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(54) Title: MAGNETIC RESONANCE IMAGING METHOD

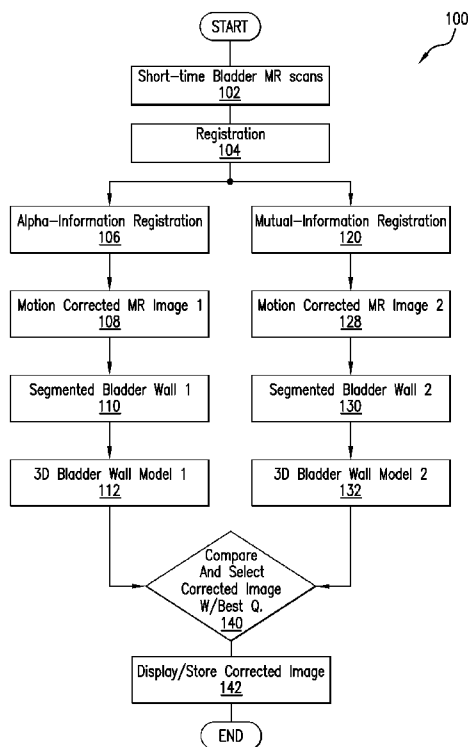


FIG. 1

(57) Abstract: Provided is a method for compensating for tissue motion during magnetic resonance (MR) imaging, and an apparatus for use thereof. The method includes acquiring a plurality of short-time MR scan images; selecting a reference scan image from the acquired plurality of short-time MR scan images; defining a set of transformation images based on the acquired plurality of short-time MR scan images other than the selected reference scan image; registering the reference scan image and the defined set of transformation images; calculating an average of aligned, registered images of the defined set of transformation images; and generating a motion- corrected image based on the calculated average.



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MAGNETIC RESONANCE IMAGING METHOD

PRIORITY

This application claims priority under 35 U.S.C. §119(e) to U.S. Provisional Patent
5 Application No. 61/811,427, which was filed on April 12, 2013, the entire disclosure of which is incorporated herein by reference.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

10 The present invention relates generally to a Magnetic Resonance (MR) imaging method. More particularly, the present invention relates to an MR imaging method that uses short-time scan acquisition and deformable registration to compensate for bladder motion during imaging.

2. Description of the Related Art

15 According to recent studies, over the last few decades, the incidence of bladder cancer has increased significantly and has become the fifth leading cancer incidence (after lung/bronchus, prostate, breast and colon) and the eighth leading cause of cancer-related deaths in the United States. Additionally, management of bladder cancer is a challenge due to high recurrence rate, e.g., as high as 80%, after local tumor resection. As can be appreciated, early
20 detection of bladder cancer or other abnormality is crucial for improving patient prognosis and treatment.

Conventional fiber-optic cystoscopy (OCy) is an accurate method for diagnosis and surveillance of bladder cancer. OCy, however, is invasive, costly, provides a limited field of view for the clinician during use, and has been known to cause urinary tract infection.

25 MR imaging provides a non-invasive method for evaluating the bladder. Such a method typically uses short-time and/or long-time scanning protocols. Short-time scanning, however, suffers from low Signal-to-Noise Ratio (SNR), and long-time scanning can introduce motion artifacts resulting from T1 and T2 relaxations of the bladder due to urine inflow, colon motion, peristalsis, and lung breathing.

30 Therefore, a reliable, non-invasive and easy-performance method for bladder imaging and/or evaluation is needed.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

In view of the above, an MR imaging method is provided that uses short-time scan acquisition and deformable registration to compensate for bladder motion during MR imaging. An aspect of the present invention provides a method for compensating for tissue motion during
5 MR imaging. The method includes acquiring a plurality of short-time MR scan images; selecting a reference scan image from the acquired plurality of short-time MR scan images; defining a set of transformation images based on the acquired plurality of short-time MR scan images other than the selected reference scan image; registering the reference scan image and the defined set of transformation images; calculating an average of aligned, registered images of the
10 defined set of transformation images; and generating a motion-corrected image based on the calculated average.

Another aspect of the present invention provides a method for compensating for tissue motion during MR imaging. The method includes acquiring a plurality of short-time MR scan images; selecting a reference scan image from the acquired plurality of short-time MR scan
15 images; defining, using a first registration process, a first set of transformation images based on the acquired plurality of short-time MR scan images other than the selected reference scan image; defining, using a second registration process, a second set of transformation images based on the acquired plurality of short-time MR scan images other than the selected reference scan image; registering the reference scan image and the defined first and second sets of
20 transformation images using the first registration process and the second registration process; calculating an average of aligned, registered images of the defined first and second sets of transformation images using the first and second registration processes; generating first and second motion-corrected images based on the calculated average; and comparing the first and second motion-corrected images.

25 Another aspect of the present invention provides an MR imaging apparatus for compensating for tissue motion during MR imaging. The MR imaging apparatus includes a scanner and a data acquisition module. The data acquisition module includes at least one control algorithm programmed to acquire a plurality of short-time MR scan images; select a reference scan image from the acquired plurality of short-time MR scan images; define a set of
30 transformation images based on the acquired plurality of short-time MR scan images other than the selected reference scan image; register the reference scan image and the defined set of

transformation images; calculate an average of aligned, registered images of the defined set of transformation images; and generate a motion-corrected image based on the calculated average.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

5 The above and other aspects, features, and advantages of certain embodiments of the present invention will be more apparent from the following detailed description taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, in which:

FIG. 1 is a flow chart illustrating a method for compensating for tissue motion during MR imaging, according to an embodiment of the present invention;

10 FIGS. 2A and 2B are MR images of a slice of a bladder wall that has been T1-weighted and T2-weighted, respectively, according to an embodiment of the present invention;

FIGS. 3A-3D are images of slices of two short-time acquisitions of a bladder wall;

FIG. 3E illustrates deformation based on data provided from the image of FIG. 3D, according to an embodiment of the present invention;

15 FIGS. 3F-3I are images of other slices of two short-time acquisitions of a bladder wall;

FIG. 3J illustrates deformation based on data provided from the image of FIG. 3I, according to an embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 4A is a three-dimensional graph illustrating acquired volumes in three standard image acquisition orientations, according to an embodiment of the present invention;

20 FIGS. 4B-4D are images of a bladder wall slice obtained using long-time acquisition with signal average;

FIGS. 4E-4G are images of a bladder wall slice obtained using an average of motion-corrected short-time acquisitions, according to an embodiment of the present invention;

25 FIG. 5A is an image of a slice of a bladder wall obtained using a short-time acquisition without signal average, according to an embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 5B is an image of a slice of a bladder wall obtained using an average of six short-time acquisitions without motion correction, according to an embodiment of the present invention;

30 FIG. 5C is an image of a slice of a bladder wall obtained using an average after motion correction, according to an embodiment of the present invention;

FIGS. 5D-5F are graphs illustrating intensity profiles based on image positions indicated by line segment "A-B" of FIG. 5A;

FIG. 5G is an image of a slice of a bladder wall obtained using a short-time acquisition without signal average, according to an embodiment of the present invention;

5 FIG. 5H is an image of a slice of a bladder wall obtained using an average of six short-time acquisitions without motion correction;

FIG. 5I is an image of a slice of a bladder wall using an average after motion correction, according to an embodiment of the present invention;

10 FIGS. 5J-5L are graphs illustrating intensity profiles based on image positions indicated by the line segment "A-B" of FIG. 5G, according to an embodiment of the present invention; and

FIG. 6 is a bar graph comparing contrast to noise ratio values between a final average of five images, with and without motion correction of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF EMBODIMENTS OF THE PRESENT INVENTION

15

Various embodiments of the present invention will now be described in detail with reference to the accompanying drawings. In the following description, specific details such as detailed configuration and components are merely provided to assist the overall understanding of these embodiments of the present invention. Therefore, it should be apparent to those skilled in
20 the art that various changes and modifications of the embodiments described herein can be made without departing from the scope and spirit of the present invention. In addition, descriptions of well-known functions and constructions are omitted for clarity and conciseness.

As noted above, an MR imaging method that uses short-time scan acquisition and deformable registration to compensate for bladder motion during MR imaging is useful to
25 evaluate and/or detect bladder cancer, and such a method is herein described.

FIG. 1 is a flowchart illustrating a method 100 for compensating for voluntary and/or non-voluntary tissue motion during MR imaging, e.g., MR Cystography, according to an embodiment of the present invention. Voluntary motions, which are related to the unpredictable patient movements, and involuntary motions, which are related to heart beat, lung breath, etc.,
30 are problematic during MR imaging.

The method 100 uses a control algorithm embodied in an MR imaging apparatus, e.g., a 3T whole body MR scanner with a pulse sequence (or data acquisition), to mitigate motion artifacts during MR imaging, thereby obtaining an MR image having high spatial resolution on borders of the MR image, while maintaining adequate SNR.

5 The method 100, which compensates for motion of rigid or non-rigid tissue, is described herein in the context of compensating for motion of non-rigid tissue, e.g., a bladder. The method 100 is also usable to compensate for motion of the heart, blood vessels, lung, and colon, which are also considered to be non-rigid tissue.

Continuing with reference to FIG. 1, at step 102, a plurality of short-time MR scan
10 images of the bladder wall of a subject, i.e., patient, were acquired using the MR scanner. In this step, to obtain an adequate tradeoff between the bladder wall outline and SNR level in the short-time acquisitions, the control algorithm uses an MR scanning protocol that includes T_1 - and T_2 - weighted imaging. In accordance with the present invention, both T_1 and T_2 imaging can be acquired without exogenous contrast medium and is a fully non-invasive procedure.

15 Considering two main advantages, i.e., shorter scan time and less Partial Volume (PV) influence on the inner border of the wall, of T_1 -weighted imaging over T_2 -weighted imaging, the T_1 -weighted MR scans were used for delineating the bladder wall. In general, because the T_1 -weighted imaging takes less time and gains contrast by lowering the lumen intensity, the desired signals or bladder wall are enhanced, as shown in FIG. 2A, when using T_1 -weighted imaging.
20 In contrast, T_2 -weighted imaging increases or enhances the image intensities of the lumen, which tends to swallow small abnormalities on the bladder border due to the PV effect, as shown in FIG. 2B.

In embodiments of the present invention, the T_1 -weighted imaging can be used to facilitate bladder wall extraction, while the T_2 -weighted images provide good pathological
25 information about the tumor invading the wall and can be used for wall analysis after the bladder extraction. Other MR images, such as diffusion weighted imaging images, dynamical enhanced imaging images, can also be used for wall analysis after the bladder extraction.

To demonstrate effectiveness of the method 100 of the present invention, prior to the performing the short-time scans, the subject was asked to empty their bladder and drink a bottle
30 of water to allow urine to fill in their bladder. Accordingly, during the short-time scanning, the bladder was caused to slowly stretch by urine inflow.

Depending on the type of tissue being imaged, the amount of short-time scan images acquired can vary. Empirical testing found that acquiring five to eight repeated short-time scan images is adequate to image the bladder, and that acquiring six repeated short-time scans provides optimal compensation for bladder motion, with gain after averaging over six repeated
5 short-time scans being inappreciable. In other words, increasing the time to acquire more than six short-time scans sacrifices computing efficiency.

In an embodiment of the present invention, the control algorithm was programmed to acquire six short-time scans, e.g., a number of acquisitions equal to 6, at an image array of $224 \times 224 \times 84$ with voxel size of $0.9375 \times 0.9375 \times 1.0 \text{ mm}^3$. The acquisition time for a single
10 short-time scan was set to approximately one minute. The image array size can increase or decrease as the patient size increases or decreases, and acquisition time can correspondingly increase or decrease.

During MR imaging, the voluntary and involuntary motions described above can cause motion artifacts, which can dramatically decrease high spatial resolution on the borders of the
15 bladder wall and SNR on the bladder wall.

FIGS. 3A-3J illustrate the effects of motion artifacts caused by voluntary and/or involuntary motion of the subject during MR imaging.

FIGS. 3A-3B illustrate slices of two short-time acquisitions taken from volunteer studies. FIG. 3C illustrates residual noise after subtraction of data points in FIG. 3B from data points in
20 FIG. 3A, without registration. FIG. 3D illustrates a residual slice after subtraction of data points in FIG. 3B from data points in FIG. 3A, after registration, with FIG. 3E providing deformation based on subtraction of data points in FIG. 3B from data points in FIG. 3A.

FIGS. 3F-3G illustrate slices of two short-time acquisitions obtained from patient studies. FIG. 3H illustrates a residual slice after subtraction of data points in FIG. 3G from data points in
25 FIG. 3F, without registration, with FIG. 3I being the residual after subtraction of data points in FIG. 3G from data points in FIG. 3F, after registration. FIG. 3J illustrates deformation based on the subtraction of data points in FIG. 3G from data points in FIG. 3F.

The corresponding difference images without registration are shown in FIGS. 3C and 3H, which show residuals of underlying noise of image acquisition and an effect of mis-registration
30 due to bladder motion, which is clearly visible among the short-time acquisitions. FIGS. 3D and 3I show difference images after registration, showing bladder motions, e.g., involuntary or

voluntary, being dramatically mitigated after registration. Accordingly, empirical testing when the motion artifact is present shows that aligning and averaging multiple short-time acquisitions enhances image quality of a final image.

Accordingly, once the plurality of short-time MR scan images are acquired, a reference scan image (I_r) is selected from the acquired plurality of short-time MR scan images. Additionally, a set of transformation images T_k $\{T_k: x = T_k(x_r), k=1, 2, \dots N-1\}$ is defined with the remaining acquired plurality of short-time MR scan images.

At step 104 of FIG. 1, the control algorithm registers the selected reference scan image (I_r) and defined set of transformation images T_k via one or more registration processes.

For example, the control algorithm of the present invention may use an α -information registration process in step 106. In the α -information registration process, the control algorithm uses the defined set of transformations T_k to align points of each of the acquired plurality of short-time MR scan images, e.g., I_k , in the defined set of transformation images T_k to points in the reference scan image (I_r). A combined transformation model, which includes a global transformation and a local transformation, is then calculated using Equation (1):

$$T_k(x) = T_{k, \text{global}}(x) + T_{k, \text{local}}(x), \dots\dots\dots(1)$$

where $T_{k, \text{global}}(x)$ denotes an affine transformation, which has twelve degrees of freedom, describing the overall bladder wall motions such as the rotations, translations and scaling; and $T_{k, \text{local}}(x)$ represents a local transformation for capturing the local deformations of the bladder wall.

$T_{k, \text{local}}(x)$ was parameterized using a Free-Form Deformation (FFD) model based on B-splines, e.g., cubic or linear B-splines, suitable for modeling three-dimensional deformations. A B-splines-based FFD model was chosen because the B-splines-based FFD model possesses superior local support nature, general applicability and computational efficiency, was used, with the FFD model preferably based on cubic B-splines.

The control algorithm uses the FFD model to deform an image, e.g., one of the short-time scanned images, by manipulating a regular mesh of control points distributed across the entire image. The deformation result of the mesh can then be applied to generate a smooth and C^2 continuous transformation. C^n is a parametric continuity used to describe the smoothness of a

parametric curve. The n represents the continuity order of a curve. A curve can be said to have C^n continuity, if its n order of derivatives is continuous of value throughout the curve. C^2 represents the first and second derivatives of the parametric curve, generated by the transformation, and is continuous. The degree of the deformation is determined by the spacing
5 of the control point mesh.

The control algorithm calculates $T_{k, local}(x)$ using parameters of Φ , which represents a $n_x \times n_y \times n_z$ grid of control points $\phi_{i,j,k}$ with uniform spacing, and degree (d) of cubic B-splines of three. Thus, at any position x , the FFD can be written as a three dimensional tensor product of a one dimensional cubic B-splines using Equation (2):

$$T_{local}(x) = \sum_{l=0}^3 \sum_{m=0}^3 \sum_{n=0}^3 B_l(u) B_m(v) B_n(w) \phi_{i+l, j+m, k+n}, \dots \dots \dots (2)$$

where $i = \left\lfloor \frac{x}{n_x} \right\rfloor - 1$, $j = \left\lfloor \frac{y}{n_y} \right\rfloor - 1$, $k = \left\lfloor \frac{z}{n_z} \right\rfloor - 1$, $u = \frac{x}{n_x} - \left\lfloor \frac{x}{n_x} \right\rfloor$, $v = \frac{y}{n_y} - \left\lfloor \frac{y}{n_y} \right\rfloor$, $w = \frac{z}{n_z} - \left\lfloor \frac{z}{n_z} \right\rfloor$ and B_i
denotes the B_i basis function of the B-spline further to Equation (3):

$$B_0(u) = (1-u)^3/6$$

$$B_1(u) = (3u^3 - 6u^2 + 4)/6$$

$$B_2(u) = (-3u^3 + 3u^2 + 3u + 1)/6$$

$$B_3(u) = u^3/6 \dots \dots \dots (3)$$

The above registration process aligns the reference scan image (I_r) with each of the acquired plurality of short-time MR scan images in the set of transformations T_k so that an average of the aligned scan images, preferably points of the aligned images, can be determined, as described below.

To increase accuracy of the α -information registration at step 106, the control algorithm performs cost function analysis or a similarity measure based on the negative of the α -information, which is a special case of α -divergence and measures the distance between the joint

probability p of two variables and their marginal probabilities' product $Q = P_1 \times P_2$, with a definition of a -information provided by Equation (4):

$$I_a(P, P_1 \times P_2) = \frac{1}{a(a-1)} \left(\sum_{i,j} \frac{p_{ij}^a}{(p_i p_j)^{a-1}} - 1 \right), \dots\dots\dots(4)$$

5 where $a \neq 0, 1$.

When $a \rightarrow 1$, Equation (4) can be rewritten as Equation (5):

$$I_1(P, P_1 \times P_2) = \sum_{i,j} p_{ij} \log\left(\frac{p_{ij}}{p_i p_j}\right) \dots\dots\dots(5)$$

10 When $a \rightarrow 1$, Equation (5) becomes the definition of mutual-information that is used with a mutual-information registration process.

$C(u, a)$ between the reference scan image (I_r) and a moving image (i.e., the acquired plurality of short-time MR scan images in the defined set of transformation images T_k) can be expressed by the transformation parameters u and a in Equation (6):

15

$$C(u, a) = -\frac{1}{a(a-1)} \left(\sum_{l,k} \frac{p^{(a)}(l, k | u)}{(p_M(l | u) p_R(k))^{a-1}} - 1 \right), \dots\dots\dots(6)$$

where $p^{(a)}$, p_M and p_R are joint, marginal moving, and marginal reference probability distributions, respectively, and u represents parameters of the transformation. It was assumed
 20 that HR and HM represented specified numbers of uniformly sized bins along respective dimensions of a joint histogram of the reference signal image (I_r) and moving images (e.g., the acquired plurality of short-time MR scan images in the defined set of transformation images T_k). Accordingly, integer values l and k can then be denoted with indexes of histogram bins, i.e., $(0 \leq k < H_R, 0 \leq l < H_M)$.

25 A Parzen window may be used to estimate the underlying image intensity distributions for smoothing the underlying image. In particular, regarding Equation 6, the estimation of the marginal and joint probability distributions of the intensity value of the reference scan image (I_r)

and the moving image (e.g., the acquired plurality of short-time MR scan images in the set of transformation images T_k) is required. The Parzen window, a kernel density estimation method, is used to estimate those probability distributions, i.e. $p^{(a)}$, p_M and p_R in Equation 6. Using the Parzen window can generate continuous estimations of the above probability distributions, and
 5 thereby reduce the effects of quantization from interpolation and discretization from binning data.

Moreover, optimizing the cost function may prove useful, and a Limited-Memory Broyden-Fletcher-Goldfarb-Shanno (L-BFGS) is a preferred method used to optimize the cost function. For a set of n -independent parameters, the gradient of α -information is given as

10 $\nabla z = \left[\frac{\partial z}{\partial x_1}, \frac{\partial z}{\partial x_2}, \dots, \frac{\partial z}{\partial x_n} \right]$, whose i -th derivative is calculated using Equation (7):

$$\frac{\partial z}{\partial x_i} = -\frac{1}{\alpha(\alpha-1)} \sum_{j=1}^{\alpha-1} \frac{j^{\alpha-1} G_j(x) \frac{\partial G_j(x)}{\partial x_i} - (\alpha-1) j^{\alpha} G_j(x) j^{\alpha-1} G_j(x) \sum_{k=1}^{\alpha-1} \frac{\partial G_k(x)}{\partial x_i}}{[G_j(x) G_k(x)]^{\alpha-1}} \dots\dots\dots(7)$$

The L-BFGS method was chosen because the L-BFGS method possesses high
 15 dimensionability of the parameter space and allows bound constraints of the variables.

After the reference scan image (I_r) is aligned with each of the acquired plurality of short-time MR scan images in the defined set of transformations T_k , an average of the aligned, registered short-time MR scan images is calculated. Calculating an average of the aligned, registered images in the defined set of transformation images T_k at this juncture in MR imaging,
 20 i.e., after alignment, is different from conventional methods, which typically calculate a direct average of the acquired short-time MR scan images, i.e., an average that is calculated immediately after the short-time MR scan images are acquired.

Thereafter, at step 108 of FIG. 1, a motion-corrected image 1 based on the calculated average of the aligned, registered images in the defined set of transformation images T_k is
 25 generated.

The control algorithm performs image segmentation on the motion-corrected image 1 at step 110 (FIG. 1) to measure thickness of an inner border of the bladder wall. Then, at step 112, the control algorithm performs thickness mapping of the inner border for detecting bladder tumors on the bladder wall.

At step 120 of FIG. 1, a mutual-information registration process is performed based on reference scan image (I_r), as described above at step 104.

The mutual-information registration process at step 120 uses a mutual-information registration based model that is based on a maximization of an images' mutual-information in combination with a parameterized deformation field that is similar to the B-splines based FFD model described in regards to step 106. The mutual-information registration process performed at step 120 averages the acquired short-time scan images after registration, and may not perform as well as the α -information registration process at step 106 since elastic properties of bladder tissue can differ between patients and age groups. Accordingly, the mutual-information registration process at step 120 may be not be optimal for use with bladder MR imaging, particularly when a tumor or other anomaly is present in the bladder wall. Accordingly, the mutual-information registration process at step 120 of FIG. 1 may be reserved to image rigid tissue.

In step 128 of FIG. 1, after the mutual-information registration process 120, a motion-corrected image 2 is generated based on the registered short-time MR scan images. Image segmentation on the motion-corrected image 2 is then performed at step 130 to measure thickness of an inner border of the bladder wall. Then, at step 132, the control algorithm performs thickness mapping of the inner border for detecting bladder tumors on the bladder wall.

At step 140 of FIG 1, the control algorithm calculates a quality of each of the corrected-images 1, 2 output from steps 112 and 132, respectively, and a best quality corrected image is selected.

Mean and variance of a Squared Sum of intensity Differences (SSD) and the Correlation Coefficient (CC) of each of the corrected images are calculated using Equations (8) and (9):

$$SSD = \frac{1}{n} \sqrt{\sum (F_R - T(F_M))^2} \dots\dots\dots(8)$$

$$CC = \frac{\sum (F_R - \bar{F}_R)(T(F_M) - T(\bar{F}_M))}{\sqrt{\sum (F_R - \bar{F}_R)^2 \sum (T(F_M) - T(\bar{F}_M))^2}} \dots\dots\dots(9)$$

where $\bar{F}_R$ and $\bar{F}_M$ represent average intensities of reference scan image (I_r) and moving

image, respectively, e.g., the acquired plurality of short-time MR scan images in the set of transformation images T_k ; with the SSD and CC providing a direct measure of corrected image quality, i.e., quality of the registration processes.

At step 142 of Fig. 1, the best quality corrected image is output, and can be stored in
5 memory of the MR imaging scanner for future clinician access or directly transmitted to a display.

As noted above, the bladder is non-rigid and the corrected image 1 output from Step 112 of FIG. 1 will typically have best quality and an embodiment therefore implement only the α -information registration process. That is, at step 102, a plurality of short-time MR scan images
10 are acquired, reference scan image (I_r) is selected from the acquired plurality of short-time MR scan images, and a set of transformation images T_k based on the acquired plurality of short-time MR scan images other than the selected reference scan image is defined. At steps 104/106, the reference scan image (I_r) and the defined set of transformation images T_k are registered, and an average of aligned, registered images of the defined set of transformation images T_k is calculated,
15 followed by generating a motion-corrected image 1 based on the calculated average at step 108 and quality control at step 140 using SSD and CC, as described above, to determine whether corrected-image 1 meets a predetermined quality value.

If the corrected image meets the predetermined quality value, the corrected image 1 is displayed/stored at step 142. If the corrected image 1 does not meet the predetermined quality
20 value, the process returns back to step 102, to repeat the α -information registration process, thereby providing a clearer and more robust motion-corrected image than available utilizing conventional MR imaging methods that short-time scan without averaging after registration or long-time scan utilizing other registration processes.

FIG. 4A is a three-dimensional graph illustrating acquired volumes in three standard
25 image acquisition orientations, according to an embodiment of the present invention; and FIGS. 4B-4G provide a comparison of images taken between the average of motion-corrected short-time acquisitions obtained in accordance with the method 100 of the present invention and an equivalent long-time acquisition with signal average (LTASA) taken with a conventional MR scanner. The LTASA taken by the MR scanner is a k-space average controlled by an integer
30 value of parameter NSA obtained by averaging multiple measurements in the k-space before image reconstruction.

The motion-corrected average obtained in accordance with the present invention and the LTASA obtained by the MR scanner were taken in three standard image acquisition orientations, i.e., transverse, coronal and sagittal, shown in FIG. 4A. FIGS. 4B-4D show edge blurring ("A") that is present in conventional long-time acquisition. In contrast, method 100 of the present invention performs motion correction that more clearly defines the bladder wall in terms of edge details and wall uniformity, as shown in FIG. 4E-4G.

FIGS. 5A-5L illustrate gain obtained in enhancing edge details, while preserving SNR, or enhancing SNR and preserving edge details, utilizing method 100 of the present invention. FIGS. 5A-5C are short-time scan images, with FIG. 5A illustrating a short-time acquisition without signal averaging (segment of a slice), FIG. 5B illustrating the average of six short-time acquisitions without motion correction, and FIG. 5C illustrating an average after motion correction using the method 100.

FIGS. 5D-5F are intensity profiles based on image positions indicated by the line segment "A-B" shown in FIG. 5A. Bladder wall edge blurring is indicated at "B" in FIGS. 5B-5C. Labels "A" and "B" in FIG. 5D correspond to positions "A-B" of FIG. 5A.

FIGS. 5G-5I are short-time scan images, with FIG. 5G illustrating short-time acquisition without signal averaging; FIG. 5H illustrating an average of six short-time acquisitions without motion correction; and FIG. 5I illustrating an average with motion correction using the method 100 according to the present invention.

FIGS. 5J-5L are intensity profiles based on image positions indicated by line segment "A-B" of FIG. 5G, with "A" indicating a bladder wall position and label "B" representing a bladder wall tumor.

FIGS. 5A-5L indicate that averaging multiple short-time acquisitions of the present invention enhances the SNR, as compared to the conventional short-time acquisitions. The averaged image with motion correction better preserved bladder wall definition than the averaged image without motion correction; and the bladder walls were blurred without the motion correction of the present invention.

Empirical testing also shows that gain of SNR during the α -information registration and mutual-information registration processes is maintained, if not increased, when compared to conventional MR imaging. It is noted that since the bladder lumen is the only uniform region in the bladder, the signal was measured from the bladder lumen, and noise was measured from a

no-signal region outside of the bladder. Based on the method of Henkelman and Kaufman, et al., the SNR value can be calculated using Equation (10):

$$\text{SNR} = \frac{u_{\text{signal}}}{1.5 \times \sigma_{\text{noise}}} , \dots\dots\dots(10)$$

5 where u_{signal} denotes the mean of signal and σ_{noise} denotes the standard deviation of noise. Since the noise was measured in a no-signal region where noise follows Rician distribution rather than Gaussian distribution, a factor of 1.5 was included to account for underestimation of σ_{noise} when measured in air in a magnitude MR image.

10 SNR values measured by mean +/- standard deviations for five patients are listed in Table 1, which shows that the measured SNR increased with the increment of the number of acquisitions in the average, as expected. More importantly, as compared to the long-time acquisitions, the final average of six short-time acquisitions achieved comparable and possibly higher SNR values.

15

TABLE 1

SNR	Non motion correction	Motion-corrected
Single short-time scan	4.42±0.43	
Average of 2 short-time scans	6.21±0.72	6.51±0.97
Average of 3 short-time scans	7.57±0.97	8.43±1.40
Average of 4 short-time scans	8.19±1.09	8.74±1.46
Average of 5 short-time scans	9.28±1.26	10.55±2.33
Average of 6 short-time scans	9.56±1.32	10.97±2.42

Contrast to Noise ratio (CNR) values were measured with respect to the bladder wall and
 20 surroundings. Since bladder wall surroundings are complicated, the bladder lumen was used as background, and the CNR value was calculated using Equation (11):

$$\text{CNR} = \frac{|u_{\text{wall}} - u_{\text{background}}|}{\sqrt{\sigma_{\text{wall}}^2 - \sigma_{\text{background}}^2}} , \dots\dots\dots(11)$$

where u_{wall} and $u_{background}$ represent the means of the bladder wall and the background, respectively, and σ_{wall} and $\sigma_{background}$ denote the standard deviations of the bladder wall and the background, respectively.

FIG. 6 compares CNR values between final averages of five images, with and without the motion correction of the present invention, showing that motion corrected averages provided by the present invention outperform averages provided without motion correction.

Accordingly, the MR imaging method 100 of the present invention provides an effective and simple way of acquiring repeated short-time acquisitions, performing non-rigid alignment of the short-time acquisitions to a selected reference, and forming a single motion-corrected average image. The MR image method 100 of the present invention can be implemented without addition or modification of hardware, such as a specialized coil, is fully evasive, and can correct for image domain deformations, without being scan protocol specific. The MR imaging method 100 facilitates extraction of better image quality bladder wall images usable to detect bladder abnormality and provides dynamic MR imaging of other moving organs, such as heart, lungs, etc., to provide tissue contrast information inside the bladder wall for functional studies and pathological assessment.

While the present invention has been particularly shown and described with reference to certain embodiments thereof, it will be understood by those of ordinary skill in the art that various changes in form and details may be made therein without departing from the spirit and scope of the present invention as defined by the following claims and their equivalents.

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for compensating for tissue motion during magnetic resonance (MR) imaging, the method comprising:

acquiring a plurality of short-time MR scan images;

5 selecting a reference scan image from the acquired plurality of short-time MR scan images;

defining a set of transformation images based on the acquired plurality of short-time MR scan images other than the selected reference scan image;

registering the reference scan image and the defined set of transformation images;

10 calculating an average of aligned, registered images of the defined set of transformation images; and

generating a motion-corrected image based on the calculated average.

2. The method according to claim 1, wherein registering the reference scan image
15 and the set of defined transformation images includes aligning points in each image of the acquired plurality of short-time MR scan images in the defined set of transformation images to points in the reference scan image.

3. The method according to claim 2, wherein registering the reference scan image
20 and the set of defined transformation images includes determining a global transformation representing an overall motion of the defined set of transformation images and a local transformation representing a local deformation of the defined set of transformation images.

4. The method according to claim 3, wherein the global transformation is a twelve
25 parameter affine transformation.

5. The method according to claim 3, wherein the local transformation is a free form transformation based on B-splines.

30 6. The method according to claim 5, wherein the B-splines are one of linear B-splines and cubic B-splines.

7. The method according to claim 1, wherein registering the reference scan image and the defined set of transformation images includes performing a cost function analysis of the calculated average based on a negative of α -information between the reference scan image and the defined set of transformation images using Equation:

$$C(\mu, \alpha) = -\frac{1}{\alpha(\alpha-1)} \left(\sum_{l,k} \frac{p^{(\alpha)}(l, k | \mu)}{p_M(l | \mu) p_R(k)^{\alpha-1}} - 1 \right).$$

8. The method according to claim 7, further including optimizing the cost function analysis using Equation:

$$\frac{\partial C}{\partial \mu_i} = -\frac{1}{\alpha(\alpha-1)} \sum_{l,k} \frac{\alpha p^{\alpha-1}(l, k | \mu) \frac{\partial p(l, k | \mu)}{\partial \mu_i} - (\alpha-1) p^{\alpha}(l, k | \mu) p_R^{\alpha-1}(k) \sum_k \frac{\partial p_R(k)}{\partial \mu_i}}{[p_M(l | \mu) p_R(k)]^{\alpha-1}}.$$

9. The method according to claim 1, further including calculating a quality of the registration of the reference scan image and the defined set of transformation images using a Squared Sum of intensity Difference (SSD) of:

$$SSD = \frac{1}{n} \sqrt{\sum (F_R - T(F_M))^2}.$$

10. The method according to claim 9, wherein calculating the quality of the registration of the reference scan image and the defined set of transformation images includes using a Correlation of Coefficients (CC) of:

$$CC = \frac{\sum (F_R - \bar{F}_R)(T(F_M) - T(\bar{F}_M))}{\sqrt{\sum (F_R - \bar{F}_R)^2 \sum (T(F_M) - T(\bar{F}_M))^2}}.$$

11. The method according to claim 1, further including estimating underlying image intensity distributions of the registered reference scan image and the defined set of transformation images using a Parzen window.

12. The method according to claim 1, wherein a number of the acquired plurality of short-time MR scan images includes six to eight MR scan images.

13. A method for compensating for tissue motion during magnetic resonance (MR) imaging, the method comprising:
acquiring a plurality of short-time MR scan images;
selecting a reference scan image from the acquired plurality of short-time MR scan images;
defining, using a first registration process, a first set of transformation images based on the acquired plurality of short-time MR scan images other than the selected reference scan image;
defining, using a second registration process, a second set of transformation images based on the acquired plurality of short-time MR scan images other than the selected reference scan image;
registering the reference scan image and the defined first and second sets of transformation images using the first registration process and the second registration process;
calculating an average of aligned, registered images of the defined first and second sets of transformation images;
generating first and second motion-corrected images based on the calculated average; and
comparing the first and second motion-corrected images.

14. The method according to claim 13, wherein the first registration process is an α -information registration process.

15. The method according to claim 13, wherein the second registration process is a mutual-information registration process.

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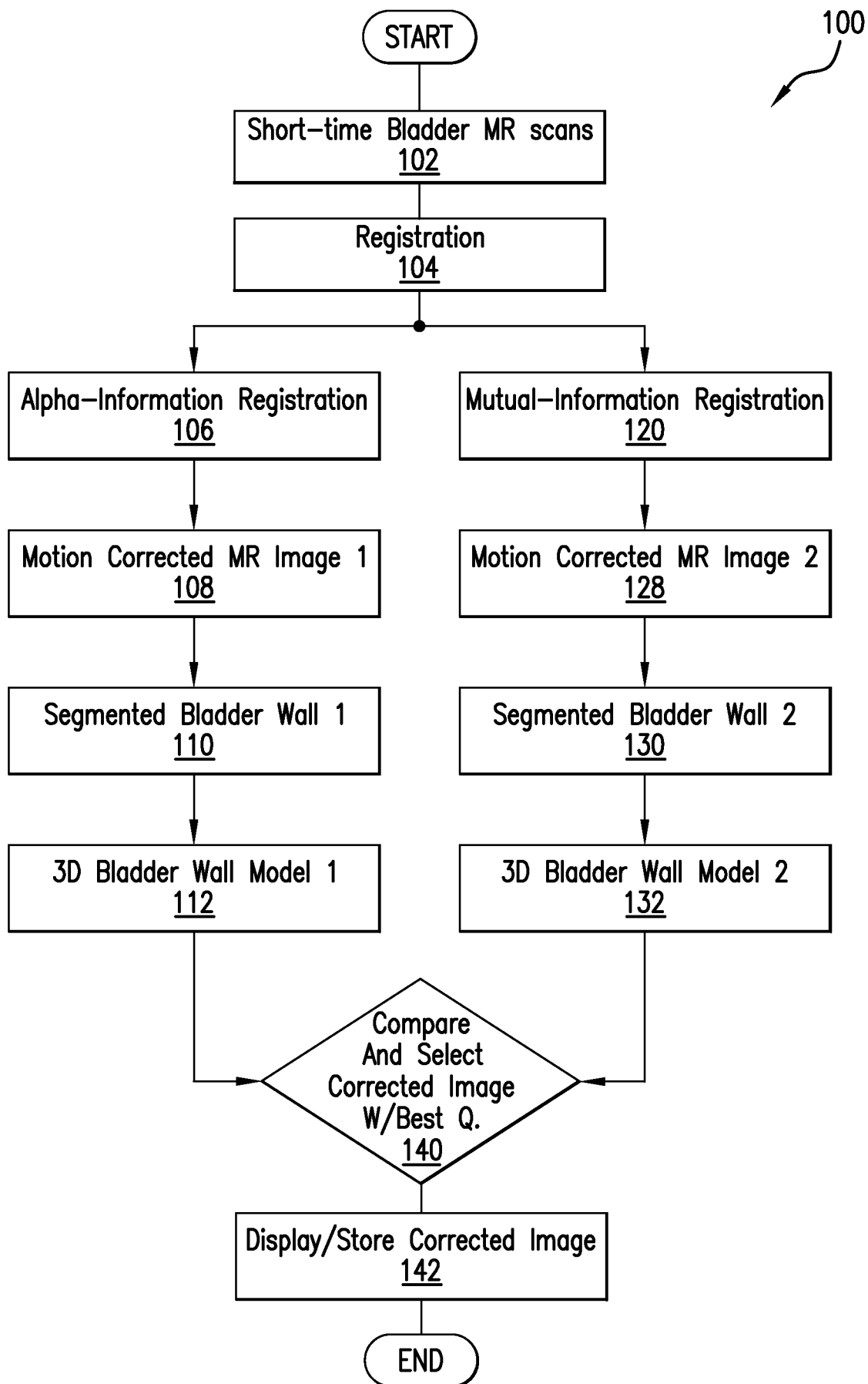


FIG. 1



FIG.2A



FIG.2B

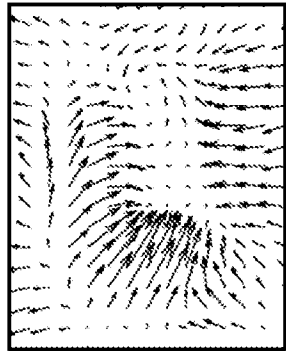


FIG. 3E

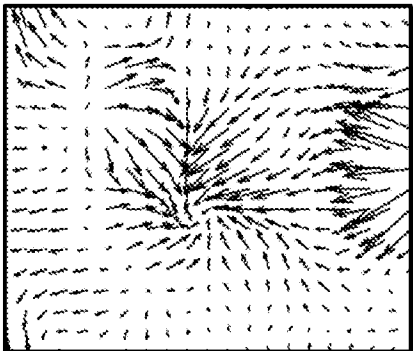


FIG. 3J

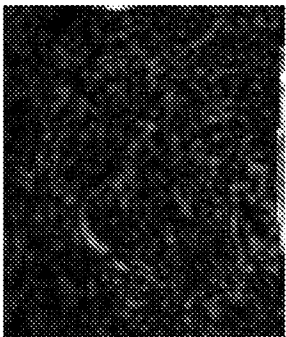


FIG. 3D

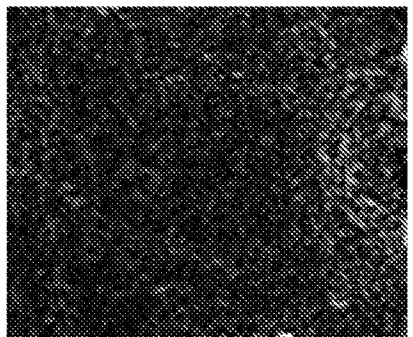


FIG. 3I

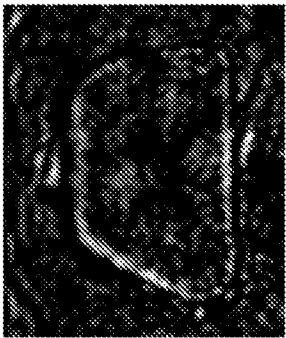


FIG. 3C

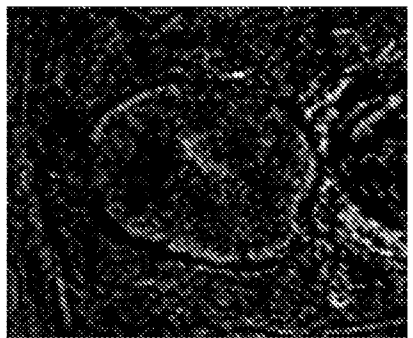


FIG. 3H

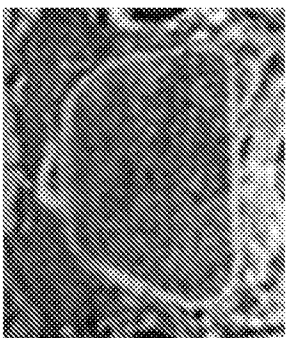


FIG. 3B

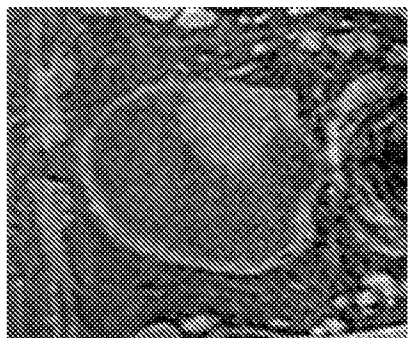


FIG. 3G

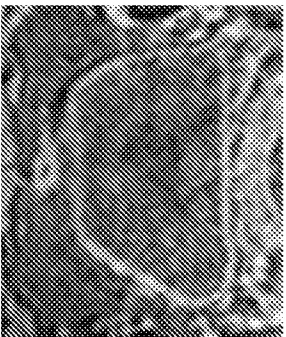


FIG. 3A

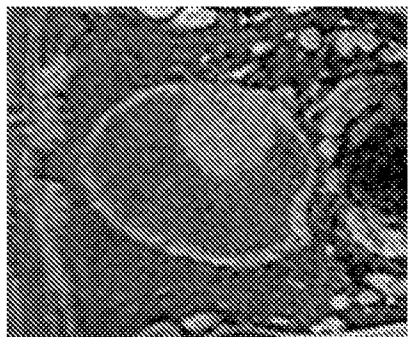


FIG. 3F

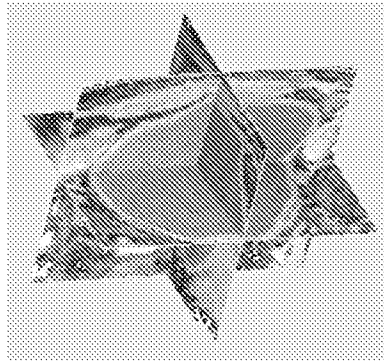


FIG. 4A

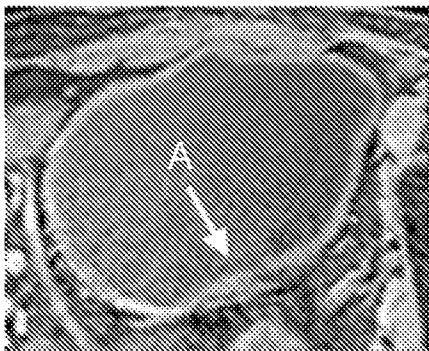


FIG. 4B

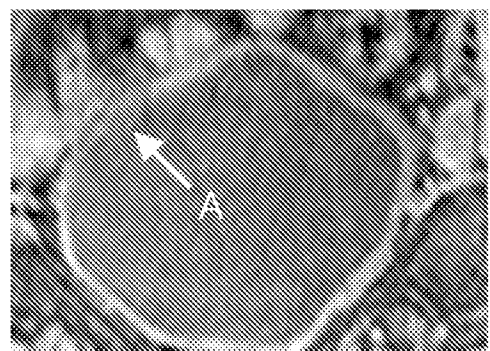


FIG. 4C

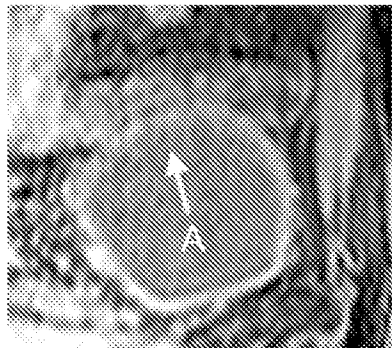


FIG. 4D

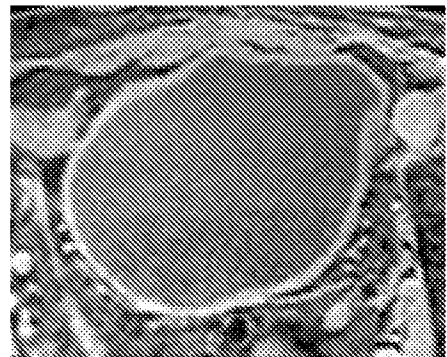


FIG. 4E

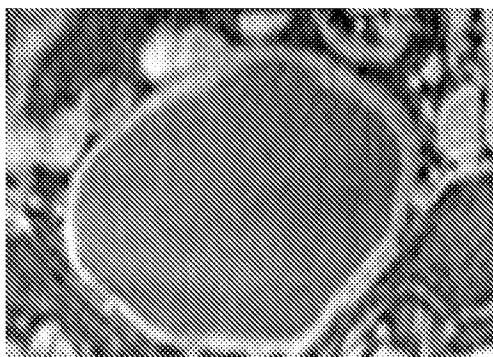


FIG. 4F

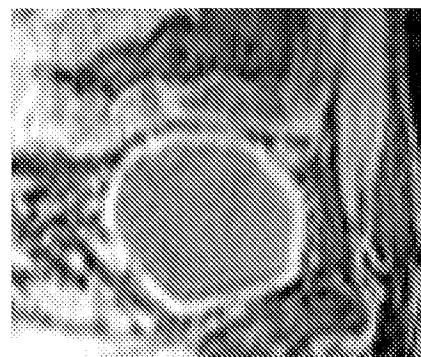


FIG. 4G

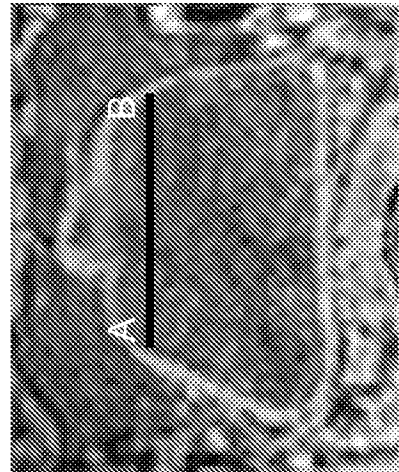


FIG. 5A

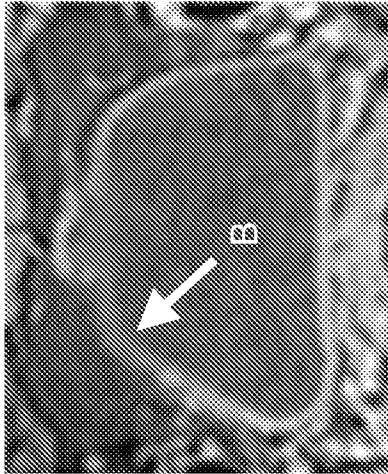


FIG. 5B

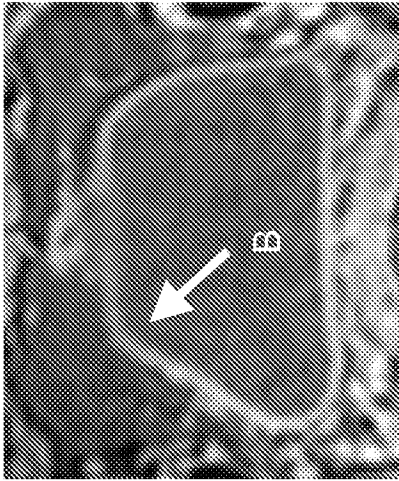


FIG. 5C

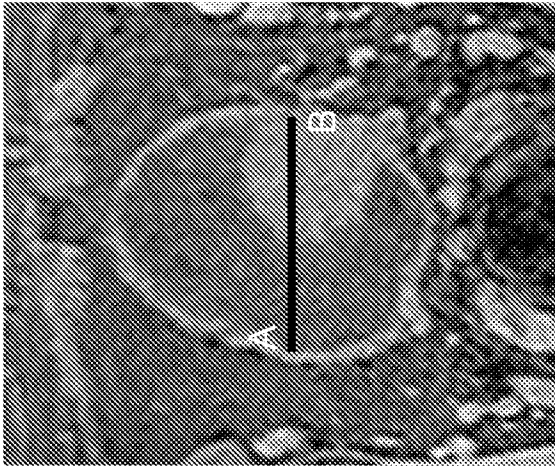


FIG. 5G



FIG. 5H



FIG. 5I

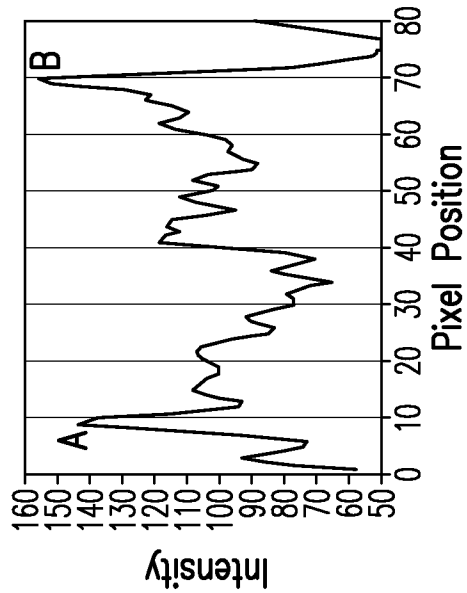


FIG. 5D

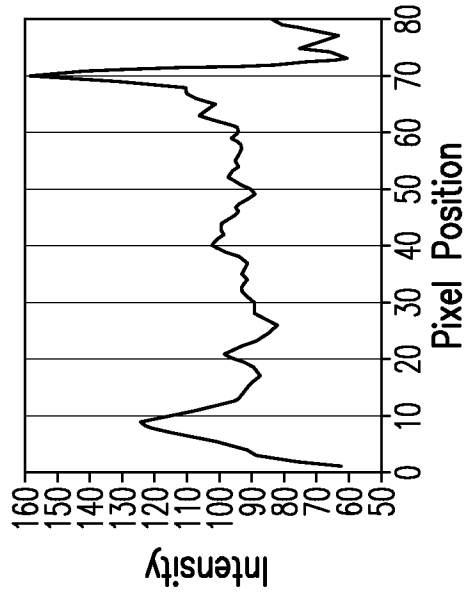


FIG. 5E

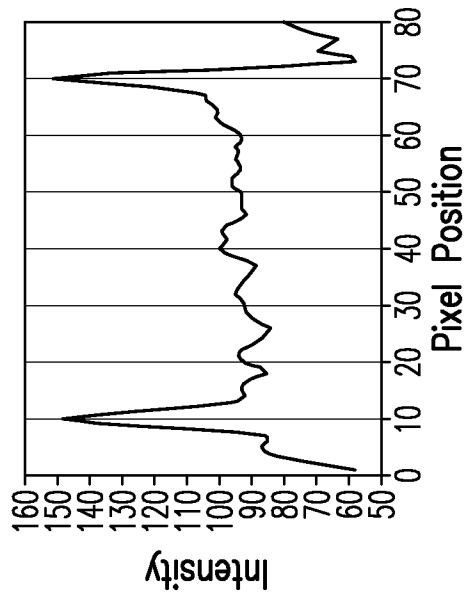


FIG. 5F

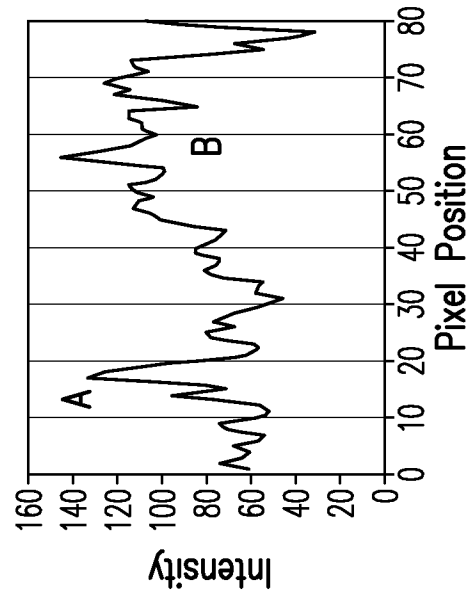


FIG. 5J

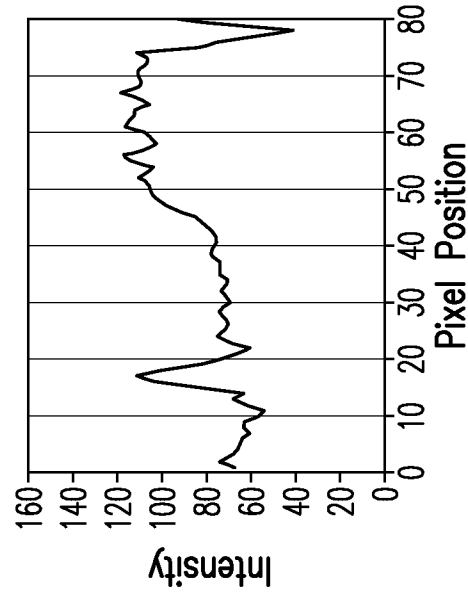


FIG. 5K

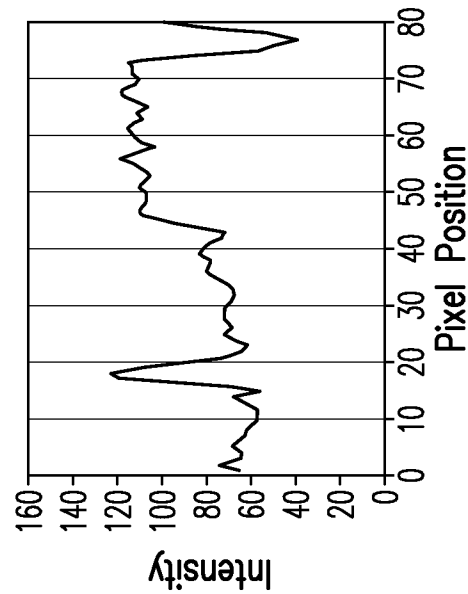
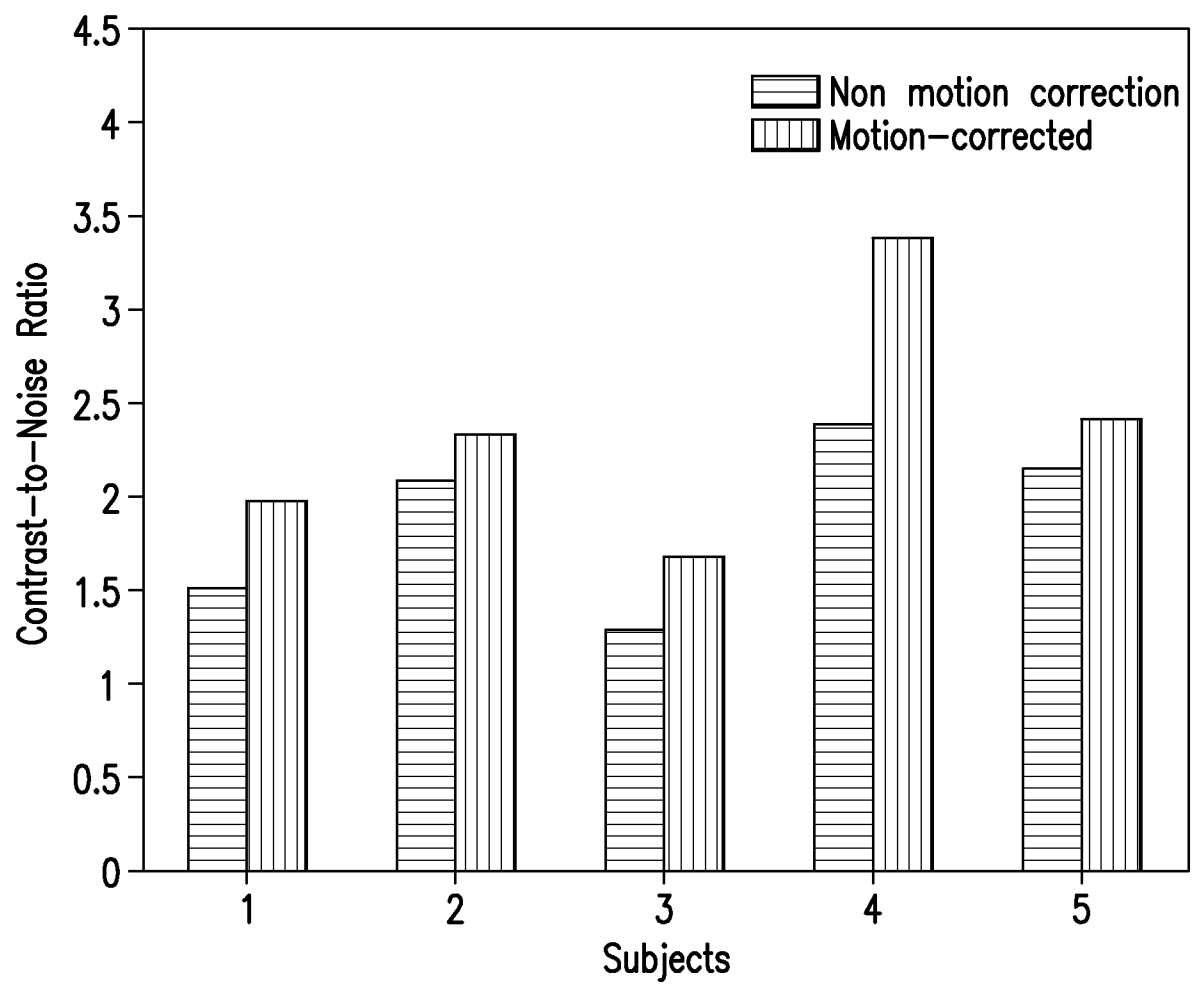


FIG. 5L

**FIG.6**

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/US2014/033990**A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER****A61B 5/055(2006.01)i**

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

A61B 5/055; A61B 5/05; G01V 3/00; G01R 33/561; G06K 9/00; G01R 33/54

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Korean utility models and applications for utility models

Japanese utility models and applications for utility models

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)

eKOMPASS(KIPO internal) & keywords: short-time, MRI, reference, scan, transformation, average, motion-corrected

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A	US 2007-0276221 A1 (JAN BERTUS MARTEN WARNTJES) 29 November 2007 See abstract, paragraphs [0006]-[0023], claims 1-4 and figures 1,2.	1-15
A	US 2007-0165923 A1 (HONG SHEN et al.) 19 July 2007 See abstract, paragraphs [0004]-[0031], claims 1-26 and figures 1-4.	1-15
A	US 2010-0145185 A1 (XIAOLE HONG et al.) 10 June 2010 See abstract, paragraphs [0045]-[0086] and figures 1-5.	1-15
A	US 2004-0102695 A1 (STERGIOS STERGIPOULOS et al.) 27 May 2004 See abstract, paragraphs [0063]-[0091] and figures 1-22.	1-15
A	EP 2423701 A1 (KONINKLIJKE PHILIPS ELECTRONICS N.V.) 29 February 2012 See abstract, paragraphs [0025]-[0037] and figures 1,2.	1-15



Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.



See patent family annex.

* Special categories of cited documents:

"A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance

"E" earlier application or patent but published on or after the international filing date

"L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)

"O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means

"P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed

"T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention

"X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone

"Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art

"&" document member of the same patent family

Date of the actual completion of the international search

26 August 2014 (26.08.2014)

Date of mailing of the international search report

26 August 2014 (26.08.2014)

Name and mailing address of the ISA/KR

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

International application No.

PCT/US2014/033990

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EP 2423701 A1	29/02/2012	None	