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System and method for generating MR phase contrast images near metal.

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A system and method for generating MR phase contrast images near metal include an MRI apparatus that includes an MRI system having a plurality of gradient coils and an RF transceiver system and an RF switch controlled by a pulse module to transmit RF signals to an RF coil assembly. The MRI apparatus also includes a computer programmed to acquire a plurality of three-dimensional (3D) MR data sets and to generate a plurality of frequency images based on the plurality of 3D MR data sets. Each 3D MR data set is acquired using a central transmit frequency and a central receive frequency set to an offset frequency value that is distinct for each 3D MR data set. The computer is also programmed to convert the plurality of frequency images to a plurality of time domain images and to generate a phase image based on the plurality of time domain images.

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Dit octrooi is verleend ongeacht het bijgevoegde resultaat van het onderzoek naar de stand van de techniek en schriftelijke opinie. Het octrooischrift komt overeen met de oorspronkelijk ingediende stukken.

SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR GENERATING MR PHASE CONTRAST IMAGES NEAR METAL

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

5 [0001] Embodiments of the invention relate generally to magnetic resonance (MR) imaging and, more particularly, to generating MR phase contrast images from a region-of-interest (ROI) near metal.

[0002] When a substance such as human tissue is subjected to a uniform magnetic field (polarizing field B_0), the individual magnetic moments of the spins in the tissue attempt to align with this polarizing field, but precess about it in random order at their
10 characteristic Larmor frequency. If the substance, or tissue, is subjected to a magnetic field (excitation field B_1) which is in the x-y plane and which is near the Larmor frequency, the net aligned moment, or “longitudinal magnetization”, M_z , may be rotated, or “tipped”, into the x-y plane to produce a net transverse magnetic moment M_t .
15 A signal is emitted by the excited spins after the excitation signal B_1 is terminated and this signal may be received and processed to form an image.

[0003] When utilizing these signals to produce images, magnetic field gradients (G_x , G_y , and G_z) are employed. Typically, the region to be imaged is scanned by a sequence
20 of measurement cycles in which these gradients vary according to the particular localization method being used. The resulting set of received NMR signals are digitized and processed to reconstruct the image using one of many well known reconstruction techniques.

[0004] The use of MR in musculoskeletal (MSK) diagnostics is a rapidly growing field. Arthroplasty is the surgical placement of implants. The population of patients
25 having some form of metal implant is quite large and growing rapidly. MR has significant capabilities in assisting the diagnosis of implant revisions. Using magnetic resonance imaging to assist in clinical diagnostics of MR-compatible arthroplastic implants, however, has proven a fundamentally challenging problem. Most materials that are robust and durable enough to utilize for bone replacements will have magnetic
30 properties that, when placed in a typical B_0 magnetic field, induce extraneous fields of amplitude and spatial variation that are large compared to the field offsets utilized in

conventional spatial encoding. Accordingly, these materials can introduce distortions in the main magnetic field resulting in an inhomogeneous magnetic field.

5 [0005] MR imaging in the presence of metal hardware has developed increasing importance in view of metal-on-metal implant replacement failure modes that are not detectable via other imaging techniques. The complications from such implants have been attributed to both high rates of wear and hypersensitivity reactions without high wear rates. Unfortunately, conventional magnitude contrast techniques cannot easily differentiate between such soft tissue variations.

10 [0006] Since some of the variation between these tissue constructions involves the presence of high magnetic susceptibility particulate matter, a potential differentiating contrast may be gained from phase analysis of MR images in these regions. However, the substantial B_0 perturbations induced by metal render conventional phase-contrast mechanisms useless.

15 [0007] It would therefore be desirable to have a system and method capable of reducing image artifacts near or around implant interfaces to allow for differentiation between and within these classes of local tissue response using MR imaging.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

20 [0008] In accordance with an aspect of the invention, a magnetic resonance (MRI) apparatus includes an MRI system having a plurality of gradient coils positioned about a bore of a magnet, and an RF transceiver system and an RF switch controlled by a pulse module to transmit RF signals to an RF coil assembly to acquire MR images. The MRI apparatus also includes a computer programmed to acquire a plurality of three-dimensional (3D) MR data sets and to generate a plurality of frequency images based on the plurality of 3D MR data sets. Each 3D MR data set is acquired using a central
25 transmit frequency and a central receive frequency set to an offset frequency value that is distinct for each 3D MR data set. The computer is also programmed to convert the plurality of frequency images to a plurality of time domain images and to generate a phase image based on the plurality of time domain images.

30 [0009] In accordance with another aspect of the invention, a method of magnetic resonance (MR) imaging includes determining a distinct central frequency for each of a plurality of 3D MR data acquisitions, performing the plurality of 3D MR data acquisitions, each 3D MR data acquisition having a central transmit frequency and a

central receive frequency set to the distinct central frequency determined therefor, and reconstructing a frequency image for each of the plurality of 3D MR data acquisitions. The method also includes generating a plurality of temporal images based on the reconstructed frequency images and generating a phase image based on the plurality of
5 temporal images.

[0010] In accordance with yet another aspect of the invention, a computer readable storage medium having stored thereon a computer program comprising instructions, which, when executed by a computer, cause the computer to set a center transmission frequency and a center reception frequency of a first 3D MR acquisition equal to a first
10 center frequency offset, to execute the first 3D MR acquisition to acquire a first set of 3D MR data, and to set a center transmission frequency and a center reception frequency of a second 3D MR acquisition equal to a second center frequency offset different than the first center frequency offset. The computer program also causes the computer to execute the second 3D MR acquisition to acquire a second set of 3D MR
15 data, to reconstruct a frequency image for each of the first and second sets of 3D MR data, to convert the frequency images to respective first and second time domain images, and to generate a phase image based on the first and second time domain images.

[0011] Various other features and advantages will be made apparent from the
20 following detailed description and the drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0012] The drawings illustrate embodiments presently contemplated for carrying out the invention.

25 **[0013]** In the drawings:

[0014] FIG. 1 is a schematic block diagram of an exemplary MR imaging system incorporating embodiments of the present invention.

[0015] FIG. 2 is a flowchart of an MR imaging technique according to an embodiment of the invention.

30 **[0016]** FIG. 3 is a technique for constructing a magnetic field map according to an embodiment of the invention.

[0017] FIG. 4 is a technique for constructing a magnetic field map according to another embodiment of the invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

5 **[0018]** Referring to FIG. 1, the major components of an exemplary magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) system 10 incorporating embodiments of the present invention are shown. The operation of the system is controlled from an operator console 12 which includes a keyboard or other input device 13, a control panel 14, and a display screen 16. The console 12 communicates through a link 18 with a separate
10 computer system 20 that enables an operator to control the production and display of images on the display screen 16. The computer system 20 includes a number of modules which communicate with each other through a backplane 20a. These include an image processor module 22, a CPU module 24 and a memory module 26 that may include a frame buffer for storing image data arrays. The computer system 20 is linked
15 to archival media devices, permanent or back-up memory storage or a network for storage of image data and programs, and communicates with a separate system control 32 through a high speed serial link 34. The input device 13 can include a mouse, joystick, keyboard, track ball, touch activated screen, light wand, voice control, or any similar or equivalent input device, and may be used for interactive geometry
20 prescription.

[0019] The system control 32 includes a set of modules connected together by a backplane 32a. These include a CPU module 36 and a pulse generator module 38 which connects to the operator console 12 through a serial link 40. It is through link 40 that the system control 32 receives commands from the operator to indicate the scan
25 sequence that is to be performed. The pulse generator module 38 operates the system components to carry out the desired scan sequence and produces data which indicates the timing, strength and shape of the RF pulses produced, and the timing and length of the data acquisition window. The pulse generator module 38 connects to a set of gradient amplifiers 42, to indicate the timing and shape of the gradient pulses that are
30 produced during the scan. The pulse generator module 38 can also receive patient data from a physiological acquisition controller 44 that receives signals from a number of different sensors connected to the patient, such as ECG signals from electrodes attached

to the patient. And finally, the pulse generator module 38 connects to a scan room interface circuit 46 which receives signals from various sensors associated with the condition of the patient and the magnet system. It is also through the scan room interface circuit 46 that a patient positioning system 48 receives commands to move the patient to the desired position for the scan.

[0020] The gradient waveforms produced by the pulse generator module 38 are applied to the gradient amplifier system 42 having G_x, G_y, and G_z amplifiers. Each gradient amplifier excites a corresponding physical gradient coil in a gradient coil assembly generally designated 50 to produce the magnetic field gradients used for spatially encoding acquired signals. The gradient coil assembly 50 forms part of a magnet assembly 52 which includes a polarizing magnet 54 and a whole-body RF coil 56. In an embodiment of the invention, RF coil 56 is a multi-channel coil. A transceiver module 58 in the system control 32 produces pulses which are amplified by an RF amplifier 60 and coupled to the RF coil 56 by a transmit/receive switch 62. The resulting signals emitted by the excited nuclei in the patient may be sensed by the same RF coil 56 and coupled through the transmit/receive switch 62 to a preamplifier 64. The amplified MR signals are demodulated, filtered, and digitized in the receiver section of the transceiver 58. The transmit/receive switch 62 is controlled by a signal from the pulse generator module 38 to electrically connect the RF amplifier 60 to the coil 56 during the transmit mode and to connect the preamplifier 64 to the coil 56 during the receive mode. The transmit/receive switch 62 can also enable a separate RF coil (for example, a surface coil) to be used in either the transmit or receive mode.

[0021] The MR signals picked up by the multi-channel RF coil 56 are digitized by the transceiver module 58 and transferred to a memory module 66 in the system control 32. A scan is complete when an array of raw k-space data has been acquired in the memory module 66. This raw k-space data is rearranged into separate k-space data arrays for each image to be reconstructed, and each of these is input to an array processor 68 which operates to Fourier transform the data into an array of image data. This image data is conveyed through the serial link 34 to the computer system 20 where it is stored in memory. In response to commands received from the operator console 12, this image data may be archived in long term storage or it may be further processed by

the image processor 22 and conveyed to the operator console 12 and presented on the display 16.

[0022] FIG. 2 shows a technique 70 for MR imaging near or around patient metallic implants according to an embodiment of the invention. In an embodiment of the invention, technique 70 will be described with respect to 3D Fast Spin Echo (FSE) MR imaging; however, it is contemplated that technique 70 may also apply to 3D spin-echo sequences and other 3D MR acquisition techniques. In an embodiment of the invention, computer system 20 may be programmed to perform technique 70. Technique 70 begins with configuring a pulse train of an MR acquisition pulse sequence at block 72 to be used during each MR acquisition of the MR imaging to acquire a 3D MR data set. The pulse train is configured such that no slab selection imaging gradients are used. In this manner, image reconstruction may be simplified. The shape of pulses of the pulse train within the MR acquisition pulse sequence is also configured. In an embodiment of the invention, a Gaussian pulse shape is used as the shape for pulses of the pulse train. In another embodiment of the invention, the pulse shape used may be based on a spatial-spectral pulse shape or on the shape of a hard or square pulse.

[0023] At block 74, imaging bandwidths for the MR acquisitions are determined. An excitation pulse bandwidth for the MR acquisition pulse sequence to be used for acquiring MR data is determined as well as a bandwidth of utilized refocusing pulses. The utilized refocusing pulse bandwidth is determined to be equal to or less than the bandwidth of the excitation pulse. A receiver bandwidth for the receive coil array used to acquire MR data during the MR acquisition pulse sequence is set to a bandwidth larger than that typically used in 3D FSE imaging. In an example, the receiver bandwidth is set to +/- 125 kHz. It is contemplated that the receiver bandwidth may also be set to a value greater than +/- 125 kHz. In the described technique, off-resonance readout distortion is limited to frequency offsets contained in the RF refocusing band. Setting the receiver bandwidth accordingly helps to minimize this residual readout distortion in reconstructed images.

[0024] A resonance interval is determined at block 76 that represents an offset for both the center resonance frequency for transmission and the center resonance frequency for reception between sets of acquired MR data. According to an embodiment of the invention, the resonance interval is less than the bandwidth of the

utilized refocusing pulses. At block 78, a resonance interval sequence is determined for acquiring 3D MR data sets. The resonance interval sequence includes offset frequency values, or B_0 values, to which central transmission and central reception resonance frequencies are set during MR acquisition. In an embodiment of the invention, the resonance interval sequence includes an offset frequency value of zero. Additional values in the resonance interval sequence include multiples of the resonance interval. For example, the resonance interval sequence may include values for the central transmission and central reception resonance frequencies to be set to each 1 kHz offset step in the range -7 kHz to +7 kHz.

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10 **[0025]** In an embodiment of the invention, the resonance interval sequence is set to interleave or interlace the offset frequency values such that sequential MR acquisitions based on the offset frequency values do not acquire MR data with the central transmission and central reception resonance frequencies set to sequential offset frequency values. For example, an interleaved resonance interval sequence with a 1 kHz resonance interval (or offset step) in the range -7 kHz to +7 kHz may have the following order: [-7, 1, -5, 3, -3, 5, -1, 7, -6, 0, -4, 6, -2, 4, 2 kHz]. Accordingly, neighboring values in the resonance interval sequence are separated by more than the offset step of 1 kHz. Interleaving the resonance interval sequence in this manner reduces interaction between 3D MR data acquisitions in an imaging scan. As described
15
20 further below, each offset frequency value in the resonance interval sequence is used as the central transmission and reception frequency for a different 3D MR data acquisition. In one embodiment, an MR imaging scan (or protocol) may be configured such that a first set of acquisitions uses a resonance interval sequence with the offset frequency values [-7, 1, -5, 3, -3, 5, -1, 7 kHz] during a single scan and such that a second set of
25 acquisitions uses a resonance interval sequence with the offset frequency values [-6, 0, -4, 6, -2, 4, 2 kHz] during another single scan. The resonance interval sequence values listed above are illustrative only and do not limit the invention. Other and different orders and values for the resonance interval sequence values are considered and are within the scope of the invention.

30 **[0026]** At block 80, the central transmission and central reception resonance frequencies for a 3D MR data acquisition are both set to one of the values in the resonance interval sequence, in particular, the central transmission frequency and the

central reception frequency for the acquisition are set to the same offset frequency value. 3D MR data is acquired at block 82 using the scan parameters and sequences configured and determined in the previous steps of technique 70. In an embodiment of the invention, the 3D MR data is acquired using non-parallel imaging techniques. The 3D MR data may be acquired via multi-channel RF coil 56 of FIG. 1 or via another multi-channel receive coil. However, it is contemplated that parallel imaging techniques such as ARC, and the like may also be used and that multiple multi-channel receive coils may be used to acquire the 3D MR data. At block 84, it is determined if another 3D MR data acquisition should be performed. If all the offset frequency values in the resonance interval sequence have not been used 86, then process control returns to block 80 for setting the central transmission and central reception resonance frequencies for the next 3D MR data acquisition to another of the offset frequency values in the resonance interval sequence and at block 82 3D MR data for another 3D MR data set is acquired as described above. If all the offset frequency values in the resonance interval sequence have been used 88, a frequency image, $I^f(x, y, z, f)$, is reconstructed at block 90 for each MR data set acquired, resulting in a collection of images. Each image is reconstructed using known reconstruction techniques.

[0027] At block 92, the frequency images or spectral data, $I^f(x, y, z, f)$, are converted or transformed into composite image-space data bins or temporal images, $I^t(x, y, z, t)$, that can be analyzed in the complex plane. According to an embodiment of the invention, a Fourier transformation in the spectral domain at each pixel in the imaging volume is used to convert the data to temporal images:

$$I^f(x, y, z, f) \rightarrow FT \rightarrow I^t(x, y, z, t). \quad (1)$$

Through the Fourier transform, the frequency spectral bins are summed and phased relative to one another.

[0028] At block 94, a phase image is calculated or generated based on the plurality of temporal images or bins, $I^t(x, y, z, t)$. In one embodiment, the phase image is calculated based on the phase between a pair of the temporal bins, which may be temporally adjacent or may be temporally non-adjacent temporal bins in the case of three or more converted temporal bins. In another embodiment, the phase image may

be generated based on all of the converted temporal bins, whether two or more temporal bins were converted. In yet another embodiment, the phase image may be calculated from an average of a plurality of phase images generated based on the phase between each neighboring pair of temporal bins.

5 **[0029]** In an embodiment of the invention, a magnetic field map may optionally be generated at block 96 based on the frequency images $I^f(x, y, z, f)$. Referring to FIG. 3, technique 102 spatially corrects the frequency images $I^f(x, y, z, f)$ relative to one another in the frequency-encoded dimension. At block 104, the frequency images $I^f(x, y, z, f)$ are normalized at each pixel location according to:

$$10 \quad \sum_{b=1}^{N_b} I_b^f(x, y, z, f) = 1 \quad \forall x, y, z, f, \quad (2)$$

where N_b represents the number of frequency images $I^f(x, y, z, f)$.

[0030] Using the normalized image intensities resulting from Eqn. 2, a weighted average field map, $\Delta v_0(x, y, z, f)$, is estimated at block 106 according to:

$$\Delta v_0(x, y, z, f) = \sum_{b=1}^{N_b} I_b^f(x, y, z, f) \cdot v_0^b, \quad (3)$$

15 where v_0^b represents the spectral offset of each frequency image $I^f(x, y, z, f)$.

[0031] In another embodiment of the invention, the magnetic field map may be generated at block 96 based on the technique 108 shown in FIG. 4. At block 110, a plurality of reconstructed MR frequency images are selected. In one embodiment, the plurality of reconstructed MR frequency images are retrieved from an image storage
20 location such as memory 26 shown in FIG. 1 or another computer readable storage medium. The plurality of reconstructed frequency images may be generated using the technique described above with respect to FIG. 2. In another embodiment, the plurality

of reconstructed MR frequency images may be generated on-the-fly. For example, the plurality of MR frequency images may be generated using the technique described above with respect to FIG. 2. At block 112, the pixels for each of the plurality of MR frequency images are examined to determine, for each pixel location, which image of the plurality of MR images has the maximum intensity. At block 114, each pixel location in the magnetic field map is assigned the offset frequency value, or B_0 value, to which the central transmission and central reception resonance frequencies are set to in the image determined to have the maximum intensity for the corresponding pixel location. For example, for a given magnetic field map pixel location, the image acquired with the central transmission and central reception resonance frequencies set to 3 kHz may have the maximum intensity for the corresponding pixel location. Accordingly, the value of 3 kHz is used for the given magnetic field map pixel location. For an adjacent magnetic field map pixel location, it may be determined that the image acquired with the central transmission and central reception resonance frequencies set to -4 kHz may have the maximum intensity for the corresponding pixel location. Accordingly, the value of -4 kHz is used for the adjacent magnetic field map pixel location.

[0032] Returning to FIG. 2, the magnetic field map generated from technique 102 or technique 108 is then used in this embodiment at block 98 to subtract macroscopic phase trends from the phase image generated at block 94 such that only the high-frequency phase variations remain in the phase image. At block 100, the phase image (or the modified phase image if modified using the magnetic field map) may be displayed to a user and/or stored in an image storage database.

[0033] Embodiments of the invention allow for the removal of B_0 perturbations from metal implants that contaminate raw phase image data to expose finer scale phase variations within the image. Such a phase-contrast mechanism allows easier identification of potential MR phase-based differentiators of local tissue reactions near joint replacements, for example.

[0034] A technical contribution for the disclosed method and apparatus is that is provides for a computer implemented method for generating MR phase contrast images from a region-of-interest (ROI) near metal.

[0035] Therefore, in accordance with an embodiment of the invention, a magnetic resonance (MRI) apparatus includes an MRI system having a plurality of gradient coils positioned about a bore of a magnet, and an RF transceiver system and an RF switch controlled by a pulse module to transmit RF signals to an RF coil assembly to acquire MR images. The MRI apparatus also includes a computer programmed to acquire a plurality of three-dimensional (3D) MR data sets and to generate a plurality of frequency images based on the plurality of 3D MR data sets. Each 3D MR data set is acquired using a central transmit frequency and a central receive frequency set to an offset frequency value that is distinct for each 3D MR data set. The computer is also programmed to convert the plurality of frequency images to a plurality of time domain images and to generate a phase image based on the plurality of time domain images.

[0036] In accordance with another embodiment of the invention, a method of magnetic resonance (MR) imaging includes determining a distinct central frequency for each of a plurality of 3D MR data acquisitions, performing the plurality of 3D MR data acquisitions, each 3D MR data acquisition having a central transmit frequency and a central receive frequency set to the distinct central frequency determined therefor, and reconstructing a frequency image for each of the plurality of 3D MR data acquisitions. The method also includes generating a plurality of temporal images based on the reconstructed frequency images and generating a phase image based on the plurality of temporal images.

[0037] In accordance with yet another embodiment of the invention, a computer readable storage medium having stored thereon a computer program comprising instructions, which, when executed by a computer, cause the computer to set a center transmission frequency and a center reception frequency of a first 3D MR acquisition equal to a first center frequency offset, to execute the first 3D MR acquisition to acquire a first set of 3D MR data, and to set a center transmission frequency and a center reception frequency of a second 3D MR acquisition equal to a second center frequency offset different than the first center frequency offset. The computer program also causes the computer to execute the second 3D MR acquisition to acquire a second set of 3D MR data, to reconstruct a frequency image for each of the first and second sets of 3D MR data, to convert the frequency images to respective first and second time domain

images, and to generate a phase image based on the first and second time domain images.

[0038] This written description uses examples to disclose the invention, including the best mode, and also to enable any person skilled in the art to practice the invention, including making and using any devices or systems and performing any incorporated methods. The patentable scope of the invention is defined by the claims, and may include other examples that occur to those skilled in the art. Such other examples are intended to be within the scope of the claims if they have structural elements that do not differ from the literal language of the claims, or if they include equivalent structural elements with insubstantial differences from the literal languages of the claims.

CONCLUSIES

1. Een magnetische-resonantie (MRI) inrichting omvattende:
een MRI systeem met meerdere gradientspoelen gepositioneerd rond een boring van een
5 magneet en een RF zender-ontvangersysteem en een RF schakelaar aangestuurd door een
pulsmodule om RF-signalen naar een RF spoelsamenstel te versturen om MR beelden te
verwerven, en een computer geprogrammeerd om:
meerdere driedimensionale (3D) MR gegevenssets te verwerven , waarbij elke 3D MR
gegevensset is verworven met behulp van een centrale zendfrequentie en een centrale
10 ontvangsfrequentie ingesteld op een offset-frequentie die verschillend is voor elke 3D MR
gegevensset;
meerdere frequentiebeelden te genereren op basis van de meerdere 3D MR gegevenssets;
de meerdere frequentiebeelden te converteren naar meerdere tijdsdomeinbeelden en
een fasebeeld te genereren op basis van de meerdere tijdsdomeinbeelden.
15
2. De MRI inrichting volgens conclusie 1, waarbij de computer als geprogrammeerd om de
meerdere frequentiebeelden om te zetten, geprogrammeerd is om een Fourier transformatie
toe te passen op de meerdere frequentiebeelden.
- 20 3. De MRI inrichting volgens conclusie 1, waarbij de computer verder geprogrammeerd is om
een magnetisch-veldkaart te genereren op basis van de meerdere frequentiebeelden.
4. De MRI inrichting volgens conclusie 3, waarbij de computer verder geprogrammeerd is om
lage ruimtelijke frequentiefase uit het fasebeeld te verwijderen op basis van de magnetisch-
25 veldkaart.
5. De MRI inrichting volgens conclusie 1, waarbij de meerdere tijdsdomeinbeelden meer dan
twee tijdsdomeinbeelden omvat en
waarbij de computer als geprogrammeerd om het fasebeeld te genereren, geprogrammeerd
30 is om het fasebeeld te genereren op basis van een fase tussen een paar van de meerdere
tijdsdomeinbeelden.
6. De MRI inrichting volgens conclusie 5, waarbij het paar van de meerdere
tijdsdomeinbeelden overeenstemmen met tijdsgebonden niet-aangrenzende
35 tijdsdomeinbeelden.
7. De MRI inrichting volgens conclusie 1, waarbij de computer als geprogrammeerd om het
fasebeeld te genereren, geprogrammeerd is om het fasebeeld te genereren op basis van alle

van de meerdere tijdsdomeinbeelden.

5 8. De MRI inrichting volgens conclusie 1, waarbij de computer als geprogrammeerd om het fasebeeld te genereren, geprogrammeerd is om het fasebeeld te genereren op basis van een gemiddelde van de fasen tussen elk naburig paar tijdsdomeinbeelden.

10 9. De MRI inrichting volgens conclusie 1, waarbij de computer verder geprogrammeerd is om elk van de meerdere 3D MR gegevenssets te verkrijgen zonder plaatselectie via afbeeldingsgradiënten.

10 10. De MRI inrichting volgens conclusie 9, waarbij de computer verder geprogrammeerd is om elk van de meerdere 3D MR gegevenssets te verkrijgen met behulp van een ontvangerbandbreedte van ten minste ± 125 kHz.

15 11. De MRI inrichting volgens conclusie 1, waarbij de computer verder geprogrammeerd is om offsetfrequentiewaarden gebruikt om het aantal 3D MR gegevens te verkrijgen, te verweven zodanig dat opeenvolgende 3D MR gegevenssets worden verworven met niet-opeenvolgende offset-frequentiewaarden.

20 12. Werkwijze voor magnetische resonantie (MR) beeldvorming omvattende:
het bepalen van een aparte centrale frequentie voor elk van meerdere 3D MR gegevensverwerkingen;
het uitvoeren van de meerdere 3D MR gegevensverwerkingen, waarbij elke 3D MR gegevensverwerking een centrale zendfrequentie en een centrale ontvangstfrequentie heeft,
25 ingesteld op de daarvoor bepaalde aparte centrale frequentie;
het reconstrueren van een frequentiebeeld voor elk van de meerdere 3D MR gegevensverwerkingen;
het genereren van meerdere tijdsbeelden op basis van de gereconstrueerde frequentiebeelden en
30 het genereren van een fasebeeld op basis van de meerdere aantal tijdsbeelden.

13. Werkwijze volgens conclusie 12, verder omvattende:
het genereren van een magnetisch-veldkaart op basis van de gereconstrueerde frequentiebeelden en
35 het verwijderen van lage ruimtelijke frequentiefase van het fasebeeld op basis van de magnetisch-veldkaart.

14. Werkwijze volgens conclusie 12, waarbij het genereren van het fasebeeld het berekenen

omvat van de fase tussen een paar tijdsgebonden aangrenzende tijdsbeelden berekenen.

15. Werkwijze volgens conclusie 14, waarbij het genereren van het fasebeeld het berekenen omvat van de fase tussen een paar tijdsgebonden niet-aangrenzende tijdsbeelden.

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16. Werkwijze volgens conclusie 12, waarbij het genereren van het fasebeeld het berekenen omvat van een gemiddelde van de fasen tussen elk paar van aangrenzende tijdsbeelden.

10 17. Een computer leesbaar opslagmedium met daarop opgeslagen een computerprogramma omvattende instructies die, wanneer uitgevoerd door een computer, ervoor zorgen dat de computer:

een centrale zendfrequentie instelt en een centrale ontvangsfrequentie voor een eerste 3D-MR verwerving gelijk aan een eerste centrale offset-frequentie;

de eerste 3D MR verwerving uitvoert om een eerste set van 3D MR gegevens te verwerven;

15 een centrale zendfrequentie instelt en een centrale ontvangsfrequentie voor een tweede 3D-MR verwerving gelijk aan een tweede centrale offset-frequentie verschillend van de eerste centrale offset-frequentie;

de tweede 3D MR verwerving uitvoert om een tweede set van 3D MR gegevens te verwerven;

20 een frequentiebeeld reconstrueert voor elk van de eerste en tweede set 3D MR gegevens; de frequentiebeelden omzet naar respectievelijk eerste en tweede tijdsdomeinbeelden en een fasebeeld genereert op basis van de eerste en tweede tijdsdomeinbeelden.

25 18. Het computer leesbaar opslagmedium van conclusie 17, waarbij de instructies die ervoor zorgen dat de computer elk frequentiebeeld omzet naar een respectievelijk tijdsdomeinbeeld, ervoor zorgen dat de computer een Fouriertransformatie toepast op elk frequentiebeeld.

19. Het computer leesbaar opslagmedium van conclusie 17, waarbij de instructies er verder voor zorgen dat de computer:

30 een centrale zendfrequentie instelt en een centrale ontvangsfrequentie voor een derde 3D-MR verwerving gelijk aan een derde centrale offset-frequentie;

de derde 3D MR verwerving uitvoert om een derde set van 3D MR gegevens te verwerven;

een frequentiebeeld reconstrueert voor de derde set 3D MR gegevens;

35 het frequentiebeeld voor de derde set 3D MR gegevens omzet naar een derde tijdsdomeinbeeld en

waarbij de instructies die ervoor zorgen dat de computer het fasebeeld genereert, ervoor zorgen dat de computer het fasebeeld genereert op basis van de eerste, tweede en derde tijdsdomeinbeelden.

20. Het computer leesbaar opslagmedium van conclusie 17, waarbij de instructies verder ervoor zorgen dat de computer:

een magnetisch- veldkaart genereert op basis van de eerste en tweede set 3D MR gegevens,

5 en

gegevens in de magnetisch-veldkaart aftrekt van gegevens in het fasebeeld om lage ruimtelijke frequentiefase van het fasebeeld te verwijderen.

10

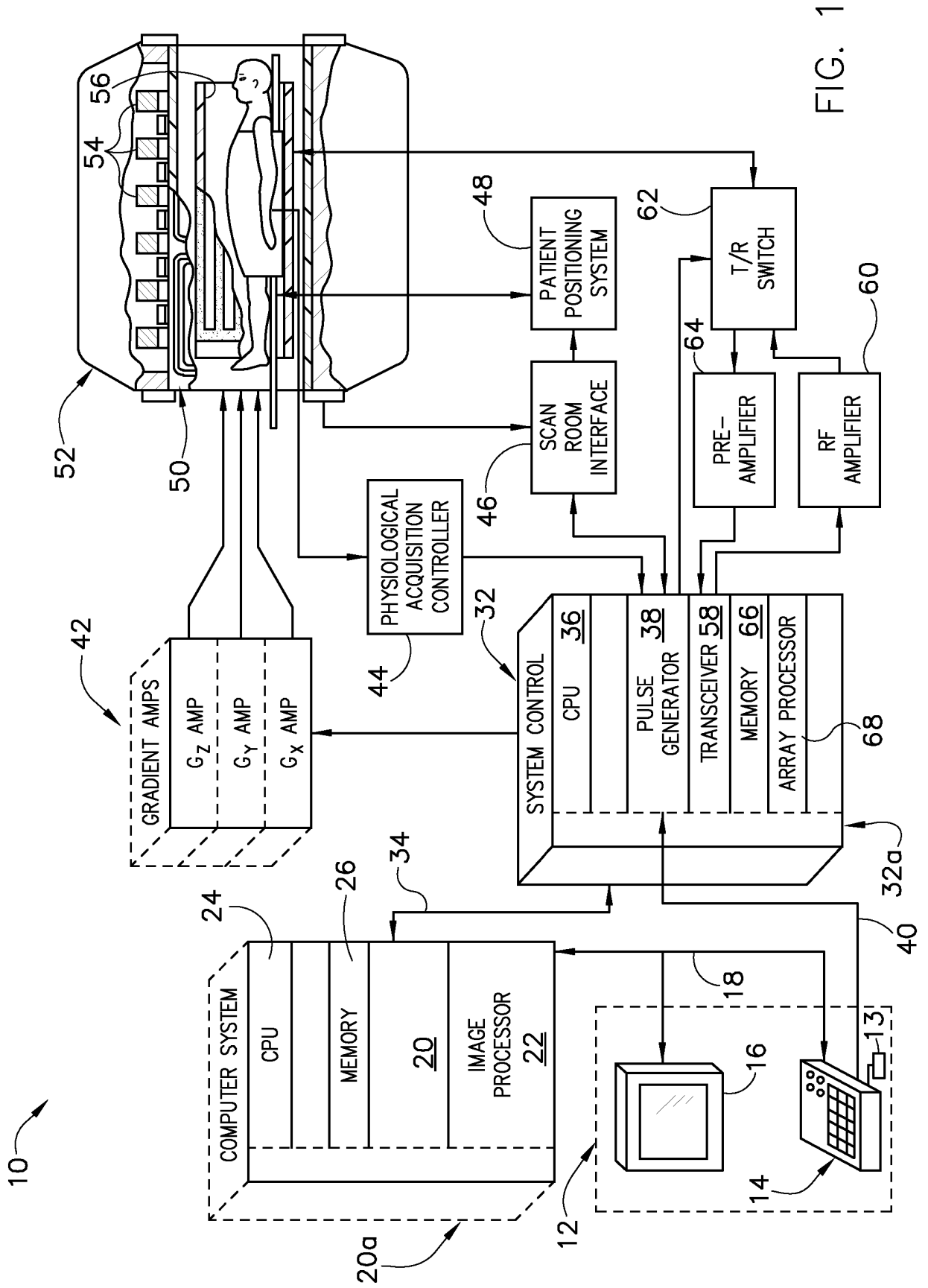
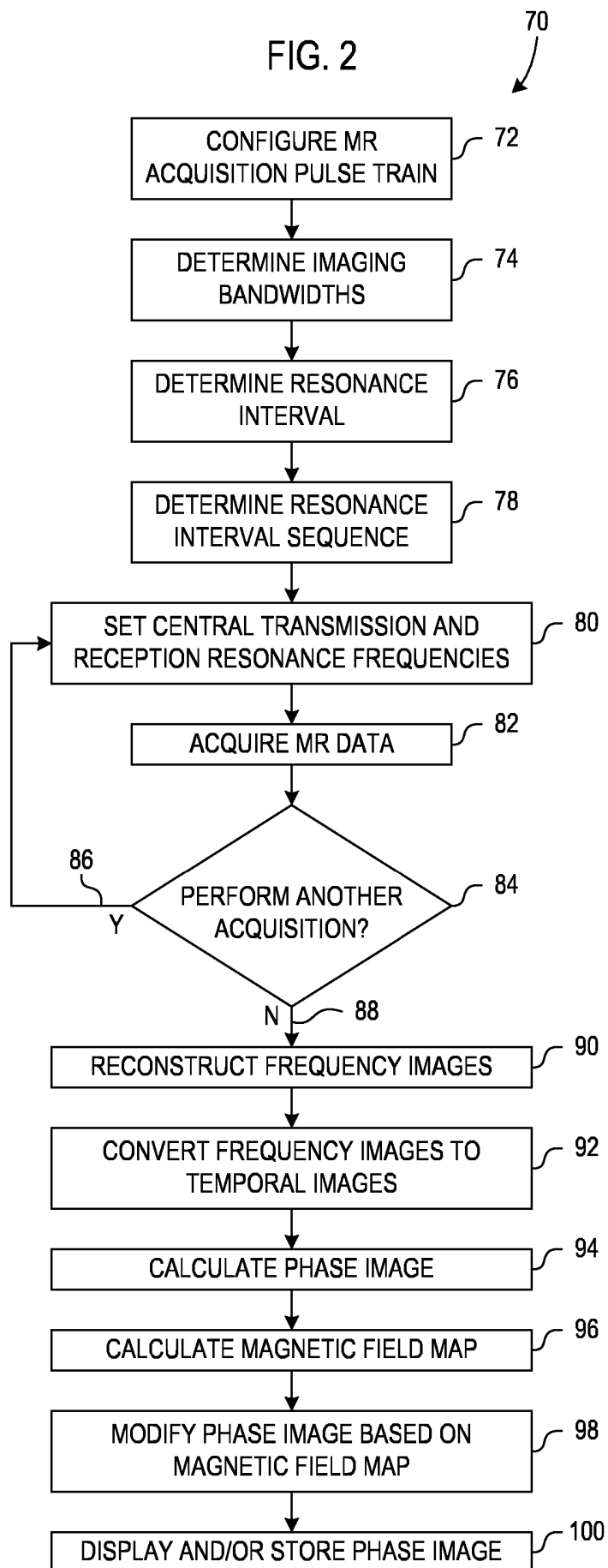


FIG. 1

FIG. 2



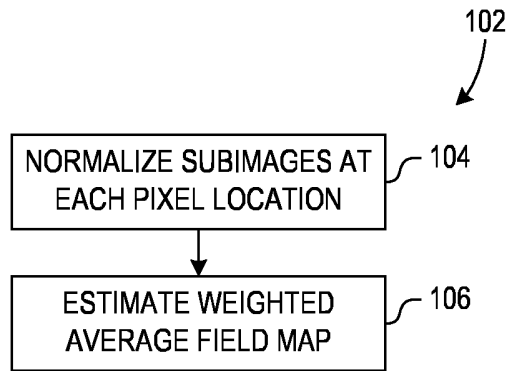


FIG. 3

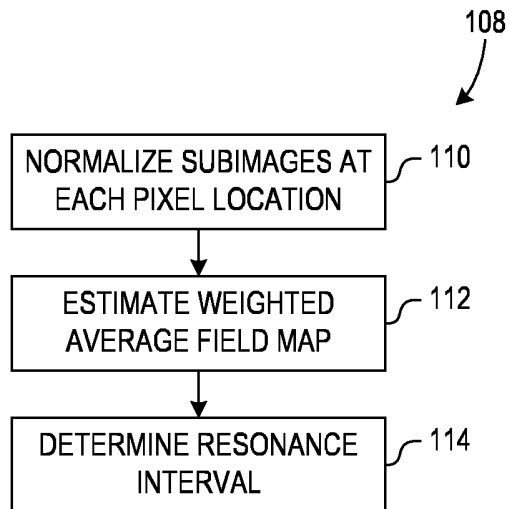
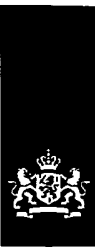


FIG. 4



ONDERZOEKSRAPPORT

BETREFFENDE HET RESULTAAT VAN HET ONDERZOEK NAAR DE STAND VAN DE TECHNIEK

RELEVANTE LITERATUUR			
Categorie ¹	Literatuur met, voor zover nodig, aanduiding van speciaal van belang zijnde tekstgedeelten of figuren.	Van belang voor conclusie(s) nr:	Classificatie (IPC)
A	KOCH K M ET AL: "Imaging Near Metal with a MAVRIC-SEMAC Hybrid", MAGNETIC RESONANCE IN MEDICINE, JOHN WILEY & SONS, INC, US, deel 65, nr. 1, 1 januari 2010 (2010-01-01), bladzijden 71-82, XP002639594, ISSN: 0740-3194, DOI: 10.1002/MRM.22523 [gevonden op 2010-10-27] * het gehele document *	1-20	INV. G01R33/565 ADD. G01R33/24
A	US 2005/030023 A1 (BANGERTER NEAL K [US] ET AL) 10 februari 2005 (2005-02-10) * alinea [0021], [0028] *	1-4,12, 13,17-20	
A	KOCH K.M. ET AL.: "Jacobian-Based Correction of 3D-MSI Images Near Implanted Metal Devices", PROCEEDINGS OF THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR MAGNETIC RESONANCE IN MEDICINE, 19TH ANNUAL MEETING AND EXHIBITION, 7 mei 2011 (2011-05-07), bladzijde 3173, XP040619979, Montréal, Canada * het gehele document *	1-20	
			Onderzochte gebieden van de techniek
			G01R
A	US 6 445 182 B1 (DEAN DAVID [US] ET AL) 3 september 2002 (2002-09-03) * kolom 6, regel 15 - regel 58 *	1-4,12, 13,17-20	
Indien gewijzigde conclusies zijn ingediend, heeft dit rapport betrekking op de conclusies ingediend op:			
Plaats van onderzoek: München		Datum waarop het onderzoek werd voltooid: 5 februari 2015	Bevoegd ambtenaar: Skalla, Jörg
¹ CATEGORIE VAN DE VERMELDE LITERATUUR			
<p>X: de conclusie wordt als niet nieuw of niet inventief beschouwd ten opzichte van deze literatuur</p> <p>Y: de conclusie wordt als niet inventief beschouwd ten opzichte van de combinatie van deze literatuur met andere geciteerde literatuur van dezelfde categorie, waarbij de combinatie voor de vakman voor de hand liggend wordt geacht</p> <p>A: niet tot de categorie X of Y behorende literatuur die de stand van de techniek beschrijft</p> <p>O: niet-schriftelijke stand van de techniek</p> <p>P: tussen de voorrangdatum en de indieningsdatum gepubliceerde literatuur</p> <p>T: na de indieningsdatum of de voorrangdatum gepubliceerde literatuur die niet bezwaard is voor de octrooiaanvraag, maar wordt vermeld ter verheldering van de theorie of het principe dat ten grondslag ligt aan de uitvinding</p> <p>E: eerdere octrooi(aanvraag), gepubliceerd op of na de indieningsdatum, waarin dezelfde uitvinding wordt beschreven</p> <p>D: in de octrooiaanvraag vermeld</p> <p>L: om andere redenen vermelde literatuur</p> <p>&: lid van dezelfde octrooifamilie of overeenkomstige octrooipublicatie</p>			

3

EOB FORM 02.83 (P0414B)

RELEVANTE LITERATUUR		
Categorie ¹	Literatuur met, voor zover nodig, aanduiding van speciaal van belang zijnde tekstgedeelten of figuren.	Van belang voor conclusie(s) nr:
X,P	KOCH K.M. ET AL.: "Extracting Phase Contrast from MAVRIC Images Near Metal Implants", PROCEEDINGS OF THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR MAGNETIC RESONANCE IN MEDICINE, 2012 ANNULAR MEETING PROCEEDINGS, 5 mei 2012 (2012-05-05), XP040575353, Melbourne, Australia * het gehele document * -----	1-20

3
 EOB FORM 02.83 (P0414C)

¹ CATEGORIE VAN DE VERMELDE LITERATUUR

- X: de conclusie wordt als niet nieuw of niet inventief beschouwd ten opzichte van deze literatuur
- Y: de conclusie wordt als niet inventief beschouwd ten opzichte van de combinatie van deze literatuur met andere geciteerde literatuur van dezelfde categorie, waarbij de combinatie voor de vakman voor de hand liggend wordt geacht
- A: niet tot de categorie X of Y behorende literatuur die de stand van de techniek beschrijft
- O: niet-schriftelijke stand van de techniek
- P: tussen de voorrangsdatum en de indieningsdatum gepubliceerde literatuur
- T: na de indieningsdatum of de voorrangsdatum gepubliceerde literatuur die niet bezwaard is voor de octrooiaanvraag, maar wordt vermeld ter verheldering van de theorie of het principe dat ten grondslag ligt aan de uitvinding
- E: eerdere octrooi(aanvraag), gepubliceerd op of na de indieningsdatum, waarin dezelfde uitvinding wordt beschreven
- D: in de octrooiaanvraag vermeld
- L: om andere redenen vermelde literatuur
- &: lid van dezelfde octrooifamilie of overeenkomstige octrooipublicatie

**AANHANGSEL BEHORENDE BIJ HET RAPPORT BETREFFENDE
HET ONDERZOEK NAAR DE STAND VAN DE TECHNIEK,
UITGEVOERD IN DE OCTROOIAANVRAGE NR.**

NO 138651
NL 2010571

Het aanhangsel bevat een opgave van elders gepubliceerde octrooiaanvragen of octrooien (zogenaamde leden van dezelfde octroofamilie), die overeenkomen met octrooischriften genoemd in het rapport.

De opgave is samengesteld aan de hand van gegevens uit het computerbestand van het Europees Octrooibureau per De juistheid en volledigheid van deze opgave wordt noch door het Europees Octrooibureau, noch door het Bureau voor de Industriële eigendom gegarandeerd; de gegevens worden verstrekt voor informatiedoeleinden.

05-02-2015

In het rapport genoemd octrooigeschrift	Datum van publicatie	Overeenkomend(e) geschrift(en)	Datum van publicatie
US 2005030023 A1	10-02-2005	GEEN	
US 6445182 B1	03-09-2002	AU 3754299 A US 6445182 B1 WO 9956156 A1	16-11-1999 03-09-2002 04-11-1999

SCHRIFTELIJKE OPINIE

DOSSIER NUMMER NO138651	INDIENINGSDATUM 05.04.2013	VOORRANGSDATUM 06.04.2012	AANVRAAGNUMMER NL2010571
CLASSIFICATIE INV. G01R33/565 ADD. G01R33/24			
AANVRAGER General Electric Company			

Deze schriftelijke opinie bevat een toelichting op de volgende onderdelen:

- Onderdeel I Basis van de schriftelijke opinie
- Onderdeel II Voorrang
- Onderdeel III Vaststelling nieuwheid, inventiviteit en industriële toepasbaarheid niet mogelijk
- Onderdeel IV De aanvraag heeft betrekking op meer dan één uitvinding
- Onderdeel V Gemotiveerde verklaring ten aanzien van nieuwheid, inventiviteit en industriële toepasbaarheid
- Onderdeel VI Andere geciteerde documenten
- Onderdeel VII Overige gebreken
- Onderdeel VIII Overige opmerkingen

	DE BEVOEGDE AMBTENAAR
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SCHRIFTELIJKE OPINIE

Aanvraag nr.:
NL2010571

Onderdeel I Basis van de Schriftelijke Opinie

1. Deze schriftelijke opinie is opgesteld op basis van de meest recente conclusies ingediend voor aanvang van het onderzoek.
2. Met betrekking tot **nucleotide en/of aminozuur sequenties** die genoemd worden in de aanvraag en relevant zijn voor de uitvinding zoals beschreven in de conclusies, is dit onderzoek gedaan op basis van:
 - a. type materiaal:
 - sequentie opsomming
 - tabel met betrekking tot de sequentie lijst
 - b. vorm van het materiaal:
 - op papier
 - in elektronische vorm
 - c. moment van indiening/aanlevering:
 - opgenomen in de aanvraag zoals ingediend
 - samen met de aanvraag elektronisch ingediend
 - later aangeleverd voor het onderzoek
3. In geval er meer dan één versie of kopie van een sequentie opsomming of tabel met betrekking op een sequentie is ingediend of aangeleverd, zijn de benodigde verklaringen ingediend dat de informatie in de latere of additionele kopieën identiek is aan de aanvraag zoals ingediend of niet meer informatie bevatten dan de aanvraag zoals oorspronkelijk werd ingediend.
4. Overige opmerkingen:

SCHRIFTELIJKE OPINIE

Aanvraag nr.:
NL2010571

Onderdeel V Gemotiveerde verklaring ten aanzien van nieuwheid, inventiviteit en industriële toepasbaarheid

1. Verklaring

Nieuwheid	Ja: Conclusies 1-20 Nee: Conclusies
Inventiviteit	Ja: Conclusies 1-20 Nee: Conclusies
Industriële toepasbaarheid	Ja: Conclusies 1-20 Nee: Conclusies

2. Citaties en toelichting:

Zie aparte bladzijde

Onderdeel VI Andere geciteerde documenten

Andere geciteerde openbaarmakingen

Zie aparte bladzijde

Niet schriftelijke openbaarmakingen

Onderdeel VII Overige gebreken

De volgende gebreken in de vorm of inhoud van de aanvraag zijn opgemerkt:

Zie aparte bladzijde

Onderdeel VIII Overige opmerkingen

De volgende opmerkingen met betrekking tot de duidelijkheid van de conclusies, beschrijving, en figuren, of met betrekking tot de vraag of de conclusies nawerkbaar zijn, worden gemaakt:

Zie aparte bladzijde

1 **Re Item V**

Reasoned statement with regard to novelty, inventive step or industrial applicability; citations and explanations supporting such statement

1.1 Reference is made to the following documents:

- D1 KOCH K M ET AL: "Imaging Near Metal with a MAVRIC-SEMAC Hybrid", MAGNETIC RESONANCE IN MEDICINE, JOHN WILEY & SONS, INC, US, deel 65, nr. 1, 1 januari 2010 (2010-01-01), bladzijden 71-82, XP002639594, ISSN: 0740-3194, DOI: 10.1002/MRM.22523 [gevonden op 2010-10-27]
- D2 US 2005/030023 A1 (BANGERTER NEAL K [US] ET AL) 10 februari 2005 (2005-02-10)
- D3 KOCH K.M. ET AL.: "Extracting Phase Contrast from MAVRIC Images Near Metal Implants", PROCEEDINGS OF THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR MAGNETIC RESONANCE IN MEDICINE, 2012 ANNULAR MEETING PROCEEDINGS, 5 mei 2012 (2012-05-05), XP040575353, Melbourne, Australia
- D4 US 6 445 182 B1 (DEAN DAVID [US] ET AL) 3 september 2002 (2002-09-03)

1.2 Novelty and inventive step

Document D1 is considered as representing the closest prior art, in that it discloses (the references in parentheses applying to D1) an MRI apparatus comprising: an MRI system having a plurality of gradient coils positioned about a bore of a magnet (**the method of D1 is implemented by means of a GE HDx system**), and an RF transceiver system and an RF switch controlled by a pulse module to transmit RF signals to an RF coil assembly to acquire MR images (**see Fig. 1 and corresponding description; surface coils are used**); and a computer programmed to: acquire a plurality of three-dimensional MR data sets (**the MAVRIC method is a 3D-FSE imaging technique; a computer is used for controlling the MR device**), each 3D MR data set acquired using a central transmit frequency and a central receive frequency set to an offset frequency value that is distinct for each 3D MR data set (**MAVRIC acquire multiple 3D FSE images at incremented offsets of transmission and reception frequencies, see chapter "MAVRIC and SEMAC"**); generate a plurality of frequency images based on the plurality of 3D MR data sets

(MAVRIC spectral images are independently reconstructed to produce volumetry images, see chapter "MAVRIC and SEMAC"). The aforementioned features are also known from SEMAC which in addition to the MAVRIC method adds a magnetic field gradient.

Thus, the apparatus in accordance with claim 1 differs from that of D1 in that the plurality of frequency images are converted to a plurality of time domain images; and in that a phase image is generated based on the plurality of time domain images.

These features solve the problem of generating a phase contrast, which is particularly beneficial near metallic implants.

Document D1 does not address the generation of phase images. When suggesting the calculation of field maps from overlapping Gaussian spectral windows, pixels in the subimages are corrected in the frequency domain. This idea is also disclosed in D2 and therein applied to a correction of the summation of SSFP signals, see paragr. [0028], which are acquired however for different phases of the RF excitation pulse, i.e. central receive and transmit frequencies are not varied as in the MAVRIC method. Document D4 discloses a method of performing object-induced geometric distortion correction on the basis of phase images generated from 3D MR data. However, the 3D data sets to be compared are generated for different phase-encoding gradients rather than differently set central transmission and reception frequencies.

The subject-matter set forth in claim 1 is therefore considered as being based on an inventive step. The same applies *mutatis mutandis* to the corresponding method of claim 12 and the computer readable storage medium of claim 17, the lack of clarity notwithstanding. The other claims define preferred embodiments.

2 Re Item VI

Certain documents cited

Document D3 was published after the priority date but before the filing date of the current application. It is a conference abstract referring to an oral presentation of the current invention. Since the priority claim is held to be valid, the document and the oral presentation to which D3 refers do not constitute prior art to be taken into consideration when assessing novelty and inventive step.

3 Re Item VII

Certain defects in the application

3.1 The independent claims are not in the two-part form, which in the present case would be appropriate, with those features known in combination from the prior art (e.g. D1) being placed in the preamble and the remaining features being included in the characterising part.

3.2 The relevant background art disclosed in D1 is not mentioned in the description, and this document is not identified therein.

4 **Re Item VIII**

Certain observations on the application

4.1 Claim 1

4.1.1 The definition of a computer "programmed to" ("geprogrammeerd om") acquire MR data sets is obscure because the data is acquired by means of the other components of the MRI apparatus.

4.1.2 It is not clear whether the phrase "set to an offset frequency value that is distinct for each 3D MR data set" ("die verschillend is voor elke 3D MR gegevensset") grammatically refers to only the central receive frequency or both the central transmit and receive frequencies.

4.1.3 Claim 1 is not supported by the description in that it fails to contain all steps essential for carrying out the invention. In particular, it is an object of the invention that image artifacts near or around implant interfaces are reduced, see paragraphs [0006] and [0007]. However, claim 1 merely describes a way of generating a phase image without any compensation for magnetic field inhomogeneities. It appears that a magnetic field map has to be generated and that the phase image is to be modified by means for the magnetic field map, i.e. the features of claims 3 and 4 appear to be essential to the performance of the invention.

4.1.4 The claim allows to apply a slab selection imaging gradient. However, such a method is not supported by the description, compare with page 6, line 11.

4.2 Claims 12 and 17

Objection 3.1 applies *mutatis mutandis*.

4.3 Claim 17

Usually, a computer is not able to execute MR data acquisitions, i.e. the claim should refer to the control of an MRI apparatus.