no defined mechanism for partitioning glucose between plasma and the second fluid, two problems have been repeatedly shown:

1. There can be a large variability in the concentration ratio among people, often a range of several-fold to a factor of ten, meaning that the calibration factor for each person must be individually determined—no “factory calibration” for the test is possible.
2. The concentration ratio for an individual tends to vary over time, meaning that calibration must be repeated frequently. A noninvasive test requiring daily calibration via a fingerstick is much less noninvasive.

Glucose, even though a relatively small molecule, does not diffuse across cell membranes (unlike ethanol, which has led many people to expect glucose to diffuse freely). Insulin is required to move glucose into most muscle cells, and a family of proteins (“transporter molecules” designated GLUT1 to GLUT 14), move glucose to and from other areas.¹ Without a defined process for glucose transport into other body fluids, the concentration (and thus the ratio between glucose in blood and other fluids) has often been found to be variable both among people and within a person over time.

While both tears and saliva contain very low levels of glucose (see below), trying to coerce the cells to do something they don’t want to do (leak glucose), may create the effect under duress, but not reliably or at a constant rate. This leads to another principle that has a parallel in quantum physics, known as the Heisenberg “uncertainty principle.”

¹ Another family of transporter molecules is termed SGLT (for sodium-glucose co-transporters), brand names for these drugs include Jardiance, Invokana, and Farxiga.

The formal definition is a little obscure, but what it implies is that trying to look too closely at a subatomic particle will alter its state, just by the process of looking. The same principle occurs if attempts are made to force glucose to go where nature didn't intend it and leads to the Uncertainty Principle Subsection of the Second Law.

Uncertainty Principle Subsection of the Second Law:

Attempts to force glucose across an intact membrane will alter the local concentration of glucose.

As the section on Cygnus' GlucoWatch will detail, it's possible to get glucose to appear on the surface of the skin (or across the conjunctiva of the eye, or in the saliva across the buccal membrane inside the cheek), but a lot of force is required, and this force inevitably disrupts the normal equilibrium of that portion of the body. Defense mechanisms are almost always raised (swelling, inflammation, blistering), and these result in very different metabolic states and substance levels than would normally be present and which almost invariably alter the local glucose concentration. There have also been attempts to change membrane permeability and allow increased glucose flow by using "natural" substances such as bile acids, but also without commercial success.

In addition, the Directional Principle of the Second Law, as was learned by companies like Cygnus (reverse iontophoresis) and Sontra (ultrasound), states:

Directional Principle Subsection of the Second Law:

It's easier to get (uncharged) molecules into the skin than out of it.

Transdermal drug delivery ("patches") have been used to deliver a number of therapeutic agents across the skin. They use materials called "permeation enhancers" which help move the drug molecules, but they also use a very large concentration of drug in the

patch. This large concentration helps to drive the partitioning of drug into the skin, and when the patch is discarded, a substantial fraction of the drug generally remains undelivered. Adding an electric current to transdermal delivery produces a technique called iontophoresis, and it has also been used for drug delivery. Cygnus (with its GlucoWatch) proved just how difficult it is to pull molecules the other direction, especially if they're uncharged (the glucose molecule is *polar*, meaning that the electric charge is unbalanced from one end to the other, but without measures that are intolerable to tissue, it does not ionize into a positively or negatively charged species that would be accelerated by an electric current). It has been speculated that glucose moves through some portions of the skin in concert with sodium ions,¹ but that has not been proved. In addition, the concentration of glucose below the skin is very low, so it does not have the concentration advantage of the drug delivery patches.

The technique of phonophoresis, using ultrasound to increase the permeability of skin so substances like topical anesthetics can penetrate more easily, has also been used for many years, and it has found use for anti-inflammatory drugs and analgesics, mostly for pain management. Abbott learned, in a brief association with Sontra² around 1996 that coaxing glucose out from the skin with ultrasound was at least as difficult as with electricity, if not more so (Bayer learned the same thing when it sponsored Sontra's research in about 2003). Sontra originated in Robert Langer's lab at MIT, hoping to move glucose across the skin with ultrasound and has become, through a complex sequence of acquisitions and buyouts, Echo Therapeutics.

¹ The class of diabetes drugs known as SGLT2 inhibitors operate on a transporter protein that reabsorbs both materials back into the bloodstream; it is located only in a specific section of the kidney.

² Sontra's existence continued on a tortuous path for some years. After having its research sponsored by Bayer from 2003 to 2005, it announced plans to close down in 2007. It was saved through an acquisition by Echo Therapeutics and continued its existence at least through 2016, issuing frequent press releases with exaggerated descriptions of its progress. In 2022, however, there was still a [LinkedIn page](#) insisting the company had 10 employees.



The revised principle involves abrading off the top layer of skin with their “Prelude Skin-Prep” system, then applying an electrochemical sensor called “Symphony” to monitor glucose for a day, after calibration and warm-up. Some bad press in 2013 about a major stockholder unhappy with the precipitous decline of their stock price resulted in the abrupt departure of the CEO, and foreshadowed other troubles for the company. A blog called “Buyers Strike!” posted several articles casting doubt on the future of Echo, saying “Recently Echo Therapeutics (ECTE), the little reverse merger company that can’t (fill in the blank – get a 510(k) approved, raise money from reputable investors, generate meaningful revenue, run a properly registered trial) [has attempted further dilution of its shares].” Echo may have applied to the FDA for 510(k) clearance of their device as early as 2009, but that has yet to be granted. In October of 2013, Echo announced it had laid off 30% of its workforce, citing delays at the FDA caused by a temporary government shutdown, but still announcing it would start a clinical trial for FDA approval in late 2014.¹ Echo announced in September of 2014: “Echo Therapeutics Inc. has suspended its product development, research, manufacturing and clinical programs and operations to conserve its liquidity and capital resources,” but in March of 2015 a press release said that it had “achieved its wireless mobile communication milestone, making it now possible for its continuous glucose sensor to transmit data to any mobile platform.” A story in the New York Times in late 2016 indicated more trouble for Echo’s primary investor: “A founder of the New York hedge fund Platinum Partners and six others were arrested on Monday morning on charges relating to a \$1 billion fraud. The men were charged with securities fraud and investment adviser fraud in a \$1 billion scheme in which executives used new investor money to pay older investors, according to an unsealed indictment filed in Federal District Court in Brooklyn.”

¹ There is no record at clinicaltrials.gov of any clinical trial for Echo Therapeutics.

Another pair of companies, Technical Chemicals & Products, Inc., and Americare, both thought they had the ideal transdermal system based on changing permeability of skin with solvents such as ethanol or ether and conducted a soap-opera battle with each other in the press and in court for some years. Neither company launched a product for measuring glucose, but a successor company (that may finally have ceased to exist called Health-Chem Diagnostics¹), attempted to launch a transdermal “patch” product using propylene glycol as the permeation enhancer. As of 2017, all material on its website related to these products had been removed, and the website itself had disappeared by 2018, leaving just another [LinkedIn page](#).

Sweat

Passive collection of sweat, just like examination of the surface of the skin (by any means—spectroscopic or otherwise), shows only trace and variable amounts of glucose, but possibly because increased interest in “wearable” sensors, interest has increased in this fluid in recent years—see below.

An idea floated quite some years ago was to add a “sudorific” (sweat-inducing) compound such as [pilocarpine nitrate](#) to the surface of the skin, thereby increasing the flow of sweat from the skin surface (this is done, along with mild electrical stimulation, in what’s termed a “sweat test” to screen for cystic fibrosis, but that test has diagnostic value because the abnormal level is about 50% greater than normal). Again, it’s a reasonable bet that, if normal sweat contains no measurable glucose, any that is found after stimulation of the skin will not accurately reflect the amount present in unstimulated tissue (see the “uncertainty principle of the Second Law, above). Depending on whether one’s glass is perennially half-full or half-empty, it is possible to interpret the continuing pursuit of these trans-membrane techniques as “hope springs eternal,” or “those who cannot remember the mistakes of the past are doomed to repeat them.” See the section below for sweat techniques that have not yet produced commercial success.

¹ Jack Aronowitz, who was the CEO of Technical Chemicals and Products, was still listed as the CEO of Health-Chem Diagnostics in 2020, but the company was sold to store-brand generic maker PL Developments in 2016.

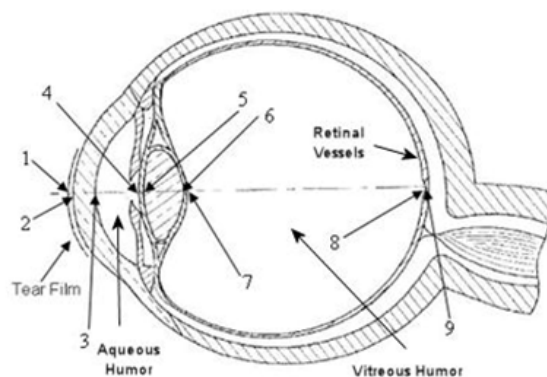
One fluid (interesting beyond the fact that it's just plain fun to say) is called "gingival crevicular fluid," and does have glucose levels very close to plasma. GCF is very slowly exuded between the gums and the teeth, into the mouth where it mixes with saliva.¹ The very low rate of production makes it challenging to collect, and the very large amount of saliva that surrounds it makes it very susceptible to dilution (or contamination if food has been recently consumed). Although it appeared in investigations at least twice almost twenty years apart², it did not survive as a practical means for measuring glucose either time. In 2023, though, "Gingival Crevicular Blood Glucose as a Novel Method for Screening Diabetes Mellitus in Periodontally Compromised Patients" was published in [Cureus 2023 May 24;15\(5\):e39444. doi: 10.7759/cureus.39444. eCollection 2023 May.](https://doi.org/10.7759/cureus.39444)

The Retina

If the eye is the window to the soul, might it not also be the best place to find glucose? In addition to the description above of aqueous humor attempts (and below of visual pigment regeneration rates), the optical clarity of the eye has tempted many investigators to seek glucose there, especially in the retina. Attempts to make near-infrared measurements of glucose in the retina have produced universally discouraging results, and attempts to find glucose within the blood vessels visible on the retina have also not yielded success. There are several major complications--there is a limitation to the amount of light that can safely be put into the eye, and only a fraction of one percent of the light is reflected from the retina or its vessels (again, it might be possible to determine *hemoglobin* in retinal blood vessels, because it has both the huge concentration and color advantages over glucose). Also, there are many interfaces in the eye (both surfaces of the cornea, both surfaces of the lens, and associated membranes) which scatter light, so the light returned from the inside of the eye is difficult to transform into a straightforward measurement.

¹ It is possible that this is at least one source of the low levels of glucose found in saliva.

² The first, in 1988, was at the University of Stony Brook in New York; the second, in 2005, was a [Professor Yamaguchi](#) at Toyama University in Japan.



More significantly, in order to make a glucose measurement in retinal vessels (this would almost certainly be a spectroscopic method, and most likely near-infrared), it is necessary to look at the path the measuring light would need to travel and what it holds. The light must pass through several millimeters of the aqueous humor, where the glucose likely varies somewhat more slowly than in blood, and almost 20 millimeters of vitreous humor (the jelly-like fluid inside the eyeball), where glucose is also present but varies much more slowly¹. The retinal vessels are only a fraction of a millimeter in diameter, so the light would encounter something like one hundred times more glucose in passing through the eye than it would encounter in the retinal vessel. Corrections for this “background” glucose could be made by viewing an area of the retina that has no vessels and subtracting the value obtained, but whenever two large numbers (say 99 and 100) are subtracted from each other, measurement error is doubled and the result is generally much less precise. Retinal arteries, where a pulsatile signal might be seen that could help locate the blood, are smaller and less common than the veins visible on the retina. Finally, the regions of the near-infrared spectrum that are most specific for glucose are wavelengths where the allowed intensity in the eye is severely restricted by safety considerations.

Gluco Vista in Israel tried between about 2006 and 2009 to measure glucose in retinal vessels at the back of the eye.² Their website said in 2013 “The Company’s technology was reduced to portable laboratory units that underwent successful clinical tests in 2010

¹ Glucose in vitreous humor has been used in forensics to [estimate the time of death](#).

² U.S. Patent 7,308,293 was filed in 2002 and issued to Jonathan (Yonatan) Gerlitz in 2007. The company was spelled “Glucovista” with no space.

and then was further miniaturized into hand-held units. Advanced clinical studies on the hand-held units will commence shortly at two prominent hospitals in Israel” Two clinical trials in Israel (with no indication of the intended measurement method) are reported as “Study has passed its completion date and status has not been verified in more than two years.” by clinicaltrials.gov. It might still be possible to measure glucose in these vessels by focusing the light on the retina (or by using a pulsatile component of the small arteries there), but there has yet been no announcement of success.¹

An interesting approach, also sponsored by LifeScan, was investigated by [RetiTech](#). The inventors speculated that, because the human vision processing system is a combination of an older, more primitive motion detection system and a newer system for processing color and fine detail, there could be a difference in perception at different glucose levels. The technique employed computer-generated rotating colored patterns and seemed to show some differentiation at higher glucose levels, but not with enough resolution for monitoring.

A little further afield, but still related to the eye, are techniques that have been patented which make use of vision changes to estimate glucose. After many hours of being bathed in high glucose levels, the lens of the eye swells and alters the focal point of the eye. An early approach used a series of parallel lines with varying separation to estimate the glucose level—the smallest pair that the user could resolve was the approximate glucose level. Others (U.S. Patent 4,750,830—Lee and U.S. Patent 6,442,410—Steffes) have made measurements of the refractive correction of the eye and related that to glucose levels. Unfortunately, this approach again seems to work effectively only at high levels (and after quite a delay) and has not yet been shown to be accurate enough for general monitoring use.

Retinal Pigment Regeneration

¹ In about 2008, the same inventor and company began to file patent applications about glucose measurement using mid-infrared emission from tissue (and later patented other technologies)—see that section. They have patented a number of different technologies for measuring glucose noninvasively.

Fovioptics¹: This startup was founded in 1999 by Mark Rice, an anesthesiologist, and its glucose technology was based on measurement of the regeneration rate of visual pigment in the retina. The technology was encouraged by the observation that visual acuity (judged by color-matching studies following a bright light to bleach the pigments in the retina) for people with diabetes often returned much faster than for people without diabetes, and that the rate of recovery was variable from week to week. A [paper published in 1995](#) by a researcher named Sanford Ostroy contended that the regeneration rate for visual pigment in excised mouse eyes depended strongly on the amount of glucose in the infusion solution.

Early results were equally promising and allowed obtaining of two rounds of venture capital financing, but continued investigation showed that the relationship was not robust enough to allow development of a product with the acute health impacts of a glucose monitor. To their credit, when the principals made the decision to discontinue the effort in 2006, they returned a majority of the investors' unspent money.²

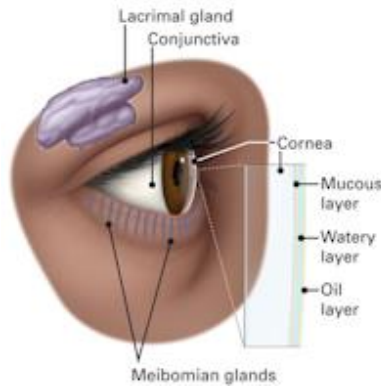
Following its demise, one former employee of Fovioptics tried to build on the work done there by using a technique called a "electroretinogram:" an electrical signal detected from the conjunctiva of the eye that may have some dependence on glucose level (US 8,326,395, issued to Jack Gratteau in 2012). Another entrepreneur, Dan Burnett, briefly followed the technology by creating a company called Novoculi that looked into detecting the time at which visual sensitivity for detecting movement returned after a bleaching episode (US 2011/0115894 A1). Neither approach has so far been shown to provide clinical accuracy. Yet another patent related to this technology appeared in 2014: US 8,812,097 B2, from inventors at Honeywell, where the detection of visual pigment regeneration is based on neurophysiological response sensed by EEG electrodes.

¹ I served as a consultant, then as CEO and CTO for Fovioptics from 2003 to 2006. Because the proposed biochemical mechanism had a rate-determining step dependent on glucose concentration (and because the retina is so highly perfused by blood), it was one of the most promising approaches I had seen.

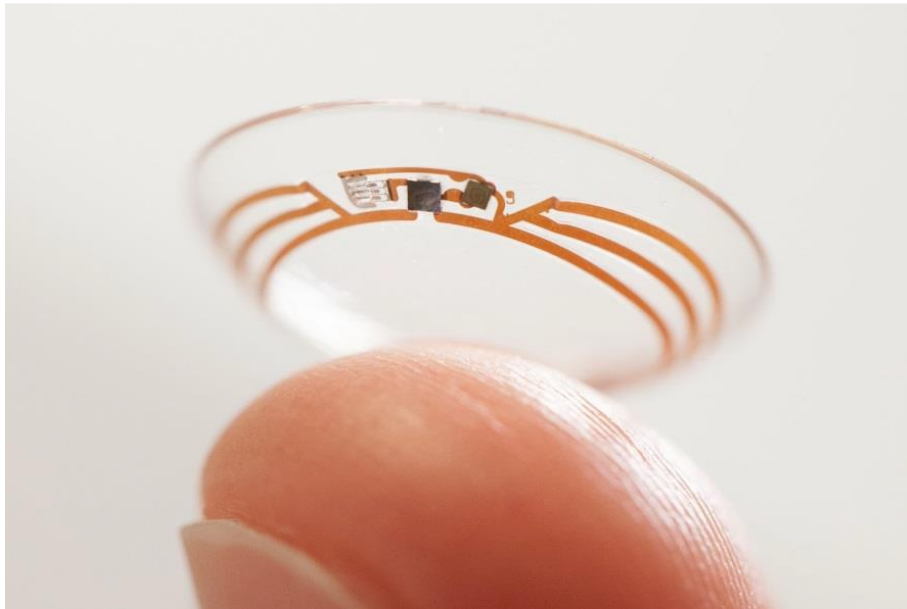
² When startup a company is funded by a venture capitalist, the entire amount is deposited into the company's bank account as a lump sum. If they so choose, the company's principals can use the money to pursue other technologies or ideas. In this case, the amount returned about was about \$18,000,000.

Tears

Tears seem like a simple, clear liquid, but are actually more complex. [The tear film has three layers: an outer oil layer, a central watery layer, and an inner mucus layer.](#) These



materials can provide challenges to either optical or electrochemical measurement techniques.



It has often been suggested that contact lenses which change color (or alter their fluorescence) would be an ideal noninvasive monitor. Measurement of glucose in tears got renewed attention with the announcement of Google's patenting and licensing of a

contact lens with electrochemical detection of glucose,¹ and for that reason, this section has been substantially expanded.²

Sources of glucose to a contact lens are aqueous humor (from the inside, through the cornea), tears (from the outside—see below), and the conjunctiva inside the eyelid, but even if suitably nonirritating materials could be found for use there, it is unlikely that they would have either the sensitivity or response time to be suitable for tracking changes in glucose. Because of the intimate contact between a contact lens and other structures on the eye, there is a conflict between making the material permeable enough for glucose to diffuse in and react with a sensing compound and preventing any sensing chemicals from being leached out into the sensitive areas of the cornea or conjunctiva. Both glucose oxidase and a product of its reaction with glucose, hydrogen peroxide, could have irritating or toxic effects on sensitive tissue. Several patents have appeared but with no working prototype to date.

A company called Sentek announced in 2001 that it was developing a technology termed “Glucoview” around this approach, and a collaboration between a professor of “bionanotechnology” at the University of Washington and a researcher at Microsoft (that may have later become the Google Verily contact lens—see below) has also been announced. It seems some ideas are just too appealing not to pursue many times, in spite of the Second Law (see above), and a Google search for (“contact lens” glucose) will reveal an amazing number of these attempts.

As Wikipedia stated:

“On 16 January 2014 Google announced that, for the past 18 months, they had been working on a contact lens that could help people with diabetes by making it continually check their glucose levels. The idea was originally funded by the National Science

¹ Six months after the first announcement, Goggle said that Alcon, a leader in eye care and the second largest division of Novartis, the Swiss pharma giant, would license the Google technology and attempt to bring it to market.

² One of the earliest attempts to make a measurement in tears (for electrolytes, rather than for glucose monitoring), was Orange Medical, a company that existed briefly in Costa Mesa, CA, who also produced a traditional strip and meter system (the “Trendstrip” and Trendsometer”). They developed an “ocular ring” in 1988 that could fit inside the eyelids, possibly to make an electrochemical potassium measurement, but it apparently never worked reliably and (before Bluetooth and other near-field communication techniques) suffered the additional visual disadvantage of wires dangling from the eye.

Foundation and was first brought to Microsoft. The product was created by Brian Otis and Babak Parviz who were both members of the electrical engineering faculty at the University of Washington prior to working in Google's secret lab, Google[x]. Google noted in their official announcement that scientists have long looked into how certain body fluids can help track glucose levels easier, but as tears are hard to collect and study, using them was never really an option. They also mentioned that the project is currently being discussed with the FDA, while still noting that there is a lot more work left to do before the product can be released for general usage, which is said to happen in five years at best, and that they are looking for partners who would use the technology for the lens by developing apps that would make the measurements available to the wearers and their respective doctors. The partners would also be expected to use this research and technology to develop advanced medical and vision devices for future generations."

It was not well communicated amidst the flurry of publicity about the "glucose contact lens," but the arrangement with Alcon also involved another product, an electronically-controlled autofocus lens. After several years of hype, and just about a year after Alcon announced that testing of the contact lens would begin "in 2016," in November of that year, a Reuters dispatch was widely communicated which said: "[Autofocus contact lens being developed by Verily and Alcon suffers delay](#)." Almost invisible in the myriad of follow-up news aggregator announcements of this was, as *Stat* [said](#), the contact lens that was the big topic two years earlier: "It's also unclear when, if ever, human testing might start for a glucose-sensing contact lens meant to relieve diabetics of the need for needle sticks to test their blood sugar. This lens inspired Google cofounder Sergey Brin to form the ambitious Verily, which, like Google, is a subsidiary of Alphabet."

Despite the intensive effort for the commercial development of Google lens, lead researcher Brian Otis [reported](#) that there was insufficient consistency in their measurements of the correlation between tear glucose and blood glucose concentrations to support the requirements of a medical device. The disappointing clinical results might be associated with the challenges of obtaining reliable tear glucose readings in the complex on-eye environment.

Finally, in late 2018, came these announcements, reported by [Reuters](#) “Alphabet unit halts glucose-detecting contact lens project,” and by [Forbes](#) “It's Lights Out For Novartis And Verily's Glucose Monitoring 'Smart Lens Project.’”

In 2013, there were at least three announcements of people attempting this technology. Professor Babak Parviz of the University of Washington (above), Dr. Jun Hu, associate professor of chemistry at The University of Akron was also trying this approach (using an iPhone to take a picture of a contact lens and determine glucose by color changes in the lens responsive to glucose), and Jeff Walling and Jaesok Jeon of Rutgers University announced they were collaborating on the development of a low power ocular sensor that continually monitors blood glucose levels, using micro-power generated by ascorbic acid and glucose in tears.

Nevertheless, Wei-Chuan Shih, a researcher with the University of Houston, [announced](#) in September of 2016 the development of a contact lens built from several layers of gold nanowires stacked on top of a gold film, using a “surface-enhanced Raman scattering technique” and claiming enough sensitivity to measure glucose in tears. Not to be outdone, Greg Herman, a professor of chemical engineering at Oregon State University, announced in 2016 that his group is using a contact lens sensor with a [nanostructured transistor](#) – specifically an amorphous indium gallium oxide field effect transistor– that can detect subtle glucose changes in physiological buffer solutions, such as the tear fluid in eyes. Philips (WO 2016/150630) and Johnson & Johnson’s Vision Care (US 9,323,073) have also published patents for similar glucose-sensing contact lenses.

A group at the [University of Maryland](#) say they have developed a better glucose-sensitive silicone contact lens containing a fluorescent binding agent that operates in the ultraviolet region, with a journal article at J. Biomed. Opt. 23 057005. However, a device be used to detect the fluorophore in the lens was not described.

There are many published technical articles that describe the relationship between glucose in tears and glucose in blood. One of the earliest¹ was Sen and Sarin, British

¹ There were eleven published reports of the measurement of glucose in tears prior to this one, but the methods for glucose measurement were not as accurate, and the concentrations quoted are highly variable.

Journal of Ophthalmology, 1980, 64, 693-695. The purpose of the study was to see if people could be screened for diabetes by measuring glucose in tears, but the authors concluded “There was no significant correlation between glucose content of blood and tears among normal persons and diabetics.” Another was in 2007, by Baca, et al., *Clinical Chemistry* 53, No. 7, 2007, who used liquid chromatography and mass spectrometry for glucose measurements and made this hopeful observation “We observed significant correlations between fasting blood and tear glucose concentrations ($R = 0.50$, $P = 0.01$).” A correlation coefficient of 0.50, though, yields an R^2 value of 0.25, meaning that there is only about 25% of true correlation, not nearly good enough for glucose monitoring.¹

There are also concerns with the rates of tear production and evaporation. Tears are produced unevenly during the day, and the rate of production depends on physical activity and uncommon events, such as emotional responses and yawning. Even though the tear film has a surface coating of an oily layer to reduce evaporation, that rate is still influenced by relative humidity and temperature, and by airflow variations from heating, air conditioning, or wind.

Shortly after Google’s announcement, this appeared in 2014: “An award of \$65,000 from Mayo Clinic in Arizona will help Arizona State University bioengineer Jeffrey La Belle² (20170234894) continue development of a tear-based glucose meter designed to help people living with diabetes monitor their health.

There has always been some hope that a contact lens, rather than responding to tears, could respond to glucose in the conjunctiva on the inside of the eyelid (which *might* produce a better correlation than tears), but the contact lens is in more intimate and much longer contact with both the tear film between it and the cornea (the cornea does not seem to pass significant amounts of glucose), and the tear fluid which also surrounds it on the front. Other than during sleep, contact with the conjunctiva is limited to blinks, which last

¹ It has been reported that a value of R^2 of at least 0.89 is necessary to make a clinically acceptable glucose monitor. This corresponds to $R = 0.94$.

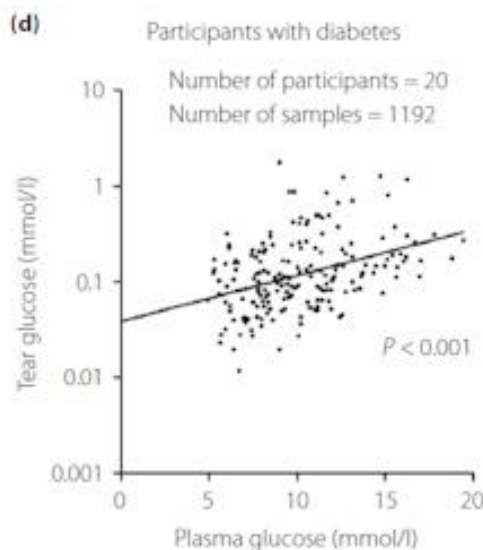
² The author of a four-part set of articles “A Disposable Tear Glucose Biosensor” in the Journal of Diabetes Science and Technology between 2010 and 2014.

no more than about 150 milliseconds and normally occur about twelve times per minute, for a total contact time of 1.8 seconds per minute, or about 3% of the time.

Attempts to measure glucose in tears have been divided among the use of contact lenses (see sections above), traditional or modified strips and meters, and indwelling devices. As discussed, no contact lens has yet been reported which shows correlation between glucose in tears and blood, and increasing tear flow to allow use of test strips, either by mechanical or chemical means, has been shown to alter the glucose content from the normal level (see the Uncertainty Principle Subsection of the Second Law, above). Given this level of effort, a clinically or commercially acceptable contact lens would constitute a substantial surprise.

An article from the European Association for the study of Diabetes in 2020, published in Diabetes as [887-P: Development of the Noninvasive Diabetes Monitoring Method](#), suggests using glycoalbumin levels in tears that they found to be “significantly correlated” to blood glucose.

Another publication in the Journal of Diabetes Investigation from the University of Toyoko “[Association between tear and blood glucose concentrations: Random intercept model adjusted with confounders in tear samples negative for occult blood](#)” showed correlations between tear and blood glucose, again not suitable for monitoring.

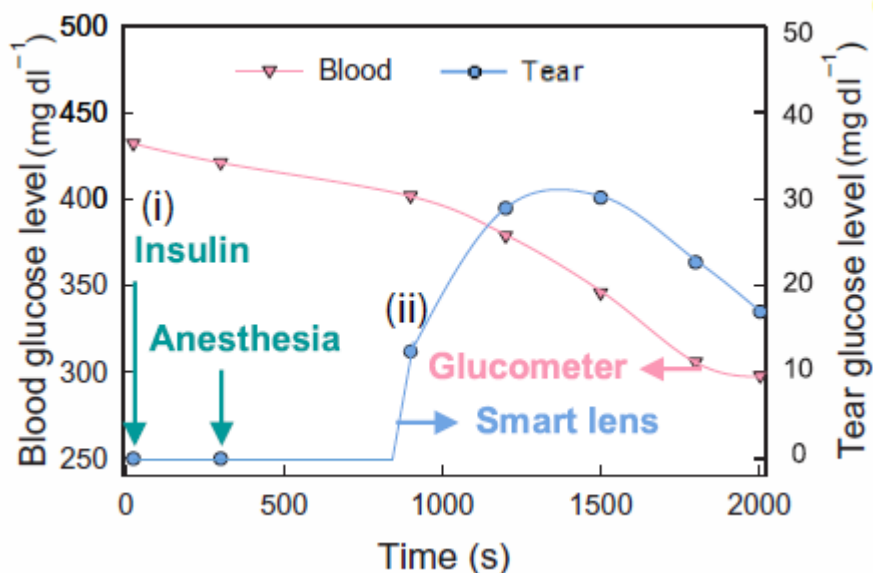


Other Contact Lenses

The effort to create such a device continues unabated. An odd geographic coincidence found three efforts in the province of Ontario: Kaanran Raahemifar of Waterloo (US 2018/0070866), Medella Health, of Kitchener (US 2017/0042480), and Jin Zhang (US 2016/0258964) of slightly more distant London. Others have been proposed by Philips (WO 2016/150630), and by Turkish researchers (WO 2017/116350) at Dokuz Eylul Universitesi Rektorlugu, who have revived the idea of a lens which changes color based on glucose level.

Another report that made a fairly big splash in 2018 was an article in [Science Advances](#) from researchers at Ulsan National Institute of Science Technology from Korea, with lots of color pictures but little actual data, with a simultaneous write-up by Rachel Becker of [The Verge](#). Another Science Advances article ([Keum et al., Wireless smart contact lens for diabetic diagnosis and therapy, Sci. Adv. 2020; 6 : eaba3252 24 April 2020](#)).

However, the Figure referred to above does not suggest a strong correlation:



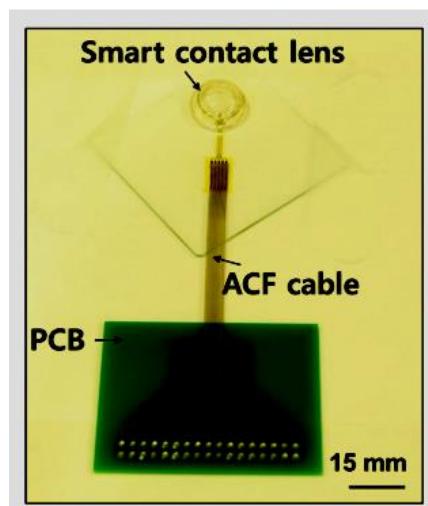
Sony, which has a long history of glucose-related patents (but to date, no products), has extended contact lens sensing, using optical detection into the near-infrared region with US 2020/0257138. This system uses a path through which tears flow that can be analyzed

with light of any preferred wavelength, but this approach combines the disadvantage of measurement of glucose in tears (with its much lower concentration than in interstitial fluid and uncertain correlation) with the challenges of NIR glucose measurement. The possible advantage would be no interference from light scattering in clear tears (at least while the optical surfaces stay clear of any adsorbed proteins and mucins).

New contact lens entrants since the last edition include a group from Saudi Arabia's Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University (US 11,042,044) with a lens that changes color with different glucose levels, [Menicon, Ltd](#) from Japan, with US 2021/0007670 A1 with another color-based optoelectronic sensor, and the Beijing BOE Technology Development Co, Ltd, with a photonic sensor that similarly detects a change in color with glucose. Also, an article from 2018 that was missed earlier is "[A transparent glucose-sensitive double polymerised holographic sensor](#)."

Another is US 2020/0326346 A1 by Jin(g) Zhang of WPP in London (formerly "Wire and Plastic Products"), describing a luminescent resonance energy transfer (LRET) technology, but with no disclosures of correlation.

One more is "[Integrated contact lens sensor system based on multifunctional ultrathin MoS2 transistors](#)," using a charge-transfer detection process "connected with an external printed circuit board through an anisotropic conductive film cable."



No correlation data for glucose are shown, but the article quotes an uncertain correlation figure of $R^2 = 0.9617$ (obtained by averaging data points for 8 anesthetized rabbits that improved the actual correlation of $R^2=0.7640$) from [Noninvasive Self-diagnostic Device for Tear Collection and Glucose Measurement](#), from the Institute of Medical & Biological Engineering, Medical Research Center, Seoul Korea. It employed a plastic ocular tip with a 2 mm diameter and measured with modified commercial Roche Accu-Chek Performa test strips.

Recent contact lens approaches include a fluorescence-based measurement for multiple compounds by Badugu and others, in US 2022/0050096 A1. He had published an article in 2003, “[A Glucose Sensing Contact Lens: A Non-Invasive Technique for Continuous Physiological Glucose Monitoring](#),” and US 11,529,098 B2 from BOE Technology Group in Beijing.

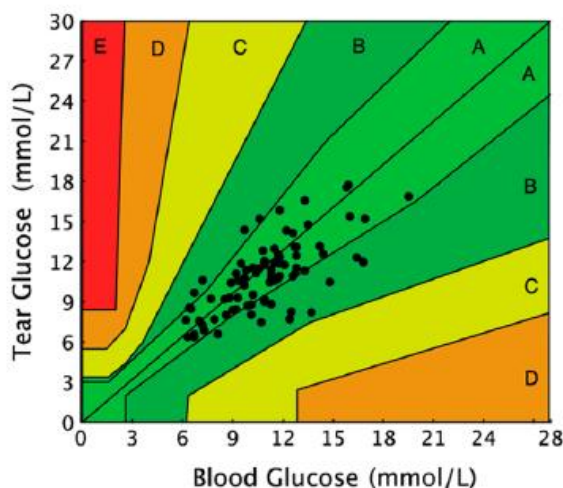
In-lid Measurement

A company in the Netherlands called [Noviosense](#) has described a sensor for glucose in tears that resides inside the lower eyelid. The company lists as one of their advisors [Dr. Joseph Wang](#), whose University of California, San Diego laboratory has involvement in many approaches for noninvasive glucose measurement.



Noviosense reported results of both animal and human (type 1) clinical trials in a comprehensive article “Clinical evidence for use of a non-invasive biosensor for tear glucose as an alternative to painful finger-prick for diabetes management utilizing biopolymer coating,” *Biomacromolecules* 2018, 19, 4504–4511, available on-line at <https://pubs.acs.org/doi/pdf/10.1021/acs.biomac.8b01429>. The results show the best correlation yet seen between glucose in tears and in blood: a median average relative difference of 12.5%, compared to the value they obtained for the Abbott FreeStyle Libre of 12.0%. The data showed all of the results for six subjects in the A and B regions of the Consensus Error Grid.

Noviosense attributes these good results to the sensor being bathed in “basal tears” inside the eyelid, rather than many earlier attempts that used a variety of tear collection methods, thus avoiding ear stimulation or evaporation problems seen in earlier attempts. The measurement is made by the electrochemical technique known as chronoamperometry at a platinum electrode with an applied voltage of +0.5 V, following the conversion of glucose to hydrogen peroxide with the same chemistry used in



transdermal continuous glucose sensors. Biocompatible coatings on the electrodes are claimed not to cause subjects any redness or eye damage. With expected performance improvements and the prospect of near-field communication, this approach shows

promise of being the first accurate tear-based glucose sensor. An additional benefit would be the prospect of truly continuous measurements with no sensor inserted under the skin.

However, after reporting positive results from its clinical trial, in 2020, the [website](#) said only “NovioSense will be back Thank you for being patient. We are doing some great things behind the scenes check back soon!”

Noviosense is not alone in seeking an “under-lid” glucose sensor, another report of this approach is by Google’s Verily in US20180199864, possibly in response to the failure of its contact lens sensor.

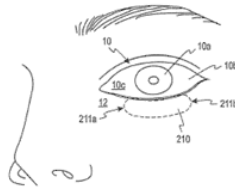


Fig. 2A

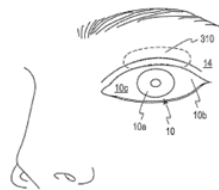


Fig. 2B

Saliva

As with tears, attempts continue to be made to measure glucose in saliva. Crowdfunding was used to finance one effort—the iQuickIt Saliva Analyzer was announced on the [Indiegogo website](#), with a goal of raising \$100,000, but the campaign was reported closed on December 18, 2013 with just \$4,230 raised.¹ A method for glucose in transbuccal fluid coming across the inside of the cheek (claimed to be different from saliva) was described

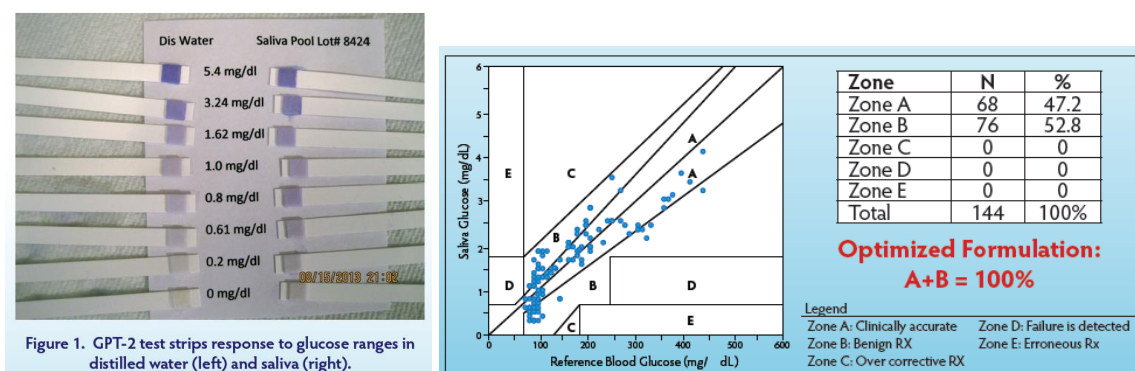
¹ But see the section on impedance measurements for the entirely different crowdfunding experience of Healbe.

in 1988 by Xienta, Inc. (US 4,750,496), and a second appeared in 1995 under the auspices of Universal Biosensors, at [Biosensors & Bioelectronics 10 \(1995\) 379-392](#).

An article by Siu and others in [Nanophotonics 2014; 3\(3\): 125–140](#), is characteristic of attempts to make this measurement using exotic nanomaterials. It contains many impressive colored graphs describing the proposed detection process, but no results of testing of subjects. A similar report from [Purdue University](#) combines nanostructured sensors with graphene, the latest material touted as the solution to many of the problems of mankind.

Other entrants for saliva glucose measurement include Northeastern University (US 2016/0097734), Jeffrey LaBelle of Arizona State University (he has also patent applications for tear glucose), and Boe Technology Group Co (US 10,004,456) of Beijing, with an “intelligent dental ornament” that measures glucose in saliva. [Diabetomics](#) (US 9,383,352) has a “[Glucema](#)” saliva glycosylated protein test that measures “sugars on saliva proteins that reflect blood glucose levels.”

A company from Cliffside Park, NJ (which has appeared with names of [Pop Test](#), Pop Test Cortisol, and Pop Test Oncology) has proposed a system for glucose measurement in saliva which they have proposed for either screening for diabetes or glucose monitoring. They have shown some agreement with blood glucose ($R = 0.82$), but this appears to be just for subjects following overnight fasting.



“[Healthcare](#) announces \$500,000 Regulation ‘S’ Private Placement for Develop a Dual Sensor Noninvasive Saliva-based Sugar Monitor Device to Test for Diabetes” “Using

two parameters of diabetes physiological changes, the device will provide more accurate results for diabetics and their blood sugar level.” No additional information is available on the device or the parameters, but the company seemed heavily focused on investing and stock prices. It appears that Eternity Healthcare had a shorter lifetime for its saliva test than its name implied—in early 2018 it acquired a company in China focused on stem cell research, along with a loan for \$25M, but no longer mentions glucose.



Dr. Yan Feng of Hong Kong Polytechnic University has published an [article](#) and has a [news release](#) about a sensor for a saliva glucose test using enzyme-modified graphene.

A company, also in Hong Kong, called [eNano Health](#) has developed the “Kiss and Tell” colorimetric saliva test for “high glucose” monitoring, but noted on its website that the device was “No blood. No Pain. No Wound.”, and “Not for diagnostics.” With no substantiation, it contains these statements:

- Proven scientific correlation between saliva and glucose levels.
- The change of glucose levels due to diet or exercise is reflected in saliva in a pattern similar to blood.
- High accuracy
- Kiss & Tell has been tested with thousands of samples in the lab and with people

Interestingly, a publication by Agrawal ([Noninvasive Method for Glucose Level Estimation by Saliva](#)) in 2013 that studied the correlation between saliva glucose and blood glucose for people with and without diabetes, concluded that the correlation coefficient for people with diabetes (0.40) was so much worse than for those without (0.58) that it could be used as a potential screening method for diabetes, but neither of these values would allow glucose monitoring. Again, regardless of the lack of any

evidence for a strong correlation between saliva and blood glucose, it should be anticipated that attempts to find it will continue.

Another company now known as GBS, Inc., [announced](#) in March of 2022 that it had received institutional review board approval for its first study “Specimen Collection Methodology to Support Subsequent Correlation Analyses of Glucose in Oral Fluids, Capillary, and Venous Blood.”

Another is [Glucojet](#), a startup from Saudi Arabia, using ink-jet printed paper sensors.



[MX3 Diagnostics](#), which specializes in hydration testing, had an application publish (US 2019/0150836) describing measurement of ketones, glucose, and other analytes in saliva, but with no performance or accuracy reporting.

[Nanobio Systems](#) has recently published applications for collection and treatment of saliva samples for glucose measurement (such as US 11,197,658 B2), using a variety of filtration and measurement techniques.

Joseph Wang at UCSD, who has been involved in many attempts at glucose monitoring, has applied for a patent (US 2021/0338157 A1) for a pacifier to measure saliva glucose in younger subjects.

It is sometimes amazing the degree of complexity people will attempt in this pursuit, consider this article title “[A spectroscopy based prototype for the noninvasive detection of diabetes from human saliva using nanohybrids acting as nanozyme.](#)”

Breath

Collecting breath is about as noninvasive as a technique could be (and it is known to work well for estimation of blood alcohol), so it has been investigated multiple times to

see if something in it corresponds to glucose. It was mentioned above that the exhaled breath of people with severe hyperglycemia often contains acetone—this is the result of compounds, known collectively as “blood ketones” (in early times, “ketone bodies”) that accumulate in the blood with extended hyperglycemia. One of these, called acetoacetate (the other common one is beta-hydroxybutyrate), breaks down to yield acetone in exhaled breath. When the blood glucose concentration is high for extended periods, the compound can even be detected by just smelling the breath, and this has led people to speculate that lower concentrations might be measured and correlated with blood glucose. Similar to urine glucose, however, it has been determined that this appears to be a “threshold” effect that indicates high glucose over time but does not operate reliably at low or even normal glucose levels. Even someone following a low-carbohydrate diet like those called Atkins or South Beach (and thus metabolizing body fat to produce the same ketones in the blood at lower levels) could generate enough acetone to cause errors. Every year seems to bring another technology devoted to measuring acetone in breath but even if a simple apparatus could be developed, it would probably not be a practical system for monitoring glucose levels in blood.

An early patent, US 7,417,730 (now expired due to nonpayment of fees), used an unwieldy “microplasma source” and a spectrometer. US 9,470,675, assigned to the Council of Scientific & Industrial Research in New Delhi, uses a semiconductor sensor. Another patent, US 9,470,675, uses optical detection. Another company, [Applied Nanodetectors, Ltd.](#), of Middlesex, GB, has a sensor for volatile organic compounds in breath, but no device on the market, and a Silicon Valley startup in San Francisco, Respirix, Inc. has a respiratory monitor application, WO/2016/073945A1, with broader intended applications, but seems more focused on cardiac monitoring.

Western New England University's Prof. [Ronny Priefer](#) has [founded New England Breath Technologies](#) to exploit acetone monitoring. His issued patent (9,581,585) describes a pair of compounds that react with acetone to develop a substance that absorbs ultraviolet light, which can be measured with a hand-held device, in a product called [Glucair](#). [The website was no longer active in 2023.](#)

A company called [PositiveID](#) in Del Ray Beach, Florida, started its glucose measurement adventures with a “glucose-sensing RFID microchip” it had acquired, but then changed over to a breath-sensing system based on the “Easy Check” sensor it also acquired, this time from a company in Israel. The device has a patent, US 8848189, a chemical that reacts with acetone to produce a color, but there has been no further information about the appearance of a commercial product, and the company now appears from its [website](#) to be focused on homeland security applications, and as of 2017, there was no longer a mention of noninvasive glucose measurements on the company’s website.

University of California–Irvine scientist [Pietro Galassetti](#) announced a research program into detection of very trace amounts (parts per trillion) of gases in breath using extremely expensive and complex equipment. In 2011, he was appointed to the scientific advisory board of PositiveID. Also in 2011, the company acquired MicroFluidic Systems, which does biological testing and sample preparation. In its monthly press release early in 2013, the company described the end of its glucose programs:

“PositiveID Corporation today announced it has entered into an agreement to license its iglucose™ technology to Smart Glucose Meter Corp. ("SGMC") for up to \$2 million based on potential future revenues of glucose test strips sold by SGMC. These revenues will range between \$0.0025 and \$0.005 per strip. A person with diabetes who tests three times per day will use over 1,000 strips per year.

“William J. Caragol, Chairman and CEO of PositiveID, stated, "In 2011, in conjunction with our acquisition of Microfluidic Systems, PositiveID began a corporate realignment to focus on patented molecular diagnostic technologies for bio-threat detection and rapid medical testing. This was done in order to position the Company to target the current and significant market opportunities in these sectors and take advantage of the detection and cost advantages we believe our technology provides. To date, we have achieved real results as part of this restructuring, including the sale of our implantable microchip IP and related assets, a significant reduction of our cash burn, and now the license of our iglucose wireless diabetes management technology, which we believe is another important milestone in this process."

As of 2017, Dr. Galassetti was no longer listed as a member of the company's Board of Advisors.

Other compounds in exhaled breath have been shown to correlate with blood glucose, and one called "methyl nitrate" was studied extensively in 2007 by [B. J. Novak](#) of UC Irvine. Quantities were again in the parts per trillion range, and measuring it required, however, gas chromatography using electron capture and mass selective detection—equipment too expensive for a hospital, let alone a home, so while this made a great research project, it was not practical as a monitor (besides, there was no attempt to predict glucose values, just to find a correlation—see the Third Law in the following section).

[Philips Company](#) in the Netherlands has a patent application, published in 2009 (US20090270700) which suggested that the carbon monoxide level in breath might correlate with blood glucose, based on the action of an enzyme involved in hemoglobin breakdown called "heme oxygenase." However, a 2008 [publication](#) (Fritsch, T., et al., "Is exhaled carbon monoxide level associated with blood glucose level? A comparison of two breath analyzing methods," J. Biomed. Opt. 13, 034012 (Jun 05, 2008); doi:10.1117/1.2937215) that included two of the inventors on the patent application, stated in its abstract: "The previous finding that the glycemia increase after glucose administration was associated with a significant increase in eCO [exhaled carbon monoxide] concentrations was not confirmed." More follow-up disclosures like this are needed!

A group out of the University of Florida called Xhale patented US 7,914,460 (now expired, issued to Melker, et al) a method for detecting glucose content in exhaled breath. In their technique, micro-droplets that originate deep in the lungs are collected by condensing the last part of a patient's breath on a cold surface. Both the amount (the glucose concentration is reduced by a factor of 1,000 to 1,000,000 in these droplets) and concentration of glucose in this condensate will vary over time, so the technique requires measurement of another (relatively nonvarying) compound originating in blood (such as chloride ion) and establishing a ratio of the two in the compensate. Unfortunately, this requires the measurement of a ratio of exceptionally small amounts of two compounds,

which would be expected to add to the error of the overall measurement. The company has since closed down, and even after the company's patent was secured in 2016 by another Gainesville company ([RespiTrend](#)) with the same CEO as Xhale, that newer company is now missing from Richard Melker's [LinkedIn page](#).

Other entrants in breath measurement via acetone include The University of Sydney (WO 2018/081877) and the [Center for Process Improvement in England](#). Researchers at The Purdue Research Foundation (US 2017/0196481) attempts to measure small amounts of glucose entrained in breath, but spells that word as “breadth” throughout the document. It appears to have been acquired by [TekCapital](#), which may also have acquired a license for saliva glucose from the [Arizona State University](#).

Newer patent publications include WO 2020/102573 from [Aerbetic](#), which purports to detect acetone, methyl nitrate, pentyl nitrate, ethanol, methanol, propanol, methane, propane, ethyl benzene, isoprene, Oxylene, M/P-xylene, formaldehyde, or acetaldehyde, at between 1 part per billion and 10 parts per million in a wearable wristwatch device that samples ambient air—no breathing into a tube! If that level of functionality (and correlation to glucose) could be shown, it could be a huge success. Several other reports have appeared that measure acetone in hope that it will allow monitoring, rather than just detecting hyperglycemia. To date, these have all been unsuccessful.

A recent entry in breath analysis is this “breath-taking glucose meter” for people with pre-diabetes. The inventor, 2020 University of Washington graduate [Poom \(Thipok\) Cholsaipant](#), says: “All it takes is a single breath. The lower the acetone exhaled, the higher the blood glucose.” Unfortunately, that's not how it works—if acetone in breath were responsive to low levels of blood glucose, lower acetone would correspond to lower glucose.

Taking advantage of the current health issues, a patent application has been published for John J. Daniels (apparently part of [Diagmetrics](#)), US 2021/0321903 A1, using breath condensate from a mask to monitor glucose, as well as for diagnosing COVID infections.

A recent entrant in this field is BoydSense, a division of Alpha MOS, a company that makes semiconductor chemical sensors. They use this type of sensor, together with an “acoustic wave sensing mechanism, like a microphone.” Their issued patent (US 10,584,994 B2) and all subsequent applications allude to measuring VOCs (volatile organic compounds), but never identify which compounds are measured. Common VOCs used by others are acetone and isoprene, and a number of patents have been published describing methods for their measurement. They have recently announced the conclusion of their 2nd clinical study, but no published article has been identified at the time of this writing.

Breath—An Aspirational Tale. The Internet-sourced story below is an example of the thought process that has gone through the minds of many people who have an interest in this field. It is presented without comment.

“The idea came to me one day when I took my car in for its biennial smog test. An internal combustion engine takes in air (containing oxygen and some other gases), combines it with fuel (generally gasoline), causes oxidation to occur (it happens quickly enough that we perceive it as an explosion), converts some of the heat produced into mechanical energy, and blows the products (heat, carbon dioxide, water, and a bunch of other stuff) out the tailpipe.

The human body is a chemical engine that operates in much the same way. We take in air (containing oxygen and some other gases), combine it with fuel (food that is turned into glucose), cause oxidation to occur (relatively slowly), convert the energy into mechanical and chemical energy, and get rid of the waste products through several means, one of which is by exhaling.

By measuring the products that come out when you exhale, it should be possible to get a very good idea of what is going on inside the engine (your body).

Your first thought might be, “This is a waste of time, glucose is not a blood gas.”

While glucose is not a blood gas, neither is alcohol, and it is certainly possible to measure blood alcohol levels from breath analysis.

Here are some possibilities:

Look for something already in exhaled breath.

It might be a single substance. It might be a combination of substances or the ratio between two or more substances.

It might require that the user take a calibrated inhaled breath. That's ok, we can have the user inhale through our device and measure the air being inhaled.

We can add something to the breath being inhaled. However, it has to be something that is completely innocuous and also extremely cheap. Anything radioactive is completely out. Maybe some form of a nitrogen gas compound. Or maybe a form of an oxygen gas compound. Maybe a non-radioactive isotope of oxygen. ("Read your glucose level and get a boost at the same time.") Hopefully, it won't be helium.

If we are really lucky it could require eating something that looks like a small piece of candy that tastes like chocolate."

Voice

An international patent application has appeared (WO2014/072823) where the inventors would like to correlate changes in voice with glucose levels:

"As applied to the present application, [] the biological tissue of the larynx and the cord, whose elasticity ratio is suffering change under the impact of changes in glucose level in the human blood. Therefore, it would be interesting to use the identified correlation between changes in the sound fluctuation spectrum of the voice of a person and changes in his/her blood biochemical parameters."

In 2019, Sony published a patent application (US 2019/0365301 A1) with very vague statements about speech in its proposed claims "receiving speech of the individual; analyzing the individual's speech...wherein the determination of the supplementary glucose value is based on the analyzing of the individual's speech." The speech patterns referenced were those developed by Ulanovsky, et al., described in a PCT patent application WO 2014/049438, assigned to Scienmet LA, Inc., and US 7.925,508 to Michaelis of Avaya, Inc.

Hypoglycemia Monitors

With the many failures of noninvasive glucose monitoring in mind, some groups have set their sights a little lower and tried to produce a device that detects only low glucose values to set off an alarm. Hypoglycemia creates a spectrum of symptoms (although not all people display all the symptoms, and people who have had diabetes for many years sometimes develop insensitivity to the effects of hypoglycemia), including sweating, nervousness, tremor, hunger, confusion, difficulty reading or speaking, and eventually, unconsciousness. Because confusion and other symptoms are common (and because many hypoglycemic events occur during the night), it's difficult for a patient to detect low values with a traditional blood glucose meter. Various devices have been proposed over the years to detect these symptoms (although relatively few actually try to measure glucose, which becomes increasingly difficult at lower values), and the continuous glucose monitors now on the market are possibly the best method of detecting low values, especially at night.

Devices on the market rely primarily on skin temperature and perspiration (devices that sense these parameters have been marketed since the late 1980s¹) and range from a pair of wristwatch-sized ones called HAS-01 from Medpage in the U.K. (for nighttime use, with a “sale price” of \$123.16; it seems to have disappeared), to a device called “Hypomon” marketed by Aimedics² in Australia that is a combination of a belt and monitor for people with type 1 diabetes aged 10-25. It sells for \$1500. On 5 August 2013, however, TGA [Australia's Therapeutic Goods Administration] identified that HypoMon was not performing as well as expected. The rate of detection of sleep-time hypoglycemic episodes was lower than the rate specified in HypoMon's Instructions for Use (IFU), and all the devices were recalled from the market. In 2018, the company no longer had a website.

¹ A product from this era that sensed temperature and sweating went by the name Hypoguard, but seems to have disappeared.

² Skladnev. V., et al., [Clinical Evaluation of a Noninvasive Alarm System for Nocturnal Hypoglycemia](#), Journal of Diabetes Science and Technology, Volume 4, Issue 1, January 2010.



The Diabetes Sentry (domain expired) (\$495) by a company of the same name, was given FDA clearance before 2005, has issued U.S. Patent 7,052,472, and according to the website, monitors both increases in perspiration and decreases in skin temperature, both known symptoms of a hypoglycemic event. They say it is “The only FDA approved, patented, wearable, non-invasive, sensor based Hypoglycemia symptom alarm available on the market.”

In 2020, the website said “Unfortunately, we are currently on backorder for the Diabetes Sentry through 10/1/2018. Please contact us Toll-Free at **1(855)325-4537** at your convenience to discuss further.”



Another entrant into this field is Night-Sense with their Hypo-Sense, an Israeli company that appears to have been a successor to Bio-Impedance General. They say they are in “the very early stages” of developing such a device, and their [clinical trial](#) is listed as

“This study has been completed.” The company no longer appears to have an active website.

A system was being developed by Cybiocare in Quebec, described as a simple arm band that claimed to be a noninvasive “photonic” glucose monitor based on near-infrared light. It required entry of blood glucose results from another device, but only provided an alarm if the instrument “sensed” the onset of a hypoglycemic event. In 2017, only an [archive](#) remained. A product using similar promotional pictures, named PGS, appeared on a website for a company called Onsens, but like Cybiocare, that website is also gone.

Tying Ideas to New Technologies

FreeStyle Tracker. It’s easier to gain attention, press coverage, or possibly funding when a proposed glucose monitoring technology is tied to the latest consumer electronic technology. TheraSense (acquired by Abbott Diabetes Care in 2004) was the first company to connect a blood glucose meter to a hand-held “Personal Digital Assistant” (PDA), the FreeStyle “Tracker” that used a Handspring Visor PDA.



The product was launched in 2002, just a year before Handspring was merged into Palm, the other leading maker of PDAs, resulting in the discontinuation of the Handspring Visor. Reports have circulated about a system using a fluorescent nanoparticle tattoo, developed by a team at Northeastern University, that could be read using an iPhone application as the detector, and announcements are frequently made of devices that

incorporate Bluetooth communications¹ or Radio Frequency Identification Devices (RFIDs).

iBGStar—Possibly the starkest example of this hazard was a meter called the iBGStar that attached to Apple’s wildly popular iPhone. It was developed by AgaMatrix and marketed by Sanofi as that French company’s first involvement with blood glucose monitoring. The product had no sooner launched than Apple made a revision to the iPhone’s operating system that made it inoperable. Shortly later, Apple changed the connector from a 30-pin to the “Lightning” connector of the iPhone 5, and an external adaptor was required to use the two together. Consumer electronics, which have relatively limited regulatory hurdles, progress much more quickly than medical devices with their sometimes cumbersome approval processes, and most such combinations are challenged at least as much by obsolescence of the coupled electronic device as by limitations of the glucose measurement technology.²



Epic Health This company made a big splash, reported many places, about “Glucose Monitoring, but not as you know it.” A typical announcement is [this](#) from ZDNet, complete with a video. The proposed method was to place a fingertip over the camera lens of an iPhone, and images would be sent to the cloud for analysis. The app was

¹ Medtronic, a leading insulin pump producer, announced in 2011 that they had teamed up with Ford to develop a prototype system that adds a Bluetooth link for their continuous blood glucose monitoring system, allowing audio alerts and visual displays about glucose levels while driving. Almost nothing has been heard since the original splash.

² Similarly, LifeScan engineers initiated a project to integrate a One Touch glucose meter into Apple’s “Newton” PDA. Fortunately, the project was still in the conceptual stage when Newton was withdrawn from the market.

expected to be available, free of charge, in Q4 of 2017. Today, not even a website remains, and CEO Dominic Adam Wood’s LinkedIn page no longer mentions the company or his involvement in it. The company name appears to have changed to Bioepic LTD before its demise, but the only company Wood acknowledges is Lemongrass Health, with only a LinkedIn presence.



[KWatch from PKVitality](#). This watch claims to measure glucose using proprietary “SkinTaste” technology in an adhesive “K’apsule” under the watch that needs to be changed every 7 days. The K’apsule might use “microneedles”—the [team](#) once included a needle specialist, a French diabetologist, and Tom Bishop, the former VP of product development from the ill-fated [Echo Therapeutics](#). It is expected to “be available as soon as medical certification is being passed. This date will vary from region to region.” Although they tout “[200 Press Articles](#),” none of them have disclosed any further information about medical certification or clinical study results.



Others

Other approaches which are less widely investigated (and some of which are truly unique), will be described in the sections below.

Evaluation Techniques

Why Does It Keep Going On?

One of the disturbing questions about this field is this: Since over two hundred of these approaches have failed, why on earth would people invest money in the next one?

Venture capital investors, who fund the majority of these approaches, generally look at three things when deciding whether to invest—the “pedigree” of the scientific and management team, the technology, and the market opportunity. About the last, there has never been a question—blood glucose monitoring is still over a \$10 billion worldwide market, and even though the chances for substantial expansion (as a dollar market) of at least the “strip and meter” business were decreased with the lowered reimbursement for test strips in 2013 and 2016, a noninvasive monitor would still represent the “Holy Grail” of medical device venture capital market opportunities.

The quality of the management team is much harder to assess. Many of the people who set out to do this have a good scientific background (with a few spectacular exceptions that we’ll note later) but many experience something akin to a religious vision when a great idea reveals itself to them, wind up possessed by an almost messianic zeal to see their dream realized, and the pursuit takes on overtones of a “quest.” If a company’s management is populated by those who have previously succeeded, either with medical devices or in a diabetes-related business, the team is much more highly regarded.¹

It’s not hard to understand the multiple driving forces that make inventors into “true believers:” the chance to help millions of people afflicted by a life-threatening, incurable

¹ I joined Fovioptics in 2004 when it was having challenges raising funding. Based at least in part on my participation, we obtained about \$4M in initial Venture capital funding. When the company hired an executive from TheraSense (which made blood glucose monitors and had just been sold to Abbott for \$1.2 billion) as CEO and the previous CEO of TheraSense as Chairman, the next round of funding brought \$18M, with “term sheets” from four venture capital funds.

disease; the chance for scientific recognition in succeeding where so many have failed; and, undeniably, the chance to become very wealthy as the result of those efforts. These have combined to cloud the otherwise sound judgment of many respected investigators (and possibly only one of these factors might suffice to accentuate tendencies of the less altruistic). While “angel” investors, often close friends or family of a company founder may invest in early rounds out of friendship or loyalty, venture capitalists are viewed as quick-thinking, steely-eyed judges of people, but they’re human, too, and can be swayed by people who really believe in what they’re peddling.

The really challenging issue is assessment of the technology. The straightforward, easily-explained approaches have long since been tried, and as the ideas get more exotic or more scientifically complicated, they become increasingly hard for nonscientists to understand. Worse yet, the failures are rarely publicized by those who have failed, and the same technology can be described by different people using slightly different terminology and sound like an entirely different approach. Because very few investors are trained scientists, almost none would be expected to have sufficient breadth of experience to objectively evaluate the exceptional range of technical approaches that have been proposed.¹ As a result, they rely on consultants with expertise in the primary area of technology for any proposal, and few such consultants are familiar with all the special quirks of glucose measurement in tissue described here.

Yet another consideration is that, once intrigued by this pursuit, investigators may switch from one technique that did not work to another approach that appears promising. There are at least a half-dozen examples detailed here where the same person has pursued different—often dramatically different—technologies for glucose measurement. Sometimes too, investigators will attract a second investor (or employer) after an initial one has lost interest. An example is two inventors, Yoon Ok Kim and Ok-Kyung Cho, who were intriguing because they had addresses in Germany, but were funded by Hitachi, and involved a number of independent technologies to arrive at a glucose measurement,

¹ It seems especially attractive if inventors include the most recent exotic device in their technology. It is possible, for example, that employing a “quantum cascade laser” or a “graphene oxide semiconductor” instead of more pedestrian components could enhance a new technology in the eyes of potential investors.

such as temperature, optical spectra, and skin conductivity (see the “Combination of Ingredients” section below). They were issued eleven U.S. patents with filing dates of 2003 and 2004 that were assigned to Hitachi (occasionally with co-inventors having addresses in Japan), but beginning with a filing date in 2006, at least four U.S. patents involving glucose have issued to them that were assigned to Ingo Flore in Dortmund, Germany. Dr. Ingo Flore appears to be an attorney who has no other U.S. patents related to glucose.

Occasionally, this “switch” has been the result of venture investments not fully spent during one stint; in other cases because the researcher had developed a reputation in the field which allowed additional investments or grant approvals in new areas, and a few individuals have even made it their life’s purpose to solve this problem and will gravitate to the next new promising approach wherever it appears.

AstraZeneca, a British pharma company, posted a challenge in late 2014: “AstraZeneca Challenge: Developing a Minimally Invasive Glucose Monitor,” announced on the “crowd-solving” website <https://www.innocentive.com/ar/challenge/9933680>. “This is an electronic Request-for-Partners (eRFP) Challenge. The Solver will write a preliminary proposal (including supporting non-confidential information and contact details) to be evaluated by the Seeker with a goal of establishing a collaborative partnership. Upon completion of the evaluation, AstraZeneca may contact selected Solvers directly to work out terms for a collaboration contract. The monetary value of the contract will vary depending on the amount of work to be delivered and the agreed upon time frame.” Many entries were undoubtedly submitted, but no winner was declared publicly; some entrants were belatedly advised that they had not been selected as winners.

A subsequent challenge “AstraZeneca Challenge: Robust Online In Vivo Measurement of Biomarker Concentrations” with a \$25,000 prize was announced in March, 2016, but nothing was publicly disclosed about a winner.

What Makes Everyone Think Their Approach Works?

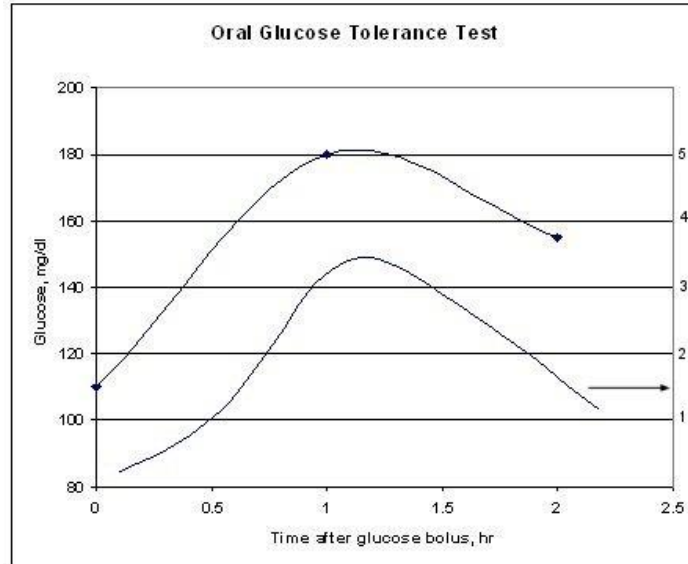
Richard Feynman, the irascible physicist and Nobel laureate from Cal Tech, provided the guidance: “The first principle is that you must not fool yourself, and you are the easiest person to fool.” There are two sets of reasons that people believe too much—the first is scientific, and the second is more associated with personality and faith. First, here are some of the reasons that science can lead an investigator astray.

Oral Glucose Tolerance Tests

When a person has fully developed type 1 or type 2 diabetes, the symptoms are hard to miss: excessive thirst and urination, even acetone in the breath. In the early stages, especially in type 2 diabetes, the onset is a gradual process that is very hard to sense or measure. There are two tests¹ widely used to diagnose diabetes: fasting plasma glucose (FPG) and the oral glucose tolerance test (OGTT).² When a patient’s blood glucose (it’s called “plasma glucose” when measured in a laboratory) is over 126 mg/dL before eating in the morning on two occasions, the patient is presumed to have diabetes. The alternative (or confirming) OGTT is one where the patient consumes 50 to 100 grams of glucose in a fruit or cola-flavored beverage, and blood glucose values are measured over the next several hours.

¹ Glycosylated hemoglobin percentage, or “A1c,” has also been recommended as a diagnostic test for diabetes.

² An addition to the available screening tests, named the “Scout,” was developed by VeraLight, a spinoff of InLight Solutions in Albuquerque, NM. Their testing system combines a measure of the degree of crosslinking of proteins in the skin using visible light fluorescence with near-infrared spectroscopy, and produces a “diabetes risk score.” It was a noninvasive test and has been approved for use in Canada and Europe, but the company was a casualty of the funding drought and was sold off to Miraculins, Inc. in Winnipeg, Manitoba.



For a nonpregnant person (stated this way because the test is frequently used to test for gestational diabetes in pregnant women, and the diagnostic values are different), the values for people without diabetes should be as follows: fasting, 110 mg/dL or less; at one hour after drinking a beverage containing 75 grams of glucose, the value should be 180 mg/dL or less, and at two hours, 155 mg/dL or less (upper curve in the graph above). The OGTT is a relatively simple test, requires only a blood glucose meter and an easily-obtained liquid (two cans of soda would contain about the same amount of sugar, but much of that sugar is fructose, which makes soda completely unsuitable for reference measurement testing with meters and strips that are specific for glucose), so it can be readily performed by an investigator to cause a significant change in his blood glucose as a “quick and dirty” test to see if a noninvasive monitoring technology shows promise.

Physiologically, when a person ingests 50 to 100 grams of glucose in a single drink, it creates a massive disruption of metabolism (as well as of the entire endocrine system), and this effect is intended when trying to determine how well the metabolic system handles large amounts of glucose for a diagnosis of diabetes. However, when the intent is to determine whether another parameter is also a good measure of glucose concentration, the results have often been disastrous! This leads to the First Law of noninvasive glucose:

First Law:

Almost every measured physiological parameter will show strong correlation with the curve in an oral glucose tolerance test.

This single, little-appreciated law has by itself resulted in the inappropriate spending of *hundreds of millions* of invested dollars in the area of noninvasive glucose research!

Examples of parameters which show good correlation with the curve in an OGTT are core and surface temperature, peripheral perfusion, skin hydration, electrolyte balance, gastric motility, peripheral edema, enzyme levels (liver, heart, brain and digestive), galvanic skin response, respiration, urine production, saliva production, and many others. In short, any function related to metabolism or the overall endocrine system is more likely to show correlation than not.

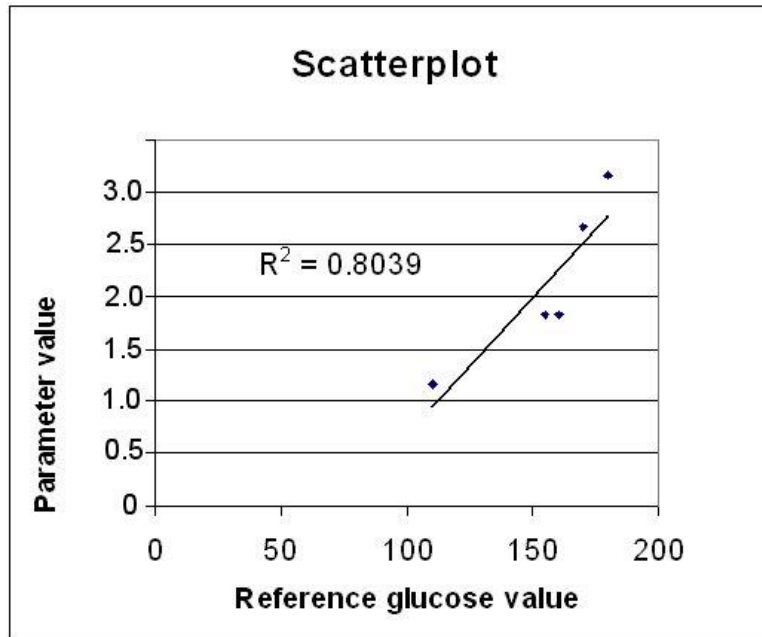
This false positive response is so common that it suggests another, similar test: a “fructose tolerance test” (see Test 5, below).

Correlation

The statistical techniques referred to below generally operate on the assumption that all the error in the measurement is from the device, and that none is from the reference measurement. In fact, there often is error in the reference measurement, and this further complicates the analysis. Many such tests are done using a traditional glucose meter and strips, with interferences from drugs and components of blood that may not be well understood by the investigators. The “gold standard” reference method of the industry is a series of instruments produced by [Yellow Springs Instruments](#) (YSI Inc. in Yellow Springs, Ohio), collectively known as “the YSI.” Based on an electrochemical technique pioneered by Dr. Leland Clark in the early 1970s, the reasonably-priced lab instruments made by YSI are respected for their accuracy, their freedom from chemical interferences in blood, and their reliability when properly maintained.¹ Unless a comparative study of

¹ After many years of serving as the “gold standard” of glucose reference measurements, the YSI 2300 has been [discontinued by the manufacturer](#). Its replacement is the [YSI 2900D Biochemistry Analyzer](#).

the differences between two devices is being performed, investigators are always encouraged to make reference measurements with the YSI.¹



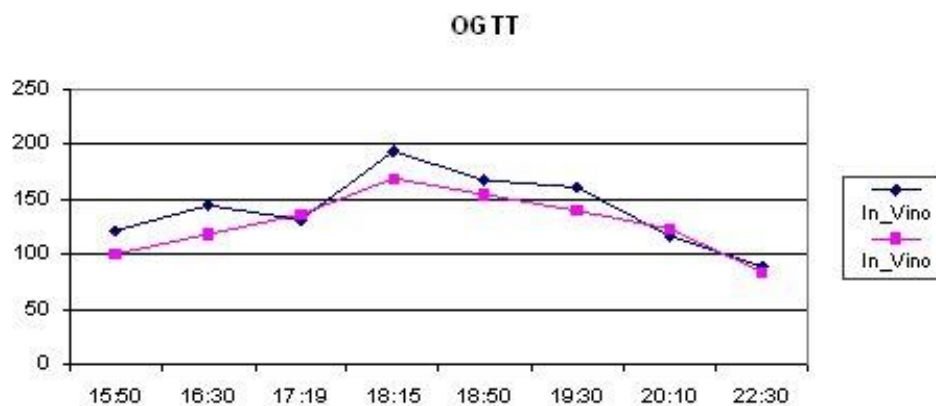
To see if there is a relationship between the effect being studied and a variation in glucose, the two results are plotted against each other in what's termed a correlation plot or more commonly, a "scatterplot." A calculation of the best straight line among the points ("linear regression," sometimes called a "linear trendline") shows how well they line up with each other, and a "correlation coefficient" R (technically called Pearson's Product Moment Correlation) that expresses the degree of agreement between the points is also calculated. When that value is squared (R^2), it is a quantitative measure of the agreement between the experimental and reference measurements (If $R^2 = 1.0$, there is perfect agreement, and if $R^2 = 0$, there is no agreement whatsoever, and an R^2 of 0.5 means that there is 50% of an actual correlation, while the rest of the results are random

¹ This issue is also important when considering calibration of a proposed noninvasive meter. If the device needs to be calibrated frequently, the only way patients can do so is to obtain a glucose value with their "finger stick" meter and enter it into the noninvasive device. In addition to potential errors from drugs, hemoglobin and oxygen saturation that affect many meters, there is also a possibility that the glucose level measured in blood from the fingertip may not correlate well with the glucose in interstitial fluid that is sensed in tissue by many proposed noninvasive meters. This effect can be exacerbated by testing after meals and could lead to a serious calibration error. However, no noninvasive meter has yet progressed to the point where the reference error has become a significant problem.

association). The one great flaw of this type of analysis is that the mathematics it uses place more emphasis on the results with the largest numerical value, and more than one experimenter has taken advantage of this by finding a few well-agreeing points at the extreme right-hand side of the graph, using them to overwhelm the numbers from a passel of mediocre agreements on the left hand side, where the need for accuracy is actually much more critical.

Another metric that has come into greater use is known as MARD, or mean absolute relative difference—it gives the average percentage difference between measurements (ignoring whether they are higher or lower) made with the experimental device and the reference measurement. It is generally a better estimate of system accuracy than the median absolute relative difference (MDARD) statistic, which is sometimes quoted. Estimates of MARD values for strip-and-meter systems are between 5 and 10%, and a value of less than 15% would probably be considered very good for a noninvasive system. Published results for CGM systems are less than 10%, but those systems do a good deal of smoothing and projection of results to achieve performance at that level.

An entertaining example of this kind of agreement appeared briefly on the website of a hopeful provider of a new noninvasive technology. Clearly, one of the lines was intended to be “*in-vivo*” (measurement within a living being) and the other “*in-vitro*” (measurement made “in glass” using fluid extracted from the body, *i.e.*, a reference blood glucose measurement). It is an amusing conjecture that the plot was made under the hopeful influence of too much wine (the website was later corrected).

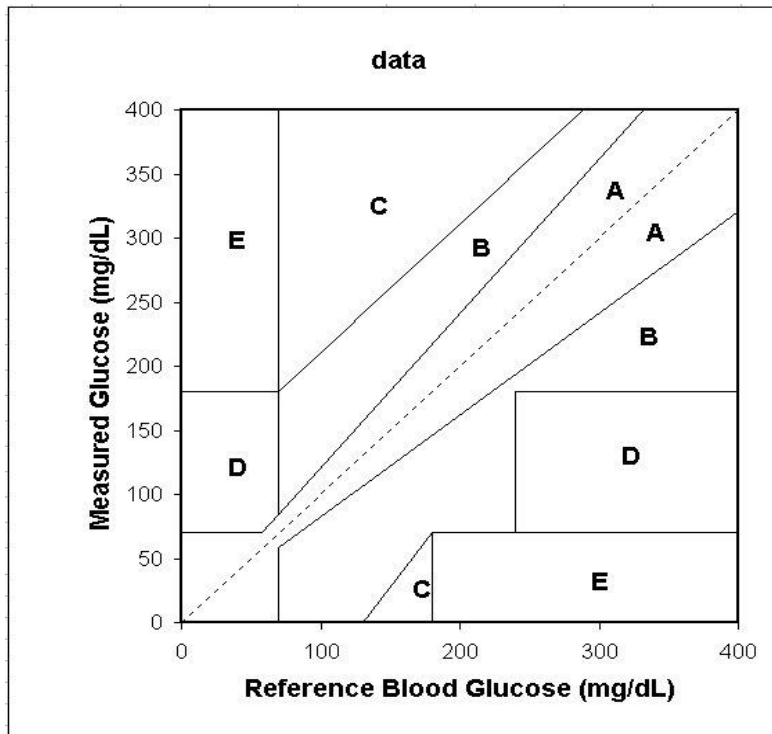


Generally speaking, an R^2 value of 0.9 for a noninvasive test (compared to a good reference, such as the YSI) would be considered acceptable to bring a device to market, with 0.85 being about the lowest value that should be interpreted as showing promise. Of course, many of these studies are performed by trained laboratory personnel, not by patients with diabetes, and equivalently good results are rarely found with in-home testing. Worse yet, a correlation obtained in the lab with an early prototype may be compromised as the realities of product development require size and cost reduction from the lab unit, and what seemed promising on the benchtop may fall apart when a more practical commercial device is developed.

Clarke Error Grid

Because diabetes places individuals at different levels of risk depending on the level and duration of glucose values (low levels for any length of time are “acutely” dangerous, while high levels have more of a “chronic” impact over days or years), different levels of hazard are assigned to errors of different kinds, and simple correlation doesn’t tell the whole story. One common way of expressing this is the use of an “error grid” published by W.L. Clarke, et al. in 1987, and known universally in the industry as the “Clarke Error Grid.” It has been widely adopted for use in the evaluation of blood glucose monitoring systems (a revised and more detailed version, called the “Consensus Error Grid, is described below, and is being gradually more widely adopted).

The grid plot divides up the possible errors into groups. For instance, if the patient’s blood glucose is low, and the device being used to test says that it’s high, the patient might take more insulin, lose consciousness, and place his life in jeopardy. On the other hand, if the true glucose value is high, and the device reads low, the patient might eat some food or drink orange juice, but it’s not likely that immediate harm will result. The grid looks like this:



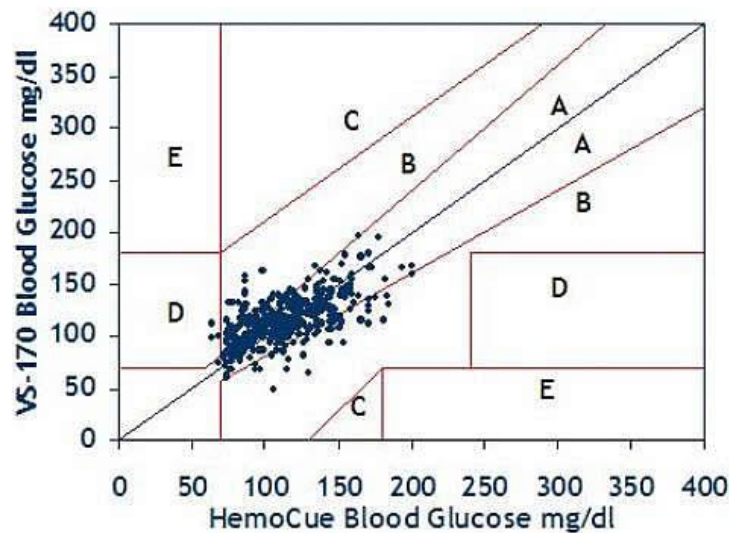
Error grid region definitions:

- A: "Clinically Accurate"**
- B: "Benign Errors, Clinically Acceptable"**
- C: "OverCorrection"**
- D: "Dangerous Failure to Detect and Treat"**
- E: "Erroneous Treatment, Serious Errors"**

**Source: FDA Clinical Chemistry and Clinical Toxicology
Devices Panel Meeting Dec 6, 1999**

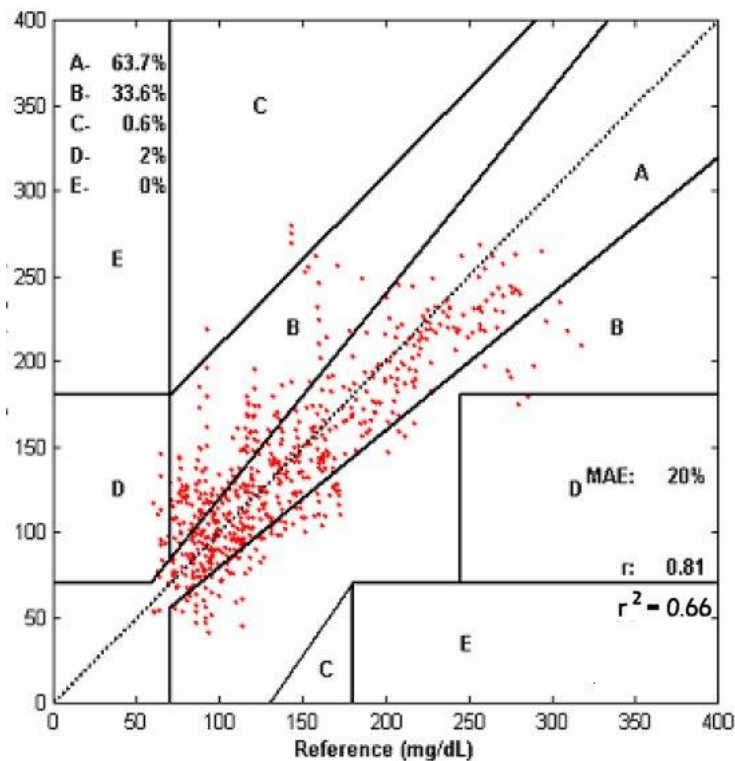
The regions of the chart have been designated as shown, with mnemonics to help recall how the regions should be interpreted. As valuable as this presentation is, it can make data that are truly not very good seem acceptable and vice versa. The goal of a traditional meter would be to have 98% of the values in the A and B regions, with less than 0.1% (one in one thousand measurements) in E. For noninvasive devices, no generally accepted standards exist, and each group tries to define what they think would be found “acceptable” by the FDA.

There are frequent publications of poor correlations that can look promising on a Clarke Error Grid. Many of these have been described as “double barrel” results, looking more like the pattern from a pair of shotgun blasts. Red flags on this sort of data presentation are: limited glucose range (almost all points between 70 and 150 mg/dL), and generally poor correlation.



The collection of results shown below is an example of the optimistic slant that an error grid plot can place on a data set. While over 97% of the results are in the A and B region, the overall correlation as measured by R^2 is only 0.66 (and the mean absolute relative difference (MARD), shown here as “MAE” is 20%)—a device with this correlation would likely not be acceptable for home use by patients.

There is a mistaken impression by many newcomers that having “95% of all results in the A and B regions” would be satisfactory evidence for a successful noninvasive meter. The scatterplot below (and many like it) indicate that is not a valid criterion.

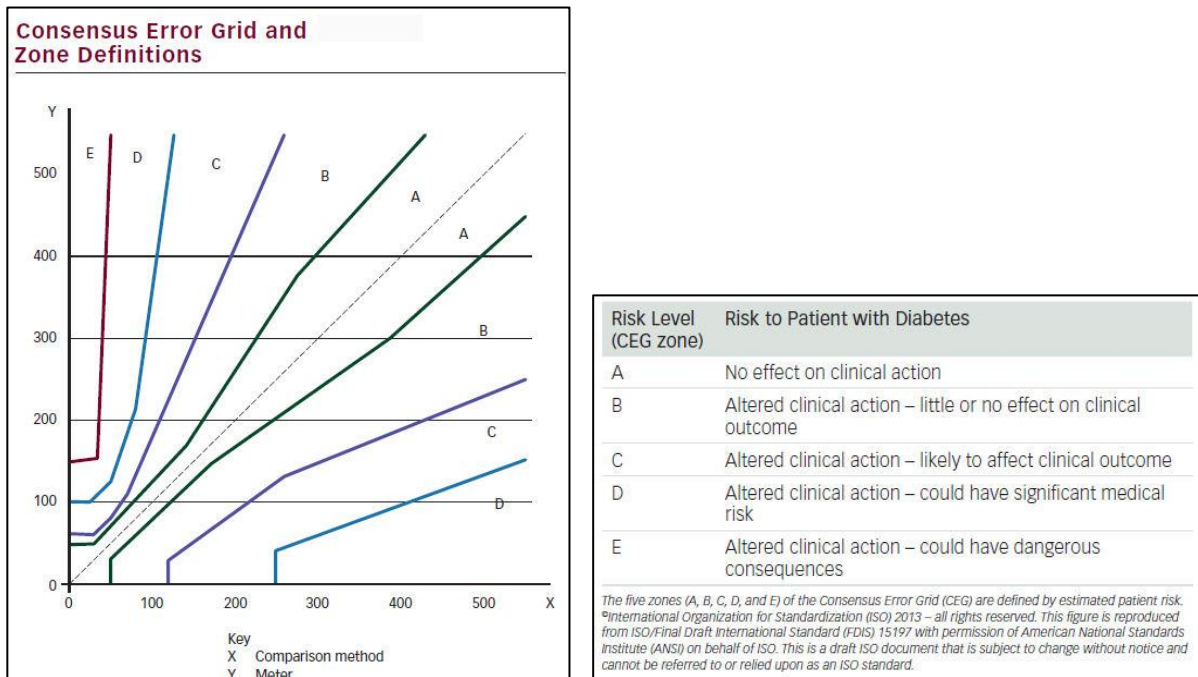


ISO Standards

In 2003 the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) published standard 15197, specifying the required accuracy for blood glucose meters. It required that 95% of all results above 75 mg/dL fall within 20% of the reference value, and that 95% of all results equal to or below 75 mg/dL fall within 15 mg/dL of the reference value. A revision published in 2013 (with a 36-month transition period) requires 95% of all results above 100 mg/dL to fall within 15% of the reference value, and 95% of all results equal to or below 100 mg/dL to fall within 15 mg/dL of the reference value. It will also require that 99% of the results fall within the A and B zones of the “Consensus Error Grid” (see below) and will require testing with three lots of reagents instead of one.

Consensus Error Grid

A revision to the Clarke Error Grid above was published in 2000 by Parkes, et al.¹, and is known as either the “Consensus Error Grid or the “Parkes Error Grid.” An image of that grid is below, followed by the letter ranges (but the “A” zone of the Consensus Error Grid is not the same as the set of requirements imposed by the ISO standard).



Specificity

Two fundamental issues have plagued those making measurements since analysis began: sensitivity and specificity; they are both of great importance in any attempt to measure glucose in tissue.

The issue of sensitivity is well known and fully described under many of the measurement techniques that follow—there is very little glucose present, and to most measurements, it does not present a strong signal, both of which make it hard to measure. The problem of specificity is more subtle and requires more in-depth knowledge of how the measurement of a physical parameter can be related to glucose concentration. Many measurement techniques (for example refractive index, with the corollary of light

¹ Diabetes Care, Volume 23, Number 8, August, 2000 p. 1143.

scattering, optical coherence tomography, radio-frequency or microwave impedance measurements) can show a good, short-term correlation with blood glucose variations, and this has led many groups (see the section on Radio Frequency/Impedance for examples) to believe that their technique responds specifically to glucose, when in fact specificity is often overestimated.

The examples of measurement techniques above, along with others, respond to what are known as “bulk properties” of tissue fluids, known to scientists as “colligative properties:” those that respond to the total number of “particles” in solution. Density, osmotic pressure, freezing point depression or boiling point elevation are all parameters that respond only to the total number of particles in solution, and do not differentiate among those particles.¹ As such, they will respond to changes in any of the materials dissolved in the fluids of tissue with the same sensitivity that they respond to changes in glucose.

In addition to their effect of directly varying glucose concentration in body fluids, variations in glucose concentration have an insidious effect that impacts these measurements—it shifts the amount of water among various “fluid compartments” of the body. Water exists in, and moves among, intracellular fluid (within the cell), interstitial fluid, and plasma (“intravascular fluid”), where the last two combine as “extracellular fluids.” Because the concentration of glucose varies by more than most other substances, a change in its concentration alters the composition of these fluids and thus the osmotic pressure in them, and the body responds by shifting the amount of water to regain osmotic balance. This is known by a number of names, including “osmotic shift” and “water redistribution.”²

One of the first critical questions that should be used to assess new proposed measurement technologies is “Is there a known scientific effect that corresponds to the

¹ Refractive index of interstitial fluid, which largely determines the scattering of light in tissue, is less agnostic regarding dissolved particles because it varies with the polarizability of solute molecules or ions, but still varies as the fluids seek osmotic balance when glucose concentrations changes.

² In my opinion, this effect (and the lack of testing for it) has resulted in wasting more money than any other single effect in noninvasive glucose testing, other than possibly the universal false positive response of most techniques to oral glucose tolerance testing.

glucose measurement being attempted?” A surprising number of approaches fail this question, but are still investigated to uncover a correlation with the preferred measurement. If the answer to the question is “not really,” (or even “maybe not”), an early test of the water redistribution effect is in order to challenge any correlation found (see Test 4, below). Even the slightest doubt about the *strength* of the scientific principle involved should trigger an immediate use of that test.

Those involved in near-infrared absorbance measurements (see that section), where water absorbs strongly and can be measured more or less directly, have gradually learned at great expense that **the majority of the signal seen there is due to variations in the amount of water present in interstitial fluid**. Unfortunately, other impacts on the body also influence this “water balance”—exercise, hydration, nutrition, electrolyte levels, even monthly cycles in women. These also influence the distribution of water between the compartments, and the tenuous correlation that exists between measurements that respond to the distribution of water (and that can *appear* to respond to glucose concentration) falls apart, often in less than 24 hours.

An example that will be detailed more fully below is impedance measurements. While it is known that impedance measurements respond to these bulk properties (or even to the variations that result from changes in the distribution of water), in spite of more than a dozen failed attempts to correlate these measurements with glucose, no specific interaction between the glucose molecule and electromagnetic energy in the radio-frequency (or microwave) regions has ever been proven—many frequencies will show a variation in response as glucose levels in tissue are varied, but no frequency or range has ever been shown to give a specific response to the glucose molecule, and correlations based this relationship have so far not held up over time.

A series of comprehensive reviews^{1,2,3} (available from either the links or a Google search for the titles) detail the degree of interaction between electromagnetic radiation and tissue over a wide frequency range. The actual basis of interaction between tissue and radiation is complex and, depending on the parameter being measured, may be difficult to understand, but it is largely nonspecific, and no publication has yet reported a specific frequency or group of frequencies that accurately respond to glucose concentration.

Emotional Considerations

Following the earlier heading “What Makes Everyone Think Their Approach Works?”, the second set of considerations is decidedly nonscientific. As mentioned, diabetes touches every family and none more intimately than when someone’s small child is diagnosed with diabetes. If the parent is a scientist or engineer, or has a close friend who is one, an incredibly strong driving force can develop to find a way to measure the child’s glucose without sticking a needle in his/her finger. When emotion supplements reason (or worse, supplants it), it’s very easy for an otherwise rigorous investigator to begin to believe in the faintest of correlations. Even those who have not been personally affected by the disease could recognize the tremendous benefit that would accrue to millions of people with diabetes if a truly noninvasive monitoring technique could be developed. This has led to a group of researchers, who can only be described as “true believers,” who have abandoned their skepticism in favor of a certainty that the method they are pursuing is right, and usually, the only right way. When this happens, they will argue with anyone who does not see the correlation of data the way they do, or who cannot see the bright, clear path to success that has been revealed to them.⁴ Most often, the people who keep trying against all reason are determined, well-intentioned souls who don’t realize what

¹ [C Gabriel, S Gabriel and E Corthout, The dielectric properties of biological tissues: I. Literature survey, Phys. Med. Biol. 41 \(1996\) 2231–2249.](#)

² [S Gabriel, R W Lau and C Gabriel, The dielectric properties of biological tissues: II. Measurements in the frequency range 10 Hz to 20 GHz, Phys. Med. Biol. 41 \(1996\) 2251–2269.](#)

³ [S Gabriel, R W Lau and C Gabriel, The dielectric properties of biological tissues: III. Parametric models for the dielectric spectrum of tissues, Phys. Med. Biol. 41 \(1996\) 2271–2293.](#)

⁴ I’ve witnessed this “syndrome” many times during my involvement with noninvasive glucose measurement, and there is no more depressing sight in this field.

they're up against in trying to solve this problem, or simply can't acknowledge that they have not succeeded.

Consider the following excerpt from an article in *Diabetes Interview Magazine* of April, 2004 (names have been deleted): "Company president __, formerly a physicist in the semi-conductor industry, wants a piece of the noninvasive pie, but his motivation is much more personal: his son, __, developed diabetes more than a decade ago. This led __ to form a partnership with __, a physicist with experience in infrared devices, and retired doctor __. The three founded [the company] in 1999."

This is not an atypical scenario, as seen from this description of the founding of another company: "__ Founder and President, __, has a son in his twenties with type-1 diabetes. Since his son's diagnosis at age 13, __ has been actively and aggressively researching all aspects of diabetes care and management. In late 2008, __'s son had a dangerous low blood sugar event while driving. Every parent can relate to the fear inspired by that telephone call. For __, it was a call-to-action. __ was determined to find a non-invasive method to alert his son, and the other 24+ million diabetics in the U.S., to rapid and unexpected changes in their blood glucose levels. __ searched the country's best research universities and was eventually led to the most promising non-invasive continuous glucose monitoring (CGM) technology and obtained an exclusive option for a patent license."

Yet another such story is [detailed](#) by Kevin McMahon of Diabetech.

"C8 MediSensors was co-founded by a father trying to help his son living with diabetes, and as a company, we remain dedicated to helping those with the disease," said Paul Zygielbaum, CEO of C8 MediSensors, shortly before it went out of business.

The dark side of the emotional set of considerations is exemplified by those who might have entered this field out of intentional dishonesty or who got so enmeshed in their work that they didn't realize they had begun to believe a fairy tale (or that they had fallen in with thieves and liars). In some cases, of course, the dishonesty just crept in, as it did in Enron or WorldCom, where a company had been built and the truth just couldn't be

admitted to the investors or shareholders. When any of these scenarios occurs, there is usually intrigue, cover-up, or even worse.

For any of these reasons (and, realistically, because there would be a huge payoff on success), people who have developed a technology are loathe to even consider that they might not be actually measuring glucose, and as a result, tend not to challenge their results as they should (termed “experimenter expectancy bias”). In some cases, they have made a leap of faith to the certainty that they will succeed and have tried to negotiate world-wide rights with one of the major players before they have performed even a single definitive test.

Another emotional aspect of this pursuit involves secrecy and competitive intelligence.¹ Because of the perceived magnitude of the payoff, and because many groups are usually working simultaneously toward the same reward, investigators tend to become cautious to the point of paranoia about protecting their information. Although there are very few tales of actual intrigue, each group feels that any information passed to another could impair their chances for getting to success first, while collecting competitive intelligence about other groups might let them know how they are doing in comparison to others.

This issue leads to problems with full disclosure to investors or to consultants hired by them to assess the technology. Venture capitalists tend not to sign confidentiality agreements (consultants almost always do) and many talk to each other about the companies that they have been exposed to. Realistically, more information “leakage” occurs this way than any other, but it’s a risk that startup companies seeking funding must take.

¹ Having observed or participated in many of these investigations, I can lend personal credence to the tales of unusual measures taken by some companies to protect their own proprietary information or to gain access to that of others.

Tests of Technologies

A fundamental problem is that, since there is so far no direct technique for measuring glucose inside the body, the approaches are all varying degrees of indirect measurement, and these generally yield subtle, tenuous and variable results.¹ The relationships are not easily seen, and even though the Scientific Method demands attempting experiments that can *disprove* hypotheses (i.e., prove the “null hypothesis,” that glucose concentration absolutely *does not* correlate with the chosen parameter), it is emotionally challenging to put effort into a test that might end the quest.

Because continued funding and enthusiasm depend on producing positive results, most people invested in unproven technologies (like those described here) work tirelessly to prove their hypotheses, but efforts would often be better directed toward proving that the *opposite* is true: tests to prove that there is no strong, enduring relationship between the parameter measured and reference glucose values. When pursuing a hypothesis, it seems that every success, regardless how small, supports the idea that success is just ahead, but in fact each experiment that disproves what previous investigators thought to be true (that there is *a* relationship) is a more efficient means of expending energy and funding. Every past investigation progressed from faintly encouraging to more promising as it was developed, but to date, the failure mode of each was eventually discovered. This is the reason that the tests for technologies are listed below—any effort directed toward disproving the approach is much more efficient (although disheartening if the test succeeds in predicting failure) and must be pursued as early as possible in the investigation.

It is natural to postpone acquiring what seems like negative information, but the unpleasant reality is that if a proposed technology cannot pass the tests below (or parallel ones designed for testing of likely failure modes of the chosen approach), it is likely it will follow scores of its predecessors into oblivion.

¹ Senator (and orator) Everett Dirksen of Illinois used the phrase “gossamer and diaphanous” to describe this kind of relationship.

Several specific tests have served well over time to evaluate whether a technique has a chance of working (these assume that the technique under evaluation has something to do with spectroscopy, which the vast majority do, but they will also find application in other fields).

Test 1: Unless a spectroscopic technique can see and accurately measure 1 mg/dL of glucose in pure water, it is unlikely to provide acceptable results for physiological levels of glucose in human tissue.

Because tissue is so much more complex than an aqueous solution, the concentration of the analyte must be reduced to make the test of a solution meaningful.

Test 1A: Unless the technique can distinguish between 1 mg/dL of glucose and 1 mg/dL of fructose, it is unlikely to provide acceptable results for physiological levels of glucose in human tissue.

To make these tests meaningful (and to avoid the possibility that the differences seen are merely due to a decrease in the amount of water present, as described above), comparisons should be made between solutions with the stated concentration of glucose, and others substituted with the same concentration of a similar “polyhydroxy” compound like fructose, lactose, mannitol, or sorbitol. A measurement of 1 mg/dL of glucose could show the needed sensitivity, but if the technique can’t distinguish between 1 mg/dL of glucose and the same amount of fructose, it will never succeed at measuring glucose in tissue.

Test 2: Unless a spectroscopic technique can see and accurately measure 5 mg/dL of glucose in a very turbid and complex liquid medium, it is unlikely to provide acceptable results in human tissue.

These are both based on many years of experience. Human tissue is complex, bumpy, heterogeneous, and very hard to get any kind of radiation through without a major distortion from the medium itself. The minimum acceptable accuracy for a commercial

glucose device is about plus or minus 20 mg/dL at normal levels (70-130 mg/dL). This means that there can be at most 20 mg/dL uncertainty in the measurement. Without question, tissue is 20 times more complex and challenging than a solution of glucose in pure water, and at least 4 times as complex as the murkiest liquid suspension possible (turbid liquids are made up using materials like [Intralipid](#)[®], a synthetic triglyceride suspension that looks like milk, or small beads that scatter light, such as polystyrene). To make such a test valid, either the pure water or the turbid suspension should also contain the sort of things that are present in serum or blood: albumin, urea, triglycerides and cholesterol, and at their normal concentrations.

Test 2A: Unless the technique can distinguish between 5 mg/dL of glucose and 5 mg/dL of fructose, in a very turbid and complex liquid medium, it is unlikely to provide acceptable results for physiological levels of glucose in human tissue.

The same rules apply to the turbid test. It is equally important for an accurate measurement to be made in a messy situation as in a clean one.

It is reasonable for those providing funding to ask that tests such as these be completed before any testing is conducted on humans. Because, as has been argued, glucose tolerance tests are very likely to generate spurious correlations, and because testing a statistically valid number of subjects (and making accurate reference measurements on them) is an expensive and time-consuming activity, the technique needs to be wrung out as thoroughly as possible in the laboratory.

In many cases, spectroscopic techniques have shown a good initial correlation which turned out to be due to local environmental variations, leading to test 3:

Test 3: Every tentative correlation must be checked against variations in room temperature and humidity.

This is especially important in near-infrared studies, since the spectrum of water is a major component of every spectrum (and the NIR spectrum of water vapor is complex, temperature sensitive, and varies with humidity). Every laboratory should continuously record and test against these two sources of variation, but they are often neglected in the excitement and confusion of a small startup company.

Because so many techniques have been found to be misled by the “water redistribution” (or “osmotic”) effect of glucose described elsewhere, the following test is strongly recommended for every proposed method:

Test 4: it is critical to test whether subject hydration can confuse a glucose result.

Presuming that a calibration process has been established, calibrate subjects after having them intentionally dehydrate through vigorous exercise, then re-test as soon as possible, comparing to finger-stick testing. Re-test again the following day after subjects are fully re-hydrated. If the calibration does not hold over the two extremes of hydration, it is very likely that water redistribution is a major interference, or even the primary source of the variations being observed.¹

Test 5: Consider an Oral Fructose Tolerance Test to check on a positive OGTT result.

It may sound frivolous, but one more test is indicated to challenge the frequent false positive results of the oral glucose tolerance test, the “Oral Fructose Tolerance Test” or OFTT. Similar to the OGTT test, the test is administered by having the subject consume 50 to 100 grams of fructose, and looking for a response similar to that seen with glucose (it’s not practical to make reference measurements of fructose in blood, but the shape of the curve can be estimated from glucose tests). A similar response is evidence that the proposed method is not responding to glucose, but to one of the other effects of ingestion

¹ This could be described as an “alternative hypothesis” test to the null hypothesis tests described above.

of a large carbohydrate load, as described above under the OGTT. There will be some conversion of fructose to glucose (probably by the liver, but see [Jang, C., et al. The Small Intestine Converts Dietary Fructose into Glucose and Organic Acids, Cell Metab. 2018 Feb 6; 27\(2\): 351–361.e3.](#)), and glucose in the blood would be expected to rise much more slowly than in an OGTT.¹ If nothing else, this could provide a difference in the rate and amount of glucose increase that might indicate whether the measurement being made actually reflects glucose.

Rigorous Evaluation of Results

This final Law applies to all noninvasive techniques, regardless of the scientific approach. Most important, as many of the anecdotes below illustrate, it is almost always possible to generate a “retrospective correlation” by finding a way to match the data to the reference values. As a result, the only meaningful tests are those known as “predictive.”

Third Law:

Only predictive results count (correlation is *not* causation).

In predictive tests, after the necessary calibration² procedures are performed, the subject returns at another time (hour, day, week) to have a measurement made from which a glucose value is calculated, or “predicted.” Only after the result is reported (and written down in ink) is a reference measurement made for comparison. To be truly valid, the results should be subjected to analysis by a “disinterested person:” someone who has no stake in the outcome (it’s amazing how many excuses can be found to “throw out” data points that don’t agree, or to “adjust” results when one’s livelihood or future employment depends on generating a good correlation). There is no substitute for rigorous, tough,

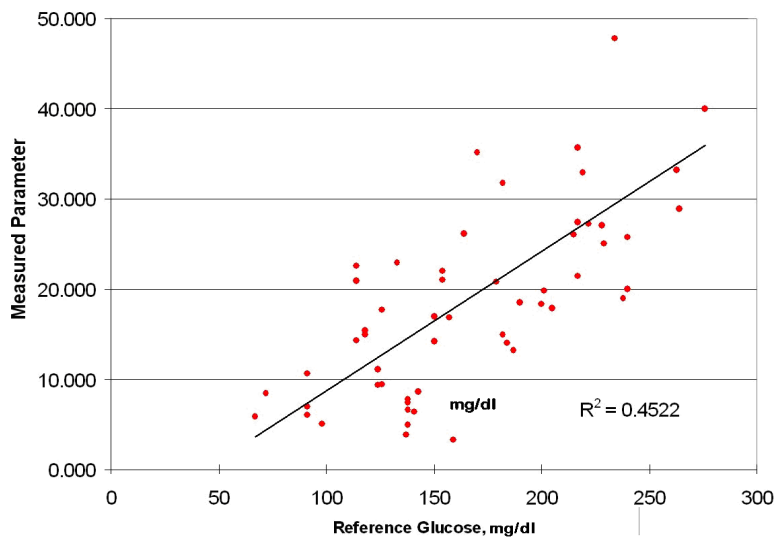
¹ There is a risk to some people of elevated uric acid levels with heavy fructose ingestion, so medical caution is indicated.

² Calibration refers to establishing the response of the instrument for an individual person, generally by making reference (“true”) measurements with a finger stick measuring device (or YSI) and generating a calibration factor or curve corresponding to the instrument’s response to that person (see below for details).

impartial evaluation of results. Anything less runs a terrible risk of distortion by wishful thinking.

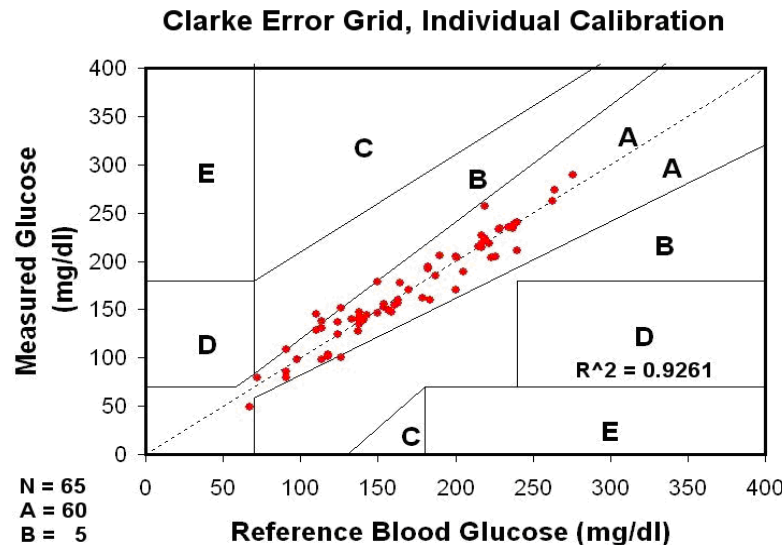
Individual Regression

One alternative, a trap that experimenters fall into (or jump into willingly when the results aren't coming out as desired) is to use “individual (or internal) regression,” where a number of points taken at one time are used to “predict” another point taken simultaneously. Data presented using this technique can be made to look inappropriately good, and have been the basis for much of the false belief and inappropriate funding that has occurred in this field. Consider the following two presentations of a single data set.



The first graph shows the agreement generated when the data points are generated from a general relationship (the same parameter measured across a number of individuals, and compared to reference measurements, sometimes called “group correlation”). Clearly, this is not an encouraging set of results, and it shows an unacceptable correlation. If, however, the glucose values are calculated by using each person’s individual regression line (which may be quite different from another’s, and might not even be similar for the same person on another day), the same data set can be prepared to look like the error grid

chart below,¹ which would appear to represent a technique with good promise for an acceptable device.



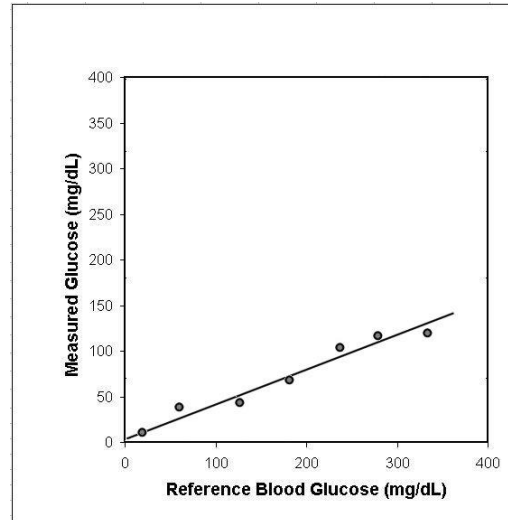
However, none of these results (even the first set) are predictive, since the “measurement” points were generated simultaneously with the “calibration” data points. With a technique showing this degree of scatter, it is very unlikely that predictive results would ever be as good as the individual correlation plot above.

More about Calibration

The ideal noninvasive instrument would not require calibration at all—that is, making a measurement of a parameter would be directly related to glucose concentration, and each value measured would generate a unique glucose result. Owing to the complexity of the techniques that are necessary to generate glucose measurements noninvasively, however, this has not yet been demonstrated. Instead, a spectrum (or impedance, or temperature, or whatever variables are being investigated to represent glucose) usually has a more complex relationship to the glucose concentration (see, especially, the “chemometric” techniques discussed in the “Measurements” section above for really complicated calculations).

¹ These are actual data sets that I participated in generating, and they were part of a presentation I made to potential investors while raising a second round of venture capital for Fovioptics, to provide a cautionary example of how poor data can be made to look good. The true correlation was always shown.

To get a data set from a given parameter to correlate with reference values taken from the same set of patients, there are a number of corrections that are often necessary. If it has been established that the value has a (linear) proportional response to glucose that goes through zero (that is, a zero-value result represents zero glucose), only a single measurement would be necessary to establish the correct response—this is called a slope correction.

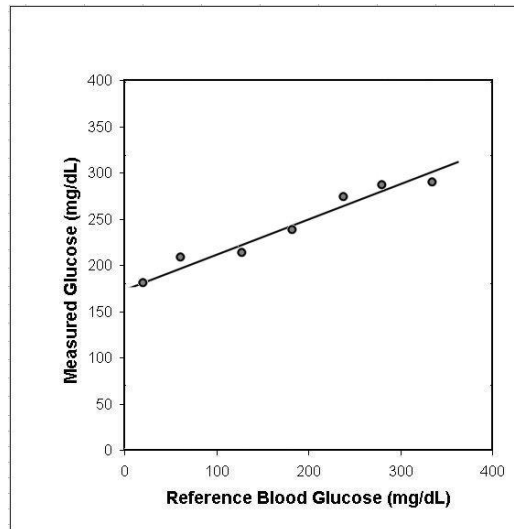


This was done for decades with traditional glucose meters, using “calibration codes” that were set into the meter by the user for each lot of strips to correct the readings.¹ If the experimental result for a new technology gave this kind of response, a single measurement would suffice to establish the calibration line for the results, and each time a new calibration was required (due to instrument drift, changes in temperature, etc.), a single reference measurement would establish the correct response.

If all the results were also offset by a fixed amount, an additional constant (an “intercept” correction) would be needed to add or subtract from each value to correct, and each time calibration was established or repeated, two measurements at different levels would be required to correct both sources of error, and the accuracy of the calibration would

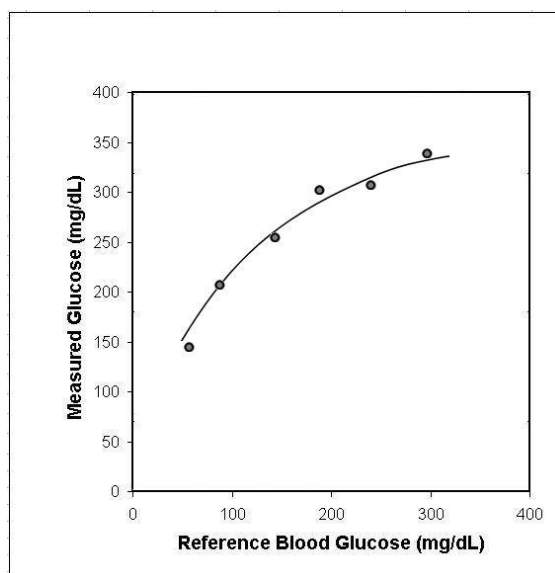
¹ Each lot of test strips is tested at the factory and a calibration code was assigned there—customers have not needed to “re-calibrate” meters and strips since the pioneer days of the 1970s. Almost all meters on the market have dispensed with calibration codes for individual strip lots, and are described as “no-coding” meters.

depend not only on the accuracy of the reference values, but on how much difference there was between the two values. If the glucose values are close together, extrapolation of a straight line between them would be subject to substantial error; the farther apart they are, the more accurately the line would represent the true response.¹



If the relationship of a measured parameter turned out to have the kind of nonlinear relationship with glucose concentration shown below, additional points would need to be measured each time calibration was required, and this could cause additional user interface difficulties and potential errors if the patient were required to perform the calibration.

¹ To establish significantly different glucose values requires making an initial set of measurements, eating food or glucose to increase the level, and then making a second set of measurements. Because glucose levels with this “meal challenge” can change rapidly, device and reference measurement should be made at essentially the same time to avoid a “time offset” source of error.



The frequency of calibration (or “calibration interval”) becomes very important in assessing the ease of use of a given measurement. If a device could be developed that did not require calibration for an entire year, it would be viewed as very successful. Even once a month calibration with a single finger stick measurement would be generally considered acceptable by most workers in the field. Once weekly calibration would impose significant hardships on the user, and a more frequent calibration requirement would probably make a device unacceptable in the marketplace. If a device required a “two-point” re-calibration (with a substantial difference between the two readings, say 100 mg/dL and 200 mg/dL), it would be extremely challenging for people to perform this calibration at home, and it might have to be done in a doctor’s office or clinic. This requirement would be considered strongly negative in assessing the potential of a proposed noninvasive technology.

Individual vs. Universal Calibration

Current invasive blood glucose meters are said to have universal calibration—that is, one calibration setting works reasonably well for the entire population, regardless of age, gender, or ethnicity.¹ Most of the noninvasive technologies proposed to date would be

¹ The amount of red blood cells in the blood, or “hematocrit” is a major error source with traditional glucose meters, and a range of values for acceptable accuracy is generally given for each device. Hematocrit values of 30% to 55% cover the vast majority of the population, but the FDA now looks for a range of 20% to 60% for over-the-counter systems.

expected to be influenced by an individual's anatomy and physiology, and very few have been proposed that could work equally well for all people with no need for adjusting the response to each individual. How easily a device could be “tailored” to respond accurately to a person and how long the calibration could remain valid are important considerations for each proposed technology.

Clinical Studies

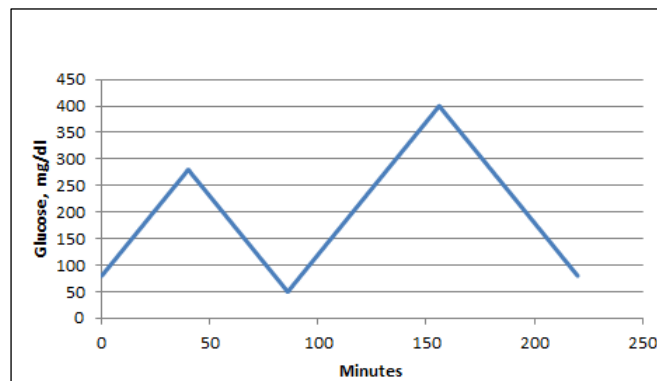
Proving that a noninvasive method for glucose works (and learning just how well it works) is not an easy task or an inexpensive one. After the inventor tests himself, then usually a few friends or family members, testing is subsequently done (under the Institutional Review Board protocol described in the introductory section above) by bringing in volunteer patients, usually those with diabetes in order to obtain a range of glucose values, and testing their glucose levels with both the proposed technology and a reference method. Specific instructions may be given to the volunteers to arrive fasting, after a meal (or after an insulin injection), or they may just arrive in random circumstances.¹ To avoid bias in these tests, it's desirable to have a cross-section of the population across age, gender and ethnicity.

If a technology gives good agreement with this first level of testing, studies of calibration technique and calibration interval are usually performed. For this kind of testing, volunteers are brought in and their individual calibration factors are determined by an initial series of measurements. They are then brought back at intervals of a day, a week, or a month to determine if the calibration will “hold” to give accurate predictive results. In these subsequent tests, the glucose value obtained by the noninvasive technique must be obtained before a reference measurement in order to avoid bias. In some cases, it is advised that different people who cannot consult with each other perform the two sets of tests, and that the results be compared only after the testing is completed, and if calculations for the experimental results take some time, the person performing those must be kept “blinded” to the reference values. To do otherwise invites the tendency to

¹ In our first test at Fovioptics, one volunteer showed up with a glucose value of only 33 mg/dL, and was sweating so profusely that no testing could be performed. This is an indication that medically trained personnel should always be on site, when even these simple tests are conducted.

discount results that do not agree well, with unfortunate consequences. An important source of authoritative information about clinical trials is the website maintained by the U.S. National Institutes of Health: <http://www.clinicaltrials.gov/>.

If a technique survives these initial tests (especially if oral glucose tolerance tests or simple “meal challenges” are used), a series of much more rigorous and expensive tests is eventually required, known as “clamp” studies. In this testing, diabetic volunteers are recruited under strict protocols and have their blood glucose levels carefully manipulated using a combination of glucose and insulin infusions. There is a limited number of endocrinologists or diabetologists who perform these tests, and since there is a need to maintain strict medical observation, they are usually performed at hospitals or specialized clinics. One such organization, with clinics in Germany and California, is called Profil (now “[Prosciento](#)” in California), and conducts these tests for evaluation of both pharmaceutical products and glucose measuring systems.¹ The patient’s glucose values can be manipulated to a greater degree than in glucose tolerance tests, including “M-shaped or W-shaped” profiles that are particularly effective in eliminating spurious correlations, and can be taken briefly into the critical hypoglycemic range to study response there.



“M-shaped” Glucose Profile

¹ Interestingly, the devices used to monitor and maintain patients’ glucose (in 2006) at Profil were “[Biostators](#),” a device developed and marketed briefly in this country by Miles (now Bayer) in the 1980s. The manufacturer was no longer supporting those instruments, and there were no other known applications for them, so the institutions needed to maintain their own supply of spare parts and materials. Those systems have been replaced in Germany with “Clampart™,” a new system developed by Profil that is not available in the U.S., where the instrument used now may be the “GlucoScout” intravenous monitor from International Biomedical in Austin, TX, with a “published algorithm.”

The cost of this testing can easily run to more than \$15,000 per patient, and if a population cross-section needs to be tested, this can become one of the most expensive parts of evaluating a glucose measuring technology. No other testing protocol, however, has the power of clamp studies, and if an approach is to be considered seriously for product development (beyond the research phase), they must be conducted.

However, even devices showing promise in clamp studies will need comprehensive clinical studies to accurately measure performance or uncover hidden errors and interferences. These are even more expensive, and need to include broad cross-sections of subjects in multiple locations.

Why Don't People Communicate the Results of their Work?

The main reason is simple: people don't like to describe failure! It's hard to write any technical communication, and it's doubly hard if one has staked his reputation (and perhaps his personal fortune or millions of venture capital dollars) on something that didn't work out. When a company has burned through all the funding it raised, putting down in writing what didn't work is particularly hard and might impair the principals' ability to be part of the next startup that comes along. Realistically, when a company goes under, no one has the time or motivation to publish a paper, especially a negative one, and the principals rarely care all that much if someone else repeats their mistakes.

Only a few people have had enough tenure in the glucose business to see a very broad cross-section of the potential noninvasive technologies, and an R&D executive who spent just a few years¹ at LifeScan, Abbott, or Roche will know only why a few technologies didn't work (that is, the ones they tried to pursue in-house, or with sponsored outside groups). Each company's appetite for noninvasive glucose will have waxed and waned over the decades this industry has been significant, and no one wants to be the lone champion of an idea that doesn't have support from management. As a result, each R&D executive (and each company) has sort of a snapshot view of the field, and, since every

¹ The tenure of a top R&D executive in a high-technology company is generally short. Changes in the company's fortunes in the marketplace, the failure of research projects, and the impatience of top management with the inevitable delays in new product developments all contribute.

attempt to date has failed, all are left with a bitter taste and very little interest in the newest and brightest prospect that comes along.¹ Even Bob Coleman (who called himself a “card-carrying analytical chemist”), who had been president of MediSense (the first electrochemical blood glucose testing company) when it was sold to Abbott in 1996, who was the founder of another company with extensive experience in blood glucose monitoring, and who had seen more noninvasive technologies than most over his long career, subsequently founded a noninvasive company (Argose) that pursued two radically different technologies (skin fluorescence and a subdermal reporter molecule) before throwing in the towel.

In many cases, companies have managed to fail in their noninvasive pursuits and have turned to other related areas. It’s a testament to the doggedness of some entrepreneurs that they can keep a company and team together while making a dramatic change of direction after being unable to realize a dream like noninvasive glucose. Among the long-time survivors listed in the tongue-in-cheek “20-year club” in the first edition of this book in 2006 are NIRDiagnostics, InLight Solutions, Sensys, and Optiscan Biomedical, none of which are now actively pursuing noninvasive glucose technologies,² and Glucorecs, the probably the last reincarnation of Solid State Farms, which finally no longer exists.

Technologies and Groups

¹ It has been twenty-five years since my retirement from LifeScan, and there is not a single technical person left who overlapped with me. I have had discussions with a number of successors, but most of those have also moved on by now.

² Of these, InLight Solutions, NIRDiagnostics and Sensys are no longer in existence, and OptiScan, after changing its focus to intravascular testing in the hospital finally [disappeared](#) in 2020. A company initially dubbed VivaScan (see below) and renamed Grove Instruments departed the twenty-year club in 2015. I considered Wayne March (see the section on optical rotation) the “dean” of the group, but he, too, is now gone.

Near-Infrared: The 800-Pound Gorilla

As mentioned earlier, more money, tears and controversy have revolved around near-infrared spectroscopy (“NIR”) than all the other techniques combined¹.

This field was the basis for one of the earliest patents on noninvasive glucose, and shares that honor with optical rotation in the aqueous humor of the eye (see above). The first description of a near-infrared glucose measurement that stirred genuine interest seems to be European Patent Application 0160768A1: “Spectrophotometric method and apparatus for the non-invasive determination of glucose in body tissues” issued to Dähne and Cross, researchers at the Battelle Institute in Switzerland, in 1985. It described making measurements at wavelengths where glucose was absorbed, and correcting those measurements by looking at other wavelengths where it did not. It is shown in patent compilations as having been referred to more than one hundred times in other patents. By the time the actual patent was issued, as EP0160768B1, Battelle had transferred the patent to [Kurabo Industries](#) in Japan; it does not appear that Kurabo continued the investigation, but is reported to have worked with Kyoto Dai-Ichi before abandoning the technology.

A European Patent application (EP 3 138 493 A1) filed thirty years later, published in March of 2017, said almost exactly the same thing:

“Referring to FIG. 1, water has the same absorbance of approximately 30 % for light having a wavelength of approximately 1880 nm and light having a wavelength of approximately 2080 nm. On the other hand, glucose has different absorbance values for the light having the above wavelengths. While glucose, like water, absorbs approximately 30 % of the light having the wavelength of 1880 nm, it absorbs approximately 90 % of the light having the wavelength of 2080 nm. Therefore, if the light having the wavelength of 1880 nm and the light having the wavelength of 2080 nm are alternately irradiated to the same location on the human body, they may transmit through the human body to be received in

¹ Since this technology spans all but the earliest attempts, and since it encompasses much of the emotional spectrum as well as the electromagnetic, I will devote a large part of the discussion to historical examples. As always, these are my own recollections, corroborated where possible by discussion with others and by research work, but they are prone to bias, forgetfulness, and personal interpretations. They are presented without malice, even though some of the tales reflect what may have been accidental or even intentional improprieties.

different amounts. It can be concluded that this difference in the amount of light received results from a difference in the absorbance of glucose.”

The approach employed by these researchers (and by dozens, if not scores, who followed them) was based on a technique pioneered by Max Liston¹ that evolved into a series of clinical instruments called “Abbott Bichromatic Analyzers” where corrections to an optical measurement for an interfering substance such as hemoglobin or bilirubin could be made by making a second measurement at a wavelength where the chromogen for the analyte did not absorb, but the interference did. Many researchers tried in vain to find such “pairs of wavelengths” where the absorbance of things like water, proteins, and fat could be removed from the near-infrared absorbance signal of glucose. The spectral overlap and wide disparity of the concentrations, and thus the materials’ absorbances, as described at length below, have so far defeated this approach.

In a review article, “Noninvasive Glucose Sensing” (Anal. Chem., 2005, 77(17) pp. 5429-5439), Drs. Mark Arnold and Gary Small of the University of Iowa, who have worked extensively in this field, reported:

“It is important to realize at the outset that, to date, no one has proven the ability to measure glucose noninvasively in either human subjects or animal models. Nothing published in the peer reviewed literature or described in the patent literature is proven to measure glucose selectively from noninvasive analytical information. Although many papers and patents claim this ability, none is able to provide the level of proof necessary to establish such a complex analytical measurement. In fact, nearly all the published accounts are most certainly not measuring glucose directly.

□

An observation frequently noted at scientific meetings and review panels is that noninvasive glucose sensing has been under development for more than 15 years without a resulting product. Some evaluators conclude that this lack of success indicates that such measurements are impossible and further development is a waste of time and resources.”

Little has happened since 2005 to change that assessment, but fairly naïve descriptions still appear frequently, such as from Samsung (US 2016/0258814), Leman Micro Devices (US 2016/0015301), Benaron (US5337745), and K. Sairam, “[Design and Development of Non-Invasive Blood Glucose Measurement System using Near Infrared technique](#),”

¹ In a last-ditch effort to salvage one near-infrared technology in which LifeScan had invested, I hired Max as a consultant in 1991, but he, like the research group, was unable to resolve their problems.

International Journal of Advanced Research in Computer and Communication Engineering Vol. 4, Issue 7, July 2015, 74-79. A U.S. patent issued in 2022 with the same technology and claiming priority to PCT/GB2017/000068, filed in 2018.

Samsung is one of the most frequently-appearing companies in the weekly lists of patents searched for this manuscript,¹ with frequent employment of NIR and Raman spectroscopy for glucose measurement. Its inventors come from many of its corporate branches and from many countries, in addition to Korea.

A revealing description of the impact of the changes in distribution of water in the body as a result of glucose concentration changes is U.S. patent 6,990,364, issued to Ruchti in 2006, which states (at column 6, line 66 through column 7, line 9):

“Because the cell membrane is relatively impermeable to most solutes but highly permeable to water, whenever there is a higher concentration of a solute on one side of the cell membrane, water diffuses across the membrane toward the region of higher solute concentration. Large osmotic pressures can develop across the cell membrane with relatively small changes in the concentration of solutes in the extracellular fluid. As a result, relatively small changes in concentration of impermeable solutes in the extracellular fluid, such as glucose, can cause tremendous changes in cell volume.”

Owing to the high concentration of water (about 70% in the dermis, where glucose is usually measured), its absorption dominates the near-infrared spectrum², and small changes in its amount in tissues have large impact on the spectrum of tissue there.³

LifeScan’s significant involvement with noninvasive testing began in about 1987. Roger Phillips had moved from Vice President of R&D to directing the noninvasive research program.⁴ He instituted a creative approach to learning about nascent technologies that he termed a “poke-around” grant: write up an idea, and if it was considered to have merit,

¹ Another is Dexcom, which includes non-invasive monitor mentions in almost every application, despite never having shown interest in developing such a product.

² Glucose and water have similar “absorptivities” over much of the near-infrared and mid-infrared spectra, meaning that the same concentration of the two materials would display similar absorbances.

³ Even small changes in the *shape* of the water spectrum (caused by variations in materials other than glucose) can upset the data analysis techniques widely employed in this field.

⁴ I joined LifeScan in November of 1987 as Vice President of Research, Development and Engineering.

LifeScan would award a grant of \$10,000 to see if the promise developed. The *quid pro quo* was that LifeScan would get a brief written report, the first chance to negotiate for the commercial rights to a promising device, and would have developed a positive relationship with the investigator.

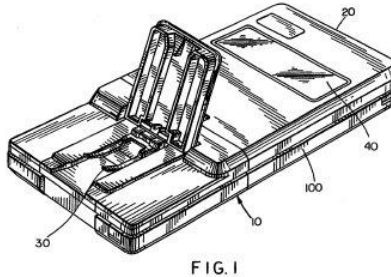
It's not recorded how many of these were awarded; Roger retired in 1988 and had little further contact with LifeScan. One grant did go to Prof. Dawood Parker in Wales, who turned up later as a principal of Abbey Biosystems, which was purchased by another division of Johnson & Johnson. His approach showed clearly increasing absorbance in one region of the near-infrared spectrum for glucose solutions of 5, 10 and 15 millimolar (about 90, 180 and 270 mg/ml), but he was unable to reproduce the data that accompanied the grant request, and declined to provide a report after receiving the \$10,000.

Another technology for noninvasive glucose was brought to Roger's attention, and even though LifeScan's scientists did their best to evaluate it, they felt it was outside their fields of expertise. A consultant from an academic institution was located and retained who issued a report after evaluating the technology. In general, he said, the technology lacked sound scientific grounding, would never work, and even if it did, would be much too bulky and expensive for home use. However, shortly thereafter, LifeScan received a second communication from the consultant, describing a technology he was seeking funding for that was clearly derived from the technology he was hired to evaluate.

KES: Also in 1987, an arrangement was made by Roger to fund research work by Ed Stark of KES in New York¹. Ed's approach was abstract, theoretical, and effectively involved subtracting away the near-infrared spectra of other substances from the spectrum of tissue, in an attempt to see the glucose signal beneath. The approach was slow to show results, and the funding was discontinued in 1988 or 1989. Ed got even to some degree, however. LifeScan relinquished the rights to his research, and Ed patented a similar approach as [U.S. Patent 5,379,238](#) in 1995. When he published his patent, he

¹ I had known Ed at Technicon Corporation in the 1970s, where he worked on systems for industrial analysis and I worked on clinical analyzers—see US 4,278,887 and US4853336.

took advantage of the fact that all patent drawings are in the public domain, and illustrated what his device might look like by copying the picture that LifeScan had used in a design patent for its One Touch meter (U.S. Design Patent D318,331).



Interestingly, in 1995, the same year his near-infrared patent issued, he also patented an approach to measurement of glucose using optical rotation in the aqueous humor of the eye (U.S. Patent 5,433,197), initially assigned to “Bionir.”

NIRDiagnostics: In about 1988, LifeScan was approached by researchers from Waterloo, Ontario, with an idea that again combined improved spectrophotometers with mathematical treatment of the data. Known first as CME Telemetry (then as NIMtek, finally as NIRDiagnostics), the principals were Ted Cadell, a professor of psychology at the University of Waterloo, and Aidan Furlong. Their proposal seemed to have merit, and a relationship was begun with a \$10,000 “poke-around” grant, followed by a comprehensive research and license agreement that continued until about 1992. With the expanded funding, they developed an instrument (with a light source powered by a tractor battery to eliminate power supply variations), and produced data sets of patient spectra they compared to reference glucose values. Ted’s preferred technique was called multiple linear regression, and he made comparisons to reference glucose values using “retrospective correlation.” With this technique, wavelength regions were identified which showed strong correlation with the measured glucose values, and a number of these correlating wavelengths were subjected to the mathematical analysis, producing a strong correlation between the spectral and the reference values.

There were two main problems with this approach. First, the spectra first needed to be differentiated (to give either the first or second derivative of the spectrum with regard to wavelength), a treatment that removed offsets and “tilts” in the spectra but substantially

increased the amount of noise in the data (made the curves much more “bumpy”). If the noise introduced by this process was filtered out, the technique didn’t work nearly as well. Second, if the reference values were scrambled¹ and the spectrum for one patient was matched to the glucose value of a different patient and then processed, equally good correlations could be obtained. This is a dead giveaway that the data were being “overfit;” that is, there was enough variability in the spectra to correlate with almost any data set. The illusion was completely destroyed when it was shown that an equally strong correlation of the spectral features with historical stock market data could be shown, and the relationship was dissolved in the early 1990s. They were later funded briefly by Abbott, but that relationship reportedly ended in about 1997, and even an investment in the technique of more than \$5M by Motorola, beginning in 2000, did not produce a product.

As an example of the persistence of companies in this field, in August of 2004 the president’s message on NIRDiagnostic’s website stated: “...the primary research goal of the company remains the completion of GlucoNIR™, a non-invasive glucose self-monitoring device, aimed at the \$4.5 billion diabetes self-monitoring market. GlucoNIR™ will offer instant results and pain free testing; two highly desirable characteristics for people with diabetes who must monitor their blood sugar levels several times per day.” They were not the first company to keep the dream alive for over fifteen years,² but an announcement of accuracy improvements by the company in 2006 was met with considerable skepticism:

“CAMPBELLVILLE, ON, July 18 [2006] /CNW/ - NIR Diagnostics Inc. (TSX Venture: NID), a leading-edge developer of handheld spectroscopy based medical instruments, announced today that it has achieved a level of accuracy in sponsored feasibility testing of its light-based in vitro glucose

¹ I termed this process “pseudoglucose,” and it is a valuable technique for uncovering false correlations between patients’ glucose values and data obtained in the laboratory for many techniques.

² For Ted Cadell, I have only fond memories. A fellow wine lover, he not only visited my vineyard and helped out during harvest but also provided me with the finest bottle of Burgundy (a 1959 Vosne Romanée) that I am ever likely to taste. It was the final bottle at my retirement wine tasting at LifeScan in 1998 and will be remembered for a very long time by those who were there.

monitoring device that is sufficient to advance to development of a prototype and initiate clinical trials.

[...]

The results from an in-vitro bench top device of 224 patient samples demonstrated an R(2) value of 0.95. "Achieving results of more than 90 percent in the A zone and 99.5 percent in the A and B zone of a Clark Error Grid on a bench top device signals a technological breakthrough in the accuracy of glucose monitoring with a reagentless light-based device. No other light-based device that we know of can boast this level of glucose accuracy with components suitable for a low cost hand-held device format," said Ash Kaushal, Vice President Technology of NIR Diagnostics."

VivaScan: In about 1991, another group called VivaScan (clever naming in view of LifeScan) in Worcester, Mass., was brought to LifeScan's attention with the forerunner to several other techniques that can be grouped as "squeeze" techniques. The principle of this approach is to measure a transmission spectrum of tissue (in this case, the "web" between the thumb and finger), then compress the tissue to decrease the amount of blood in the path and measure again. By using sophisticated optical and electronic "bridge" techniques, it was hoped to get enough signal to detect the decrease in glucose from the blood that was squeezed out by the compression. The difficulties in making this practical were the extreme variability of the optical properties of tissue and the difficulty in reproducing the location and spectrum, and the fact that much more glucose is present in the interstitial fluid between cells which is squeezed out much less than the blood in blood vessels.

After a lot of hard work, and a lot of critical analysis, it was determined that this technique did not show continuing promise, and LifeScan's funding was discontinued. A year or two later, however, VivaScan was brought to the attention of the Johnson & Johnson Development Corporation (JJDC), J&J's in-house venture capital fund, by Dean Kamen, an "Inventor of the Year" from New Hampshire, who tried his best to convince both J&J and LifeScan that the technology was truly great, and that LifeScan was incredibly foolish to have stopped funding it. Since Dean, in addition to always wearing work boots and denim clothing, never returns phone calls, it made life at LifeScan very

uncomfortable until he moved on to greater things in a few months. More about Dean later.

VivaScan, then renamed Grove Instruments, received first \$3 million tranche of a \$5 million Series B-1 round of equity from undisclosed private accredited investors in December of 2012. The round came nearly a year after a \$6 million Series B round that closed late [in 2011]. If clinical trials had gone well in 2013, the CEO expected to initiate the process of seeking Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approval for the device in 2014. In late 2014, the company announced that it had completed a “Landmark Clinical Milestone” of having a durable calibration that lasted 24 hours (insiders were not equally enthusiastic about the results). Then on April 15, 2015, came the [announcement](#) that Grove had filed for Chapter 7 bankruptcy, with debts of more than \$3 million and assets of less than \$100,000.

A similar technical approach was taken by LighTouch Medical, founded in 1997, although they hoped to use Raman spectroscopy, a variant on infrared, to make the differential measurement after the tissue squeeze. Their website said, even in 2015: “When it comes to non-invasive, fast, and painless technology for continuous monitoring of glucose and other analytes in the blood LighTouch is number one. No other diagnostic technology is faster and more reliable.” It’s also not approved for sale. Charles (Chuck) Peterson, M.D. was listed as president of the company. He had a long and distinguished career as medical director and CEO of the Sansum Medical Research Institute in Santa Barbara, where he was witness to a substantial number of noninvasive glucose attempts. As of 2018, the website is gone, the Syracuse, NY, address is missing, and [records](#) remained only of a company of the same name in Bryn Athyn, PA, with Joseph Chaiken listed as the CTO. Amazingly, the two published an article in 2021, “[Noninvasive Blood and Tissue Analysis: Raman Spectroscopy, One Perspective for Monitoring of Glucose and Beyond,](#)” with both then on the faculty of the University of Syracuse. A similarly-named company in Japan (Light Touch Technology Incorporated) published a European patent application EP4224147 A1 using mid-infrared laser light.

It was also suggested by researchers from Agilent Technologies (U.S. Patent 6,113,541, derived from an earlier patent, 5,817,181, by the same inventors when their employer was identified as Hewlett Packard), squeezing the finger to reduce the volume of blood in it and using either near-infrared absorbance or “blood-scattering” detection methods in an attempt to measure glucose (a suggestion was also included that iontophoresis could yield additional information about the amount of glucose in the finger’s blood).

Japanese company Look Tek has a similar approach described in US20230233110 A1, using several wavelengths of near-infrared light.

Rio Grande Medical Technologies (InLight Solutions): From Sandia National Laboratory in about 1990, had come hints that a noninvasive, near-infrared glucose research project was beginning nearby, but it was so carefully cloaked that repeated inquiries, as well as a visit Albuquerque in 1991, failed to ferret it out. Some details eventually leaked, and in 1992, at the Oak Ridge Clinical Chemistry Conference, Ries Robinson made a public disclosure of the intent (it was his project at Sandia that had been so carefully guarded).



In early 1993, Ries founded Rio Grande Medical Technologies (“RGMT,” later renamed InLight Solutions, “ILS”), and began serious negotiations with several glucose monitoring companies to decide who would be granted the right to commercialize the

technology. After extensive discussions (including a session in their offices at which a stenographer was retained to insure that all confidential communications were documented) and multiple contract revisions, an agreement was reached in October of 1993 (the picture above shows Rick Thompson,¹ then CEO of LifeScan, Ries Robinson and John Smith).

Ries is an exceptional individual. With bachelor's and master's degrees in mechanical engineering from Stanford and an M.D. from the University of New Mexico Medical School (he also studied electrical engineering during medical school to stave off boredom), he brought a broad technical background, a triathlete's competitive spirit, a driving, determined personality, and little industrial experience to the new company. He was certain that the problem would be solved "within a year" so his company would be ready to begin receiving royalty income shortly after and move on to other challenges. The association between LifeScan and RGMT/ILS continued for over ten years, with LifeScan funding virtually all of the company's glucose activities. Each year yielded significant insights into the problem, but with each insight came new challenges to be resolved. Finally, after six changes in technical leadership at LifeScan, the relationship was effectively ended in 2004, and rights to the technology reverted to InLight.²

Near-infrared spectroscopy is primarily performed with two different classes of instrumentation, and the path followed by RGMT used "interferometry," or "Fourier-Transform" instruments (the other, as used by the group at Sensys, is called "dispersive," and will be described later). These are instruments based on a Michelson-type interferometer, where two light beams interfere with each other, and the result is a frequency-based compilation of the signal called a Fourier transform. The details aren't

¹ Rick Thompson went on to become CEO and Chairman of Aradigm, a company with funding from Novo Nordisk that tried for many years to develop an inhaled insulin preparation, and sat on the InLight Solutions board of directors. He later became CEO of Luminous Medical, spun out from InLight to address the hospital critical care unit continuous monitoring market. That company closed down in 2011.

² I managed the interface between LifeScan and RGMT/ILS from 1993 to 1998 when I retired as LifeScan's Chief Scientific Officer, and then until 2003 as a consultant. That year, I was called in to meet with the then-current VP of R&D to terminate my consulting relationship. After driving three hours from my vineyard and signing in at the front desk, I needed to use the restroom. As I finished, my LifeScan visitor's badge slipped off my shirt and dropped into the urinal. I have no idea what that might symbolize. InLight never commercialized a noninvasive glucose monitor.

important here because the signal is quickly converted to a standard spectrum of intensity (or absorbance) vs. wavelength. Those who work with this technique will aver its superiority over the dispersive alternative, while those who worship at the other church disagree. As will be seen, it hasn't yet made much difference in results.

Various “multivariate” (“chemometric”) mathematical techniques for extracting correlations from the complex data generated in the near-infrared also have their adherents and detractors. An interesting exchange occurred between Bob Rosenthal of Futrex (see below) and Ries Robinson of RGMT when both presented papers at the Oak Ridge Clinical Chemistry Conference in 1992. Bob was strongly advocating “multiple linear regression” (MLR), while Ries insisted that the correct path was the technique known as “partial least squares” (PLS). The other similar technique that appeals to a number of practitioners is called “principal component regression” (PCR).

The ten years of association were interesting, to say the least. Ries was fiercely independent, and strongly resisted outside suggestions about how the research might be conducted, even from the people who were supplying the funding.¹ The initial intent of the program was to produce an instrument with “universal calibration,” that is, the instrument could be applied to anyone's tissue (they first looked at the fingertip, then the nail, then the forearm) and give an accurate glucose result. When that proved impractical, the goal was relaxed to allow “subgroup” calibration, where people with similar tissue optical properties could get a result, and finally to a technique for individual calibration that was renamed “tailoring” (the analogy was that a new suit wasn't required for each person; simply adjust the sleeve length, cuffs and waistband).

Many long, difficult and contentious meetings were conducted—LifeScan personnel would fly to Albuquerque one month, and RGMT people would trek to LifeScan's headquarters in Milpitas the next. Hundreds of experiments were suggested, rejected,

¹ When he was faced with my demand to produce a certain level of accuracy before conducting any additional measurements with human subjects, he named it the *Simpsons*-related “Smither Challenge.” By the time the goal was achieved and the necessary instrumental improvements to allow accurate measurements were in place, he reluctantly agreed that requirement was appropriate, and that acceptable results with human subjects could never have been produced with the stability of the earlier instrumentation.

revised and performed, and along the way some remarkable advances in the state of the art of instrumentation were made, and some virtually unsolvable technical problems were surmounted by a brilliant, dedicated group of engineering and scientific minds—possibly the most capable group assembled in New Mexico for a single purpose since the Manhattan Project. Sadly, the goal of accurate, reliable glucose results remained always “just over the horizon.” Along the way, [Johnson & Johnson Development Corporation](#) (the venture capital arm of the Corporation established to be alert for new technologies) took an equity position in the company.¹

As alluded to earlier, the esoteric nature of most of the techniques used for exploring noninvasive blood glucose measurements constitute a dilemma for most corporate managers in the traditional blood glucose industry, in which profitability depended on brand loyalty to generate repeated test strip purchases. On one hand, their company’s livelihoods was perpetually threatened by the almost-weekly announcements that “someone, somewhere has finally developed a practical noninvasive glucose meter” (every member of the board of directors seems to get these in daily news alerts, and each one needed an explanation of why it’s not the end of the current business model); while on the other hand, each company is conducting their own research programs (they tend to keep some kind of effort going on in-house or outside), from which they get perpetual semi-annual projections that the answer is “just around the corner,” in reports that are filled with incomprehensible graphs, mathematical equations, and explanations they can’t begin to understand. A retired CEO of one of the “Big Four” companies who served as a board member to Fovioptics confided that he never understood what his noninvasive research group was doing but was unwilling to terminate the program because they “just might succeed” (or someone else might, and he needed a “window” into what was going on elsewhere). He said the group always had “great progress” to report when it was time to calculate the budget for the upcoming year but, like others, never seemed to get to the end of the road.

¹ A fact which probably enabled InLight to extend their funding from LifeScan, because to discontinue meant LifeScan would have to write off the investment as an expense, and that amount combined with any termination charges in the contract might have had a bigger impact on LifeScan’s bottom line than the cost of funding the research program for another year.

One of the ways companies deal with complex problems is to hire a consultant. A consultant who was revered by Johnson & Johnson, and who was trotted out by the corporation at technical management meetings with the subliminal message: “Why can’t you guys be inventive like him?” was the aforementioned Dean Kamen. Dean had invented an early implantable insulin pump and in about 1990 the iBot, a wheelchair with revolutionary balance capabilities so it could climb stairs and raise its occupant up to an eye-level height to converse with people who were not so constrained (this was the forerunner of the famous, or infamous, Segway scooter that received so much attention). The development and commercialization path (sponsored by J&J) for the iBot was anything but smooth, but there were plenty of places to point and stories to tell about why it was so slow to reach the market, and why it cost so much when it did.¹

Probably at corporate urging, Dean was retained by LifeScan to evaluate the RGMT technology in the late 1990’s and to determine if management was starting to throw good money after bad. He flew his private jet to Albuquerque, listened to hours of presentation and got his glucose measured (it came out amazingly close, as it almost always does for people who don’t have diabetes). Dean submitted his evaluation, which was generally not positive about reaching the goal in a reasonable time. However, his message to J&J included a suggestion that he had much better ideas than InLight of how to pursue noninvasive glucose measurements, and if J&J would fund him, he could promise results. J&J declined his offer, which was probably fortunate for both parties.

By 2003, it appeared to LifeScan that InLight had run their near-infrared glucose investigation about as far along as it could go—the results were not good enough, especially in the critical hypoglycemic range, and the amount of money necessary to make meaningful improvements began to appear impractical. Since similar results began to be heard about the alternative technology in the Sensys group described below, LifeScan decided it was time to wait for a technology breakthrough before investing further, and ended its relationship with InLight.

¹ ¹ In May of 2016, there was an [announcement](#) that Toyota would attempt to relaunch the product, but that had [not yet reached the market in 2018](#). As of 2020, the iBot was shown on a [website](#) for Mobius Mobility in Manchester, NH. They put the cost then at \$30,000.

InLight Solutions spun off a company in 2004 called VeraLight, with a device for noninvasive screening for diabetes (based on the same instrument InLight planned to use for glucose measurement) called “Scout,” which was sold to the Canadian company Miraculins in 2013. That company renamed itself Luminor Medical in 2016 and repeated that in 2018 by renaming itself [RISE Life Science Corp](#), with a news release containing an ominous statement about “distribution of all of the Corporation's shares of its wholly owned subsidiary Scout Assessment Corp.”

InLight had earlier generated a biometrics company called Lumidigm in 2001, and another called MolecuLight in 2003 to do cervical cancer screening; they formed Luminous Medical to address continuous glucose measurements in intensive care environments¹). They also pursued the use of near-infrared spectroscopy for alcohol measurement through their TruTouch company (the name persevered to 2022, with the “AlcoSense TruTouch Biometric Alcohol Tester showing a [newer version of InLight’s spectrometer](#). What appears to be a spectrometer very much like the original version was used for at least part of the screening measurements, alcohol, and glucose, and is elegantly designed, if a little large for everyday use (below).



InLight Glucose Measurement System

¹ The company closed down in 2011.



Instrumentation Metrics (Sensys): During 1995, LifeScan received a visit that was surprising on two counts. First, the senior member of the duo was John Kaiser, who had headed up Boehringer Mannheim Corporation's blood glucose business during LifeScan's ascendancy over its earlier dominance in the early nineties. Relations between the two companies had been frosty at best during the years when LifeScan deposed BMC as the world market leader. However, there had been a change in ownership there, and John had become a Silicon Valley entrepreneur at Biocircuits (and later at [C8](#)), so he and LifeScan's president, Dick Wiesner, could meet on civil terms.¹ John brought along Steve Malin, the founder of Instrumentation Metrics, who demonstrated a table of correlations he had generated for virtually all analytes of biological interest—molecules and ionic species alike—using near-infrared spectroscopy^{2,3}.

Having had experience with four or five near-infrared companies, it was already a stretch for LifeScan to believe that the listed correlations could be generated for molecular analytes like glucose and bilirubin, but seemed almost impossible that someone could obtain accurate near-infrared results for sodium, potassium and calcium, which have virtually no signal in this wavelength region (this doesn't mean it *couldn't* be done, because ionic species can have an effect on the spectrum of water, which is what

¹ In 2006, John Kaiser was CEO of Sensys (but see his obituary notice in early 2013, above under C8 Medisensors).

² I had met Steve years earlier at Kallestad Diagnostics, the predecessor of Sanofi Diagnostics Pasteur/Beckman Instruments in Chaska, MN, during an interview visit there just before I joined LifeScan.

³ Steve was later a technical advisor at Artemis Biomedical Technologies, a company pursuing noninvasive, possibly pulse-wave-based glucose measurements in the NIR.

dominates a near-infrared spectrum of tissue).¹ Where Inlight (ILS) used an interferometer as the basis of their instrumentation, IM was focused on a wavelength-dispersive optical design that spreads the spectrum in space (as a prism separates the rainbow colors from white sunlight), then creates a recording of the spectrum to determine concentrations.

IM (the name was changed along the way to Sensys) ran parallel to RGMT/ILS for many years—publishing remarkably similar patents within months of each other, seeming to uncover much the same problems and solutions in similar time frames, and seeming to have similar accuracy issues (so much so, that each company considered the possibility that there might be a “mole” in the organization, but it was never clear *which* organization, if either, might have been infiltrated). Each company, with its own instrumentation approach, has several dozen patents, but both appear to have wound up about the same place: **If** the sensor probe (light source and detector connection through fiber optic or similar light conduit) could be located at exactly the same place on the skin with exactly the same pressure, and **if** the skin had the same degree of hydration (and possibly temperature), and **if** calibration with a finger stick reference were made on a regular basis, the results would be *almost* clinically acceptable, at least at elevated glucose levels. With all these caveats, it was unlikely that either would ever see the light of day as a home use device. Even if they had, each is a reasonably delicate piece of optical apparatus, with moving parts that require precise alignment, and would have been challenged in a home environment. If one of these devices were made, it would likely have sold for many thousands of dollars.

After nearly a decade of insistence that the people at Sensys were truly measuring glucose, it appears that they may have finally arrived at the conclusion that they truly

¹ I sent Steve the best near-infrared spectrum of tissue we could produce and asked him to tell me the concentration of any of the analytes in his list, but I never heard from him again. Repeated phone calls to his office and cell phone were never answered, nor were messages returned. Some years later, after Steve had been ousted from his company, I had a conversation with another former employee who said that they knew it was impossible meet the challenge with a spectrum measured on a different instrument and simply decided not to respond.

weren't. In an unusually candid statement in a patent application (20060116562), they seem to concede as much:

"[0048] A major component of the body is water. A re-distribution of water between the vascular and extravascular compartments and the intra- and extra-cellular compartments is observed as a response to differences in glucose concentrations in the compartments during periods of changing blood glucose. Water, among other analytes, is shifted between the tissue compartments to equilibrate the osmotic imbalance related to changes in glucose concentration as predicted by Fick's law of diffusion and the fact that water diffuses much faster in the body than does glucose. Therefore, a strategy for the indirect measurement of glucose that exploits the near-infrared signal related to fluid re-distribution is to design measurement protocols that force maximum correlation between blood glucose and the re-distribution of fluids. This is the opposite strategy of the one required for the direct measurement of blood glucose in which the near-infrared signals directly related to glucose and fluids must be discriminated and attempts at equalizing glucose in the body compartment are made. A reliable indirect measurement of glucose based at least in part in the re-distribution of fluids and analytes (other than glucose) and related changes in the optical properties of tissue requires that the indirect signals are largely due to the changing blood glucose concentration. Other variables and sources that modify or change the indirect signals of interest should be prevented or minimized in order to ensure a reliable indirect measurement of glucose."

Under the two names, Sensys and ILS burned through well over \$100 million in venture (Sensys) and corporate (ILS) funding. The amazing thing is that, combined, they don't even hold the record for expenditures in near-infrared noninvasive glucose, nor has either one seen anything like the legal troubles of the two companies, Biocontrol and Futrex, described below.

After Sensys ceased operating, their patents were sold to GLT Acquisition Corp, a subsidiary of [Masimo](#) (which also owns patents purchased from the defunct GlucoLight Corporation), a leading company in pulse oximetry with a long-term interest in noninvasive glucose measurement. Masimo's other subsidiary, [Cercacor](#), has obtained a number of patents in the area of near-infrared noninvasive glucose monitoring over almost 25 years, and has filed additional continuation patent applications. It's also rumored that scientists from Sensys moved to Cercacor after the former closed down, and some went from Cercacor to Apple, if for a brief time (but see the section regarding the long-dead [Biocontrol](#) near the end of that section for an example of the irony this field continues to produce).

Apple. The incorporation of noninvasive glucose technologies into the Apple Watch has been a subject ripe for speculation ever since the watch's existence was first rumored. CNBC reporter Christina Farr has written enthusiastically on this, but most of the excitement seems to have been from a misunderstood report that Apple's CEO, Tim Cook, was "test-driving" a glucose sensor for the watch. It turns out he was using a DexCom CGM sensor that was linked to his watch, not a noninvasive measurement. Apple has reportedly investigated a number of technologies and (at least temporarily) hired a number of noninvasive researchers from other companies that had looked into noninvasive glucose measurements, but whether there is an on-going program there is known only to those inside the company. In 2020, Masimo sued Apple for infringement of many of its patents with the Apple Watch, but the only "analytes" accused of infringing were "pulse rate" and "heart rate."

Before the release of the Apple Watch 7 in September of 2021, rumors circulated on a large number of "insider" reports ([MacRumors](#), [Appleinsider](#), [Weareable.com](#)) that it would include glucose measurement. Much of the speculation centered on [Rockley Photonics](#), headquartered in Pasadena and Oxford, UK, which was rumored to have a photometric system capable of measurements of glucose in the near-infrared region between 2,000 and 2,400 nm. That company had acquired patents for tissue ethanol measurement issued to TruTouch Technologies (a subsidiary of InLight Solutions in Albuquerque, NM), and has another dozen of more patents describing their new photonic "platform." Former members of TruTouch organization were rumored to be employed at Rockley and working toward an eventual glucose sensor. Within days of the Watch 7 release, that did *not* include glucose, new rumors concerning Watch 8 began to appear.

In January of 2022, the following appeared: An unidentified "insider" has reported that the Apple Watch Series 8 will not get a glucose sensor or other advanced health tracking features. In fact, the glucose sensor might not come to any future Apple Watch anytime soon either. Bloomberg's Mark Gurman addressed the Apple Watch sensors in his Power On newsletter (via Apple Insider), titled "[Apple Watch glucose & blood pressure sensors still years away](#)." In a masterstroke of understatement, he said "I wouldn't be surprised if

glucose monitoring doesn't land until later in the second half of the decade.” If his information is accurate, we're three years away from having a blood sugar sensor in the Apple Watch. Therefore, the Apple Watch Series 8 can't possibly support such sensors. Similarly, the blood pressure sensor isn't on the cards for the next Apple Watch. Gurman put it at “at least two to three years away.” In March of 2023, AppleInsider reported the disappointing news that “Apple Watch glucose sensing up to seven years away from launch,” but in February of that year, [Bloomberg](#) reported that “Apple Makes Major Progress on No-Prick Blood Glucose Tracking for Its Watch” by “disguising its work behind a secretive Health-care startup known as “Apple’s Exploratory Design Group, or XDG.”

In 2022, it was [reported](#) that Medtronic was working with Rockley to create “wearables,” but in June of 2023, further [reports](#) said that Rockley had filed for bankruptcy, and the same month, the company issued a [press release](#) saying that they had emerged from the chapter 11 filing and would continue with all programs, including glucose monitoring.

In an article in the [online publishing platform Medium](#), Sergio Alberto Romero made the case for “Why Smartwatches Should Start Monitoring Blood Glucose Levels,” but concluded with “Of course, there are also some challenges that need to be addressed before smartwatches can become a standard way to monitor blood glucose levels. One challenge is that the technology is still in its early stages, and the accuracy of smartwatches is...Nonexistent.”

Possibly because of the difficulties of optical measurements in actual skin, Nokia Technologies Oy (not the mobile telephone company) has proposed (in 2021/0267749) that artificial skin, “formed from polymeric films, hydrogels, or fibrous strands of the material used for the artificial skin,” could be placed over damaged skin, and the glucose content in that medium determined using “infrared light.”

At a body location preferred by VivaScan/Grove, Bruce Landy of Parker, CO (US 2021/0121104 A1) uses 1550 nm light through the web between the finger and thumb to measure glucose.

The Shanghai Institute of Technical Physics, and Chinese Academy of Sciences (US 2021/0330217 A1) have combined NIR spectroscopy and optical polarimetry, but even putting these two together with a “random forest algorithm and a data fusion algorithm” has not yet seemed to yield success.

Zyomed was an entrant in the near-infrared field, with its first U.S. patent (US 9,448,164) appearing in 2016. It was founded by Sandeep Gulati, a computer scientist who had a long association with NASA and the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, and a background in signal processing techniques.¹ Based on the understanding that the multivariate techniques used in most of the previous investigations in this spectral region did not have the power to separate the extremely small glucose signal from other “confounders” in the near-infrared spectrum of tissue, they developed a new approach to treating the data, called “collision computing.”

The essence of this approach is first to isolate specific frequency components of regions (or “features”) of the pure component spectrum of glucose. The NIR spectrum of the sample is interrogated for these same features through amplifying them by “colliding” that part of the spectrum many thousands of times with a “Zyoton” a specially-created “soliton” waveform having characteristics that amplify only the selected components of the sample spectrum related to the pure component spectrum. The energy extracted from this series of collisions is accumulated and compared to that obtained from tissue phantoms (called “Zyogels”) with known glucose concentrations. For all the proposed power of this technique, it did not prove sufficient to allow reliably accurate glucose measurement in tissue.

¹ I served as an advisor to this company from 2010-2019, and I am a co-inventor on some of its patents.

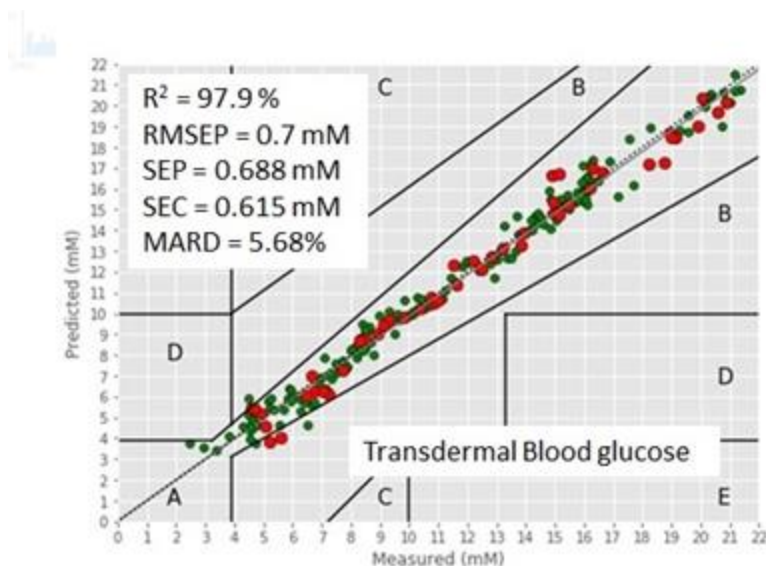
Glucoactive is a recent entrant from Warsaw, Poland, with three systems presumably based on near-infrared light (the only published description says “The measurement is captured by irradiating the skin with light of a certain wavelength.”). The products are labeled “GlucoStation,” “GlucoFit,” and “GlucoWear”



A PCT patent application (WO 2022/009071 A1) was published in early 2022 that shed some light on the proposed technology. The first named inventor is Jakub Niemczuk, whose LinkedIn page says he left there in 2020, but the [Glucoactive website](#) still lists him as Co-Founder & Electronics specialist. The patent cites Raman spectroscopy with a claim of measurement using a peak optimized by multiplying a normalized Raman spectrum of tissue by the crystalline glucose spectrum, a non-standard technique.

Brolis Semiconductors

A startup in Lithuania features near-infrared sources and sensors said to extend the wavelength range to about 2.4 microns, a region reported to have better sensitivity for



glucose. They have published a calibration curve for glucose in pigs with excellent correlation. Their latest US patent application is US 2020/0069225, and the wavelength region they report is essentially the same as that of Rockley Photonics.

Another recent entrant in NIR is the iGLU system, with publications [iGLU 1.0: An Accurate Non-Invasive Near-Infrared Dual Short Wavelengths Spectroscopy based Glucometer for Smart Healthcare](#) and [iGLU: An Intelligent Device for Accurate Noninvasive Blood Glucose-Level Monitoring in Smart Healthcare in IEEE Consumer Electronics Magazine · December 2019](#), but with no apparent corporate presence yet.

BRAGI GmbH of Germany published a patent application, US 2021/0077025, for an earpiece to make near-infrared measurements of glucose in the tympanic membrane.

[EzeRX](#) from India has published WO 2021/199086 A1, and has a hand-held device which appears to operate in the range of light wavelengths between 310 to 850 nm to determine “hemoglobin, bilirubin, oxygen saturation, creatinine and random blood glucose.”

Another new player in NIR is Biomedilabs of Seoul, Korea, with EP 3 763 291 A1, combining spectroscopic measurements with PLS multivariate data reduction.

One variation of this (EP 3747363 A1), taking near infrared photographs of the fingertip and processing them with AI, was published by Qingping Suzhou Deng of Jiangsu, China.

A cryptic application (US 2021/0358630 A1), with inventor Pavel Kazar of Slovakia, assigned to [Digital Blood Corporation](#) of Miami, FL, suggests using four sensors on the subject’s body, but does not explain how they work. The website says that the sensors used are “Radiometer America's 'TINA TCM4' Device” and “Masimo's 'RD Rainbow SetTM' Device” (both visible/NIR-based noninvasive sensors), combined with “PK Software,” and that “18 blood values can be measured,” “AND ALL OF THIS IS BEING DONE WITHOUT A SINGLE DROP OF BLOOD.”

Equally cryptic is US 11,058,328 B2, issued to Achyut Kumar Dutta and assigned to Banpil Photonics, Inc. of Santa Clara, CA. It includes: a semiconductor sensor with a

“nano-membrane that allows in materials such as aqueous fluids containing charged ions to pass, but resists entry of proteins, particles visible to the eye, and other such macromolecules;” an “overarching concept” of a light source and detector of unspecified wavelength; and a “resistivity embodiment” to detect “glucose and other molecules generally too large for motility through nano-channels.”

Wear2B from Israel has published a number of US applications (such as US 2020/0196918 A1, Wear2B US20200261005A1) with various NIR wavelengths and illumination arrangements, as well as US20200261005A1: glucose measurement based on a technology known both as “LIDAR” (light detection and ranging) and “FMCW” (frequency-modulated continuous wave), disclosed in a Google-translated Chinese patent [CN1021609791](#).

[Glucosense](#) was a company with the same name as an earlier company (see below under RF/impedance measurements). It was created by NetScientific in London and the University of Leeds, based on technology from Dr. Jin Gose (of the Institute for Materials Research in the University of Leeds’ School of Chemical and Process Engineering). The company issued a press release In July of 2015 titled “New non-invasive glucose monitoring device could transform lives of people with diabetes,” and received quite a bit of publicity for the laser-based system that was based on a near-infrared laser fluorescence technology. As of 2018 though, even a URL that persisted until 2017 had disappeared, the company was no longer listed on NetScientific’s portfolio page, and as of 8th Edition, even the [YouTube](#) video was gone).

[Cnoga](#) is an Israeli company that has developed the “SoftTouch Non-Invasive Finger-Mounted Device,” and conducted a clinical study there between about 2008 and 2012. Patents issued between 2008 and 2013 shed little light on the principle used to convert readings of visible and near-infrared light to glucose concentrations. A not very enlightening example of the approach is from a patent application filed in November of 2012: “...physiological or biophysical properties are all indirectly connected to the spatial-temporal Red, Green, Blue colors, and their potential, intensity, irregularity, regularity, vividness, saturation, deformations, correlation, auto correlation, cross

correlation, histograms, look up tables, diffusion, potential, heat, absorption, and derivations.”

A more recent patent application may indicate that the original, fully noninvasive technology did not work as well as planned and required the addition of an invasive measurement to perform. US Patent 8948833 is titled “Combination Non-Invasive and Invasive Bioparameter Measuring Device” and says, in part, “For example, if the bioparameter is glucose, the patient may stick himself, places the blood on the test strip of the invasive component and then insert the test strip into the invasive component of the combination device...” This is not the testing sequence followed by any of the blood glucose meters on today’s market; it is also another example of “making the hammer heavier” (see the section on “combination techniques” below).



A company in Guangdong Province China with a number of elegantly-styled noninvasive glucose products but with limited description of the technology, is [EserDigital](#). The technology section for products like the “GlucoGenius” and “GlucoDiary” is entitled “What we done?” but one [page](#) indicates that the probe comprises “an infrared radiation sensor, a thermistor, humidity sensors, light receivers, thermal rods.”



A 2014 entrant in the near-infrared field was described in a very naïve article in a trade magazine, *Electronic Design News*. It included this picture, the first report of the “[Biopie](#),” which has not been heard from since.



Biocontrol¹: About 1988, the first reports appeared regarding a company called Biocontrol, in Indiana, Pennsylvania.² Their first patent application was filed in 1990, and became U.S. Patent 5,070,874 in 1991.³ It described a fairly simplistic approach using only a few near-infrared wavelengths and derivatives of the spectrum to eliminate offsets

¹ This company should not be confused with Biocontrol Systems, Inc. in Bellevue, WA—they’re a legitimate company making instruments to measure eye and body movements.

² I spoke with David Purdy, president of the company, in about 1988 about a potential collaboration or sponsoring of their research with LifeScan, and he seemed like a person whose motives were proper, and who was genuinely interested in solving the technical problem. He told me they were not interested in working with another company, and that they intended to build a completely integrated company to make and sell the first noninvasive glucose monitor.

³ They continued to generate press, and by the time I visited their facility (in 1992 or 1993), I met only with marketing and sales executives Anthony Feola and Glenn Keeling (CEO Fred Cooper was out of town), and they showed me some correlation plots for glucose. When I asked how many employees they had, the reply was: “Five in research and about 35 in investor relations.”

and slopes that confused the measurement (see the description of this technique under NIRDiagnostics).

As time went on, Biocontrol went public with tremendous hype about its promise for making a practical near-infrared device they termed the DiaSensor, split off a division to market the device called Diasense, and proceeded to raise funds as needed by additional offerings of stock. They lived on press releases, and “hype” messages appeared regularly on stock bulletin boards, with multiple exclamation points, about how BICO (their stock symbol) was about to hit it really BIG!!!! In January of 1994, they filed a 510(k) application with the FDA, but the application was evaluated and rejected because the FDA found the results generated with their device were not nearly good enough.¹

Fred Cooper responded predictably, testifying before a congressional subcommittee that the FDA was biased, didn’t understand his technology, had a serious conflict of interest with some of its panel members and consultants, and calling for the ouster of the agency’s director, David Kessler (neither Congress nor the FDA were impressed with his diatribe).

At the FDA panel meeting for Biocontrol’s second 510(k) submission, the company produced successful data on only eight patients in its clinical trials, despite enrolling 85. Twenty-two were eliminated due to malfunction of the machine; two were eliminated because glucose levels did not vary sufficiently to calibrate the machine to them. Of the remaining 61 patients, 47 had the machine successfully calibrated to them. The company chose to follow 23 of them for 30 days, and the FDA did not object, according to the company. The eight successes were found among those 23 subjects.

¹ LifeScan, like every other company in the business, was aware that Biocontrol had filed a 510(k) application with the FDA. Because the FDA had no specialists who were aware of the subtleties of near-infrared measurement of glucose, LifeScan offered to meet with the FDA to acquaint them with what we had learned from our years of research in the field. We met with their scientific staff and provided an understanding of the complexity of extracting glucose signals from tissue spectra. One motivating factor for this meeting was that we were quite sure that Biocontrol did not have a viable device, and we didn’t want future approval processes complicated by a device that might be prematurely released for sale, like the GlucoWatch.

Supporters (or possibly employees) of the company even sent out emails like this one with a suggested letter to send to the FDA:

“BICO noninvasive glucose sensor!!!!!!!!!!

Email Susan ***** PR for BICO : "Susan *****" <*****.**** at compuserve.com>

A noninvasive glucose sensor that could make testing easier thereby granting tighter control of our glucose levels has been in the FDA approval process for two years. Biocontrol Technology, Inc.'s 510(k) Notification for the Diasensor 1000 noninvasive glucose sensor will have a panel review by the FDA at 9:00 a.m., February 26, 1996 at the Holiday Inn Gaithersburg Ballroom, 2 Montgomery Village Avenue, Gaithersburg, MD. Following this meeting, which is open to the public, the FDA will vote on BICO's requested market approval. If you feel that your overall health, or that of a diabetic in your care, would be aided by such a sensor and would like a chance to express your opinion, attend the panel review. If that is absolutely impossible, write a letter. The address follows, together with a suggested wording. Of course, any wording will do:

Cornelia Rooks

Center for Devices & Radiological Health

Food & Drug Administration

2098 Gaither Road

Rockville, MD 20850

I am a diabetic or caring for a diabetic, and I understand that the Diasensor 1000 noninvasive glucose sensor will have a panel review by the FDA on February 26, 1996. If it were possible, I would attend to voice my support for such a device. Since that is impossible, however, I am writing to urge you to approve this noninvasive glucose sensor for sale. To have such a device available would be of great help in the mandatory frequent monitoring of blood glucose levels. Unless you have been diabetic or cared for a diabetic, you cannot understand the pain and complications of the finger pricking now necessary.

Sincerely,

NAME :

Address:



*Diasensor 1000*TM

Accurate control of diabetes requires as many as four or more finger-blood tests a day; a painful and debilitating chore for the diabetic. Now glucose levels can be measured as frequently as desired - simply, painlessly, accurately and quickly.

- **Measures glucose non-invasively.**
- **Each machine will be calibrated to the diabetic.**
- **11" x 18.5" x 11" - Lightweight & portable.**
- **No supplies needed.**

The Diasensor 1000TM is now available at The London Diabetes & Lipid Centre where a dedicated team of experts will be available for consultation, information and advice.



DIASENSE, UK LTD.

an affiliate of Biocontrol Technology, Inc.

at The London Diabetes & Lipid Centre •
115 Harley Street • London W1N 1DG UK • Phone 071 487 4470 • FAX 071 487 3527

In an open letter to stockholders and people with diabetes, CEO Fred E. Cooper defended the company's position that eight patients provided sufficient data on efficacy and safety: "It was enough because for those eight patients, 263 data points...were submitted to FDA--that's an average of 32 data points per patient. Firms currently using finger stick technology only submit an average of one data point per patient for devices they are attempting to get cleared. That means 100 data points submitted equals 100 patients studied. Therefore, 263 data points submitted for the Diasensor 1000 is equal to having tested 263 patients--a substantial test size." In the 10 months following the panel meeting, Biocontrol withdrew, revised, resubmitted,

and then again withdrew a 510(k) application for the device.¹

Cooper then hired Jack Nard, a well-known critic of corruption in government, (and a leading proponent of conspiracy theories) to investigate the FDA. But by this time, stories had come out in the press, especially the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, describing that CEO Cooper was bringing home an annual salary of \$700,000, even as the company had lost \$66 million in the previous few years. In fact, executives Feola, Keeling, and Cooper among them managed to rake in between \$10M and \$20M during the time they ran the company into the ground, while losing over \$220 million of investors' money. In addition, it turned out that the company had violated a number of securities laws in their initial and follow-up offerings, and restless stockholders had begun to file class-action suits, hoping to recover some of their bad investments.

In 1997, plans were announced to sell Diasensors to customers in the Philippines (which had much less stringent medical device regulations than the United States). In the same year, an article by Patricia Sabatini appeared in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, detailing rigged demonstrations, where the device was programmed to display acceptable results, and alteration of the result grids for the FDA by using "white-out" to remove data points that were dangerously erroneous. By 1998, they announced that four orders had already been received, and two devices had been delivered.

¹ Somewhere around this time, I received a call from Glenn Keeling (ironically, I took the call in a parking lot of the University of New Mexico while visiting RGMT), who volunteered the information that they were able to get good agreement only at very high glucose values, and that they were interested in selling the technology or the entire company, if the price were right. Based on their lack of success, I indicated that LifeScan had no interest in acquiring either. Within a few days, Biocontrol issued a press release stating that they were "in talks" with Johnson & Johnson to negotiate a purchase of their company and all its technology.



In 1999, a year when the FDA placed an order for a Diasensor (to “gain knowledge of the performance of such devices,” they said), the subsidiary marketing company changed its name to Diasensor.com, which had greater appeal once the Internet technology boom was underway. In late 2000, David Purdy announced his resignation as chairman, saying he could no longer “be associated with the marketing and development of the Diasensor(R) 2000 Noninvasive Glucose Monitor system in its present circumstances.” He received \$912,000 in severance. Also in 2000, the company settled one class-action stockholder suit by paying out \$3.45 million.¹

The lack of progress, together with the mounting Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) problems and class-action stockholder suits took their toll, and in September of 2002, Fred Cooper pled guilty and was convicted of not only pledging company funds to guarantee personal loans, but also of failing to pay hundreds of thousands of dollars in federal income tax over a number of years (his two fellow officers were not charged). His pay for the previous three years had averaged about \$1 million. The convictions carried a maximum penalty of 13 years in prison and \$1.2 million in fines. On December 23, 2004, however, Cooper was sentenced to just 36 months’ probation, including six months of house arrest. Third Circuit Judge Sloviter dissented on a number of grounds, including her belief that the millionaire defendant had effectively bought his way out of prison by

¹ In 2003, I was building a new, smaller winery in the Sierra Foothills of California, and the well and water-system contractor told me he would be unable to retire as planned; he had invested his retirement account heavily in BICO, and had lost it all.

suddenly doing good deeds for underprivileged inner-city kids after he became aware of the investigation that led to his conviction.

Finally, in June 2005 (it takes a long time for a corporation to die), this announcement appeared as a footnote to what was surely the final financial statement:

"The following pro forma adjustments are incorporated in the pro forma condensed statements of operations and are expected to have a continuing impact on the Company:

2. Reflects the elimination of all prior BICO and CXC operations. By the end of the reorganization BICO had no employees, no operations, and no assets, all of its prior businesses were gone, as were the subsidiaries through which its operations had been conducted"

But while BICO may have died, it appears Diasense did not, and has undergone many transitions--see <http://www.hotstocked.com/10-k/diasense-inc-DSNS-330060.html>,¹ most recently known as "Truewest,"² The story continues, and Jeremy Grata and Michael N Pitsakis (neither one had appeared as an inventor for Diasense or Biocontrol before),

¹ "Truewest Corporation was incorporated in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania on July 5, 1989 as Diasense, Inc., ("Truewest", or the "Company") a wholly owned subsidiary of Biocontrol Technology, Inc., which later changed its name to BICO Inc. (BICO). BICO owned approximately 52% of Truewest until July 23, 2004 when BICO sold its entire ownership interest, 11,975,000 shares of common stock, to Dominion Assets, LLC. []

On August 16, 2006, the Company received two letters from Dominion Assets, LLC ("Dominion"), demanding immediate payment of principal and interest under, respectively, (i) that certain Demand Note, dated July 23, 2004, in a principal amount of \$1,954,936, issued by the Company to BICO, Inc. ("BICO") and assigned by BICO to Dominion, as amended effective September 28, 2004 (the "Demand Note"), and (ii) the additional loans totaling \$50,700 in principal amount extended by Dominion to the Company under that certain Note and Security Agreement, dated October 29, 2004, by and between the Company and Dominion, as amended.

On August 29, 2006, the Company entered into a Voluntary Surrender Agreement (the "Voluntary Surrender Agreement") with Dominion Assets, LLC ("Dominion") whereby all of the Company's assets, pledged as collateral to secure loan agreements under which the Company is in default, were repossessed. Dominion is the majority shareholder of the Company. Keith R. Keeling owns a majority 75% interest in Dominion and was also a former member of the Company's Board of Directors and the former CEO of the Company until resigning from both such positions with the Company on August 4, 2006."

² Truewest Corporation's common stock [was] deleted from OTC Bulletin Board (OTCBB) effective September 18, 2013.

shortly after becoming consultants to Diasense¹, filed a patent application in 2006, with Diasense, Inc., as the assignee, based on a provisional patent they filed in 2005. Sometime later, the assignee became Dominion Assets of Potomac Falls, VA (see footnote). They obtained a patent in 2012, US 8,140,139, based on that application. Dominion filed its own patent application in 2012, a continuation-in-part, which became US 9,037,206.

On May 30, 2012, just a few months before the latest filed Biocontrol patent expired, Dominion Assets sued Masimo and its subsidiary Cercacor for infringement of three of the patents they owned. Dominion had acquired the assets of Biocontrol and had decided to assert them. Interestingly, the suit was not about glucose (Cercacor, like everyone else, has not yet marketed a noninvasive glucose meter), but about measuring total hemoglobin, carboxyhemoglobin, and methemoglobin in the near-infrared. It appears that this story was indeed not yet over.

Some interesting facts were discovered during the progress of the lawsuit. Dominion, in an attempt to “monetize” its patents, had sold them to another party and did not own them on the date the suit was filed. The Court dismissed the suit on Friday, June 27, 2014, but Dominion filed essentially the same suit again on Monday, June 30, with statements that they had recovered ownership of the patents. The suit was terminated on August of 2018, after Cercacor was able to exclude testimony from Dominion’s only expert witness.²

Artemis Biomedical Technologies was a successor-in interest (at least to some degree) to BICO and Diasense. The company’s webpage at one time listed Keith Keeling (Glenn Keeling’s brother) as CEO (he is also managing director of Equity Partners HG and was managing director of Dominion Assets, LLC until 2009). Dominion is still listed as the assignee of a number of expired patents issued to Grata, Pitsakis, and others, but today has no Internet presence. In 2016, [Steve Malin](#) was identified as a principal of Artemis, but the webpage for Artemis had also disappeared by 2020.

¹ Each was granted warrants to purchase 4,000,000 shares of Diasense's restricted common stock at an exercise price of \$0.01 per share (<http://www.sec.gov/Archives/edgar/data/895650/0000895650-05-000019.txt>).

² I was retained as an expert witness for Cercacor for both lawsuits.

The company's technology is described as near-infrared "pulse differential spectroscopy," which attempts to isolate the absorbance due to glucose in blood from that due to glucose in interstitial fluid through the use of the pulsatile signal. They referenced an article about "[Pulse Glucometry](#)."

Futrex—The Dream Beam¹: As alluded to above, there are some bad guys, some good guys, and some guys who just seem to have black clouds over their heads, not unlike the Li'l Abner character Joe Btfsplk. Robert Rosenthal,² who founded Futrex (and at least one other near-infrared company, the reverse-eponymous Trebor), seemed to be one of the last group.



The device that Rosenthal touted for many years was a small, handheld meter into which a finger was inserted, and which used a number of LEDs with interference filters to examine tissue at various wavelengths in the near-infrared. Over the years, there were very public clinical trials to gather data and numerous premature announcements followed by long silences as the technology was re-examined.

Following a private placement and an attempted initial public offering of stock, Rosenthal had his own problems with shareholders and the Securities and Exchange

¹ LifeScan, as well as the other major companies in the blood glucose area, closely followed the developments at Futrex. Bob and I visited and held numerous discussions between 1989 and 1993, but they did not lead to a relationship between the two companies.

² Bob developed Type 2 diabetes while working on this project and created what he called the "2JD" oral tolerance test, standing for "two jelly donuts."

Commission. The following excerpt was published in *Medical Device and Diagnostic Industry Magazine* in March 1997:

“But amid the hopes for developing a painless glucose monitor are stories such as that of Futrex Medical Instrumentation, Inc. (Gaithersburg, MD). For years, the firm showcased its DreamBeam, a battery-operated box about the size of a television remote control designed to provide noninvasive glucose measurements with the use of infrared radiation. Last September, the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) filed a fraud action alleging that Futrex and its senior officer, Robert D. Rosenthal, made false claims to investors in connection with a \$1.85 million private placement of debt securities. The SEC alleges that the company and Rosenthal knowingly deceived investors, presenting false conclusions from clinical studies. During at least one meeting with investors, Rosenthal used the device on himself, and claimed the readings were accurate. But according to the SEC, he allegedly had ‘directed a Futrex employee to program a DreamBeam to function as if it were giving a glucose reading.’ Rosenthal was not available to MD&DI for comment.”

The issue was finally settled in 1999 with Rosenthal neither admitting nor denying the Commission’s allegations but agreeing to the entry of a judgment enjoining him from violating securities regulations and the payment of a civil penalty of \$50,000.

The Futrex website no longer contains any mention of blood glucose monitoring devices, focusing instead on near-infrared body fat meters. The FDA’s Consumer Magazine from Jan-Feb 2000 had the following statement:

“The president and chairman of the board of a medical device company based in Gaithersburg, Md., pleaded guilty early in 1999 to charges that his company imported and sold to hospitals and clinics a device for measuring body fat before FDA approved the device for marketing. Robert Rosenthal, head of Futrex Inc., was sentenced on April 29, 1999, by U.S. District Judge Deborah K. Chasanow to four months of home detention, 18 months of probation, a \$3,000 fine, and a \$200 special assessment fee. In addition to the sentence imposed by Judge Chasanow, Rosenthal was ordered to pay a \$90,000 fine to the U.S. Customs Service and a \$50,000 fine to the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) as a result of civil settlements with those agencies. [...] FDA never pursued Rosenthal on the noninvasive blood glucose monitor, the so-called Dream Beam, because he never attempted to market it in the United States.”

Rosenthal replied to the FDA (listed in the May-June 2000 FDA Consumer Newsletter, Letters to the Editor):

“Our company's most important new product is a non-invasive blood glucose meter, mentioned in the last paragraph of the article. It is currently undergoing clinical trials. Despite our belief that FDA has treated and is treating Futrex unfairly, for the sake of the 16 million Americans with diabetes, we pray that FDA will consider these clinical trials based on their scientific merits.”

As of 2022, there was still a Futrex [website](#) advertising body fat meters under the ownership of “Futrex Tech,” complete with testimonials from satisfied customers.

Kromoscopy: One of the stranger near-infrared-based approaches to glucose measurement came from the prolific mind of Myron Block, who was an inventor and early developer of interferometric spectrometers. Dr. Mark Arnold of the University of Iowa (himself a long-time researcher in the field of noninvasive glucose measurements using near-infrared spectroscopy), presented the following:

“Kromoscopy is a new measurement code for analytical science. In this method, white light passes through the sample and the transmitted light is divided into four separate detector channels. The response function of each channel is defined by the source, detector, and bandpass function of a filter that is positioned immediately before the detector. Each chemical species displays a unique Kromoscopic response when represented as a vector in the multidimensional space defined by the four detector signals.”

The approach uses the overlapping channels analogous to the red, green and blue cone visual pigments in the eye which allow people to distinguish thousands of separate colors. Unfortunately, although the system responds to glucose in water, there has never been a convincing demonstration that this approach holds significant promise for accurate tissue glucose measurement. An option to pursue the technology was secured by Inverness Medical prior to its acquisition by LifeScan, as were some rights to Dr. Arnold’s traditional near-infrared technology.

Dr. Arnold’s [website](#) once contained the following, unusually honest assessment of his near-infrared approach:

“Recently, we have succeeded in measuring glucose noninvasively from human subjects by an analysis of spectra collected across tongues. Although measurement errors are too large for clinical purposes, these experimental results demonstrate the possibility of noninvasive blood glucose measurements”

SugarTrac: In 1997, LifeScan was approached by Richard Peters, a principal of Emerging Technology Systems, Ltd. in Akron, Ohio who had developed the “SugarTrac” Noninvasive meter. His company, later renamed LifeTrac Systems, Inc., as of 2015 had no website. The technology was fairly simple, consisting of a single 940 nm near-infrared LED (similar to those used in a television remote control) and a photodetector placed across the earlobe from each other. Using a combination of the pulsatile component of blood flow and some mathematical algorithms, a glucose result could be generated in as little as 30 seconds.



Accompanying the presentation was an impressive list of blood glucose results obtained using both their instrument and a traditional blood glucose meter. The results agreed very well, and LifeScan paid them \$1,000,000 for the rights to the technology for the next three months. After looking over the technology,¹ LifeScan scientists organized a repeat of the comparison between the device and a traditional meter (with about 50 diabetic patients), with the exception that the test results from the SugarTrac were obtained first,

¹ By this time, LifeScan had many years of experience with near-infrared attempts to measure blood glucose, with at least five different companies. Since they had seen multiple failures for NIR devices using dozens of wavelengths, the technical people were convinced that no accurate measurement of glucose could be made in tissue at a single NIR wavelength. The business development representatives, however, were swayed by the apparent close agreement in the list of results and were unwilling to let another company have access to the technology until the evaluation was completed.

written down, and the reference measurement made out of the sight and hearing of the company representatives. Not surprisingly, the correlation between the two sets of results was no better than chance—in the first trial that they used to get funding, they had reportedly measured each patient with the reference meter first, then continued to measure with their device until they finally got good agreement.

Other players: Many other groups have explored the near-infrared approach, and to date, none has achieved clinical or commercial success. It remains the single most active area of noninvasive glucose research.¹ Although none have achieved success, Medtronic has a recent application (US 2021/0298648 A1) disclosing ways to provide calibration for any such noninvasive device using their CGM system. They suggest a correlation coefficient of 0.8 might suffice for calibrating the noninvasive system.

¹ As of 2023, I still talk to one or two groups every year that have belatedly learned about NIR measurement of glucose and want to pursue it.

Other Approaches

Transdermal Measurements

Cygnus: The most successful noninvasive technology, developed at the University of California, San Francisco and Cygnus Therapeutic Corporation in Redwood City, CA, had nothing to do with light. Rather, the approach measured sugar levels transdermally with a device called a GlucoWatch. The process, called reverse iontophoresis, used an electric current to extract glucose molecules out of the body. Originally, this electrotransport technology was developed to deliver drugs transdermally *into* tissue by enlarging the pores to allow larger drug molecules to pass through. The noninvasive monitor included a sensing pad termed a GlucoPad that adhered to the skin. It was placed on the back of the GlucoWatch to measure and read glucose levels electrochemically. Cygnus envisioned that the pad would be replaced daily (with a recalibration each day based on a finger stick result), but during each day, the watch would allow for continuous monitoring of glucose levels. It was the only device broadly described as “noninvasive” to be approved by the FDA but only for supplemental use in combination with another conventional glucose monitor—termed “adjunctive” use.



In 2001, headlines like the following appeared: “Washington — Diabetics are about to get a science fiction-like way to measure their blood sugar painlessly: The government approved a wristwatch-looking device Thursday that uses tiny electric currents to monitor diabetes.” The reality of the device was quite a bit different from the advance press. The amount of current required to pull glucose out of the skin was enough to cause reddening and burning of the skin (sometimes even blisters), and the accuracy was not good enough to allow it to be used reliably, even as an alarm for low glucose values. The product is no longer manufactured, the company went bankrupt, and its assets were eventually sold for \$10 million to [Animas](#), an insulin pump company that had abandoned its own glucose monitoring system (an implanted optical sensor that tried to measure glucose with source and sensors that surrounded blood vessel) a few years before. Animas was itself bought by Johnson & Johnson in 2005, then closed down in 2017 when J&J departed the insulin infusion area of diabetes therapy.

The New GlucoWatch. But nothing in this field is ever gone for good. In December of 2012, a patent application was published (U.S 2012/0323097¹ to Chowdhury of [Nemauro Pharma](#) of Leicestershire, UK), describing what the company calls “Continuous Glucose Monitoring Watch (“GlucoWatch”). This version is also based on reverse iontophoresis, but have added mechanical vibration to flex the “patch” and enhance permeation, and, according to company publications, may measure the ratio of sodium ions extracted along with the glucose.

¹ In December of 2016, the application went abandoned in the USPTO due to failure to respond to an office action.

In hypoglycemia, sweating is common, and could influence the concentration of glucose.



In October of 2015, Nemaura announced that their renamed sugarBEAT® CGM System (with its own [webpage](#) containing an emotional but otherwise uninformative [video](#)) had completed an “interim clinical trial” (not registered with clinicaltrials.org) involving 19 patients, using the system for 12 hours a day for four days each, with a MARD of less than 11.8%. It had also replaced the leech-like earlier version with a white plastic package. In March of 2016 Nemaura announced that it had received notification of CE Approval, however, the device for which CE grant notice was granted used “retrospective evaluation” of the glucose data, which is generally not considered a valid test, and would not be accepted by the FDA.

It still suffers from some of the same drawbacks as the earlier GlucoWatch system, in that it requires a warmup of 30-60 minutes, needs fingerstick calibration, and each sensor is designed for use over only one 24-hour period. There is also speculation that the fluid extracted, rather than being interstitial fluid with a glucose content similar to blood, is actually sweat.

In 2018, Nemaura announced the initiation of “US FDA studies,” and reported that in a home-use study, 121 matched-pair points had an “overall nominal MARD¹ of 16.3%.”

¹ The term “nominal MARD” is not a defined statistic.

However, by that time, the company's US patent applications related to glucose had been abandoned. Time will tell if its performance actually exceeds that of the original GlucoWatch, and if it becomes a commercial success.

In late 2019, in order to keep its stock price about \$1.00 to stay listed on a stock exchange, the company announced a "1 for 10 reverse split," and shortly after announced that it had adapted its sensor for "continuous temperature monitoring" to help defeat COVID-19. In the past year, Nemaura's website had this cryptic statement:

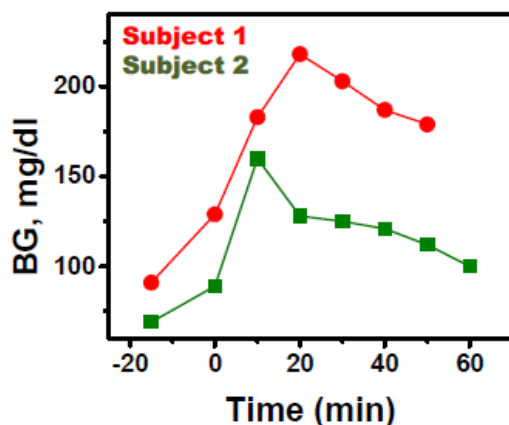
"Nemaura's technology does not use Reverse iontophoresis. It is based on causing the skin to temporarily enhance its permeation using a microsystems based fabricated disposable patch, such that glucose diffuses through the skin at a constant rate during sensor use. The glucose is collected in a hydrogel on the sensor and it then reacts with the same type of enzyme based technology that DexCom and Abbott (Libre) use. In other words it is a direct measurement of glucose from the interstitial fluid – the difference being that Abbot and DexCom Measure this glucose in the interstitial fluid inside the skin tissue in the upper arm, whereas Nemaura cause the glucose to come to the surface of the skin in the upper arm so it can be harvested and measured."

The same technique is employed by a university group in Beijing, [saying "New non-invasive glucose monitoring smartwatch prototype shows 84% accuracy,"](#) and a [Nature Microsystems and Nanoengineering article](#) titled "Highly integrated watch for noninvasive continual glucose monitoring" reports the correlation coefficient for one subject in a 10-hour test was $R^2 = 0.297$.

Another similar approach was patented by Cambridge Medical Systems (or Flexible Medical Systems LLC) of Rockville, MD (US 10,898,116), using a series of electrical "disruptor" pulses intended to separate the cells of the stratum corneum without damaging skin cells, followed by electrochemical glucose measurement in the outflowing interstitial fluid.

Tattoos

As an alternative, a transdermal glucose measurement represented as a “temporary tattoo” received widespread coverage, based on an article “[Tattoo-Based Noninvasive Glucose Monitoring: A Proof-of-Concept Study](#),” Amay J. Bandodkar, Joseph Wang, et al., *Anal. Chem.* 2015, 87, 394–398, and described as a “flexible, low-cost, and aesthetically pleasing iontophoretic-biosensing tattoo platform.” Like the GlucoWatch, this approach also uses reverse iontophoresis, but supplemental [data](#) show no comparison to reference glucose values.



The authors contend that a reduced current density below that used by the GlucoWatch will prevent the skin damage reported for that device. Publication of results that were needed to determine if this has been achieved, and if the other reported problems of the GlucoWatch have been overcome, have not appeared.

The company resulting from this effort was originally “Electrozyme;” now “[Biolineq](#),¹” and Prof. Joseph Wang is the “Technology Innovator” in a YouTube [video](#) showing the screen-printing fabrication of the tattoos. Dr. Wang has also had a patent issue (US 10,501,770) regarding creating glucose sensors by direct-drawing of enzymatic inks.

¹ Biolineq has moved on to microneedles, and raised \$100M in late 2021. Microneedles have become hot property in recent years, and are frequently described as “patch” sensors to diminish the threat of the “needle” part of the name. However, they are not noninvasive, and except to chronicle the progression of companies away from a noninvasive technology, there is no attempt to track them in this manuscript.

Gerard Côté at Texas A&M University (who had largely focused on measuring glucose by optical rotation in the eye), has also worked to develop a [fluorescent tattoo](#) which changes the intensity or color of emitted light with variations in glucose.

Newer suggestions for this approach are an international group ([Journal of Materials Chemistry B, 10.1039/C9TB02476J, \(2020\)](#)) with an article titled “Dermal Tattoo Biosensors for Colorimetric Metabolite Detection.”; a group in Germany with “[Tattoo developed that changes colour in response to blood glucose levels](#)”; and a group at Carnegie Mellon with “[E-Tattoos Are Futuristic Healthcare Wearables](#).”

GluCall. Internet announcements for this product from Korea Medical Holdings began to appear in about 2007 and persist today, saying now, as then, “Thus [GluCall](#) will be a breakthrough in medical arena particularly in diabetes area. It eventually promotes diabetic patient's quality of life,” and is described in a 2007 [review article](#) as being based on reverse iontophoresis. It does have a wristwatch readout device, however.



Pulse Oximetry Related Measurements

Because this technique has become so successful and ubiquitous for blood oxygenation measurements, a number of groups have investigated whether it might be extended to glucose. Yitzhak Mendelson, one of the originators of pulse oximetry, was also a founder of [VivaScan/Grove](#). This company chose to pursue the “bridge-squeeze” technique described above. Nellcor, one of the early market leaders in pulse oximetry, also has issued patents in this area—see, for example, US 6,845,256.

Others ([Philips](#), above), have explored the relationship between carbon monoxide in breath and glucose, based in part on pulse oximetry measurements. A company called 3 Wave Optics in Massachusetts had a patent application from 2005 which never matured into an issued patent, and Masimo, which has substantial involvement in the pulse oximetry business, has had an in-house noninvasive glucose effort for at least twenty years (originally at “Masimo Laboratories,” now renamed Cercacor), but there has been no report of success for glucose there, either. A recent Masimo patent (US 10,849,554 B2) describes using a “nose sensor” to make a variety of noninvasive measurements that were not easily made at other locations.

Pulse Wave

Because the pulse wave is easily acquired, it has appeared to several inventors that it might contain glucose information outside of normal pulse oximetry measurements (it is sometimes referred to as “PPG,” short for photoplethysmography, and also sometimes referred to as “ECG” for electrocardiogram measurement). The desire for “wearable” health monitors to include blood pressure measurements has provided additional effort to utilize this source of information. But as easy as it is to make PPG-based measurements related to hemoglobin, it is much harder to make any measurement of glucose from that signal. As mentioned, the much more strongly-colored hemoglobin molecules live only in the blood vessels whose size and contents vary with each pulse, while glucose, which has essentially no color, is present in every body fluid and does not respond significantly to the pulse waveform. A number of companies touting such devices have had to retract early promises that they could monitor blood glucose this way.

BioSign, a company in Toronto, Ontario, has promoted its UFIT device for glucose measurements, even promising delivery in Europe in late 2011. It used an “optical probe beam¹” to derive blood glucose information at the same time it monitors blood pressure and pulse rate. A 2007 press release claimed that a study of 120 people was intended to show “that the arterial pulse, a rich source of clinically relevant information (e.g., rate, rhythm, pattern, pressure and oxygen), could also provide information on blood glucose,”

¹ U.S. Patent application 20080249387. The technology for measuring glucose is not further described, and patent office records indicate that the application was abandoned in 2013.

and demonstrated “a tight statistical correlation (0.998, Pearson substantial equivalence) between UFIT® and laboratory analysis of blood glucose, with a low (1.63%) average of the mean percent difference between the UFIT® measurements and the laboratory analysis.” The correlation was obtained “post-hoc” (i.e., retrospectively) by “comparing a feature extracted from the radial artery pulse with laboratory blood glucose data.” As described above, a retrospective correlation can be obtained between blood glucose and most physiological parameters, however, it is not possible to show a correlation better than the error in the reference measurement, which is usually on the order of 4-5%. As of 2015, there was no mention of glucose on the company website.

An enduring mystery largely related to PPG centers on the Sanmina Corporation of San Jose, CA, and its prolific inventor, Robert Newberry. According to Wikipedia, Sanmina is one of the world’s largest independent manufacturers of printed circuit boards and backplanes that in 2018 ranked number 411 in the Fortune 500 list. It has 231 issued US patents in many fields, including 26 that include the terms “glucose” and “non-invasive,” all issued between 2017 and 2022. All 26 of these list Newberry as an inventor, and the technology ranges from PPG to ear pieces to “vehicular health” to nitric oxide to blood typing to sepsis detection. Quite a few have been assigned to other companies (often Trilinear Bioventures of Alabama or Hadco Corporation in California), but to date, no Sanmina-branded product has appeared in this marketplace.

[Anexa Labs, LLC](#), with inventors spread from Spain to Toronto to Omsk, combines ECG signals, bioimpedance, and AI in an attempt to monitor blood glucose. In the abstract of a recent patent application (US 2021/0228116)—not a common location for advertising copy—they say “Disclosed herein are systems and methods for non – invasively monitoring blood glucose levels with a level of accuracy that is high enough to replace invasive methods such as finger prick devices and others,” but do not present any data or explain how this combination manages the task. **As of 2023, the website has no mention of glucose.**

eTouch from Taiwan has a similar technology (2021/0059581, but does include data from four users of the device, showing agreement in normal glucose ranges. Also,

[GlucoQuantum](#) (possibly Shenzhen Carelife Health Technology), has similar measurement technology, proudly proclaiming “WE DID IT the most comprehensive non-invasive blood glucose and metabolic monitor in the market today!” They provide a link to a “[Clinical Data Study Report of a Non-invasive Glucose](#)” that does not have persuasive statistics.

Quantum Operation Inc., with only a PCT application in Japanese (WO/2021/220723), with a [Google translation here](#) that is not much more helpful, says little beyond “The data transmission unit includes the biometric data based on at least one of the heart rate, blood pressure, SPO 2 , body surface temperature, and acceleration...”

Scanbo of British Columbia, says it has developed a prototype that combines [PPG, ECG and artificial intelligence](#). As of this writing, they have no published patents.

Ecole Polytechnique Federale De Lausanne (US 2022/0022784) combines PPG and Raman spectroscopy to determine variations in the optical signal related to glucose concentration. Similarly, Sanguis Corporation of Selden, NY published US 2021/0025758 A1 that also combines those two techniques.

Marcelo Lamego’s (he’s both Cercacor former CTO and was an inventor at Apple) entire family seems to appear as inventors of PPG-based US 2021/0022676 A1, from True Wearables, with a hopeful extension to glucose monitoring.

A less-developed earring using “[high frequency radio waves](#)” came from a “recent product design graduate from the University of Huddersfield.” She was inspired to design the piece of smart jewelry after leading a focus group of parents with children with diabetes.

Fitbit was reported to roll out “[ECG app to Charge 5; Enables blood sugar monitor in India](#),” but without meaningful follow-up to date.

Application US 2021/0169417 A1 from Compumedics’ David Burton in Australia purports to operate using PPG, but its 328 pages are riddled with errors, such as “Error! Reference source not found.” It is hard to take seriously a patent publication that

describes an invention this way: “STEP 1: Go to AMAZON or eHealth-SHOPCART and click to buy eLifeWATCH for your personalized healthcare everywhere with inbuilt temp; pulse; activity/position; skin/GSR; pleth-oximeter; sound; light.”

What appears to be a Russian company, “Accofrisk,” is also attempting to exploit the PPG signal, with Russian-only patent applications such as WO 2022/225411 A1.

[Huawei](#) announced in May 2023 that it had developed an “‘Industry First’ Watch With Blood Sugar Measurement” to detect “high blood sugar risk” and says it works using “‘heart rate, pulse wave characteristics, and more,’ meaning no additional hardware is required beyond the traditional optical heart rate array.”

“Non-Medical Glucose Monitors”

The “HELO” system has had a confusing heritage, it was originally part of a company known as Wor(l)d Media and Technology Corp (initially known by its stock symbol, WRMT), then changed in 2017 to World Technology Corp (WCOR), then sometime later was integrated into a “distributor” World Global Network, but still associated with HELO, “A Sweet Innovation in Non-Invasive Sugar Trend Monitoring.”

They introduced a PPG-based product in 2017 with this headline: “Launch Of World's First Wearable, Non-Invasive, Continuous, Blood Glucose Estimation Technology Using WRMT's Smart Wristband, Helo, Will Generate Recurring Revenues For WRMT,” followed by a video that is no longer available. Their announcement said “Helo is not a medical device, but continuous measurement of blood glucose estimates are expected to be helpful in understanding blood glucose changes over time” and further, that:

“WRMT's blood glucose estimation service is non-invasive, and can be scheduled to record blood glucose estimates routinely with readings stored in Helo's LifeLog for easy presentation to the diabetic's health care provider. In the event that Helo detects a blood glucose problem, Helo's Guardian service will automatically alert the wearer and their care giver. It is expected that this service will initially be available in Q4'17, to all Helo wearers who opt-in for the service and who pay the initial fee to cover registration and to start blood glucose monitoring.”



It will be interesting to see if a product with the ability to provide “blood glucose estimates,” which also claims to provide “blood glucose monitoring” at extra charge, will be viewed by FDA as a medical device.

An older version of the website said “Although the **Glucose** Monitoring was originally planned to be within the **Helo** LX+ wristband, a decision was made to create a stand-alone device, which works ...”, and around 2018, the product was changed to the HELO Extense fingertip sensor. The device is intended to work with either apps downloaded to iOS or Android smart phones.



They offer a “LifeLog” option, with “LIFEORACLE REPORTS: See a history of your activity trends, track your long-term calorie burning goals, and receive a rank on your activity level.” And you can watch two videos, either a “Field Trial: featuring the inventor <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z0RlpuCcL0E> , or a very polished (possibly

older, based on the Wor(l)d identity?) video,
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tAu99vVfdT0>.

In 2020, the website listed it as “Helo Extense (Discontinued).”¹

With the increased emphasis on “wearable” continuous glucose monitors, the emphasis began to switch for several companies to attempting to extract glucose information from the PPG signal.² One such is [Glutrac](#) from Add-care of Hong Kong, with a descriptive



article [Joint Empirical Mode Decomposition and Singular Spectrum Analysis Based Pre-processing Method for Wearable Non-invasive Blood Glucose Estimation](#), *IEEE 4th International Conference on Signal and Image Processing (ICSIP)*, Wuxi, China, 2019, pp. 259-263, stating a “strong correlation between our estimated blood glucose values and the actual blood glucose values.”

[GlucoScanner](#) is the name of a proposed continuous, wearable glucose sensor under development by Dynamic Brain Labs with an address in Tokyo, Japan. Their earlier patent application is WO/2018/051975, which is only available in Japanese. Based on a

¹ I requested a sample of the Helo Extense to evaluate and was generously supplied one by the company. After several weeks of effort (and the downloading of several software revisions), I was never able to make a noninvasive glucose measurement with the device.

² There is also increasing interest in measuring noninvasive blood pressure, and the PPG signal is favored for that, to the point that it has been regarded as the new “Holy Grail.” Several companies listed in these pages that failed in their attempts to measure glucose noninvasively have moved their emphasis to blood pressure. As of 2022, none had succeeded.

Google translation, it appears to be based on multiple near-infrared LEDs in the range of 600-1600 nm, using [PPG](#) information. “As soon as the prototypes are ready, we will evaluate our product’s performance in a clinical trial and test if it complies with consumer product quality and safety standards. At the same time, we will also start the necessary procedures to evaluate if our product complies with different medical standards,” explains Stefano Valenzi, the inventor of GlucoScanner. As of 2020, the GlucoScanner website was being “updated,” and a new site, “Powearlab.com,” described the device, promising a clinical trial “soon,” but with a cryptic message with characters blacked out. As of 2023, it is no longer possible to either “reserve your Glucoscanner,” or “Donate a Glucoscanner Biosensor for someone who cannot afford one.” Also featured: the “First Reservation Group: 3,000 subscribers will pay \$353 for a Glucoscanner Biosensor including one year of subscription fees.” They have recently published (US 2021/0298622) as an extension of their technology

A 2017 disclosure by LifePlus (link removed due to malware warning) about the LifeLeaf smartwatch indicates it was also based on PPG measurements, as described on the video “How LifeLeaf Works” on the company’s website. According to the website, it is a “clinical grade smartwatch” and the “WORLD’S FIRST COMPLETELY NON-INVASIVE CONTINUOUS BLOOD GLUCOSE MONITORING WEARABLE!” Like the one above, there is no indication that the company will be seeking FDA clearance.



As of 2020, the LifeLeaf appears to have undergone a metamorphosis away from PPG into a near-infrared-based device. Two patent applications (US 20200085352A1 and US 20200163596) published this year indicate that measurements are made in the wavelength range of 400 to 2500 nm (or just 700 to 2500 nm). Several inventors (with a

long history of NIR tissue glucose measurement attempts¹) were added to these applications compared to earlier applications claiming priority to the same earlier provisional patent² based on PPG measurements that did not refer to near-infrared. At least seven more continuation applications from this provisional have been filed.³

A substantial number of other patents have been issued for extracting glucose levels from a range of pulse information, but curiously, one (US 6,968,221) was issued to Robert Rosenthal (of Futrex infamy, above) in 2005, describing a method of deriving blood glucose information from an optical pulse wave. Sabirmedical, a Spanish company, reported that it investigated the technique for glucose measurement, and has European patent application EP2544124 A1. A patent application (US 2015/0031969 to Khair) has suggested that waveforms derived from either pulse oximetry or ECG tracings, especially the “dicrotic notch” might include glucose information, but is short on actual methods for calculation.

Valencell, which has 34 issued US patents and 70 patent applications for wearable devices that might someday measure either glucose or noninvasive blood pressure, has apparently thrown in the glucose towel with a 2018 statement by its CEO Steven LeBoeuf “[Noninvasive glucose tracking will never happen, says leading sensor company](#).”

The ease of accessing this waveform has led to a number of “wearable” or “watch” designs for noninvasive glucose measurement, such as the InfraV from the Infravitals Company that claims “constant monitoring of blood sugar,” with an [Indiegogo](#) crowd-funding campaign promising delivery of a working device in exchange for a funding contribution. Their campaign was more successful than others mentioned earlier, raising

¹ Inventors Kevin Hazen, Roxanne Abul-Haj, and/or Alan Abul-Haj and had been previously named as inventors for noninvasive glucose patents assigned to Sensys and Zyomed between 2004 and about 2016.

² A provisional patent is a preliminary filing that establishes a patenting priority date for the material disclosed. It is never examined, expires in 12 months, and never matures into an issued utility patent. Instead, subsequent utility patents filed within its lifetime (and based on its material) can issue and claim the earlier priority date.

³ If they have been published, these can be viewed at <https://patentcenter.uspto.gov/> by entering the serial number of the provisional patent (in this case, 62/355,507), then clicking on the tab labeled “Continuity.”

over \$72,000, but there has been no mention of an actual product in recent years, and the latest [FaceBook](#) entry is dated 2014.

In January of 2020, there was a [report](#) and an article (Mihaela Porumb, Saverio Stranges, Antonio Pescapè, Leandro Pecchia, “Precision Medicine and Artificial Intelligence: A Pilot Study on Deep Learning for Hypoglycemic Events Detection based on ECG.” Scientific Reports, 2020; 10 (1) DOI: 10.1038/s41598-019-56927-5) describing how AI could detect hypoglycemic levels from ECG, but it was not extended to generalized monitoring.

Similarly, Novo Nordisk had a patent issue (US 10,524,669) disclosing use of artificial intelligence and algorithms for detecting hypoglycemia by correlating two or more parameters like PPG signals, ECG, blood pressure, perspiration, impedance, eye movements, and other parameters.

A European patent application assigned to Hamamatsu (EP 3 520 696) correlates a time delay between PPG waves at separate wavelengths for oxy- and deoxy-hemoglobin, but the correlation to blood glucose shown was also not sufficient for monitoring.

Blue Semi, which secured \$69M funding in October of 2021, has a fingertip sensor that it calls a completely non-invasive glucose monitor, ‘[Eyva](#) from Hyperabad,’ “with a simple 3-step process:

“1 Hold Eyva in both of your hands

2 Place both thumbs on the circles drawn on both sides of the gadget

3 Breathe and let Eyva take over!”

They state “it is not a medical device, which could make adoption easier.” but maintain that it measures “6 key body vitals: Blood Glucose, HbA1c, ECG, Blood Pressure, Oxygen, and Heart Rate.” The price target is about \$200.



In September of 2023, they announced on APN News (“the premier source for reliable financial & business news in India”) “[A milestone in the making: EYVA records 1 million scans with a revolutionary non-invasive approach,](#)” but there was no indication of the accuracy achieved in those scans.

Other recent entrants in this category are Hamamatsu (US 11,122,996) and Facense LTD from Israel, with “smart glasses” (WO 2021/084488 A1).

Another new company is MYMONX, which may be also using a variant of PPG measurement. Their [website](#) claims “NON-INVASIVE MONITORING OF GLUCOSE,” and of blood pressure, but does not describe the measurement method for either,

St. Louis Medical Devices, Inc.

Four closely-related patent applications in this area were published in 2013 by Zhi Xu, Associate Professor of chemistry and biochemistry at the University of Missouri—St. Louis (and entrepreneur at St. Louis Medical Devices, which has purchased the technology): US20130006070, 71, 72 and 73. They are based on extraction of glucose information from a fingertip pulse wave in the near-infrared (800 to 1600 nm), using Partial Least Squares (PLS) regression. With the hubris of the newly-arrived to this field, he stated “There have been 25 years of attempts to create such a non-invasive glucose monitor. I think we’ve done it.” In May of 2011, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch reported: Tamara Wilgers, UMSL's director of technology commercialization said “We are really sure this is it. We don't have clinical data as proof, but we believe it is.” George Chen, CEO of St. Louis Medical Devices, said he hopes the company will be ready to request approval from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration in “two years.” His best-case

scenario had the device for sale in four years, priced between \$500 and \$800. UMSL's Zhi Xu was named 2014 "Inventor of the Year" by The Bar Association of Metropolitan St. Louis. A 2011 Article on the company from the St. Louis Post-Dispatch was titled "Developing new glucose test is high-stakes, slow-going pursuit." So it goes.

As of 2022, St. Louis Medical Devices had over 39 U.S. patents or applications with Zhi Xu as the sole inventor, and most have the title "Method and system for non-invasive optical blood glucose detection utilizing spectral data analysis." Some companies, rather than conducting research and patenting new ideas, file "continuations" of previous patent applications, with no new material, just with new claims.¹ This is legal, but it can lead to the impression that a company, where the applications contain statements like "Continuation of application No. 15/464,253, filed on Mar. 20, 2017, now Pat. No. 9,877,670, which is a continuation of application No. 13/610,423, filed on Sep. 11, 2012, now Pat. No. 9,629,576, which is a division of application No. 12/425,535, filed on Apr. 17, 2009, now Pat. No. 8,340,738" is trying multiple ways to protect a single idea. When the string of "straight continuation" patent dates goes back more than ten years, it can also lead to the impression that they have done nothing new over that time. The absence of a website, any products, or any new published reports since 2011 would serve to confirm that impression.

In 2009, Xu's first application published with the title "Non-invasive blood glucose detection utilizing spectral data of one or more components other than glucose" (the patent, US 10,542,919, finally issued in 2020, after extended prosecution with no fewer than ten rejections by the examiner). As the section about Water Redistribution above describes, this probably applies to many other noninvasive measurement techniques, where the spectral signature observed is due to water or other non-glucose components, rather than to glucose. Xu's patent publications since 2009 have alternated between trying to detect glucose itself, and detecting it based on measurement of other observable spectral features.

¹ An example is a series of patents issued to Omni Medsci of Ann Arbor, MI, where a recent patent (US 11,241,156 B2) lists 31 continuations, with different names, abstracts, and claims.

Nuclear Magnetic Resonance (or MRI)

U.S. Patent 5,685,300 was issued in 1997 and claimed noninvasive measurement of glucose using NMR techniques but which only showed how glucose in blood samples could be measured. The inventor speculated that by using an MRI instrument, time slices could be made at different parts of the heartbeat, and the difference in blood content of the image might be used to measure glucose. This probably marks the single most expensive (and possibly most unrealistic) approach yet proposed for noninvasive glucose measurement.

One additional patent (US 11,237,237 B2, assigned to [Attest](#), a maker of small NMR systems, but identified on the application only as “10250929 Canada, Inc.”) uses a special set of magnetic field shaping and pulsing tricks to isolate glucose in a subject’s finger, using permanent magnets with around 1.5-2 Tesla field strength.

Another Canadian entry for NMR technology is Synex Medical Inc, from Toronto (US 2021/0121108 A1), hoping to operate between 0.1 and 0.3 Tesla,

Microwave Spectroscopy¹

In addition to the entry below about Solid State Farms/Pindi Products/GlucoRecs, Dr. Randall Jean of Baylor University created a stir in 2008 with the [publication](#) of a paper describing a glucose sensor based on microwave pulses², but no update on its progress has appeared since.

A publication “[Microwave Power Absorption in Human Body for Non-invasive Glucose Monitoring](#)” (Progress In Electromagnetics Research Symposium Proceedings, Stockholm, Sweden, Aug. 12-15, 2013, 109) concludes with the warning that

¹ The division between radio frequency (“RF”) and microwaves is subject to debate—[Wikipedia](#) describes the options. See the section on Impedance for more.

² Jean, B.R., Green, E.C., and McClung, M.J., “A Microwave Frequency Sensor for Non-Invasive Blood-Glucose Measurement,” IEEE Sensors Applications Symposium, Atlanta, GA, February 12-14, 2008.

“contributions of both real and imaginary [sic] components of complex permittivity should be considered when conducting or modelling dielectric NGM measurements.”

Another patent application, US 2012/0150000, issued to three people in Liverpool, Great Britain, also described the use of microwaves for glucose measurement. According to patent office records, it is now “abandoned -- failure to respond to an office action.” It seemed to work well, though, on solutions of “0-100% glucose concentration.”

Scientists at Cardiff University reported a [microwave-based](#) resonant frequency measurement device, and have an issued patent, US 9408564 (see [GlucoRx](#), below), and Yissum Research at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem has published application US 2020/0113495 describing frequencies between 100 MHz and 90 GHz.

Subdermal Reporters

At least the following companies have investigated the use of a “reporter molecule,” placed just under the skin, which is sensitive to glucose and reports the concentration by changing color or varying its fluorescence: Sensor Technologies, Sensors for Medicine and Science (“S4MS”), BioPeak, MiniMed, Glumetrics, Becton-Dickinson, Precisense, Motorola and Argose. The idea sounds great—just a tattoo or minor injection of a substance under the skin, then a sensing device can read the amount of glucose by shining light through the skin and measuring the response.

The practical complications are similar to those that have plagued investigators who have tried to develop long-lived, in-dwelling sensors—anything inserted into the body that is not rejected by the immune system (an “immunogenic response”) will be incorporated by the organism surrounding it with a coating of protein (the “foreign body response”) that creates two problems for glucose measurement. It can either reduce the access of glucose to the sensing material (which will increase the response time to changes in glucose, or reduce the concentration of glucose that the sensor “sees”), or it can decrease the amount of light that passes into it or is transmitted back out of the reporter. In every case so far, the result has been that the lifetime of the material in the body is limited, and the accuracy degrades over a fairly short period. And when a “noninvasive” measurement

device requires frequent recalibration using an invasive device, it quickly loses its appeal to the user. A further complication is introduced by the variable reflectance of skin, requiring precise alignment between a reader and the skin area to be read. Although it's easy to underestimate them during the early, enthusiastic years, the practical complications of a requirement like this need to be considered when assessing how well patients would be able to use a device in the home.

Eyesense

Another approach has been proposed by a German company called [Eyesense](#) (not to be confused with the former CGM company iSense in Portland, OR, or with i-SENS in Korea) utilizing a reporter molecule inserted under the conjunctiva on the surface of the eye and measured with a hand-held external photometer. It is not known if trying to measure glucose at this location will suffer the same drawbacks as at other places in the body, or if there was lack of patient acceptance because of the location, but that approach now appears abandoned.

The company appears to have moved its focus to an implanted continuous sensor (possibly using the same reporter molecule as in the conjunctival sensor) and may have abandoned implantation in the eye. "FiberSense technology is based on an optical glucose sensor which measures the glucose concentration of the tissue fluid at the tip of an optical fiber. This level of concentration very closely correlates to blood glucose levels. The sensor material consists of a biosensor that reacts specifically to glucose. It is embedded in an aqueous hydrogel at the tip of a thin light-transmitting fiber. This is implanted a few millimeters under the skin. The continuous monitoring is conducted via a miniature fluorescence photometer which is held onto the skin with a long-term adhesive bandage.

The Eyesense website also reported results of a 28-day study in 2018: "In general, the Mean Absolute Relative Deviation (MARD) lay between 8 and 9 percent depending on the location of the sensor; compared to 18 percent for the commercially available CGM System. 93 percent of the measurements were, compared with laboratory data, in the

range of correct clinical treatment decisions (consensus error grid zones A and B).” No published report of results has appeared since 2013.

Senseonics

The company Sensors for Medicine and Science (“S4MS”) (which set a dubious record by renaming itself twice in two years, first to “Sensors for Medicine and Science Inc. (SMSI), and then to “[Senseonics](#)”) mentioned above, has disclosed a notably different approach to the use of an implanted device. It’s a three-part system (now named “Eversense”), with the transmitter (right and center), the smart phone display (left), and the sensor (below). The implanted sensor—originally described as just “a little larger” than a grain of rice—is powered by an externally driven inductive link from the transmitter, allowing it to operate without a battery. The implanted receiver then illuminates a fluorescent sensor that is sensitive to the glucose that has diffused to the sensor from the surrounding interstitial fluid, and the response is sent back to the transmitter for display on the smart phone screen. The company received a substantial \$54.1 million Series D equity financing led by Delphi Ventures in 2011, underwent a “reverse acquisition” with a company named ASN Technologies, then was granted a CE mark in June of 2016, based on data showing consistent results for three months of use. **The use life was extended to six months in 2022, and the system is now being marketed by [Ascensia](#).** They had earlier partnered with Roche Diabetes for distribution of the system across Europe, the Middle East, and Africa.





Pivotal for an implanted device like Senseonics is minimizing the buildup of a protein coating known as a “capsule” resulting from the “foreign-body response.” A few years ago, the company bet that problematic “reactive oxygen species” like hydrogen peroxide, hydroxyl radical, or superoxide that result from the implantation injury could be eliminated or controlled by coating the sensor in a biocompatible metal like platinum (US 2017/0202517). A more recent design, and the product now cleared by the FDA, appears to augment the sensor’s biocompatibility by coating it with an anti-inflammatory steroid-eluting (dexamethasone) silicone collar (US9931068). That change may have increased the size of the sensor from its earlier description of “grain of rice” to “pill-sized.”

A real challenge here, as with all implanted devices, is the lifetime of the sensor. Some have speculated that monthly recalibration for a noninvasive device would make it commercially successful, but with a device implanted under the skin (that needs to be explanted and replaced when it no longer provides accurate results), the pivotal replacement interval is probably between six months and one year (but still requires daily fingerstick calibration), and their success will probably be driven by how effective their “anti-fouling” technology turns out to be. If Senseonics can realize this replacement interval, they could be close enough to a continuous “noninvasive” monitor to achieve success, but the frequency of calibration will be a problem. There will always be the stigma of an incision to implant (and explant) the device (even under local anesthetic), and that may limit market acceptance to some degree. As of August, 2020, Ascencia, the Panasonic-owned version of Bayer’s Diabetes Unit, had partnered with Senseonics, investing something like \$80M. In late 2020, Senseonics announced it would make equity stock grants to encourage employees to stay with the company, with additional such announcements in 2021, 2022, and 2023.

Radio Frequency/Impedance

Possibly because it seems mysterious, or because it also seems extremely scientific, impedance measurements using radio frequency (or other frequency ranges) have appeared frequently over the years. A review article ([Yilmaz, T, et al., Radio-Frequency and Microwave Techniques for Non-Invasive Measurement of Blood Glucose Levels, Diagnostics 2019, 9, 6](#), pdf version available through [Google Scholar](#)) has a comprehensive summary of these techniques.

Groups searching for a signal related to glucose have found various means of calculating a frequency specific for it, but to date, none has been found. Calculations may be based on the dipole moment of the molecule, or on a proposed interaction with water, or just to the persistent belief that, over the vast frequency range available, there must be *something* that relates to glucose concentration. A large number of these investigations appear between Editions.



One group in Switzerland, Pendragon, made a big splash and presented several posters at scientific meetings (with some well-known researchers in the field publishing papers) before folding when the technique was shown not to provide reproducible results. Some of the principals of Pendragon founded a second company, based on the same approach, called Solianis, and it appears to have met the same fate. Its assets were bought in 2011 by a third Swiss Company called [Biovotion \(with a website now re-directed to Bikofourmis Therapeutics\)](#), with U.S. Patent 9,247,905, assigned to Biovotion, and based on the same principles of impedance measurement issued in 2016 to many of the same principals. US 9,526,431, titled “System for noninvasive optical measurements of physiological properties in tissue,” indicated a new direction for the group to include

optical measurements with impedance measurements, possibly another case of “[making the hammer heavier](#).” An even newer patent, US 10,659,042, presents a similar device, again in wristwatch format.

Another similar previous approach is the Glucoband, touted as being developed by Calisto Medical. It uses “bio-electromagnetic resonance phenomenon” (a previously unknown effect) and again would be in the form of a wristwatch, had it come to reality. The Calisto website described the technology (the company apparently ceased to exist around 2006):

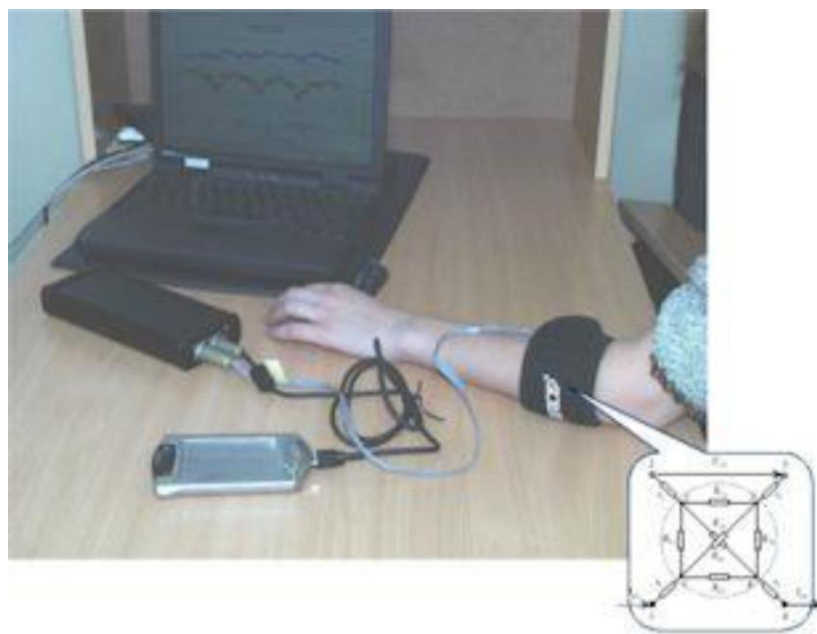
Bio-Electromagnetic Resonance (BEMR™) technology is based on the detection of a change of electrical impedance in the human body caused by an externally applied glucose-specific electromagnetic wave ('glucose signature').

Three known Phenomena are utilized in the Glucoband:

- Each concentration of Glucose solution has its unique electromagnetic molecular self-oscillation signature-wave - 'glucose signature'
- Human body is experiencing BEMR when a signature-wave matching any internal molecular self-oscillation wave is applied
- Due to the BEMR, the body is changing its electrical impedance



Another player once using impedance measurements (possibly not radio-frequency) is GlucoSense in Boston, MA (not related to Glucosense in England). Their proposed device used an arm sensor (but could probably be made into a wristwatch if the technology were to succeed). The company seemed to no longer exist as of 2013.



A possibly related company is Gen3 Partners (<http://www.gen3partners.com/>), with a publication (International Journal of Biomedical Engineering and Technology 2012 - Vol. 8, No.1 pp. 60 - 81) and two patents: US 6,998,428 and 6,841,389. While the first patent is assigned to Gen3, the other is assigned to Glucosense, and the work may have been done for them on a contract basis. The same picture that appeared on the Glucosense website was shown in their earlier promotional material.

“BIG,” or Bio-Impedance General Ltd., was a company located in Ramat Gan, Israel. Judging by the name, it uses an impedance measurement, but no technical details were available from the website, and there was no mention of glucose there in 2013. The former CEO of BIG is Gadi Kan-Tor, now part of a company called Night Sense with a noninvasive method for detection of hypoglycemia, but whose website no longer exists.

A brief entrant in this field was Azurite, a startup founded by Laura Andrews to help her sister who has type 1 diabetes. It appears it was intended to use an impedance measurement (described as “unique electromagnetic (EM) sensing system that measures intrinsic properties of the glucose molecule in the blood”) and had a campaign on another crowd-funding site (<https://experiment.com/projects/can-we-noninvasively-measure-blood-sugar-for-diabetes>), where it raised 102% of its initial \$7,500 funding goal. It still

provides updates on CGM and artificial pancreas developments at its FaceBook [page](#), but seems to have given up the pursuit of noninvasive monitoring.

Another report from [Nature](#) about a Radiofrequency Integrated Passive Device Biosensor Chip (but which may only be intended for glucose in aqueous solutions) is from the Fusion Technology Center of South Korea. Another entrant in this area from England is [Afon](#), which claims actual measurements in skin between 8 GHz and 30 GHz in US 2019/0053741. A report from the Diabetes Times in May of 2023 says “Afon Technology’s innovative device in the guise of a watch can successfully read a person’s blood glucose levels without having to inject into the skin.” The article from the Journal of Diabetes Science and Technology is [here](#), but “The median ARD across all data points was 30% and the mean ARD was 46%,” which is not commercially acceptable.

Arnold Chase (who apparently lives in one of the [largest houses in the country, at 50,900 square feet](#)), has US Patent 10,631,753 describing glucose measurement with microwaves and an individually-tailored RF mask for each subject (he also has a published application (US 2019/0239779) using multiple microneedles with undisclosed “sensing units”).

Use of microwaves around 1.4 GHz for glucose measurement is described in a pair of articles by Choi, et al.: “Microwave Noninvasive Blood Glucose Monitoring Sensor: Human Clinical Trial Results” (Published in: 2017 IEEE MTT-S International Microwave Symposium (IMS) Date of Conference: 4-9 June 2017 Date Added to IEEE Xplore: 05 October 2017 ISBN Information: INSPEC Accession Number: 17225168 DOI: 10.1109/MWSYM.2017.8058721 Publisher: IEEE Conference Location: Honolulu, HI, USA), and Microwave Noninvasive Blood Glucose Monitoring Sensor: Penetration Depth and Sensitivity Analysis ([2018 IEEE International Microwave Biomedical Conference \(IMBioC\)](#) DOI:[10.1109/IMBIOC.2018.8428850](#)).

The Nederlandse Organisatie Voor Toegepast-Natuurwetenschappelijk Onderzoek Tno covered two bases with US 10,048,218 describing microwave glucose measurements ranging from 0.5-110 GHz, and US 10,478,106 about NIR Raman spectroscopy from 700-1050 nm.

Orsus Medical had US 2019/0053741 publish, using RF frequencies around 314 GHz, only to be followed by this announcement in March of 2019: “[Glucose monitoring tech start-up seeks buyer](#).” They were bought by [Afon](#) in April of 2019.

A company that has attracted a lot of media attention (but which has to date no published technical articles or patent documents) is [Alertgy](#). The Technology section of their website features a picture of a “state of the art microchip-enabled dielectric sensor,” but little else that describes the measurement technology. In early 2019, they secured an initial \$1.2M for the technology. Among the financial contributors who invested in the seed round was Dr. John Burd, who joined Alertgy’s board of directors. Dr. Burd is a founder and previous CEO of DexCom, and stated: “Alertgy is on the brink of truly revolutionising the diabetes space with their non-invasive technology.” A press release in December, 2021 was titled “Alertgy Takes Top Prize: It’s A Game-Changer For Diabetics,” and reported by the [Market Newswire](#). As of this writing, though, there have been no reported clinical results for this technology. Their latest published patent application (with inventors John Hodges and Marc Rippen, but like others, not assigned to Alertgy) US 2020/0217809 A1, describes permittivity measurements in the 100 KHz to 220 MHz range, but provides no information about how they are converted to glucose values. A [news report](#) in early 2022 predicted the availability of device in 2023.

Another company that made an impressive debut (with 27 U.S. Patent applications appearing on the single day of June 18, 2020), is [Movano](#), with initial funding of \$27M. They use “radio waves” in the frequency range of 122-126 GHz (with complicated waveforms) in the ubiquitous wristwatch format, but with no glucose data to date. Movano founder and CEO Michael Leabman stated “Glucose has specific electrical and physical properties that can be detected by RF energy.”¹ He will join dozens of earlier investigators who have worked to determine exactly what frequency ranges and waveforms (if any) will reliably detect glucose in tissue. Recently, it was reported “[Movano unveils an reasonably priced, woman-friendly health-tracking ring at CES](#)

¹ Leabman left [Energous](#), a wireless cell-phone charger company, in 2018, when their stock was in the \$20/share range; today the stock is about \$1.

[2022,](#)” and that the company had hired John Mastrototaro,¹ a veteran of MiniMed/Medtronic CGM systems, as its CEO.

Recently, they have published patent applications that include optical sensors (US20ZZ0296111 A1, US20220287649 A1), with commentary that indicates the measured parameters are intended to include both blood glucose and blood pressure. The company has also focused recently on its Evie Ring, “The first medical grade health wearable for women,” but their website does not have specific information about what it measures.

GlucoRx in Cardiff, Wales already sells “a 14-day factory-calibrated CGM system” called AiDEX that appears to be made by Microtech Medical Company, Ltd., Hangzhou, China. which it has compared to [Abbott’s Flash system](#), but that publication was questioned in [another by Thomas Peyser, Ph.D.](#)

GlucoRx also claims to have “the world’s first noninvasive glucose sensor,” the [BioXensor](#), “pending CE & FDA Approval.” It is reported to be a “multisensory” system which includes RF, a PPG sensor, a bioimpedance sensor “all three of [which] are capable of measuring blood glucose.” Plus “to improve the accuracy, we have a 9-axis accelerometer, barometer, temperature sensor humidity sensor, pressure sensor and an ECG sensor.) Cardiff University holds patents like US9408564 for measuring glucose with microwaves in the 2.4-2.6 GHz region, and those appear to be used in this device. [Med-Tech Innovation News](#), in an article titled “The working behinds the “world’s first” non-invasive CGM multi-sensor device” says “The device works for 2-3 days alongside a companion app...” and “Rather than being disposable after a period of up to a fortnight, this is a rechargeable device – much like consumer devices including smartwatches – and can last for up to four years.” No publications have yet appeared to report performance or other details of the BioXensor.

An article from 2022 “[Microfluidic microwave biosensor based on biomimetic materials](#)

¹ John had an earlier connection to the Futrex NIR noninvasive technology. Under obscure circumstances, when he was at Eli Lilly, he was named as a co-inventor of US 5237178 with Bob Rosenthal of Futrex.

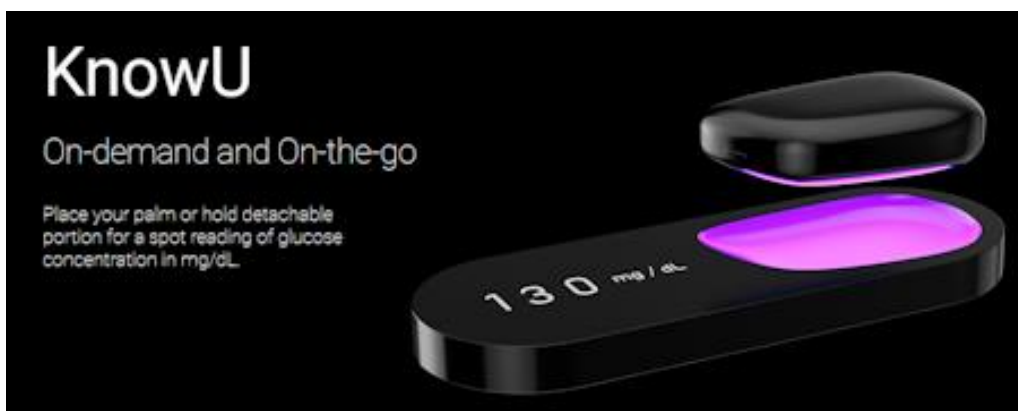
[for the quantitative detection of glucose](#)” has many details of construction, but the only measurements were made using aqueous solutions of glucose.

If passage of RF energies into tissue proves to be a problem, an impedance device could be implanted, as suggested by [D.T.R. Dermal Therapy Research Inc.](#) of London, Ontario, (US 10,357,180), using frequencies preferably between 1.90 kHz and 2 MHz. A similar device with the same combination of disadvantages was reported in [Nature](#) as “Subcutaneously implantable electromagnetic biosensor system for continuous glucose monitoring.”

Another publication “[Noninvasive, wearable, and tunable electromagnetic multisensing system for continuous glucose monitoring, mimicking vasculature anatomy](#),” from researchers at the American University of Beirut, reported good correlations, but only with two of ten subjects, between 0.5 and 3 GHz. A more recent patent from them, US 11,134,860 B2, claims better correlation using multivariate techniques over the same frequency range.

Know Labs: beginning in 2019, Know Labs (successor to Visualant) made a splash with a website featuring videos proclaiming to have achieved “The holy grail of the medical industry and patient care,” with a “BioRFID” radio frequency spectroscopy system to measure glucose in tissue. Many of the patents name a single inventor, Philip Bosua (inventor of the world’s first “smart light bulb”), and who also stars in the website videos. Features of many of the patents are “inefficient antennas” or “decoupled antennas” that can operate at many frequencies between 10KHz and 100GHz. The patents claim the ability to measure many biologically important materials, including blood glucose, blood alcohol, white blood cells, or luteinizing hormone.

The website includes links to data reported to represent sensor response to blood glucose for volunteers, but as of this writing, there is no indication of clinical trials to demonstrate performance. Recent website images of a “KnowU” sensor and the “UBand” watch are below.



An October, 2021 press release states “Bio-RFID average MARD was between 5.3% and 6.7% when compared with the FDA-approved devices used in the study, which confirms that Bio-RFID can offer the high-level of clinical accuracy required by medical diagnostics devices.”

Recent news releases indicate that the company has developed a “Particle Bulb” that inactivates COVID-2 variants, and the launch of a subsidiary that generates \$4.2M in NFT (non-fungible tokens), the very latest in financial arrangements. In December of 2020, they said their [“efforts to test and validate \[their\] patented Bio-RFID™ platform technology for non-invasive glucose monitoring with third-party research organizations have been temporarily slowed by the impact of Covid-19.”](#)

A patent issued in early 2022 (US 11,234,618 B1) includes a telling series of comments, only clarified in the claims. All the independent claims include the phrase “in vitro non-

invasive analyte sensor,” which implies that in-vitro (test strip or invasive sensor) measurement data are added to a data base of noninvasive data.¹

Two changes to the multitude of Know Labs patents began to appear in 2022: duplicates of several patents (one for apparatus, another for methods), and patents including a second inventor in addition to Bosura, Dominic Klyve, “an uncommonly gifted (juggling) mathematics professor at Central Washington University.” Also, US 2022/0074870 A1 “In Vitro Sensor for Analyzing In Vitro Flowing Fluids,” might signal attempts to measure in blood vessels filled with fluid. Another application published in 2023 (US 2023/0233108 A1) again combines an invasive sensor and a noninvasive sensor, and says “data from the non-invasive sensor and the data from the invasive sensor... can be used to calibrate the noninvasive sensor.” The length of time calibration is expected to last is not specified.

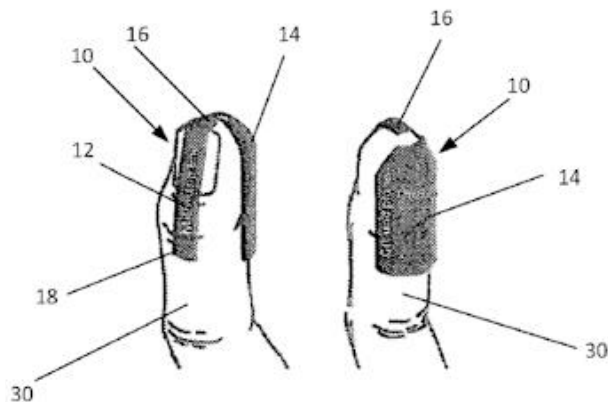
Wenwei Yu from Singapore (US 2020/0337610 A1) goes one better than wristwatch RF sensors, with a fingertip transmission line.

¹ This content is a little too specialized into noninvasive patent analysis for most readers, but there are several issues that deserve comment.

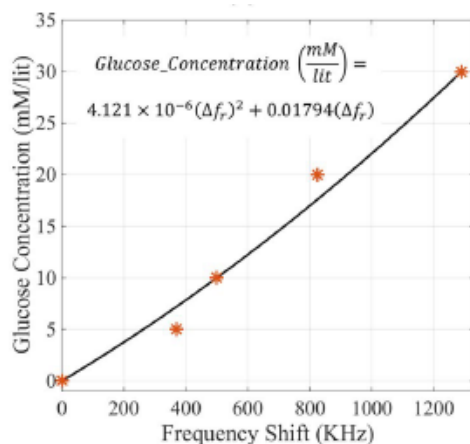
First, all the issued claims (amended following two rejections by a patent examiner), now include the phrase “in vitro non-invasive analyte sensor.” The patent clearly distinguishes between “in vitro” and “non-invasive” in a passage in column 6, lines 46-55: “The detection by the sensors described herein can be non-invasive meaning that the sensor remains outside the target, such as the human body, and the detection of the analyte occurs without requiring removal of fluid or other removal from the target, such as the human body. In the case of sensing in the human body, this non-invasive sensing may also be referred to as in vivo sensing. **In other embodiments, the sensors described herein may be an in vitro sensor where the target containing the analyte has been removed from its host, for example from a human body.**” This is the very antithesis of “non-invasive,” where there must be no penetration of skin, and no fluids should be removed from beneath the skin.

Second, the rejections by the examiner that caused insertion of this phrase referred primarily to US 2020/0187793 A1, issued to Michael Leabman and assigned to Movano, are described elsewhere herein.

Third, when in-vitro data need to be included to refine noninvasive data, it is usually a strong indication that the results being obtained are not good enough and need to be augmented. Prior examples are from Cercacor (Figure 1 of US 10,159,412 B2) “a measurement protocol of minimally invasive measurements and noninvasive measurements,” and Cnoga (Figure 5&6 of US 2012/0191001 A1) “a combination invasive and non-invasive bioparameter monitoring device.”

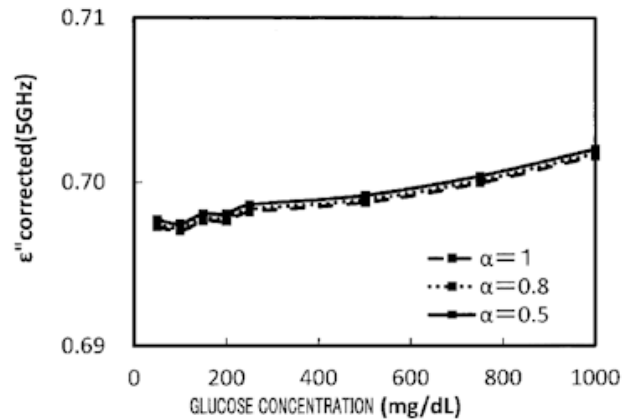


From the [Electrical and Computer Engineering Dept at the University of Alberta](#), the plot below is of aqueous glucose solutions (with 10% horse serum), showing frequency shift at 4 GHz. Because of the vast difference between aqueous solutions and tissue, these plots usually have little meaning.



Similar results were reported by the [University of Waterloo](#) with frequency-shift measurements between 1.8 and 3 GHz.

The process of measuring electrical parameters at different frequencies is often referred to as “dielectric spectroscopy,” and that term is used by scientists at Nippon Telegraph and Telephone Corporation in Japan, in US 2021/0161419 A1. They made measurements of “permittivity” over the range 20 Mhz to 70 GHz, but their best correlation for glucose was at 5 GHz:



A patent from the Ulsan National Institute of Science and Technology in South Korea (US 11,179,070), describes a combination of RF measurements at 2.5 GHz with microneedles inserted into the dermis.

Hagar Gwave of Tel Aviv received funding of \$11.7M, and according to [Businesswire](#), was granted a “Breakthrough Device Designation” for “the world's first non-invasive continuous glucose monitoring technology that uses radiofrequency (RF) waves.” ([FDA reports](#) that they granted 71 breakthrough device designation requests out of 100 total designation requests.) Gwave’s research began when a signal resulted from sugar in the tea Dr. Gerry Waintraub spilled onto a microwave sensor. A clinical study of 250 patients was scheduled to get underway at the end of 2021.

One of the more imaginative descriptions is from Zeptronics (KMZ Holdings), with US11134900, which says “Because the electron is a charged body, when the spin of electrons outside the atomic nucleus and orbit change, the electromagnetic wave [] emitted by the atoms that comprise cell [] and body Systems 505 will change.” These changes are on the order of “Micro Gauss or Nano Gauss” and are detected using a probe “the size of a magic marker” operating at “at least 14 GHz.” Detected conditions include CMP, urinalysis, glucose testing, a lipid panel, heart rate, heart rate variability, insulin tests, toxicology tests, and oxygenation monitoring.

GlucoWISE

Another company, called [Mediwise](#), has communicated about the “[Glucowise](#)” noninvasive sensor on their [website](#). The device “extracts” glucose levels “by a non-invasive technique which transmits low-power radio waves through a section of the human body, such as the area between the thumb and forefinger or the earlobe.” The website indicates that the frequency range used is about 65 GHz, (with a wavelength of about 4.6 millimeters, or about 0.2 inches) but there is no information about the expected mechanism of interaction with glucose at that frequency, except the statement that “These waves are large enough to allow penetration through the tissue, yet simultaneously small enough to provide sufficient resolution of the blood regions inside the tissue.” They initially said they expected to begin taking “pre-orders” in late 2016, but later changed that date to 2018, and have since eliminated all such dates from the website. In 2022, the website listed the following under FAQs for their “Meta” sensor: “In the past the release of glucoWISE® was foreseen by 2018, why is it taking so long? This is the first time this type of technology has been developed, and it takes time. We can assure you that our team is working hard, and it is motivated to bring glucoWISE® to life as soon as possible.”

A 2021 article indicates that the company has “made the hammer heavier” by adding NIR transmission to the radio-frequency measurements: “[Enhancing the Accuracy of Non-Invasive Glucose Sensing in Aqueous Solutions Using Combined Millimeter Wave and Near Infrared Transmission](#),” adding wavelengths between 900 and 1800 nm.



The parent company is apparently related to another called [Lamda Guard Technologies](#) (the same CEO and CTO), which claims expertise in “metamaterials” (materials engineered to have properties that have not yet been found in nature, such as Harry

Potter’s invisibility cloak), including transparent coatings for visors that block laser light for pilot safety, and it is apparently these same metamaterials “which temporarily make the skin transparent to the radio waves when a measurement is initiated.” In 2018, Mediwise was [acquired](#) by its parent company, [Metamaterials Technologies, Inc.](#)

An article published in 2018 by Mediwise employees ([J Infrared Milli Terahz Waves \(2018\) 39:761–772](#)) described measurements in pigs. When large amounts of glucose were injected (enough to raise blood glucose to about 700 mg/dL), “Transmission measurements correlated with direct blood glucose measurements, both featuring spikes followed by a slow decay in the signal.” Numerical values for correlation to reference measurements were not disclosed. A 2021 article on this subject “[Feasibility Evaluation of Metamaterial Microwave Sensors for Non-Invasive Blood Glucose Monitoring](#)” appeared in *Sensors* Volume 21 Issue 20 doi: 10.3390/s21206871.

In 2022, “META” apparently unable to complete their work with just RF measurements, [announced](#) that they had combined near-infrared light measurements with RF to improve glucose measurement, in “[Enhancing the Accuracy of Non-Invasive Glucose Sensing in Aqueous Solutions Using Combined Millimeter Wave and Near Infrared Transmission.](#)” Measurement of glucose in “aqueous solutions” is many times easier than measuring in tissue. See, however the entry under “Stimulated Raman spectroscopy” above.

Another entrant in this field, with a technology described as “Radio frequency (RF) spread spectrum identification and quantization of glucose” was Jupiter Devices located in Portland, OR. Their website indicated they had measured glucose *in vitro* from 40-400 mg/dL, but the company had disappeared as of 2020.

One more entrant for this technology, a group called Sensorflo from New Zealand, has published patent application WO2017111623 (with US and European equivalents 20190008422 A1 and EP3389492 A1), describing operation between 4 MHz and 4 GHz and good correlation for a single patient.

Healbe

A company that created a major controversy in this general field is Healbe, with their heavily promoted “Gobe” noninvasive glucose monitor and calorie tracker. They registered on the crowd-funding site Indiegogo, requesting \$100,000, but raised over \$1,000,000. The website claims that the device can not only measure glucose values, but also calorie intake and calories burned. Their [Indiegogo site](#), which is clearly a public relations (or hype) masterpiece, includes incentives for contributions ranging from getting a meter with a value of \$299.99 for just a \$209 contribution (which was accepted by 267 donors) to a \$16,000 donation, which would bring the lucky donor:

“Be Our Guest

\$16000

Enjoy a trip to St. Petersburg, Russia, for two. Includes airfare and hotel for four nights. Spend two days with Healbe™ designers and engineers, and enjoy a celebration dinner in your honor; plus get two Healbe GoBe™ Original 100% Automatic Body Managers™.

0 out of **1** claimed

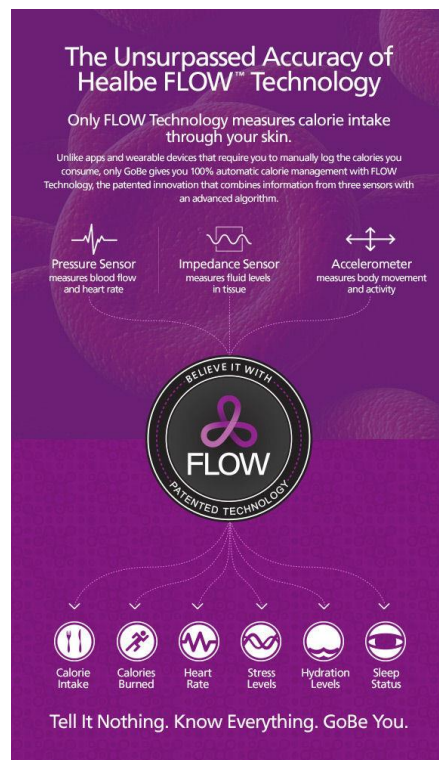
Estimated delivery: **June 2014”**

It appears that this opportunity went unclaimed.

On Pando was an admittedly comic-art-heavy website which said “We have one goal here at PandoDaily: To be the site-of-record for that startup root-system and everything that springs up from it, cycle-after-cycle,” Paul Carr wrote a devastating series of reviews of Healbe and its Indiegogo campaign. A typical title is “Healbe Hustle_ The full story of how a failed Russian cake shop owner humiliated Indiegogo and took “the crowd” for over \$1m _ PandoDaily.” In an interview, Healbe said they chose Indiegogo over Kickstarter, because the latter had more restrictive criteria for inclusion of a funding campaign. It is not clear how many devices have yet been shipped, or how much of the Indiegogo donations have been returned.

One accessible patent application that describes the technology, US20150073242 (which was abandoned in 2018), titled “Method for Determining Glucose Concentration in Human Blood” issued to inventors with Russian names but assigned to Healbe with an address in Redwood City, Ca, claims to measure changes in the amount of extracellular fluid (the combination of interstitial fluid and plasma) by measuring impedance at two different frequencies.

The Indiegogo page added this slick graphic, headlined “How does Healbe GoBe™ work?”



Time will determine if any of this is true. In 2020, the Healbe GoBe3 was listed at \$199 on the website but the word “glucose” no longer appears on the website. The company’s emphasis has shifted to calorie intake and hydration level monitoring.



Not deterred, Healbe was issued US 11,045,093 B2 in 2021 for a “sensor Unit”, which didn’t mention either glucose or sugar, but maybe following a trend, described impedance measurements for blood pressure and other “hemodynamic parameters.” Healbe also claimed on their [website](#) to measure hydration with 89% accuracy.

Magnetics

No list of candidate technologies would be complete unless it included magnetism for measuring glucose levels. [Micromem Applied Sensor Technologies](#) (MAST; New York), a subsidiary of Micromem Technologies (Toronto), a company with experience in magnetoresistive random-access memory chips and fracking, had hoped to transfer what it learned in mining exploration “to noninvasively ‘see’ glucose levels under the skin, enabling diabetics to continuously monitor blood sugar with a device that will look like a wristwatch.” As of 2015, they seem to have abandoned this approach and moved on toward “power line monitoring and energy storage.”

Patent publications indicate that Verily has taken up the magnetic approach (Andy Conrad, US 10,542,918) as has Saleem Sayani (US 10,244,985).

Magnetohydrodynamics: As if to prove that no physical phenomenon has not been applied to this quest, WO 2018/091771 A1, published by Garcia Perez and others from Helsingin Yliopisto in Helsinki, Finland described magnetohydrodynamics. What appears

to be the same company is now called [Glucomodicum](#), has had a patent issued (US 10,945,645), and published an article “[Sampling of fluid through skin with magnetohydrodynamics for noninvasive glucose monitoring](#).” In this technique, where “fluid flow is induced by the Lorentz force generated by external magnetic and electric fields,” interstitial fluid is encouraged to pass through intact skin by application of both forces. The example in the article was porcine skin, with measurement of glucose by colorimetric enzymatic analysis, but they are developing the “Talisman” adhesive patch and a wristwatch. **As of 2023, there is still no indication of the identity of the fluid extracted or its glucose concentration.**



Microporation

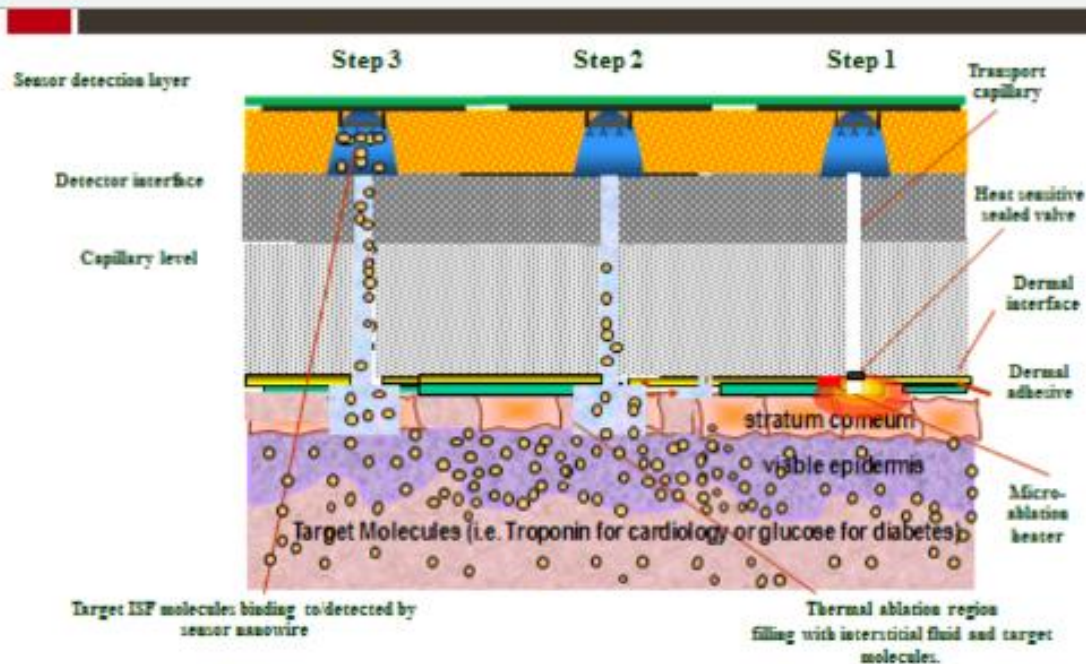
SpectRx, headquartered in Norcross, Georgia, began life as Laser Atlanta, and had been interested in noninvasive glucose measurements for at least fifteen years. Their first approach, which was licensed for a time to Boehringer Mannheim before it became Roche Diagnostics, involved measuring the amount of crosslinking in the lens of the eye. This process is a consequence of both aging and diabetes, and they initially thought it might be reversible enough to track glucose levels. Studies showed that it was essentially irreversible, and could not respond to even weekly changes in glucose levels, let alone those occurring in just a few minutes.¹

¹ SpectRx developed a device called “BiliChek” which noninvasively monitors bilirubin in the skin, especially in babies with jaundice. Bilirubin (a breakdown product of hemoglobin) can be measured through the skin because of its intense yellow-green color. The BiliChek now appears to be owned by [Philips](#).

They moved on to a system they termed “microporation,” and their website showed a “Flash” animation of how it might work: a laser beam creates very small holes in the skin, through which interstitial fluid can be collected and analyzed for glucose with an electrochemical sensor. It is touted as a “continuous” monitor, but the need to find new sites to create the holes would not allow continuous monitoring at one site for very long. In practice, a dye which absorbs near-infrared light is applied to the skin, and a laser burns off the top layer of skin.¹ Abbott invested in the technology for a year or two, but apparently decided it was not a practical approach.

A patent issued in 2006 (US 7,133,717) to Johnson & Johnson consumer product employees, described an “electroporation” technique, but appeared not to go any further.

ClinTech used a similar microporation technique, burning through the surface of the skin with a small microelectronic circuit. Their patents are jointly assigned to Medina ISF Equity LLC in New York, and Touchtek Labs LLC in Maryland but Clintech lists Carson City and Cambridge, UK addresses. They describe both electrochemical glucose detection and “nanowires” that respond to other biomarkers by a change in conductivity.



¹ When I visited their laboratories to see a test first-hand in about 1996, the most memorable part was the thin wisp of smoke that rose up from the site of the “microporation.” Three of us were in attendance, and the test failed to yield enough fluid to test any of us.

It is expected that these “micropores,” like SpectRx’s, would allow a small amount of ISF to be analyzed, but might seal up quickly and be less likely to open up a second time. There is also a chance of changing the composition of ISF where the top layer of skin is burned through. [Pitchbook](#) (a site that provides funding updates and summaries for companies) had this Terse summary of Clintech/Touchtek’s existence as of 2018:

FOUNDED: 2014 FINANCING ROUNDS: 2 STATUS: OUT OF BUSINESS

A similar approach for electroporation was disclosed by Kiffik Inc. of Montreal, in US 9,986,979, and the same company (or at least the same inventors) were formerly known as Invafree HMS. In 2021, Kiffik published a patent application for detection of COVID-19, using the same technique.

Optical Coherence Tomography

This powerful imaging technique, which allows investigators to effectively see optical images of tissue structures several millimeters below the surface of opaque tissue, was reported as a noninvasive technique by [Motamedi](#) and coworkers at the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston. It operates by measuring changes in the scattering of light, usually at near-infrared wavelengths, as a function of depth.

This technique was extensively explored by GlucoLight in Bethlehem, PA, under a license agreement from the University of Texas. A number of intriguing patents and publications appeared with descriptions of how the technique could allow determination of glucose by detecting changes in the scattering coefficient of tissue at varying depths. It was speculated in one [publication](#) that the observed changes in scattering were the result of glucose molecules reversibly attaching to tissue proteins the same way they attach to hemoglobin and other proteins in blood. The approach seemed to hold great promise, not only for measuring glucose but also for its ability to elucidate some of the fundamental limitations encountered by near-infrared spectroscopy, but the company became a victim to the funding “drought” that accompanied the 2008 recession and has passed from

existence.¹ GlucoLight's patents are now owned by GLT Acquisition Corp, in Irvine, CA, the same company that also owns patents formerly issued to Sensys and which brought these patents to the Masimo subsidiary Cercacor. A patent application by Cercacor in 2021 (US 2021/0113121 A1) describes possibly the greatest number of noninvasive sensors ever combined: an optical coherence tomography (OCT) device, a spectrometer (for example, a Raman spectrometer), a plethysmograph sensor such as a pulse oximetry device (for example, a near infrared (NIR), reflectance and/or transmittance device, a pressure sensor, an electrocardiogram sensor, a bioimpedance sensor, or acoustic sensor, among others. A similar but slightly less complex patent (US 11,026,604 B2) directed to "harmonizing" multiple measurements issued to Cercacor the same year.

A second group, Newton Photonics, had a patent application published in 2007 using the same basic OCT technology as Motamedi, except that it used a variety of temperatures to tease out variations in scattering coefficients from various depths of tissue. The application issued in 2011 as U.S. Patent 8,078,244, but the website had disappeared as of 2018.

Yet another group, Compact Imaging (formerly FP Technology) in Mountain View, California, has obtained a number of patents over the years (some related to glucose measurement), with most issued to the founder and CTO, Josh Hogan. They have a technology called MRO™ (for "multiple reference OCT") which they say is "a miniature form of OCT that at volume is projected to be comparable in size and cost to the optical pick-up unit in a DVD drive" and could potentially allow a miniaturized OCT apparatus small enough and with low enough power requirements to produce a consumer glucose meter based on this technology. As of 2022, the company may no longer be operating.

An unusual patent (US 10,779,755 B2) was issued to Ik Soo Jun of Dadam Micro Inc. of Korea (founded "with the vision of being the world market leader in disruptive embedded

¹ The principals of GlucoLight demonstrated a notable exception to the culture of secrecy that surrounds most noninvasive investigations. When I was hired by a potential investor to evaluate the technology, Matt Schurman and Ray Krauss (two principals in the company) shipped me a prototype instrument for evaluation, flew to California to meet with me, and disclosed the technology in unusually candid terms, even discussing potential problems and disadvantages.

systems with smart convergence technologies”) in 2020. It proposes both optical time domain reflectometry (OTDR) and optical frequency domain reflectometry (OFDR) for measurement of glucose. These are both alternatives to OCT which use monochromatic light and measure the rate of change of reflected light with depth in skin. One passage indicates that the wavelength range is 1.30 to 1.55 μm , a normal NIR wavelength range for glucose, but there is very sparse information regarding the actual process for making the glucose measurement. The Patent Examiner¹ seemed equally uncertain about the description of the process, but did not find the technique published in any prior art and allowed the claims.

Gases emanating from the skin—a company called Better Life Technologies communicated a previously unknown approach to noninvasive glucose measurement. George McKinney, president/CEO, said. “We believe that we are on the verge of a great breakthrough with a novel approach to glucose monitoring focusing on analyzing gases emanating from the skin.” His Indiegogo [campaign](#) for a “Wireless Wearable Non-invasive Glucose Monitor--A better way to monitor diabetes and cancer in children and adults” had raised \$160 of the \$50,000 goal in early 2017. A MedStartr campaign for the same device had not done as well. A patent for McKinney’s invention, US 10,959,651, issued in 2021, describes the use of infrared spectroscopy to detect “emissions” composed of volatile organic compounds (“human gases”), but without identifying any of those compounds.

¹ The Examiner was Eric Frank Winakur, who has examined a tremendous number of noninvasive glucose patent applications, and is probably one of few people who have looked at more of these applications than I have. “Prosecution histories” which list interactions with the patent office for patents and applications after application, can be explored, and insights into the examination process gained, at <https://patentcenter.uspto.gov/> by entering the application Serial Number (in this case, 16/097,483) and opening the tab labeled “Documents & Transactions.”



Roche has WO 2021/167918 A1, focusing on volatiles from skin such as nitrogen oxide, carbon monoxide, ethanol and benzene.

In Finland, Lakka Health Oy has WO 2021/170914 A1, focusing on acetone and/or isoprene emissions to detect hyper- and hypoglycemia.

An expansion of this approach from Turkey (EP 3 824 811 A1) involves injecting a volatile boronate agent into the skin to complex with glucose, then collecting emitted gases to monitor glucose.

Teeth—One of the more surprising discoveries in this field is that teeth are relatively transparent in the near-infrared. A U.S. patent application (US 2015/0305658 A1), which claims priority to a US provisional patent application Serial No. 61/747,472, states “By shining light through the teeth, which have fewer spectral artifacts than skin in the near-infrared, the blood constituents may be measured with less interfering artifacts.” It includes the figure below but does not indicate that any actual glucose measurements were made. The “pulp” inside teeth is reported to be extensively vascularized, with a high rate of blood flow.

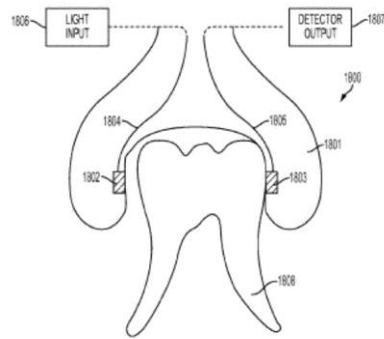


FIG. 18A

Another tooth-based measurement system (WO 2015/176004 A1) takes advantage of a dental crown to attach sensors for measurement of pH, glucose, and various chemicals found in saliva.

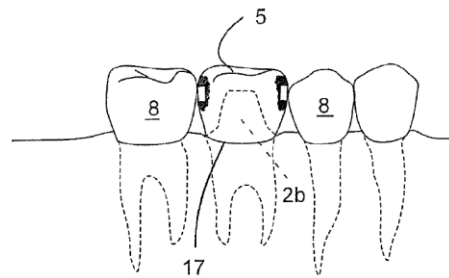
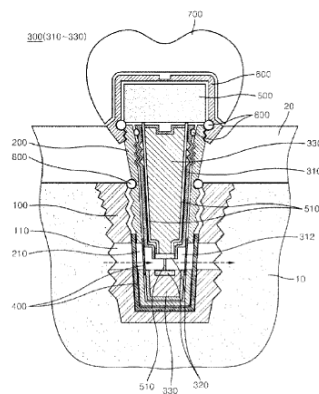


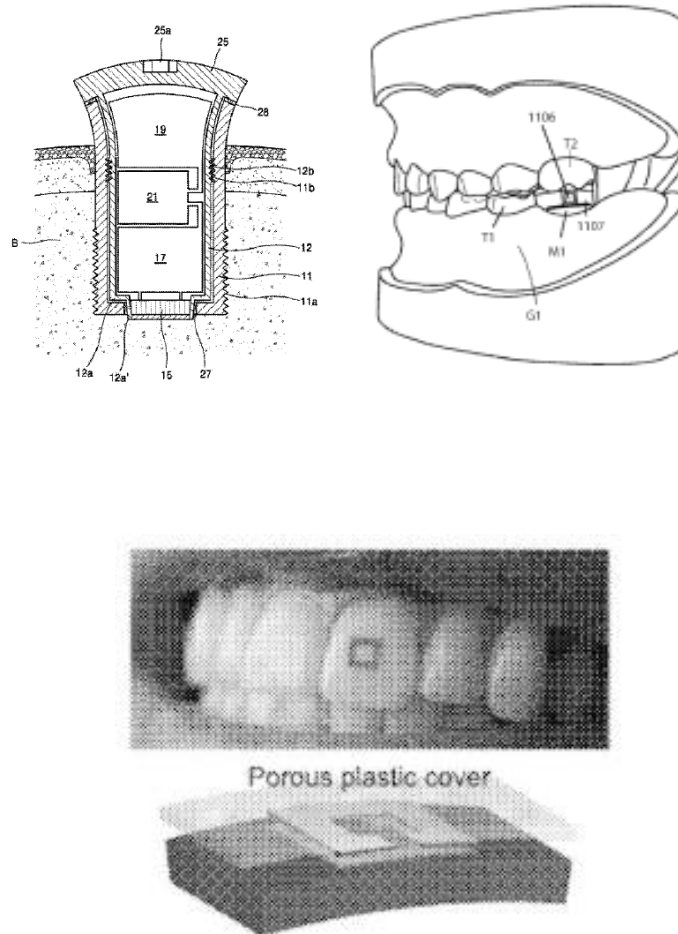
Fig. 2b

Yet another patent application (US 20170049393) describes a sensor as “noninvasive,” but requires implantation in bone, in the form of a tooth implant.

[Figure 1]



Other patents for tooth implant glucose sensors were issued to In Han Lee (US 10,980,449, left) and Uchu Biosensors (WO 2021/155285, right) in 2021.



Finally, US 2019/029823 (above) published by the Trustees of Tufts University and Fiorenzo G. Omenetto, could be applied to the surface of a tooth to detect glucose levels as changes in resonant frequency between 300 and 650 MHz.

Photoacoustic glucose measurements of molar teeth with a “tooth-attachable body” were described in US 2023/0293055 A1 by Joseph Parsi, a San Antonio, TX dentist,

Green-turquoise Light: A US patent application 20170209081, assigned to Biolab Technologies, Ltd. In Jerusalem, proposes that glucose may be measured in tissue at least in part by its absorption of “green-turquoise light” of 490 to 505 nm, but no details of the

absorption mechanism are provided. The range of glucose-detection visible colors was extended by [Basil Leaf Technologies](#) LLC (Basil Harris) to blue, green, red, and/or infrared (US 2020/0060585), stating “Applicant has discovered that blood glucose levels reliably influence the absorption of certain wavelengths of light, particularly in the blue and/or green spectra.” [Dia-Vit](#) of London (EP 3 359 038) combines blue light (430-480 nm) and near-infrared light (700-3000 nm, preferably 940 nm), pulsed at two different frequencies, to measure glucose. Light of this wavelength range has also been proposed by the ELG Corporation of Fort Smith, AR for monitoring glycated hemoglobin (US 11,089,979 B2).

Volume Detection—A patent application from the University of Illinois (US 2016/0252505) utilizes a hydrogel the volume of which changes on contact with glucose. The expansion of the gel can be detected either optically or electronically. A similar approach has been used by a Norwegian company named [Glucoset](#) for glucose measurements inside blood vessels.

Thermal and “Combination” Techniques

Temperature--OptiScan Biomedical (now in Chapter 11 bankruptcy) had an initial approach where the temperature of tissue was manipulated in an attempt to cause variation in the optical emission of glucose in the infrared, supposedly to take advantage of metabolic activity changes with varying glucose levels. The first patent to appear indicated that the fingertip temperature would be a good indication of glucose; U.S. Patent 6954661 has the following statement:

“Blood sugar levels are measured non-invasively based on temperature measurement. Measured blood sugar levels are corrected using blood oxygen saturation and blood flow volume. The measurement data is further stabilized by taking into consideration the influences of interfering substances on blood oxygen saturation.”

An example of another thermal approach used two locations near the ear to determine short-term trends in glucose, is U.S. Patent 6,949,070, issued in 2005 to Larry Ishler of Erie, PA, (whose son was reportedly diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes in college about ten years earlier) with a company called LWI & Associates, but there were no follow-ups. A

patent, U.S. 7,729,734 for a combination of measurements, creatively termed biothermophotonic, issued in to Mandelis, *et al.* 2010, but the name was revised for a second patent to the same inventors in 2013, US 8,452,360, to a “photothermal radiometric” measurement.

One more device was announced by [Pioneer IoT](#) in Alexandria New South Wales to be available for A\$1499, based partly on thermal properties of tissue they called “metabolic heat conformation.”



A patent application has appeared (US 2015/0297123) seeking to measure glucose from the temperature difference recorded in insulin dependent and non-insulin independent tissues of the body. Suggested examples of such tissues are “(oral mucosa, skin eyeball, etc.) and non-insulin dependent organs (fundus lens, retina adjacent to retinal tissue of the vitreous body).”

Another patent application for a method using short bursts of ultrasound was filed by Joseph Frattarola in 2003 (US20030013947), but never matured into an issued patent, and a second application, US 2016/0374599, published in late 2016, shortly after the obituary for the inventor. **An implantable sensor using ultrasound by Iota Biosciences was described in US 2022/0062650 A1.**

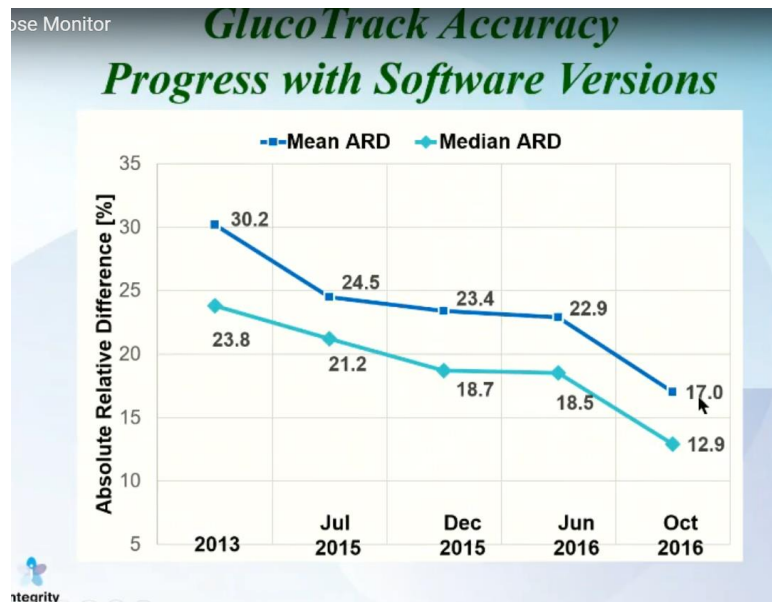
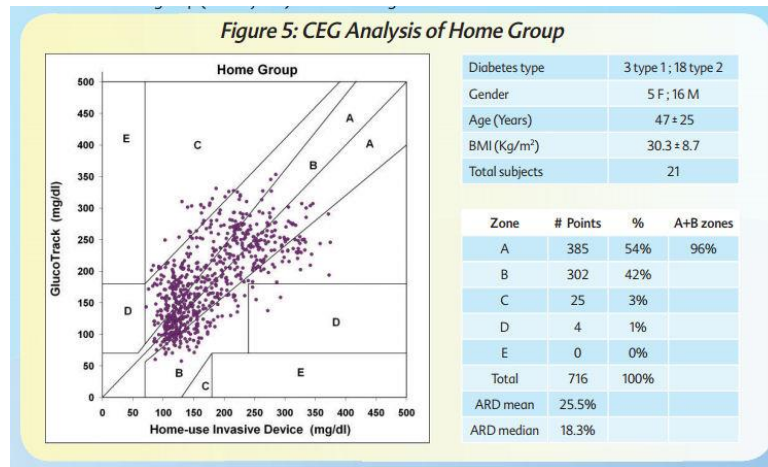
U.S. Patent 8,315,681 issued in late 2012, assigned to Toshiba Medical and describing a temperature-modifying system attached to skin for glucose measurement. Its inventors include Omar Khalil, a long-time veteran of many noninvasive glucose investigations at Abbott Laboratories.

It is typical of these investigations that, as good results are hard to produce by the initial approach, additional corrective measurements are added to remove interferences. This familiar process was defined by one investor, a retired venture capitalist and a veteran of many noninvasive glucose quests, as the process of “making the hammer heavier.”



A company that has had the most success with this “combination of ingredients” approach is [Integrity Applications](#), of Ashkelon, Israel. The company’s first issued U.S. patent, 6,954,662, states that the approach uses ultrasonic, conductivity and heat capacity sensors in an earlobe clip to noninvasively measure glucose levels in the blood (the patent cites both the Ishler thermal and the Frattarola ultrasound references above). Poster presentations have been made annually at diabetes conferences, with those through 2007 listing the three technologies above. Beginning in posters in 2008 and with a later-issued patent (US 8,235,897) the conductivity measurement was removed and “electromagnetic”¹ was added. At the 2011 American Diabetes Association conference the poster showed that, within seven days of calibration of the unit, the average error in home-use situations was 25.5%, and that 42% of the points were in the “B” region of the Clarke Error Grid, with 4% in the “C” and “D” regions. These would generally not be considered clinically acceptable results, but in studies with 2016 dates, the performance was reported to be much improved.

¹ The patent describes the change to impedance from conductance: “To reflect changes in the tissue electrical impedance caused by varying glucose, the electromagnetic channel (EMC) includes a special auto-oscillating circuit. [] Frequencies may range from 5 K Hertz (5 KHZ) up to 100 K Hertz (100 KHZ) and the amplitudes vary from about 0.1 volts to 1.5 volts.”



In June of 2013, Integrity received the CE Mark approval for its GlucoTrack® DF-F noninvasive blood glucose meter, which allows it to be sold in most of the European Union countries (this is one of just a few noninvasive meters to receive CE approval since the second version of the Glucowatch was approved in 2002¹). No submission has yet been made to the FDA to allow sale in the U.S. (they said they hoped to have approval by 2019, but didn't realize that hope), and although there have been many reports of distributorships, it is not clear how many shipments of systems outside of Israel

¹ Pendra's Pendragon received a CE Mark in 2003, Orsense in 2008, Cnoga in 2011, and C8 Medisensors in late 2012. None of these other manufacturers had a system that was ready for the market, and that casts some doubt on the CE mark as a meaningful regulatory approval process.

have been made. The company had two trials reported on clinicaltrials.gov, opened in 2007 and 2009, but in 2017, both were reported as “The recruitment status of this study is unknown. The completion date has passed and the status has not been verified in more than two years.”

A “hangout” interview with Medgadget is available [online](#), in which the founder, Avner Gal, explains and demonstrates the device. He demonstrates the use of the ear clip (attaching it to his ear backwards from the instructions on the screen), and that the measurement time is 60 seconds, but provides some highly suspect justification for the 6-month replacement interval for the clip, because “the spring might break.” The number of cycles before a compression spring breaks from fatigue is ordinarily measured in millions, and any mechanical engineer worth his salt could design a spring for such a clip that would easily outlast the user. This points out a constant conflict with a true noninvasive device—if it never wears out, the initial selling price is the only revenue source for the maker. Even with the recommended [selling price](#) of \$2,000, investors prefer a continuing revenue stream, which has now been established for this device at \$200 for two ear clips each year. Gal spends time in the interview explaining that, because the name of their company includes “Integrity,” he won’t pretend that other analytes can be measured with their technology.¹ Apparently, that doesn’t extend to his justification of the need to replace the ear clip.²

Nevertheless, the company raised \$15M in February of 2020 in a [private placement](#), with continuing hopes of applying for FDA clearance in the U.S.

In October of 2023, the company (renamed GlucoTrack in 2021, based in Chantilly, Virginia, and with stock trading on the Nasdaq exchanges and selling at the time of this announcement for \$0.25/share) [announced](#) that it had “achieved another milestone in its development of an implantable continuous glucose monitor (CGM) by commencing

¹ Because the measurement is heavily dependent on the metabolism of glucose for the thermal measurement, it’s unlikely that any other analyte outside of oxygen could be measured with the selected technologies. A function of that analyte can be measured with a fingertip pulse oximeter that sells for less than \$15.

² I have used a GlucoTrack system many times, but have not had success with results that compare well to fingerstick glucose measurements. Part of the measurement process includes entering the time and size of the most recent meal.

preclinical animal testing.” No details of the sensor were provided, but it is expected to last for at least two years post-implant. It is remarkable for a company that has been touting noninvasive measurements since its founding in 2001 to switch over to an implantable sensor.

Yet another such combination has been patented by Esenaliev (US 8,135,450), who has published investigations into [optical coherence tomography](#) (see that section) at the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston. It involves measuring changes in tissue dimensions (thickness, length, width, diameter, curvature, or roughness).” It is reminiscent of the Integrity Applications approach above. The same researcher has a recent patent (US 10,188,325) using “time of flight of ultrasound or optical pulses in the target tissue and determining a glucose value from the thickness of the target tissue.” He has investigated a [wide range of possible methods](#) for noninvasive glucose measurement.

A different combination published by Chowdhury, et al., in the International Journal of Diabetes in Developing Countries is: “[Noninvasive blood glucose measurement utilizing a newly designed system based on modulated ultrasound and infrared light](#).”

Another “combination” approach is BodyMedia, who had a patent application that published (US 2015-0282767 A1), and uses “machine learning techniques” to combine signals from body-worn sensors that include a “body motion sensor, a heat flux sensor, and a skin conductance sensor,” together with a “second set of signals comprising a heat flux high gain average variance [], a vector sum of transverse and longitudinal accelerometer [], and a galvanic skin response low gain [sensor].” BodyMedia was acquired by Jawbone, and support for its devices was terminated in early 2016 (followed by the liquidation of Jawbone itself).

A very confusing pair of patent applications (US 2019/0295729, US 2019/0261900) by Global Health Ark Medical Technology in Beijing appear to combine temperature and humidity sensors with impedance sensors. The U.S. Patent Examiner shared this author’s confusion, stating: “Claims 1 -7 are rejected... as failing to comply with the enablement requirement. The claims contain subject matter which was not described in the

specification in such a way as to enable one skilled in the art to which it pertains...make and/or use the invention.”

Another thermal device that’s hard to learn about is from [Diabet-con](#) (somehow related to Adventist Health Care International), with a single PCT patent application (in Russian). The Google translation indicates it is a thermal imager that looks at the “temperature values on the key areas of the lens, vascular bundle of the eyeball, fundus, as well as the temperature of the skin area located near the eye” to determine glucose levels, but it is not clear how these measurements are converted to glucose levels. It is reminiscent of Mark Abreu’s “brain tunnel” described above.

One more patent that can only be read through a Google translation is in Russian (PCT/RU2020/050324), and describes “isothermal calorimetric spectroscopy.” **The inventor is Ramil Faritovich Musin from Moscow, who has followed up with a U.S. application in late 2022 (2022/0369958 AI), with figures 52-54 showing spectacular accuracy in studies of up to 42 patients, with a claimed 98.3% of results falling into Clark Error Grid zones A and B; however, the mathematical and structural bases of the measurement are not clearly spelled out.**

A combination record of some sort may have been set by [Novanex, Inc.](#) (US 8,676,284), using three temperature sensors, two humidity sensors, an infrared sensor and an optical measurement device.

Another company, originally called “Drive Safe Glucose Monitoring Systems, Inc.” (now known as “DSGM Systems, ” and relegated to just a [FaceBook page](#) and a [YouTube video](#)), had a proposed product called Glusonic, which they said was “The first glucose monitor to combine invasive and non-invasive features. The GluSonic Alert™ glucose monitor will alert [the user] to dangerous lows or highs before they happen.” No technology is described, but the company’s website included the ubiquitous wristwatch picture (the picture file on their website was named “mock up”). They had extended the search for funding to a YouTube video named “Drive Safe Glucose Monitoring Systems, Inc. - Elevator Pitch” complete with “audience reaction” shots. As of 2020, they still said “DSGM Systems is commercializing a breakthrough technology to produce the first-of-its-kind, user-

friendly, non-invasive glucose monitor that continuously tracks blood glucose levels and trends painlessly, in a wristwatch format,” but that statement is no longer displayed. William Cross, who is listed as President of DSGM on his LinkedIn page, has founded Vasocorp (a company with supplements for diabetes featured prominently on its [home page](#)), and has a U.S. Patent assigned to himself, rather than a company (U.S. 9,538,943), that issued in 2017 for a “combination invasive and noninvasive glucose monitor.” Both he and his venture strategy advisor state that they have diabetes.



Evanescent Wave Spectroscopy

VivoMedical: A long-time darling of esoteric technology aficionados is a technique known as “evanescent wave” spectroscopy. When light is reflected from the interface between any two materials of different refractive indices, the light penetrates the interface to a depth of approximately one-half wavelength of the light (for green light of 550 nm, the penetration is about 275 nm (0.275 microns)) into the second material. Although this approach has been attempted several times, in Japan and elsewhere, the thickness of dead skin everywhere on the outer surface of tissue (called the “stratum corneum”), is probably too great to allow light to interact with glucose using this approach, and any glucose it holds is probably not closely related to current blood levels.

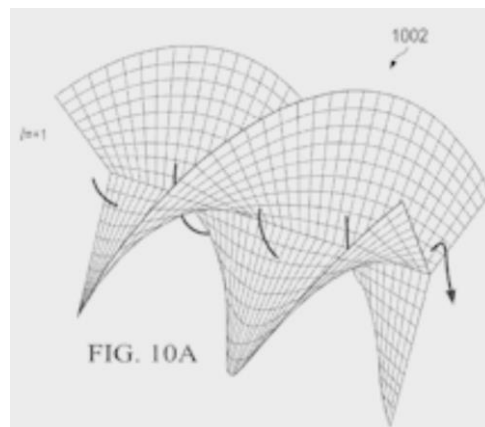
A Cupertino, California, startup called MedOptix (later renamed VivoMedical) sought to overcome this problem by measuring glucose in the extremely thin layer of sweat that forms on skin before it evaporates (after all, if a technique can only penetrate a very small

distance into a material, an extremely thin film is no limitation). Unfortunately, as maintained by the Second Law, no reliable amount of glucose finds its way into sweat, whether the film is thick or thin, and this company failed to achieve success. After failing to obtain continuing funding for the evanescent wave approach, the company briefly moved to physical collection of sweat for glucose measurement, but investors were equally unenthusiastic about this approach, and the company no longer exists.

A company that made a brief appearance with a similar approach is Rare Light, Inc., which uses a specific angle of illumination of mid-infrared light into tissue for what is described as “peri-critical reflectance spectroscopy” in a patent, US 8,730,468. The technology may have been acquired by Apple during their investigation into noninvasive glucose measurements before abandoning it.

Very similar evanescent wave approaches were patented by Koichi Yamakawa of the National Institutes for Quantum and Radiological Science and Technology in Japan, using mid-infrared light of 9.26 microns, and Yuji Matsuura of Sumitomo Electric Industries, Ltd, (EP 3 919 891 A1) at similar wavelengths. Mitsubishi also participated in this Japanese evanescent wave parade, with US 11,197,614 B2 in late 2021, as did Ricoh Company with US 2021/0259586 A2. Samsung added a pressure sensor to its version in EP 3 212 085 B1.

Orbital Angular Momentum—a combination of Raman spectroscopy with orbital angular momentum ([NxGen Partners](#), US 10,444,148), has, if not the greatest sensitivity for glucose (examples are provided for measuring 5-15% glucose in water), some of the most artfully-drawn patent figures.

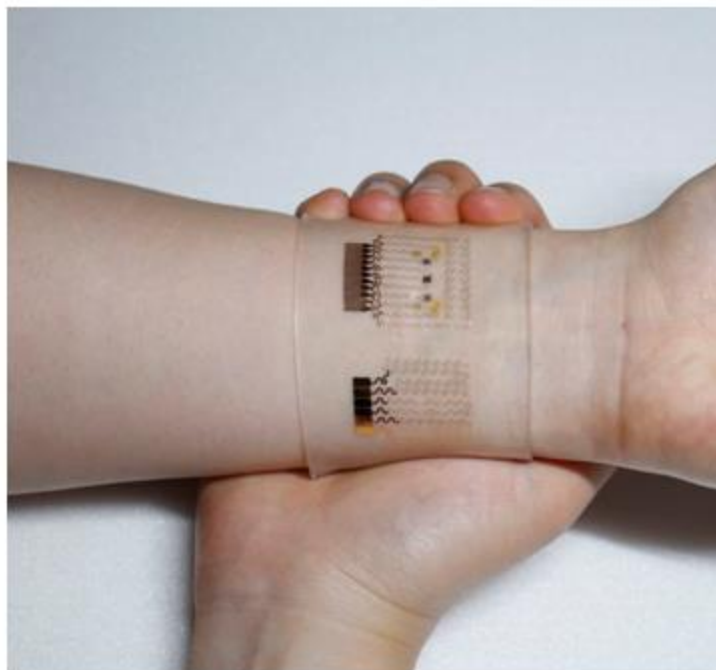


Behavioral: CaloSense from Israel has had an application published (US 2021/0345915) that seeks to detect “anomalies in glucose level” by interpreting behavioral changes from changes in activity, sleep, stress, etc.

Sweat –More than once a year, a means for measuring glucose in sweat is published.

To summarize this section, just like saliva and tears, sweat contains some glucose, but so far not shown to be at levels that correlate well enough with blood glucose that it can be trusted for monitoring glucose for people with diabetes.

Seoul National University: The [headline says](#), of a device developed jointly with Massachusetts flexible electronics company MC10 “This wearable patch uses sweat to monitor blood glucose levels and can automatically deliver medication with microneedles.” In work published in *Nature Nanotechnology*, it was reported “Researchers have created a patch that both monitors blood glucose and delivers medication when needed;” unfortunately, it does neither. While the technology uses graphene, a current trending material, it can only measure glucose in sweat, which does not correlate well with blood glucose. They say “Once a high [glucose] level is detected, heaters in the patch start to dissolve a layer of coating, exposing microneedles that then release a drug called metformin that can regulate and reduce high blood sugar levels.” While metformin is the number one oral drug for people with type 2 diabetes, it is ineffective if injected. Another good-sounding, but totally impractical device. An IEEE review article “[Wearable Sweat Biosensors](#)” from [2016 IEEE International Electron Devices Meeting \(IEDM\)](#), San Francisco, CA, USA (DOI: [10.1109/IEDM.2016.7838363](#)) is even less enthusiastic about this method.



University of Texas, Dallas: In a study published online in the journal *Sensors and Actuators B: Chemical*, Dr. Shalini Prasad, professor of bioengineering in the [Erik Jonsson School of Engineering and Computer Science](#), and her coauthors demonstrated the capabilities of a biosensor they designed with the intent to reliably detect and quantify glucose in human sweat.

Eccrine systems: This company, headquartered in Cincinnati, OH, has a PCT patent application (WO 2016/197116 A1) for detection of glucose (among other analytes) in sweat, with the intent of detection of “physiological states.” Acknowledging the variable glucose content of sweat over different rates of sweat production, they propose measuring electrolytes, sweat pH and rate, galvanic skin response, and others, to create a hypoglycemic profile for the user. They do not contend that they can monitor blood glucose using this fluid. Latest news: [Inside the demise of Eccrine Systems - Cincinnati Business](#). In 2022, it was announced that “[Epicore Biosystems buys defunct Cincinnati startup Eccrine Systems' assets.](#)”

In what could be one of the least likely combinations to actually measure glucose, Samsung (US 11,471,133 B2) proposed measuring glucose in sweat using near-infrared

light. Phillips has proposed (EP 4 085 837 A1) measuring glucose in sweat before and after application of “external positive pressure” to a fingertip.

Another entrant is [Glucose Biosensor Systems](#), (now named [Intelligent Bio Solutions](#)) with a New York City address, but actually in China, that licensed technology from an Australian company that acquired intellectual property from the University of Newcastle. A patent that was part of that IP, US 9,755,199, describes electrochemical glucose measurement with thin film transistors. Their [website](#) now lists a sweat test for “commonly abused drugs via the fingertips.”

[Gentag](#): This company says it can provide “Pain-Free Diabetes Monitoring,” presumably from measurements of glucose in sweat, as described in U.S. patent US 7969307, that issued in 2011. They stated in a September, 2015 article they shared with Eccrine in *The Economist* that they had hoped to put such a product on the market in 2016 but had not by 2022. They now feature: “Gentag predicted the need for self-monitoring technologies for a pandemic such as [Covid-19](#) and owns key early issued patents covering wireless fever monitoring patches...”

Another entrant with a “wearable” system from Taiwan is Goldensunda Technology Co., (US 2017/0065231).

Binghamton University (SUNY) has developed a [paper-based, self-powered patch](#) to test glucose in sweat that “integrates a vertically stacked, paper-based glucose/oxygen enzymatic fuel cell into a standard Band-Aid adhesive patch.”

University of Bath has also announced (and published a patent application, US 2020/0008717) a transdermal “[patch](#)” to measure glucose in “fluid secreted from hair follicles.” Richard Guy, who was intimately involved in the development of the original “GlucoWatch,” has tested the new device (which again operates by “reverse iontophoresis”) on pig skin, and predicted that a commercial device based on it could be “calibration-free.”



Another entrant is [Graphwear Technologies](#) in San Francisco, which uses electrochemistry based on novel graphene semiconductors to determine glucose in sweat (US 2019/0257732). touting “The world's first needle-free continuous glucose monitoring wearable.” In October of 2021, Graphwear closed its [Series B funding](#) with \$20.5M.

Also from Berkeley authors is “[Regional and correlative sweat analysis using high-throughput microfluidic sensing patches toward decoding sweat](#)”, who say “To investigate sweat-to-blood glucose relations more comprehensively, we conduct a population study of fasting blood and sweat glucose levels across healthy and diabetic cohorts of 20 and 28 subjects each,” finding “correlation coefficients of 0.28 and 0.42.”

Also, researchers from Tsinghua University in Beijing published “[Integrated textile sensor patch for real-time and multiplex sweat analysis](#)” for sensors made of silk. [Supplemental materials](#) to the article add more facts and photographs, but no correlation data.

A technical tour-de-force sweat sensor came from [SP Global](#) (Chantilly, VA) in 2021: US 2021/0169357 A1. Their system includes “a sweat sensor, at least one temperature sensor, a pH sensor, a heart rate sensor, a blood oxygen sensor (e.g., a pulse oximetry sensor), an accelerometer, a glucose sensor, and/or at least one sympathetic nervous system (stress) sensor.

The University of Oulu and Polar Electro Oy in Finland are developing an “[electro-plasmonic chip](#)” to monitor glucose and other compounds in sweat.

Another group of academics at Ohio State and the University of Wisconsin have described another, more stylish approach to sweat monitoring ([Battery-free, tuning circuit–inspired wireless sensor systems for detection of multiple biomarkers in bodily fluids](#)): “Demonstration of a “smart necklace” following this device concept integrated

with functional “pendant,” “clasp,” and “chain” illustrates real-time monitoring of glucose in sweat during field testing.”

Fringe Players

This section has been reserved for investigators or technologies that exceed the norms of scientific techniques and behaviors.

Solid State Farms: Milton Fuller was an eccentric inventor who felt he would be able to measure glucose using “microwave spectroscopy,” basically by applying microwave energy at various frequencies to a fingertip, and measuring the amount of energy absorbed or reflected. Since little is known about the specifics of interaction between molecules in condensed media like tissue and microwaves, his conjectures were considered viable, if not persuasive. His research was rumored to have been sponsored at the level of a million dollars by Ames (Bayer) in 1986 or 1987, and he continued to insist for many years that his techniques would work. Unfortunately, he was also convinced that one of his researchers had been murdered by a “large corporation” just as they were closing in on the solution, and it continued to evade him.¹ Milton passed away between the first and second editions of this book.

Renamed Pindi Products, the company maintained a gossamer existence for a number of years after identifying the technology as “radiomolecular magnetics.” This technology was at one time licensed to a company called Diabetex International in Connecticut, but that company appeared to also pass from existence some years ago.

¹ Milton was one of the first investigators I spent time with at LifeScan, and I found his personality and technical investigations so unusual that I made it a requirement that any employee who joined the noninvasive research group visit him during the first few weeks of employment. The experience helped to calibrate them with regard to the claims and procedures they would encounter for as long as they participated in the evaluation of noninvasive techniques. The Pindi website in 2006 gave this description of Milton: “As someone with long experience and wisdom in the ways of business and intellectual property, Milton can be thought of as the guardian or captain of the technology. He has prevented numerous attempts at theft and takeover, and he has successfully guided and grown the company towards its destiny as the premier non-invasive technology and products company in the world.”

However, in 2012, the patents issued to Milton Fuller and Pindi Products were assigned to RF Science & Technology, which began raising funding. One report on the company at that time was titled “[RF Science and Technology, a Stalled Device Startup With Bloodless Glucometer Tech Seeks Biz Partners. Any Takers?](#)” In 2015, a successor company named [GlucoRecs](#), under the leadership of John Vigurie in Mountain View, CA, raised angel funding for the same technology and began trying to raise more funds from venture capital sources. Since some of the patents still bear Milton Fuller’s name, this approach has been awarded honorary “30-Year Club Membership.”



Glucorecs Finger Sampling

As of 2018, the Glucorecs website was still active, with an updated picture of their device, now named Glufit, and little other information, but it had disappeared by 2020.



Here is one [additional perspective](#), added on Medium (an online platform), in 2016.

Visionary Medical Products Corporation: This was an example of a company president's worst technology nightmare. An entrepreneur, Thomas Castellano, had been seated next to a member of Johnson & Johnson's executive committee on a commercial airline flight and convinced him that his company had truly achieved noninvasive glucose measurement. The executive called LifeScan's president, insisted that a meeting be set up between the company and LifeScan's senior management and that the results of the meeting be sent to him as soon as the discussion was completed.

Unfortunately, the entrepreneur had neither a device nor a technology for noninvasive glucose measurement and was unable to articulate a plan for participating in the field. He brought along a "business advisor," a man who touted connections to the Hollywood film industry but with no experience in diabetes. LifeScan's management team listened politely to the presentation but informed them that there was no opportunity to fund or invest in a company with no visible technology. The result was that the "business advisor" wrote a diatribe to the J&J executive, describing that the company managers were ignorant about diabetes, that they were unable to comprehend the technology presented, and that the group was rude and insensitive to their visitors. Fortunately, his communication was so extreme that the J&J executive could see why the LifeScan group chose not to pursue the technology.

Some of Castellano's patents for insulin "pens" with glucose meters attached were sold to Becton Dickinson and became the basis for a patent infringement suit filed against Insulet Corporation, the premier maker of "patch" insulin pumps.

Dr. Schmidt: Although this account attempts to be charitable, there are certain individuals whose motives or balance must be questioned. One such was an advertisement for a noninvasive device from a Dr. Schmidt in Ulm, Germany, that appeared in the early 1990's. When a local LifeScan sales representative visited the listed address, he found only Dr. Schmidt's Sex-shoppe, with many exotic devices, but no indication of anything intended for glucose measurements.

Hemadyne: Another was an individual named Al Snitkof, whose Hemadyne Company in White Plains, NY, announced through the unusual medium of Internet diabetes

discussion groups that he had solved the problem of measuring glucose, had developed an instrument that used a single laser diode, and would be producing it and selling it at very low cost to people in need. Several attempts to meet with him to discuss his invention led to less-than-credible excuses after the arrival of industry representatives at the assigned meeting places. His device was never commercialized, and one suspects, never existed in workable form.

Summary

In laboratories around the world, the pursuit continues today and is likely to continue until techniques have been perfected.¹ The combination of economic and emotional factors creates a powerful driving force, and there remains an inexhaustible supply of bright, determined researchers who will struggle against the historical odds until success is finally achieved.

As in the attempts detailed here, the horizon will continue to be clouded by spurious correlation, incomplete understanding of the sources of error, lack of rigorous evaluation of results, and wishful interpretation of data. Unlike the cure for cancer, where partial success has been achieved in many areas, this one still seeks a breakthrough. It is hoped that the attempts detailed here will help to prevent others from repeating past mistakes and premature announcements, but a rational assessment would suggest many more lie ahead.

A March 1998 edition of an IEEE (Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers) publication called the *Leos Newsletter* was devoted to techniques for noninvasive measurement of glucose. In an overview paper in that edition, R. W. Waynant and V. M. Chenault, of the Office of Science and Technology and Office of Device Evaluation, respectively, in the Food and Drug Administration's Center for Devices and Radiological Health had the following comments:

"With ever improving advances in diagnostic technology, the race for the next generation of bloodless, painless, accurate glucose instruments has begun.

However, many hurdles remain before these products reach the commercial marketplace.

Calibration of the instruments and validation of the results obtained by the optical methods under different environmental conditions and used by different patient populations (i.e., different ages, sizes and ethnic origins) must be performed. The devices may have to be calibrated to individual users.

¹ As in the blood glucose monitoring market today, the different forms of diabetes, the varying requirements of different regulatory agencies around the world, the range of individual preferences of consumers, and the intense competition among the participating companies could allow for more than one successful product.

Current instrumentation lacks specificity due to substantial chemical and physical interferences. The devices use multivariate regression analyses that convert the optical signal to a glucose concentration. Large amounts of data are used to build the glucose model and must take into consideration the concentration range, sampling environment and other factors involved in the analysis. First an instrument must be designed that accurately detects glucose concentration. Correlation and clinical interpretation of this value, in respect to the patient's "true glucose" value, is imperative for optimum therapy and disease management.

Considerable progress has been made in the development of non-invasive glucose devices however, at this time, frequent testing using invasive blood glucose determination via fingerstick provides the best information for diabetes disease management."

As Jim Berg, a spokesperson for MiniMed, one of the long-term players in this field, was quoted in a March 1997 article in *Medical Device and Diagnostic Industry* magazine:

"People's lives are involved and we don't want to suggest that this technology is right around the corner. This is very tricky, difficult work."

These assessments remain essentially unchanged several decades later. The complexity of the measurement process and the difficulty of keeping investigations funded and on the right track have so far conspired to prevent an effective solution from reaching the millions of patients whose need for it grows daily.

That corner, that horizon stretches out into the distance.

Appendix A

Hunting The Deceitful Turkey

Story by Mark Twain

When I was a boy my uncle and his big boys hunted with the rifle, the youngest boy Fred and I with a shotgun--a small single-barreled shotgun which was properly suited to our size and strength; it was not much heavier than a broom. We carried it turn about, half an hour at a time. I was not able to hit anything with it, but I liked to try. Fred and I hunted feathered small game, the others hunted deer, squirrels, wild turkeys, and such things. My uncle and the big boys were good shots. They killed hawks and wild geese and such like on the wing; and they didn't wound or kill squirrels, they stunned them. When the dogs treed a squirrel, the squirrel would scamper aloft and run out on a limb and flatten himself along it, hoping to make himself invisible in that way-- and not quite succeeding. You could see his wee little ears sticking up. You couldn't see his nose, but you knew where it was. Then the hunter, despising a "rest" for his rifle, stood up and took offhand aim at the limb and sent a bullet into it immediately under the squirrel's nose, and down tumbled the animal, unwounded, but unconscious; the dogs gave him a shake and he was dead. Sometimes when the distance was great and the wind not accurately allowed for, the bullet would hit the squirrel's head; the dogs could do as they pleased with that one--the hunter's pride was hurt, and he wouldn't allow it to go into the gamebag.

In the first faint gray of the dawn the stately wild turkeys would be stalking around in great flocks, and ready to be sociable and answer invitations to come and converse with other excursionists of their kind. The hunter concealed himself and imitated the turkey-call by sucking the air through the leg-bone of a turkey which had previously answered a call like that and lived only just long enough to regret it. There is nothing that furnishes a perfect turkey-call except that bone. Another of Nature's treacheries, you see. She is full of them; half the time she doesn't know which she likes best--to betray her child or protect it. In the case of the turkey she is badly mixed: she gives it a bone to be used in getting it into trouble, and she also furnishes it with a trick for getting itself out of the trouble again. When a mamma-turkey answers an invitation and finds she has made a mistake in accepting it, she does as the mamma-partridge does--remembers a previous engagement--and goes limping and scrambling away, pretending to be very lame; and at the same time she is saying to her not-visible children, "Lie low, keep still, don't expose yourselves; I shall be back as soon as I have beguiled this shabby swindler out of the country."

When a person is ignorant and confiding, this immoral device can have tiresome results. I followed an ostensibly lame turkey over a considerable part of the United States one morning, because I believed in her and could not think she would deceive a mere boy, and one who was trusting her and considering her honest. I had the single-barreled shotgun, but my idea was to catch her alive. I often got within rushing distance of her, and then made my rush; but always, just as I made my final plunge and put my hand down where her back had been, it wasn't there; it was only two or three inches from there and I brushed the tail- feathers as I landed on my stomach--a very close call, but still not quite close enough; that is, not close enough for success, but just close enough to convince me that I could do it next time. She always waited for me, a little piece away, and let on to be resting and greatly

fatigued; which was a lie, but I believed it, for I still thought her honest long after I ought to have begun to doubt her, suspecting that this was no way for a high-minded bird to be acting. I followed, and followed, and followed, making my periodical rushes, and getting up and brushing the dust off, and resuming the voyage with patient confidence; indeed, with a confidence which grew, for I could see by the change of climate and vegetation that we were getting up into the high latitudes, and as she always looked a little tired and a little more discouraged after each rush, I judged that I was safe to win, in the end, the competition being purely a matter of staying power and the advantage lying with me from the start because she was lame.

Along in the afternoon I began to feel fatigued myself. Neither of us had had any rest since we first started on the excursion, which was upwards of ten hours before, though latterly we had paused awhile after rushes, I letting on to be thinking about something else; but neither of us sincere, and both of us waiting for the other to call game but in no real hurry about it, for indeed those little evanescent snatches of rest were very grateful to the feelings of us both; it would naturally be so, skirmishing along like that ever since dawn and not a bite in the meantime; at least for me, though sometimes as she lay on her side fanning herself with a wing and praying for strength to get out of this difficulty a grasshopper happened along whose time had come, and that was well for her, and fortunate, but I had nothing--nothing the whole day.

More than once, after I was very tired, I gave up taking her alive, and was going to shoot her, but I never did it, although it was my right, for I did not believe I could hit her; and besides, she always stopped and posed, when I raised the gun, and this made me suspicious that she knew about me and my marksmanship, and so I did not care to expose myself to remarks.

I did not get her, at all. When she got tired of the game at last, she rose from almost under my hand and flew aloft with the rush and whirl of a shell and lit on the highest limb of a great tree and sat down and crossed her legs and smiled down at me, and seemed gratified to see me so astonished.

I was ashamed, and also lost; and it was while wandering the woods hunting for myself that I found a deserted log cabin and had one of the best meals there that in my life-days I have eaten. The weed-grown garden was full of ripe tomatoes, and I ate them ravenously, though I had never liked them before. Not more than two or three times since have I tasted anything that was so delicious as those tomatoes. I surfeited myself with them, and did not taste another one until I was in middle life. I can eat them now, but I do not like the look of them. I suppose we have all experienced a surfeit at one time or another. Once, in stress of circumstances, I ate part of a barrel of sardines, there being nothing else at hand, but since then I have always been able to get along without sardines.

About the Author

John L. Smith earned a Ph.D. in analytical chemistry from the University of Illinois and has been involved in the design and development of instrumentation for making chemical measurements since the 1960s. Prior to becoming involved with clinical chemistry instrumentation in 1978, he spent four years as an analytical chemist with Union Carbide and five years as manager of product development with Princeton Applied Research Corporation (later part of EG&G) developing electrochemical instruments. He also taught chemistry at San Jose State University from 1991 to 1997 as an adjunct professor. He retired as the Chief Scientific Officer and Vice President of the LifeScan division of Johnson & Johnson in 1998. Following the culmination of a second career as a winemaker and winery owner, he now lives in the Pacific Northwest where he consults in glucose measurement (both invasive and noninvasive) and serves as an expert witness in patent infringement litigation.

Serious inquiries or reports of new noninvasive technologies can be sent to [john\(dot\)smith\(at\)nivglucose\(dot\)com](mailto:john(dot)smith(at)nivglucose(dot)com). It will not be possible to answer all inquiries, so if there is no response, please don't be offended. He asks that this text be thoroughly reviewed before sending in an inquiry.