Abstract

Chitosan-Based Piezoelectric Flexible and Wearable Patch for Sensing Physiological Strain†

Gaia de Marzo 1,2,*, Denis Desmaële 1,*,‡, Luciana Algieri 1, Lara Natta 1, Francesco Guido 1, Vincenzo Mastronardi 1, Massimo Mariello 1,2, Maria Teresa Todaro 3, Francesco Rizzi 1, and Massimo De Vittorio 1,2

Istituto Italiano di Tecnologia, Center for Biomolecular Nanotechnologies, 73010 Lecce, Italy; luciana.algieri@iit.it (L.A.); lara.natta@iit.it (L.N.); francesco.guido@iit.it (F.G.); vincenzo.mastronardi@iit.it (V.M.); massimo.mariello@iit.it (M.M.); francesco.rizzi@iit.it (F.R.); massimo.devittorio@iit.it (M.D.V.)

Dipartimento di Ingegneria dell’Innovazione, Università del Salento, 73100 Lecce, Italy

Instituto di Nanotecnologia Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche, 73100 Lecce, Italy; mariateresa.todaro@unisalento.it

* Correspondence: gaia.demarzo@iit.it (G.d.M.); denis.desmaele@csic.es (D.D.)
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‡ These authors contributed equally to this work.
§ Current address: Instituto de Microelectrónica de Barcelona IMB-CNM, (CSIC)C/del Til·lers, Campus Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB), 08193 Barcelona, Spain.

Abstract: Innovative biocompatible organic materials with piezoelectric properties have great potential for the development of wearable sensors for monitoring physiological parameters. Among them, Chitosan (CS) is a natural, biodegradable, antibacterial and low cost biopolymer that shows interesting piezoelectric behaviour. In this context, this work reports on a protocol where plain chitosan films (CS-F) are exploited to easily create a flexible, wearable piezoelectric patch. By adapting a previously reported simple drop casting method, we here demonstrate that a 70 µm thick CS-F can exhibit good piezoelectric properties. The structure of CS-F was analysed via the XRD technique: the spectrum reveals peaks of partially crystalline chitosan film, indicating the presence of organized polymeric chains (Suppl. Ppt. Slide 8). Piezoresponse Force Microscopy scans confirmed the presence of domains with opposite polarization directions with an extrapolated value of the piezoelectric coefficient \(d_{33}\) of 2.54 pC/N. A microfabrication process for patch realization has been set up. The top electrode was created by the simple thermal evaporation of gold directly onto the free-standing CS-F (Suppl. Ppt. Slide 10). This bilayer was then precisely cut using a cutting plotter and assembled on the copper bottom electrode (Suppl. Ppt. Slide 11). The complete patch can be conformally applied on the skin. The ability of the device to sense physiological movements was validated by an ad hoc measurement set up generating strain pulses; open circuit voltage peaks up to 20 mV were detected (Suppl. Ppt. Slide 13). This sensor represents an important step towards totally biocompatible and biodegradable wearable devices.

Keywords: chitosan; organic; piezoelectric; film; sensor; patch; flexible

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definition; G.d.M. wrote the manuscript with contribution and reviewing of all authors. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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