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Utilizing microfluidic technology to replicate placental functions in a drug testing model

by

Jeremy D. Caplin

A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Major: Mechanical Engineering

Program of Study Committee: Nastaran Hashemi, Major Professor Reza Montazami Donald Sakaguchi

Iowa State University

Ames, Iowa

2016

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DEDICATION

I wish to dedicate this thesis to my parents, Barry Caplin and Debra Huntley, who have shown nothing but support, kindness, and understanding in my academic pursuits. Thank you for all the time and patience you have invested to get me where I am today.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| NOMENCLATURE | v |
|---|----------------|
| ACKNOWLEDGMENTS | vi |
| ABSTRACT | vii |
| CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| 1.1 Motivations 1.2 Background | 1 2 |
| CHAPTER 2 MICROFLUIDIC ORGAN-ON-A-CHIP TECHNOLOGY FOR | |
| ADVANCEMENT OF DRUG DEVELOPMENT AND TOXICOLOGY | 4 |
| 2.1 Abstract | 4 |
| 2.2 Introduction | 5 |
| 2.3 Microfluidic Organ Types and Functions | 6 |
| 2.3.1 Liver | 6 |
| 2 3 2 Lung | 16 |
| 2 3 3 Intestine | 27 |
| 2.3.5 Intestine | 35 |
| 2.3.4 Kuncy | 15 |
| 2.3.5 Realt | 4 5 |
| 2.5.0 Vasculatule | 52 |
| 2.5.7 Other Organs | 55 |
| 2.3.7.1 Bone Marrow | 55 |
| 2.3.7.2 Brain | 22 |
| 2.3.7.3 Spleen | 56 |
| 2.3.7.4 Cancer/Tumor | 57 |
| 2.3.7.5 Multiple Organs | 61 |
| 2.4 Summary Table | 66 |
| 2.5 Conclusion | 72 |
| 2.6 Acknowledgements | 73 |
| 2.7 References | 74 |
| CHAPTER 3 DESIGN AND FABRICATION | 78 |
| 3.1 Design Considerations | 78 |
| 3.7 DMMA Entrication | 20 |
| 3.2 FIVIIVIA Faultuation | 02 02 |
| 5.5 Soft Lithography | 83 |

| 3.4 PDMS Fabrication | 83 |
|---|-----|
| 3.5 Membrane/Vitrified Collagen | 84 |
| 3.6 References | 85 |
| | |
| CHAPTER 4 CELL CULTURE | 86 |
| 4.1 Introduction | 86 |
| 4.2 Bringing up Original Cell Lines | 86 |
| 4.3 Maintaining Cell Lines | 86 |
| 4.4 Splitting Cell Lines | 87 |
| 4.5 Refreezing Cell Lines | 88 |
| 4.6 Controlling Cell Density | 88 |
| 4.7 References | 89 |
| | |
| CHAPTER 5 PRELIMINARY TESTING OF THE DESIGN ON A LIVER-ON | |
| -A CHIP PLATFORM | 90 |
| 5.1 Introduction | 90 |
| 5.2 Cell Culture | 90 |
| 5.3 Cell Integration into Chip | 91 |
| 5.4 Construction of a Liver-on-a-Chip | 91 |
| 5.5 Maintenance of a Liver-on-a-Chip | 93 |
| 5.6 Introduction of Ethanol-Induced Toxicity | 93 |
| 5.7 References | 95 |
| | |
| CHAPTER 6 PLACENTA-ON-A-CHIP | 97 |
| 6.1 Introduction | 97 |
| 6.2 Materials and Methods | 99 |
| 6.3 Results and Discussion | 104 |
| 6.4 Conclusion | 107 |
| 6.5 References | 108 |
| CHAPTER 7 CONCLUSION | 110 |
| 7.1 Conclusion | 110 |

NOMENCLATURE

| DAPI | 4',6-Diamidino-2-Phenylindole |
|-------|--|
| DMEM | Dulbecco's Modified Eagle's Medium |
| DMSO | Dimethyl Sulfoxide |
| EBM | Endothelial Basal Medium |
| ECM | Extracellular Matrix |
| EGM | Endothelial Growth Medium |
| FBS | Fetal Bovine Serum |
| HUVEC | Human Umbilical Vein Endothelial Cells |
| PBS | Phosphate Buffered Saline |
| PDMS | Polydimethylsiloxane |
| PEB | Post Exposure Bake |
| PETE | Polyethylene Terephthalate |
| PMMA | Polymethyl Methacrylate |
| RCF | Relative Centrifugal Force |
| RPM | Revolutions Per Minute |
| TEER | Transepithelial Electrical Resistance |
| UV | Ultraviolet |

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ABSTRACT

In this experiment, a 3D microfluidic chip is designed and fabricated to replicate the function of the placenta. This sort of device has the potential to overtake current *in vitro* methods and become a physiologically relevant alternative to animal testing for the purpose of drug testing and toxicology.

First, PDMS layers were constructed with microchannels using a soft lithography method. These layers come together to "sandwich" a membrane coated with collagen. Once sealed, the physiologically appropriate cells are grown to represent the nutrient/waste transfer of the placenta. Human Umbilical Vein Endothelial Cells (HUVEC) were grown on one side of the device and human trophoblast cells (BeWo) were grown on the other. The midsections of the channels are aligned so that the two cell groups are able to interact with one another across the membrane environment. Flow is administered through both channels at a rate of 6 μ l/hr.

Utilizing the same basic design, a liver-on-a-chip was also investigated. . Human Umbilical Vein Endothelial Cells (HUVEC) were grown on one side of the device and either human liver carcinoma cells (HepG2). To better mimic the true *in vivo* microenvironment, the HepG2 cells are suspended in fibrin gel and flow is induced on only the endothelial channel at a constant flow rate of 6 μ l/hr. Ethanol tests were performed on the liver-on-a-chip in which various concentrations were introduced into the medium, leading to a better representation of ethanol-induced liver toxicity.

vii

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Motivations

Currently, we can classify current drug testing methods into two categories: *in vivo* and *in vitro*. *In vivo* ("within the living") refers to drug testing that occurs within a biological lifeform. The most popular method of *in vivo* drug testing is testing through animal subjects. *In vitro* ("within the glass") refers to drug testing that occurs on a non-biological platform. These platforms are constructed completely separate of the intended subject, but can contain biological components. An example of *in vitro* drug testing would be testing on a cell culture growing in a Petri dish.

Both methods have their benefits, but they also contain many issues. For *in vivo* drug testing, it is clear that current methods are highly unethical, in that animals are harmed in the pursuit of studying the drugs intended and unintended effects. Animal models can also be an inaccurate representation of actual human physiological responses¹. For example, let's say that a drug was tested on a mouse to see if it was suitable for human use, and the drug was a success. This tells us that the drug was suitable for use on mice, but doesn't tell us that the drug is suitable for humans. That is not to say that using a similar, but not perfect animal model for the human can't yield clues about the drugs effect and result in benefits, but it still requires us to make that leap of faith from animal models to human models. Additionally, animal models can also be extremely expensive, and require many hurdles to obtain.

For *in vitro* drug testing, the biggest challenge is being able to replicate the complexity of the human anatomy. Animal models have experienced the success that they

have from being able to provide an environment that contain all the biological intricacies needed to show the drugs full range of effects. For *in vitro* drug testing, that environment is built from scratch. Additionally, in the pursuit of building this microenvironment, some sort of important physiological trait is either missed or sacrificed in favor of simplicity. Examples include having a two-dimensional model or having static flow conditions.

The organ-on-a-chip field was created as a middle ground between these two methods, in which the *in vivo* microenvironment is recreated in an *in vitro* platform. The organ-on-a-chip is a 3D microfluidic device in which a constant media flow is induced over a cell culture model that is configured to represent the physiological functions of the organ. The media flow is typically delivered through a system of microchannels. These devices have the potential to replicate human organ functions, and can even be connected to create a "body-on-a-chip."

1.2 Background

Organ-on-a-chip devices have many benefits that make them an attractive alternative to other drug testing and toxicology devices. First of all, they take advantage of microfluidic phenomena. The large surface area to volume ratio leads to diffusive forces being dominant in the microchannels, as opposed to bulk forces². The low Reynolds numbers that arise from these devices also gives the designer a smooth laminar flow that is easily manipulable and produce constant concentration gradients useful for long-term analysis³.

Another key feature of organ-on-a-chip devices that make them a desirable alternative drug testing method is that they use minimal products and materials to create and are relatively easy to manufacture. These qualities bring up an interesting feature for their future

implementation, which is the prospect of making these chips accessible worldwide, including third-world countries.

Additionally, this device presents a model that is physiologically similar to the body. In trying to compete with animal testing, it is important to understand that these organisms have had the time to evolve, perfecting themselves and optimizing their functional properties. Anything we can take from nature and implement in our design can prove to be an effective tool in designing the device.

As stated in the previous section, the big challenge with *in vitro* devices is building up the biomimetic microsystem from scratch without eliminating any physiologically relevant traits. With limitless possibilities, researchers are given complete creative freedom to explore designs that they believe will optimize functionality. However, the choice of organ will be a determining factor in the design of the device. Chapter 2 will present a detailed review on organ-on-a-chip devices.

1.3 References

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CHAPTER 2

MICROFLUIDIC ORGAN-ON-A-CHIP TECHNOLOGY FOR ADVANCEMENT OF DRUG DEVELOPMENT AND TOXICOLOGY

J.D. Caplin, N.G. Granados, M.R. James, R. Montazami, and N. Hashemi, "<u>Microfluidic Organ-on-a-Chip Technology for Advancement of Drug Development and Toxicology</u>", *Advanced Healthcare Materials*, 4, 1426-1450 (2015)

2.1 Abstract

In recent years, the exploitation of phenomena surrounding microfluidics has seen an increase in popularity, as researchers have found a way to use their unique properties to create superior design alternatives. One such application is representing the properties and functions of different organs on a microscale chip for the purpose of drug testing or tissue engineering. With the introduction of "organ-on-a-chip" systems, researchers have proposed various methods on various organ-on-a-chip systems to mimic their *in vivo* counterparts. In this review paper, a systematic approach was taken to review current technologies pertaining to organ-on-a-chip systems. Design processes with attention to the particular instruments, cells, and materials used were reviewed and presented.

2.2 Introduction

Before a new drug is released in the market it must go through intensive testing; prior to approval for human testing, most drugs first need to be tested for safety through animal testing. The use of animals in such experiments is often expensive, time consuming, ethically controversial, and is often an inaccurate representation of actual human response^[1]. Twodimensional cell culture models are also not the best solution because the cells do not respond the same way when their surrounding environment is drastically different from that of a human body^[2]. Organ-on-a-chip technology provides a practical solution to many of the issues presented by both two-dimensional models and animal testing. An organ-on-a-chip is a cell culture model with microfluidic channels ^[3] configured such that it is capable of simulating the activities and physiological responses of an entire organ^[4]. This type of device creates a uniquely accurate method for replicating the organ structure of human tissue and observing the biological responses, as opposed to predictions based on extrapolated data from animal testing. The chip is portable, requires little amounts of materials, creates a small footprint, and is cost effective, making its applications limitless^[5]. With some more improvements and careful testing, this technology may be able to help drugs get into the market faster, increase the number of new drugs investigated, and possibly eliminate animal testing altogether.

Many 'organ-on-a-chip' devices have already been made ^[6]. For example, the Wyss Institute at Harvard have fabricated a 'lung-on-a-chip', which is mainly made of three microfluidic channels, with the center one holding a porous membrane on which alveolar epithelial and vascular cells are grown ^[7]. A breast-on-a-chip has also been developed to study tumor nanoparticles for identifying and treating tumor cells ^[8].

The next step for this technology is to connect various organ-on-a-chip devices to one another to create a "body-on-a-chip." This configuration could possibly allow researchers to investigate the effects of substances not only on the individual organs but to replicate the interactions between each component, providing a more comprehensive analysis which could ultimately revolutionize how drugs are developed.

2.3 Microfluidic Organ Types and Functions

2.3.1 Liver

The approval of introducing new drugs to the market has proven to be a difficult barrier to overcome due to the risks associated with them. As the cost of bringing a new drug into the market keeps rising in the United States, there becomes a larger need to have high performance pre-clinical drug screenings using *in vitro* models. The liver has proven to be one of the most difficult organs for drug approval, due to the strong interactions it has with other organs, as well as its sensitivity to the metabolism of certain drugs ^[9]. This leads to a high percentage that are discontinued and removed from the market. Technologies to study microvascular structure and functions have remained largely unchanged since the late 1970's. Improving the systems and technology used to test for toxicity is key to providing better predictions of toxicity and ensuring the safety and efficacy of new drugs well before they reach market ^[10]. There has been a considerable amount of research done in the area of toxicity testing on organs, with hopes to fabricate a simpler, efficient, effective, and accurate microfluidic system mimicking the functions of the liver.

Cells used to represent the liver primarily consist of hepatocyte cells, due to their uncanny ability to mimic liver functions ^[11]. Research has taken advantage of this trait in

order to produce a working liver-on-a-chip design ^[12]. Toh et al. ^[13] created a system that can also address the cell culture chamber independently, so that different drugs concentrations can be simultaneously increased. The 3D microfluidic cell culture system, dubbed the "3D HepaTox Chip," is designed to support 8 parallel channels containing separate cell cultures, with a linear concentration generator to provide different levels of drug concentration to each channel. An array of micropillars (30 μ m x 50 μ m) separate the cell culture channel into three compartments consisting of a 200 µm wide central culture with two side compartments. The central culture had the purpose of keeping a constant cell suspension, while the side compartments introduced flow from the output of the concentration generator. To assess the functionality of the cell culture, albumin production and various metabolic activities were measured. Results showed that this microfluidic model was equally capable of the functional maintenance of the hepatocytes as a multi-well plate model, if not more so. The hepatotoxicity testing was performed using five model drugs: acetaminophen (20mM), diclofenac (1000 μ M), quinidine (1000 μ M), rifampin (2000 μ M) and ketoconazole (420 μ M). Results showed that the cells were more sensitive to the drug-mediated hepatotoxicity than the multi-well plate cultures. The toxicity data also showed a positive correlation with comparable in vivo toxicity data.

While some researchers focus on using 3D microfluidic devices for toxicity testing, others have focused on functionality. Nakao et al. ^[14] developed a microfluidic cell culture device that mimics the microscopic structure of the hepatic cords. Due to the decline in liver specific functions caused by freshly isolated hepatocytes rapidly losing their membrane polarity, a new technique for maintaining the cells was proposed, in which hepatic activity was prolonged by suctioning the cells into the cord-like compartment of the device, creating

a "collagen sandwich culture". The design is such that the tip of this compartment has an asymmetrical tip that can house two cells side-by-side. Current liver tissue cultures do not a have separate compartment to collect secreted bile and are accumulated in the cultured cells. However, *in vivo*, the bile is excreted into the bile canaliculi and is then discharged into bile ducts. The area of culture was formed by aligning two lines of hepatocyte cells in a similar way to the hepatic cords. The aligned hepatocytes were able to self-organize themselves and form bile canaliculi along the hepatic cord-like structure. The device has a medium flow channel that is 100µm wide and 30µm high, a cell loading channel that is 200µm wide and 30µm high, a cell culture area that is 37µm wide and 30µm high and an endothelial-like barrier. Additionally, there are 30µm long narrow slits with 10µm intervals that allow the nutrition to go into the cell culture area. The fluorescent substrates accumulated in the cells were aligned and formed a bile canaliculi with tight junctions. This bile canaliculi showed the ability to utilize nutrients in the culture medium stream. Additionally, using the MRP2 and CD147 marker proteins, the transportation properties of the system were tested, and the markers were found to be distributed in a similar fashion as they would in an *in vivo* counterparts.

Incorporation of biosensors has also been studied as a means to create improved analysis of a system, in addition to the development of the microfluidic platform. As part of the construction done by Schober et al. ^[15], AlGaN/GaN nanosensors were integrated into their microdevices, and were used for optical monitoring of the cells. The design consists of a base and top module used for the purpose of carrying the cell culturing substrate; within this contains a microfluidic pumping system used for circulation and perfusion. The cultivated cells are contained in a polymer scaffold system, called "MatriGrid." The hepatoma cell line,

HepG2, demonstrated the biological application of the microreactor. Analysis was done for 2D cell culture, 3D culture without perfusion, and 3D culture with perfusion. Tests for viability were completed and analyzed for the cells cultured in the 2D and 3D systems over a course of 19 days. All three cultures showed a similar general relationship between the $G_{1,0}$, D, and $G_{2,m}$ phases, with the 2D culture displaying a higher proliferation rate than what is typically seen *in vivo*. The notable difference came from monitoring the albumin secretion of the cultures. Albumin secretion was used as a metabolic marker to observe the similarities between the cultures used during the experiment and the *in vivo* counterpart. Results showed that only the 3D culture without perfusion strayed from predicted results, showing a notable increase in production over time. Additionally, the system with and without HepG2 cells went through pH testing. The results showed a steading increase in pH for the system with HepG2 cells, and a relatively unchanged pH for the system without. This is due to the conversion of glucose to lactate that occurs *in vivo* as well. These results showed a strong signal with little noise, showing reliability that can be applied for long-term monitoring of cells. Their perfused bioreactor system mimics some of the features that are found *in vivo* as well.

Lee et al. ^[16] designed a microfluidic device that contained polyethyleneglycol (PEG) pillars within a weaving channel, with each pillar containing rat liver microsomes enclosed within a 3D hydrogel matrix. The pillars took up around 35% of the space within the channel and were roughly spaced 100 μ m from each other. Gravity induced flow was able to mimic the metabolism reaction and the transport system of the liver. The concentrations of seven different substrates were used to test the P450 reaction in a microsome solution within a standard well plate system, ranging from 2 μ M to 80 μ M. Two trials were conducted: one in

which the microsomes were in the solution phase by themselves and another in which the microsomes were enclosed within the 3D matrix. Data was extrapolated and a mathematical model of the system based on Michaelis-Menten kinetics was produced, showing a high level of agreement between the two. The chip was then analyzed and a model was created. This model also showed a high level of agreement. However, ideal assumptions were created to simplify the model, including: no variation in the z-axis, completely effective diffusive properties within the channels, a completely homogeneous environment (a single diffusion coefficient), and a uniform reaction space within the channel. Certain steps still need to be taken to improve the model, like improving the diffusive properties and convective flow rate of the device, but the success of the model shows that the metabolic properties within a microfluidic liver model can be mapped and understood to create an experimental equivalent for use in liver-on-a-chip applications.

While the use of a single cell culture has shown to yield successful results, using multiple cells in a liver-on-a-chip model has the potential for even more realistic *in vitro* results due to the livers true complex nature being composed of multiple cells in interaction with each other. This line of research has produced notable results as well ^[17]. Schütte et al. ^[18] used this approach, in addition to developing a microfluidic test system for liver toxicity. This system is an organ-like liver 3D co-culture of hepatocytes and endothelial cells. The chip allows for the assembly of primary human hepatocytes and endothelial cells in a sinusoidal-like manner with the use of dielectrophoresis (DEP). The system was integrated with microfluidic channels that allowed for continuous perfusion of the culture medium and compound testing. The features within the channel structure are comprised of electrodes at the outer chamber walls with a variation of the channel cross-section in between. Micro

pillars were attached to the front and back ends of the gaps to represent flow barriers, which reduced the flow velocity and shear forces. The device was connected to a pump system for fluid control with AC voltages of up to 300 V_{pp} . Each design had a gap region 100µm high, 100µm wide, and 1,500µm long, as well as a 33° angle of inclination on the bottom channel so that particles traveling along the bottom can still be lifted into the gaps by dielectrophoretic force (**Fig. 1a**). The device only trapped the healthy living cells, thereby resolving a problem of the past. Once the electric field was turned off, the cells showed a more even distribution, with the hepatocyte cells in the center and the endothelial cells outside of them (**Fig. 1b**). This distribution was sufficient enough to not be affected by the flow.



Fig. 1. Cross section of the microchannel displaying the general layout. Two electrodes are positioned at each wall of the channel, a) providing a dielectrophoretic force to the hepatocytes and the endothelial cells traveling along with the flow once voltage is applied to the system, with the design of the device such that the particles are maintained in the center. b) Once the voltage is shut off, the particles are arranged such that the endothelial cells are

positioned outside of the hepatocytes, while still being somewhat maintained in the center of the channel ^[18].

Another multi-cell design was created by Wagner et al. ^[19], who designed a multiorgan chip (MOC) platform that combined a microfluidic channel system with multiple separate tissue culture compartments. Liver micro tissues (HepaRG and HHSteC), as well as skin biopsies, were combined and had successful long-term performance. The device contained microchannels and micropumps, as well as culture compartments for Transwell® inserts. The system allowed crosstalk between the two tissues, and was observed for 14 days while exposed to fluid flow. Consistent disk-shaped liver cells were formed during 2 days of having been cultured on the chip. The microchip device was able to culture two cell types while directly exposed to fluid flow, as well as maintain a metabolic steady state. It is able to culture and maintain cells over longer periods of time with the Transwell® inserts as the system showed it could be maintained for 28 days.

Additionally, multiple toxins can be used as well to increase the scope of the experiment. Shintu et al. ^[20] developed a microfluidic system with H NMR-based metabolomic foot printing. They used a small-molecule screening approach to characterize the toxicity in several compounds: ammonia (NH₃), dimethylsulfoxide (DMSO), and acetaminophen (APAP). Hepatocellular carcinoma cells (HepG2/C3A) were used to model the liver, Madin-Darby canine kidney (MDCK) tubular epithelial cells to model the kidney, and a combination of both (HepG2/C3A-MDCK) as cell co-cultures. When the biochips are perfused, the supply of nutrients is restored, the cells proliferate, and a higher glucose and glutamine consumption is seen. HepG2/C3A is correlated with higher glucose concentrations

and lower lactate and alanine concentrations when compared to the MDCK kidney. Additionally, the co-culture showed unique metabolite concentrations not expressed in any of the single cultures. This information was used to control these differences to ensure that they have the same "starting point" with relation to their reaction with the compounds. A datascaling method known as "SMART-scale analysis" was used to account for these differences. Using this method, the relative increase and decrease of metabolic markers was analyzed. These fluctuations, both alone and in combination with one another, can create results in various biological processes, including toxicity production. An "integrated knowledge network" was created to map out these biological processes and their implications. From this, the actions from the metabolic markers can be observed for toxicity screening purposes. Experimental results were conducted and the metabolic responses were observed and compared alongside the theoretical data. The results showed a high degree of compatibility for all three compounds.

Integrating tissue slices is another technique used by researchers to create an *in vitro* co-culture model ^[21]. Van Midwoud et al. ^[22] investigated whether intestinal tissue slices could also be cultured in a micro biochip with liver slices and also to see if their metabolic activity in incubation is better than in the well plate system. The intestine, as well as the liver, is important for the metabolism of xenobiotics. The liver and intestinal slices were obtained from male Wistar rats. They exposed the substrates to several mediums: 7-ethoxycoumarin (7-EC), 7-hydroxycoumarin (7-HC) and lidocaine (Li), to see if their metabolic rates in the biochip were similar. The slices were also exposed to a primary bile acid, chenodeoxycholic acid (CDCA), to see the interplay between the two organs. One slice of liver and one slice of intestine were placed into a compartment culture perfusion system with a continuous flow of

the mentioned mediums. The microdevice itself had 10 layers of polydimethylsiloxane (PDMS), which each had a thickness of 250 μ m and along with 6 microchambers. The device had a medium top/bottom inlet channel that was 500 μ m x 100 μ m, and a polycarbonate filter that had 8 μ m size pores and 10 μ m in thickness integrated at the entrance of the tissue chamber. The filter was 4mm x 2mm and held 25 μ L. It was found that it is possible to successfully maintain intestinal slices in the same biochip with viability and functionality for at least 3 hours. With this system they were able to easily control the flow of the medium and transfer it from one organ to another. It was also possible to link one microchamber to another for the use of perfusion and metabolic activity. They were able to integrate the liver and intestine, and it could potentially work for lung, kidney, and colon slices.

Just like van Midwoud et al., Bricks et al. ^[23] developed a model to mimic the interactions between the intestine and liver. However, instead of using actual slices of the organs, they used the human carcinogenic epithelial cell line Caco-2 TC7, which is the clone of Caco-2 cells, for the intestine, and hepatocarcinoma HepG2/C3A cells for the liver. A new microfluidic device called the Integrated Insert in a Dynamic Microfluidic Platform, or IIDMP, was used to evaluate the organ-organ interactions of the liver and intestine. This design consisted of 3 perfusion units, each unit containing two wells used as reservoirs, one cell culture insert, and one microfluidic chip that was made of PDMS. The insert was contained within the first well, with circulation traveling through the bottom of the first well into the second well, by means of a microfluidic chip bridging the two wells. A pump was used to bring flow from the second well back into the first well, thereby completing the cycle. The Caco-2 TC7 cells were cultured in the insert, while the HepG2/C3A cells were cultured in the microfluidic chip. Both cells were individually tested for integrity and

functionality before integration into the system. Confluence of Caco-2 TC7 cells were found using transepithelial electrical resistance (TEER) measurements and permeability properties were found by monitoring Lucifer yellow transportation. Results showed high levels of both after sufficient time within static culture, suggesting that the system gained tight junction properties, which is in agreement with expected results. Dynamic conditions proved to produce similar results. HepG2/C3A cells were cultivated and the functional properties were tested in both dynamic and static conditions. Dynamic conditions were tested with and without the influence of Caco-2 TC7 cells in the system. Albumin production was reported to be non-existent in the static culture, while producing higher values with the influence of Caco-2 TC7 cells compared to the system without them, despite the fact that the Caco-2 TC7 cells showed no production of albumin themselves. Bricks et al. proposed that this was due to a stimulating effect that the Caco-2 TC7 cells have on the HepG2/C3A cells. The xenobiotic metabolism was tested using the EROD test. The enzyme CYP1A was chosen for monitoring. Results showed low levels of activity when compared to primary hepatocytes, with dynamic trials showing no metabolism after 24 hours and static trials showing no activity at all after 24 hours. The co-culture of Caco-2 TC7 cells and HepG2/C3A cells were then tested by monitoring the CYP1A activity when the drug phenacetin was introduced to the system. Both static (Petri) and dynamic (IIDMP) were evaluated. The resulting APAP production was observed to be higher in the dynamic culture, despite the fact that the hydrophobic properties of phenacetin may have led some of it to be absorbed into the PDMS components of the IIDMP. When dynamic conditions with and without Caco-2 TC7 were tested, the system with Caco-2 TC7 once again produced greater amounts of production. This experiment reaffirms the hypothesis that integration of tissues from multiple organs

creates a more realistic *in vitro* model due to both the simple connections and the underlying influences they have on each other.

2.3.2 Lung

In response to the lack of experimental model systems available that can accurately replicate human lung response and function, many are currently researching and developing new technologies. The microdevice, lung-on-a-chip, recapitulates the physiological and mechanical microenvironment of a living lung. This technology allows for the study of complex physiology of the human lung. With the aid of organ-on-a-chip technology, new drug therapies can be developed, respiratory assist devices can be utilized, and pulmonary diseases can be characterized ^[24].

In early work by Huh et al.^[25], a microdevice was developed which allowed for the analysis of the effects of liquid plug flows on human small airway epithelial cells (SAEC). The device consisted of two PDMS layers containing a microfluidic channel separated by a nanoporous membrane, modeled after the human airway epithelium. Additional inlets and channels were created to connect a liquid plug flow generator. Liquid plug flows were created using a device that would switch the air-liquid interface within the chip, as shown in **Fig. 2.** Through this device, the effects of an air intake model (useful for representing a healthy lung), fluid intake model (useful for representing the developing lung of a fetus), and a variable length two-phase plug flow model (useful for representing respiratory diseases such as pulmonary edema) on the cells can be monitored as the system operates. Small airway epithelial cells were first cultured in a culture media on the membrane until a confluent layer was formed, then exposed to air in the culture chamber. Using a laser

vibrometer, the magnitude of the pressure waves from the liquid plug flows was measured. The Weibel model was used as a reference for the size and speed of the plug flow. At a rate of 1 plug per minute, the results showed that only 24% of the cells survived after 10 minutes, with most damage occurring downstream where the plug erupted. This result shows the capabilities of lung-on-a-chip devices for representing pulmonary diseases in a microfluidic platform.



Fig. 2. Process of creating the liquid plug for the microsystem. The process begins with A) air being produced in the upper inlet and liquid being produced in the lower inlet. Liquid is flowing from the lower inlet into the waste stream, so that the only fluid within the culture chamber is air. B) The plug is started once the upper inlet is blocked, bringing liquid into the culture chamber. C) The plug is complete once the upper inlet is reopened and the liquid from the lower inlet is once again only flowing into the waste stream. D) A complete picture of the plug system and the microfluidic chip can be seen, with the actual chip being

highlighted in yellow. The plug will slowly dissipate as it travels through the chip until it ruptures, *E*) releasing pressure waves in the system that can be monitored ^[25].

In a similar experiment designed to study the damage of lung cells by recreating liquid plug flow, a microfluidic device was developed by Tavana et al. to monitor the induction of pulmonary pressure on the culture system ^[26]. While the device shows a similar design to the previous design by Huh et al. for the integration of the liquid plug and the culture chamber, this project is designed to look at the role that surfactants play in the damage of lung cells. Deficiencies of pulmonary surfactants occur from the destabilization of liquid lining of small airways causing osculating liquid plugs. *In vivo*, this is prevented by the secretion of a liquid surfactant from the alveolar epithelial cells. Human alveolar epithelial cells were used for the model, and cultured in F-12K medium. An air tank was used to supply air and a syringe pump was used to supply liquid. Size and duration of the plug flow was determined using a pressure transducer controlled by a DAQ board. During the experiment, the microchip was placed on a glass slide and observed on a microscope. Cells were stained with CellMask Deep Red plasma membrane stain to monitor the effects of the liquid plugs. The cells were imaged using an inverted florescence microscope. A surfactantfree trial was run on the device, showing extensive injury to the lung cells. The surfactant, Survanta, was then introduced at 1 mg per ml of buffer for the next trial. Results showed a major decrease in the percentage of cell injuries in the system. For comparison, the surfactant-free trial showed a cell viability of 63% after three plugs, whereas the surfactant trial showed a cell viability of 81% after five plugs. This *in vitro* pulmonary airway platform can be used to study cellular and sub-cellular effects in airway reopening.

Built on the work of his previous design, Huh et al.^[7] designed and fabricated a biomimetic microsystem in 2010 to not only mimic the cellular and diffusive properties of the lung, but also the macroscopic behavior, such as the expansion and compression of the system to mimic inhaling and exhaling. The microfluidic system consisted of two microchannels that were separated by a membrane of polydimethysilxane (PDMS), as opposed to a membrane of polyester in the earlier design. This lung-on-a-chip system is capable of mimicking the human lung's response to bacteria and inflammatory cytokines. The membrane was coated with ECM and human alveolar epithelial cells (NCI H441), and human pulmonary microvascular endothelial cells were cultured on the opposite side of the membrane (Fig. 3A). Two hollow mirochannels on either side of the flexible membrane acted as vacuum chambers to simulate breathing movements (Fig. 3C, D, E). This design took advantage of the flexible PDMS membrane to better recreate physiological breathing (Fig. 3B). Through the study they also found that due to the mechanical strain of air being pulled in and out of the lung, the epithelial and endothelial uptake of nano particulates were enhanced and stimulated their transport into the underlying microvascular channel. To test their device, bacteria and inflammatory cytokines were introduced into the air, and human bloodborne immune cells were introduced into the blood-like fluid. It was observed that the lung-on-a-chip can mimic the innate cellular response to pulmonary infection of bacterial origin. However there are still differences between *in vivo* and the device, such as changes in air pressure and flow, cellular composition, and barrier thickness, that still need to be accounted for before it becomes a reliable alternative to animal testing.



Fig. 3. Design layout for lung-on-a-chip, showing A) a cross-sectional view of the device. Human alveolar epithelial cells are cultivated on the top of the membrane, while human pulmonary microvascular endothelial cells are cultivated on the bottom of the membrane. B) A view of the human lungs, showing the stretch and the resulting distribution of the air intake during the inhalation portion of the breathing cycle. C) The device consists of two PDMS layers with a porous membrane separating them. D) Once the layers are sealed, an etchant flows through the vacuum chambers. E) The finished design of the chip, with a quarter for scale ^[7].

The work done to mimic pulmonary edema in a human disease model-on-a-chip was expanded by Huh et al. ^[27] in 2012. The devices used in the study were slightly modified from previous work ^[7]. Once again PDMS was used as the top and bottom layers of the chip.

The side chambers were created by etching the membrane layers in the side microchannels with tetrabutylammonium fluoride and N-methylpyrrolidinone, mixed at a ratio of 1:3. The solution was introduced into the side microchannels through inlet reservoirs by either hydrostatic pressure or vacuum suction. Etching took place until the thickness of the PDMS walls between the side chambers from the central culture chambers became thinner than 30µm. Afterwards, the side chambers were washed with NMP to remove any PDMS etchant that remained. After the alveolar epithelial cells were attached to the upper alveolar channel, culture media flowed through the device at 50µl/hour. Cells were grown for 5 days; on day 5 the culture medium was aspirated from the upper channel and a 50:50 mixture of epithelial and endothelial medium was introduced into the lower channel. This fed the alveolar epithelial cells on their basolateral side. For 15 days, epithelial cells were grown at an airliquid interface. Just as in the previous device ^[7], the upper alveolar channel was filled with air and the lower microvascular channel was filled with liquid. Additionally, a vacuum was connected to the system to mimic breathing motion as a functioning human lung. It was shown that with the addition of cyclic mechanical strain to IL_2, leakage increased dramatically. The drug DSK2193874 was tested and shown that it could inhibit leakage. This demonstrates an additional step towards mimicking lung functions, and brings research one step closer to successfully predicting the activity of a new drug for cases involving pulmonary edema. The goal of having the ability to rapidly screen many drugs and conditions could one day become a reality once models can be connected to many other organ-on-a-chip models. This could bring about a more accurate representation of how pharmaceuticals affect all areas of the body.

Other mechanical properties were explored by the microsystem created by Douville et al. ^[28], who observed the effects of both solid and fluid mechanical stress on alveolar epithelial cells with a ventilator-induced lung injury (VILI). The device consisted of three major components: the alveolar chamber, PDMS membrane, and actuation channel. Human alveolar basal epithelial (A549, AEC) cells were culture in this model. The main contributor to solid mechanical stress for VILI is the cyclic stretching of the cells, while the main contributor to fluid mechanical stress is an air-fluid meniscus. Advancing versus receding menisci were observed for their stress impact as well (Fig. 4.), with the confirmation that a receding meniscus causes more harm to cells than an advancing one. A finite element analysis (FEA) model was used to estimate the solid mechanical stress and the resulting model was proposed as a means to estimate the stress profile by measuring the maximum deformation of the system. Results showed a viability of 16.8% in the A549 cells and 32.5% in the AEC cells when exposed to both solid and liquid mechanical stress. This study prompts further research on understanding techniques to eliminate hazardous stresses in clinical settings.



Fig. 4. Monitoring and computational fluid dynamic (CFD) analysis on the mechanical stresses of an advancing meniscus fluid plug versus a receding meniscus fluid plug. A) The streamlines of both menisci are displayed, with U = 1 cm/s. B) The half-meniscus profile was calculated and graphed. The results show a smooth profile for the advancing meniscus (red), while the receding meniscus (black) contains abnormalities when focused on the edge of curvature (exaggerated display is boxed) that will increase the stress applied on the cell layer ^[28].

While these designs have improved the functionality of an *in vitro* lung design, a major problem with these designs is their poor permeability when compared to an actual working lung. This issue was addressed by Kniazeva et al. ^[29], who created a microfluidic design to maximize gas transfer, with the goal of working towards creating an artificial lung or a lung assistant device. The design consisted of a small branched network of channels representing the microvascular system, with an ultrathin membrane separating the microvascular network from the channel representing oxygen flow. This design is repeated to create a multi-layer design with alternating levels of microvascular channels and oxygen

channels. The ultrathin gas exchange membrane is used to maximize gas transfer efficiency while minimizing membrane-blood contact area, which is one of the main challenges in artificial lung technology. The network is designed to minimize blood damage, thrombosis, and inflammatory responses. The microvascular network also provides controlled wall shear stress and uniform blood flow. The device addresses many limitations seen in lung assist devices such as the Extra Corporeal Membrane Oxygenator (ECMO). Current ECMO devices have surface area to volume ratios that are 10 times less than the natural lining of a human lung. Additionally, the gas diffusion distance in the ECMO is 10-30µm greater than the 1µm observed in the natural lining. Leaks of proteins, phospholipids, and lipoproteins often occur, which cause device failure. ECMOs also use non-physiological blood flow pathways that can be unpredictable and uncontrollable. The membrane used in this device is thinner than the membranes used in ECMO devices, thus less surface area is required for equivalent oxygen transfer and the membrane is more gas permeable. Two different methods were used to test the device. The first test characterized the permeance of the PDMS membrane in a static medium. The second test analyzed oxygen transfer through the membrane. It was found through experiments that as the membranes became thinner, the permeance increases. The relationship was modeled with the equation:

$$K = Q_2 / SA \cdot \Delta P \tag{1}$$

where K is the permeance, Q_2 is the actual oxygen flow rate, SA is the surface area of oxygen transfer (was the same for each device), and ΔP is the transmembrane pressure. Following **Eqn. 1.**, it was found that K stayed relatively constant at a given membrane thickness. Therefore, as the transmembrane pressure doubled, the flow rate also doubled. The bilayer subunits that make up this device are easily reproduced and can be connected in

different configurations. Membrane thickness can also be controlled and optimized. It was found that by using thinner sheets to create channels, overall oxygen transfer was increased. This device will be useful in artificial lung and lung assistant device applications that require high transfer rates of oxygen.

Many lung assist devices today are limited to care unit settings because they are not implantable or portable. From this, lung assist microdevices that utilize vascular networks are being designed, with the hopes that they can be implanted in the patient ^[30]. Sreenivasan et al. ^[31] developed a lung assist device that is designed to achieve physiologic flow through utilizing microfluidic vascular networks, which may allow this device to be implanted if it is impermeable to fluid. Sreenivasan et al. aimed to improve their previous 8µm silicon membrane by designing the gas exchange membrane to be more permeable. They designed and developed a free-standing membranes (FSM) and composite membranes (CM) by means of initiated Chemical Vapor Deposition (iCVD). A control membrane of 8µm thick spun cast silicone was used to compare the two designs. Both devices were also tested for bond integrity. Sreenivasan et al. chose to work with p(nBA) and p(tBA) based chemicals for freestanding membranes due to their ability to withstand bonding. The p(AA) was spun at 4000 rpm for 40s then baked at 150 °C for 2 minutes to create a sacrificial layer. The p(AA) would then dissolve away, leaving the FSMs. The FSMs successfully remained intact during handling. The FSM with a thickness of $5\mu m$ expressed a CO₂ permeance 1.3 times higher than the control membrane. An alternative to ultrathin FSMs are composite membranes. CMs are composed of a highly permeable porous structure coated with a skin of a secondary polymer. These 0.1µm commercially available membranes provide mechanical stability to the device and minimize the chances of membrane rupture. The top skin layer allows gas

transfer, while acting as a separation for liquid and gas. The CMs expressed CO_2 and O_2 permeance of 50-300 times the control membrane. These CMs are on the right track to achieving the permeable membrane needed for portable lung assist device. Defect-free thinner membranes (20-500 nm) are currently under development.

Microfluidics can also be applied for the characterization of cellular responses, such as the correlation of the expression of Glucose Regulated Protein-78 (GRP78) and the resistance to anticancer drug VP-16 in lung cancer squamous carcinoma cell line SK-MES-1, researched by Siyan et al.^[32]. Chemotherapy is hindered by cells that are resistant to the treatment. Little is known about the function of GRP78 because many *in vitro* detection methods are tedious, use large quantities of reagents, and require troublesome liquid handling procedures. The microfluidic chip contains an upstream concentration gradient generator and a downstream cell culture module. Their design was based on previous work by Jeon et al ^[33]. More will be discussed about cancer modeling on a chip in a later section.

A chip modeling the nasal passage, specifically the nasal epithelium, was designed by Wang et al. ^[34]. This is useful because the nasal epithelial can be one of the first cells exposed to environmental agents. Human nasal cilia beating behaviors, a defense mechanism of the airway, were investigated by testing its reaction to gaseous formaldehyde. A microfluidic system was used because it allows for good control and offers highly sensitive molecule detection. The microchip was made from molded PDMS and contained a square chamber (10mm x 10mm x 30µm, width x length x depth) separating two straight channels. Human nasal epithelial step progenitor cells (hNESPCs) were cultured on the device's membrane located at the square chamber. A bottle containing formaldehyde was connected to one of the straight channels (inlet), while a withdrawing syringe pump system was connected to the outlet. Cilia beating frequency (CBF) was monitored at different gaseous formaldehyde concentrations (0.5 mg m⁻³, 1.0 mg m⁻³, 3.0 mg m⁻³). While the 0.5 mg m⁻³ trial remained relatively stagnant, the 1.0 mg m⁻³ trial showed a CBF that increased immediately and continued to increase throughout the course of the trial. When exposed to high concentrations of 3.0 mg m⁻³ formaldehyde, it was observed that CBF slightly decreased instead of increasing. This may be due to the toxic effects on the epithelial cells. The resulting experiment was shown to be a successful model of the nasal epithelium and has the potential to be used in clinical applications as well.

2.3.3 Intestine

Most oral drugs and nutritive substances are effective only after they are absorbed into the blood circulation through the intestine ^[35]. The evaluation of the intestinal absorption is important in the pharmaceutical and nutritional fields. The development of *in vitro* cell-based models for the intestine that mimic the mechanical, structural, and pathophysiological properties of drugs and nutrients is needed.

Organ-organ and drug-drug interactions are very important when working with drugs. How one cell reacts to another based on the effects of a certain drug can either allow a new drug onto the market or not. For example, van Midwoud et al. ^[22] was one of the first to connect a liver and intestinal organ to allow for inter-organ interactions with applications towards toxicity testing. Bricks et al. ^[23] did a similar project using liver and intestinal cells as well.

A similar project that combined the liver with the intestine was done by Mahler et al. ^[36], who used a microscale microfluidic cell culture analog (μ CCA) of the gastrointestinal

tract (GI), as well as the liver, to predict drug toxicity. APAP was used as a model drug to test the group's hypothesis that the passage and metabolism of APAP in the intestinal epithelial monolayer, followed by absorption into liver, would lead to low concentrations of glutathione and low viability of cells. Their goal was to create a complete *in vitro* human gastrointestinal tract model that is inexpensive, quick, and accurate to that of the human organs' response to orally ingested drugs, chemicals, and the resulting cell-cell interactions. *In vivo*, the lining of the small intestine membrane is composed of enterocyte and goblet cells. The enterocytes make up most of the population and control the transport of molecules, while the goblet cells secrete a mucus designed to protect the lining of the membrane. The functions of these two cell types must be taken into consideration in order to produce a working drug absorption model in vitro. The cell line Hepg2/C3A was used to represent the liver, while a co-culture of Caco-2 and HT29-MTX cell lines at a 3:1 ratio was used to represent the intestinal cells. The design consisted of a GI tract µCCA that led into a systemic μ CCA that represented the liver, fat, kidney, and bone marrow. A peristaltic pump was used to control circulation and a reservoir compartment was connected to this system to control any sort of excessive pooling. It is important to note that only the GI tract and the liver pathways contained cells. The fat, kidney, and bone marrow chambers were only used to represent the distribution of fluid. The membrane was made of a polycarbonate with 0.4 µm pores and a Type I collagen coating. The cells were stained with calcein and monocholorobimane to visualize the monolayer integrity. Trials in this system were run for a course of 24 hours. The results showed an inverse relationship between the concentration of APAP and the concentration of glutathione and cell viability. The products of APAP, APAP-GLUC and APAP-SULF, were monitored throughout the trials as well. Results showed that
APAP-GLUC was produced fairly quick at the beginning of the experiment, but remained constant after the sixth hour. APAP-SULF showed concentrations that were ten times higher than that of APAP-GLUC for the first six hours, with a steady increase throughout the entire trial. This experiment showed GI tract-liver characteristics that showed they were able to digest APAP, with close observation to their viability and the products formed in the reaction. While they still are not able to produce the same levels of digestion as an *in vivo* equivalent, these results are fairly agreeable with *in vivo* results.

There have been many studies on the microfluidic *in vitro* design of the gastrointestinal tract and stomach for toxicity testing, drug testing, and mimicking key functional and structural parts. The use of hydrogels as a platform for cultivated cells in a GI tract design has been explored as well ^[37]. Sung et al. ^[38] developed a 3D collagen scaffold that mimicked the human intestinal villi. The technique used to create the hydrogel involved laser ablation to carve out holds on a plastic mold. This plastic mold was used to create a reverse-mold out of PDMS. Then, the reverse-mold PDMS was used to create a second mold that was made of calcium alginate. The hydrogel was built off of this mold, which eventually dissolved. The molds and structures were built with dimensions mimicking that of intestinal villi. Caco-2 cells were cultivated on the hydrogel villi, resulting in an *in vitro* system with close structural similarities to human jejunal villi. Cells could either be encapsulated in the hydrogel or seeded into the structure to be cultured. Collagen and polyethylene glycol diacrylate (PEG-DA) were used as the two types of hydrogels. Their system is simple and does not require expensive or complex equipment, which is a requirement for most microfabrication methods. While a microfluidic analysis was not done on the hydrogels, observation of the culture within the hydrogels revealed a successful layer of Caco-2 cells.

With an analysis of flow from both sides of the device, a study of the dynamics of drug absorption in the GI tract can one day be done.

Although some models are used for the testing of toxins or drugs, a model for bacteria is rarely seen in microfluidic models. Kim et al. ^[39] created a model that had bacteria grown and added to healthy intestinal cells to see how they reacted. Instead of modeling the gastrointestinal tract for its functions and mechanical properties like with previous researchers, a GI tract infection was chosen as the focus. The system mimics the sequence of events in a gastrointestinal (GI) tract infection, specifically the invasion of bacteria on the intestinal cells. In the human body, a healthy GI tract can be defined by the balance of the interactions between the commensal bacteria and the intestinal epithelial cells. Pathogens often out-compete the bacteria and attach to the epithelial cells and begin an infection even though there are more commensal bacteria than pathogens. The molecular signals that are given off by the GI tract allow the commensal bacteria to prevent pathogen colonization or infection. In the model, this relationship is studied with a microfluidic device contained a coculture of epithelial cells and bacteria. The group used E. coli as the prototypic commensal bacterium and HeLa S3 cells as the model for the intestinal epithelial cells. The pathogen used was E. coli O157:H7, a harmful strain of E. coli. The device consisted of a large chamber used to culture the epithelial cells and two "islands" used to culture bacteria. The two islands were located 1000 μ m apart and were lowered and raised on a 100 μ m thick PDMS wall. The cells grew a confluent layer and the bacteria produced a biofilm. Then the pathogen was introduced to the biofilm, followed by exposure of the epithelial cells. Resulting data showed a specific signal, indole, as having a huge effect on the resulting HeLa cell viability (which is directly correlated with the level of infection from the pathogen).

Commensal bacteria that lacked this signal produced half the viability than when it was present. A trial in which 500μ M of indole was directly introduced to the pathogens also showed an increase in HeLa viability, but not to the extent of a natural signal.. The group states that future work in determining biofilm thickness and the extent of the pathogen colonization are the next steps needed to better reproducing their model.

In 2012, the group of researchers from Kim et al. ^[40] developed a "human-gut-on-achip" that utilizes dynamic motions on the microdevice to better mimic the structure and function of the living intestine. This dynamic environment is created by the flow of the fluid through the channels, as well as the application of cyclic strain by use of vacuums within side chambers to mimic peristaltic motion. The design is similar to that of Huh et al. "lung-on-achip" design^[7], in which two side chambers are utilized as vacuums to control the motions that the organ experiences *in vivo* (Fig. 5A, B, C). This time, these distortions are used to represent the peristaltic motion experienced by the intestines (Fig. 5D, E). The upper and lower microchannels are 150µm high x 1000µm wide, and are separated by a 30 µm thick PDMS membrane that has 10 µm pore size. Caco-2 cells were used to represent the intestinal epithelial cells, and were cultured on a PDMS membrane coated with ECM. Trials consisted of a Transwell plate for control and the microfluidic device containing just fluid flow, just mechanical distortion, and both. Results showed faster and higher quality Caco-2 cells in the trials using the microfluidic device. In the absence of fluid flow, the cells in the microfluidic trial resembled those in the Transwell plate. Additionally, the trial containing both fluid flow and mechanical distortion grew cells containing folds that resembled intestinal villi. To simulate the GI tract more accurately, cells obtained from a strain of Lactobacillus rhamnosus GG (LGG) were used to simulate the microbes native to the intestines. The co-

culture displayed greater integrity than the Caco-2 monolayer in the prior trials when exposed to fluid flow and mechanical distortion on the microfluidic chip. Therefore, this design was a success in introducing two variables to a gut-on-a-chip model: the integration of microbial cells native to the intestines and the dynamic motions inherent in the organ. Kim has explored these ideas further in other research papers ^[41].



Fig. 5. Layout for Gut-on-a-chip, with a) two co-current microchannels containing a membrane with cultured gut epithelium. Two vacuum chambers are located on either side of the device. B) An aerial view is shown of the actual device. C) A cross-sectional view is shown, with an aerial view of the membrane. D) When the vacuum chambers are active, mechanical strain is exerted on the device (upper two images). Cells showed that they would deform due to mechanical strain. The image on the bottom left circled in red is an epithelium cell after

strain. Note the image to the right showing an overlap image of the two, with the deformed cell clearing showing a larger width. E) Graphical results of the strain of both the substrate and the cells as a function of the applied pressure of the vacuums ^[40].

In contrast to Kim et al., the experiment done by Kimura et al. ^[42] used polarized Caco-2 intestinal cells in their microfluidic system. Polarized cells are known to mimic human organs, especially the human intestine, with much better accuracy. The developed microfluidic system was able to have long-term perfusion within the cell culture, as well as integrated optical fiber inserts used for fluorescent measurements within the device. The device contained two PDMS layers separated by a semipermeable membrane coated with collagen. A micropump controlled by a stir-bar was used to induce circulation of the medium. Once again Caco-2 cells were used to represent the intestinal cells and were cultivated on the apical side of the membrane. On the ninth day of cultivation, a confluent monolayer of cells was observed over the membrane. The cells were able to be cultured for up to 30 days and formed a tight monolayer. Transportation qualities were recorded by introducing rhodamine 123 into the medium, along with fluorescent beads, and recording the effects through the optical fibers. The results showed flow capable of long-term perfusion within the system. The functionality of the device and the measurements found through the results of the rhodamine 123 show that this has the potential to be a useful platform for drug screening as well as toxicity testing.

Some microfluidic systems are complex or have operating parts that not everyone can use. For this reason, it is important to think about simpler designs for microfluidic systems. Imura et al. ^[43] developed a microchip-based system that mimicked the human intestine. They had a microfluidic system to evaluate the intestinal absorption, with less cells and samples used and a shorter testing time. The design of the system was a two-tiered microchannel separated by a monolayer of Caco-2 cells that are cultured on a permeable membrane. The device had two PDMS sheets, each with its own microchannels that were 1.5mm in width and 200µm in height. The channels connected the upper and lower side of the PDMS sheets together. The upper channel worked as a microchamber for the cell culture. The membrane was made of a polyethylene terephthalate sheet that had 1µm sized pores and was coated with type I fibrillar collagen. Permeation tests were done to test the drug permeability of cycliphophamide (CPA), using Lucifer yellow as a fluorescent marker. They also set bubble traps in the injection ports to prevent incursion into the chip. Since past structures had leaked the Lucifer yellow to the lower channel because of loose PDMS sealing, a new design was made. In this new design, the lower PDMS sheet and the membrane were tightly bonded to avoid leakage onto the other channels. Due to the cells becoming damaged because of unstable medium flow, the group cultured the cells statically and the medium was replaced on a daily basis. The Caco-2 cells formed a confluent cell sheet, and the Lucifer yellow could not permeate the membrane, while the CPA did. Good results were obtained with a lower flow rate; however, it also proved to be very time consuming. The Caco-2 cells reached confluence after 3 days and then remained this way for 10 days in the microchamber. When compared to conventional *in vitro* experiments, this system had practical characteristics of intestinal absorption.

Drug testing is one of the most important factors in intestinal microfluidic applications. Although many groups have used drugs for testing, none of them have used an array of drugs to study the effects they have in relation to each other. Yeon et al.^[44]

developed a microfluidic device to test drug permeability in the intestinal epithelial cell membrane. Researchers looked at 10 different drugs in order to test their permeability and compare the results with *in vivo* permeabilities. Instead of a membrane, the device trapped Caco-2 cells in microholes and measured the permeability of the drugs from there. The microfluidic device consisted of channels, each with an inlet and outlet, and a microhole array separating the two channels, and a channel for mixing. The microholes are 3µm in diameter, 5μ m in height, and 30μ m in length. The microchannel height was 25μ m and most animal cells with a diameter of $5-15\mu$ m could be trapped. The Caco-2 cells are imported into only one of the inlets, while a buffer is imported through the other. Different flow rates from the two channels created a pressure difference that trapped the cells once they reached the microhole array. Once this occurs, the drug intended for testing is imported through the inlet originally containing the buffer. The drugs are absorbed by the cells in their channel, and travel through the mixing channel and into the outlet. The 10 drugs that were used for the experiment were: propranolol, naproxen, furosemide, antipyrine, verapamil, atenolol, piroxicam, hydrochlorothiazide, cimetidine and carbamazepine. The Peff values that were measured in the microfluidic device were not the same as *in vivo*; however, they were still highly correlated with the permeabilities in the human intestine. This system reduces the assay time due to a non-complex system, and because there is no cellular membrane. The results found here has the potential to be used in predicting actual human permeability values of drugs, as well as a tool for drug discovery and toxicity testing.

2.3.4 Kidney

The renal transporters are located in the apical and basolateral membranes of the tubular epithelial cells. The effect of fluid shear stress on the cells is less understood than other major cells ^[45]. The renal epithelial cells experience mechanical forces due to variations in the urinary flow rate.

With toxicity being a main interest in the drug testing field, the kidney has been an organ of increasing interest for such tests. The kidney is exposed to fluid shear stress and it acts as a filtration system for the blood, as well as a vessel for the removal of toxins. The kidney transfers the toxins to the bladder, where they are then removed from the body during urination. Recall that Shintu et al. ^[20] used the liver and kidney, as well as cell co-cultures, to study their metabolic responses to various toxins. However, this section will focus on research done solely on the kidney ^[46]. One of those is Baudoin et al. ^[47], who developed a microfluidic microchip that contained functional living cell microchambers that allowed for continuous cell feeding and waste removal. Their experiment consisted of a Madin Darby Canine Kidney (MDCK) cell culture on a PDMS-based cellular microchip that can be used for *in vitro* renal applications. Additionally, a toxicity study was performed on the microchip for the demonstration of large-scale toxicity applications. The group coated the PDMS chip in Fibronectin (extracellular matrix protein). The first PDMS layer with the microstructures contained a series of $300\mu m \times 300\mu m \times 100\mu m$ microchambers and $400\mu m \times 150\mu m \times 100\mu m$ 100µm microchannels, which were all contained inside a cell culture chamber. The second layer of PDMS was used to close this cell culture chamber. Culture media was brought into the microchip system through a culture medium tank, and the flow was induced through a peristaltic pump. These devices were formed as a circuit, thereby creating a perfusion loop.

For toxicity tests, ammonium chloride was used. The initial experiments tested the viability of cells in the system as it ran inside a CO₂ incubator for various flow rates (0, 10, 25, and 50 μ L/min). The results showed it was able to run while keeping a viability above 90% for almost all flow rates, except for at 50 μ L/min. At 50 μ L/min, the cell detached from the surface after a 24 hour perfusion and viability was found to be below that of 10%. Cell density tests showed that at static conditions, the number of cells stayed roughly the same, regardless of their initial count. At flow conditions, slight proliferation of cells was observed at flows of 10 μ L/min and 25 μ L/min. The addition of ammonium chloride as a toxicity agent caused the reduction of cell proliferation. This reduction was most prevalent in the 10 μ L/min trial. The addition of ammonium chloride also led to an increase in the consumption of glucose and a decrease in the production of ammonia.

The integration of fluid shear stress is an important factor that can increase the relevance of an *in vitro* model. Jang et al. ^[48] developed a multi-layer microfluidic device that utilizes fluidic shear stress for a more complete renal model. They used primary rat inner medullary collecting duct (IMCD) cells as their model to be cultured inside the microfluidic channel. A fluidic shear stress was applied to the device to generate a realistic environment for the cells. The device consisted of two layers of PDMS, with a polyester porous membrane between them. The bottom layer of PDMS was used as a reservoir, while the top layer contained a microfluidic channel that would be used for fluid flow. After 3 days of culture, the cells were brought into the system and a fluid shear stress was applied for 5 hours using a syringe pump. After the shear stress was applied, 1mM of hydrogen peroxide solution was added to the fluid regions to test the cell viability. Hydrogen peroxide was also added to a control culture that was cultivated on a glass surface separate of the device. The results

showed that after 2 hours of treatment, the device under fluid shear stress already displayed a significantly higher viability than the glass control. Additionally, the system showed accurate cell separation associated with its cell polarization. Molecular transport was also analyzed by applying vasopressin and aldosterone into the lower PDMS reservoir to induce hormonal stimulations into the system. Vasopressin is able to induce water transport, while aldosterone induces NA transport. Both of these results agree with *in vivo* expectations. This system can be used as a model for diseases like diabetes or edema, as well as a model for studying renal physiology.

In the year 2010, Jang studied the kidney cells and showed the polarization and transport of the primary rat inner medullary collecting duct (IMCD) cells as well as the application of fluid shear stress (FSS). Now in the year 2011, Jang et al. ^[49], developed a 'collecting-duct-on-a-chip' to further investigate the effects of changes within a renal environment. The role of the collecting duct in the kidney is mainly to maintain homeostasis of fluids through transportation across its membrane. Specifically, the role of the protein aquaporin-2 (AQP2) was observed under these altered conditions due to the major role it serves in water transport across the membrane. Additionally, the role of the actin cytoskeleton present in *in vivo* collecting ducts (F-actin) is explored in the model. Like their previous design, the main components that made up the chip consisted of a PDMS reservoir and a PDMS layer complete with microchannels for active fluid flow, as well as a polyester membrane separating them. Fluid shear stress, hormonal stimulation, and an osmotic gradient across the membrane will serve as the active changes within the system. Fluid shear stress at 1 dyn cm⁻² and arginine vasopressin stimulation (AVP) were applied in the microfluidic chip for trials consisting of F-actin within the IMCD cells. A strong fiber network was observed

roughly 1 hour after the start of the trial, with a slow depolymerization occurring up until hour 5, when the F-actin was fully depolymerized. It was also observed that if system was left undisturbed after depolymerization, the F-actin would repolymerize after roughly 2 hours. Additionally, the application of an osmotic gradient was shown to lead to a full F-actin depolymerization. This system can be used as a tool for drug screening of the regulation of AQP2 as well as being an important model for fluid homeostasis.

Most recently, Jang et al.^[50] made a microfluidic device that mimicked the functions of the human proximal tubule using primary human kidney epithelial cells. Although they only used one type of cell, their research brings forth more information that is needed to help the problem of accurate drug development. Their system, just like others, can be used to replace two dimensional cell culturing and animal testing for the ability to test for toxins in organs. The device shows many similarities to their previous design ^[49]. Once again, the main components consisted of a lower reservoir and an upper microfluidic channel with a porous membrane containing ECM collagen separating the two. The cells were cultivated on the porous membrane, in which well-defined monolayers were observed after 3 days for both static and fluid conditions. The addition of fluid shear stress created an even more realistic cell layout, with a system of cell columns consistent with their *in vivo* cell polarity (**Fig. 6**.). Analysis of the system showed that the levels of albumin uptake, expression of brush-border alkaline phosphatase, and glucose transport were greatly increased when flow was introduced into the system. To observe toxicity effects, the cells were treated with cisplatin for 1 day and then were allowed to recover by keeping them drug free for 4 days. The magnitude of recovery was significantly higher in the system containing flow. The use of primary human

kidney epithelial cells, along with a model used in static and dynamic conditions, presents a method that shows promise for renal toxicity analysis.



Fig. 6. Design layout for the device, showing A) a cross-sectional view. The device mimics the human proximal tubule of the kidney (pictured below). Human proximal tubuluar epithelial cells are cultivated on top of the membrane, with tubular flow occurring on the apical section, and interstitial fluid located on the basolateral section. B) The device shown layer-by-layer. Two design consists of an upper layer containing a microfluidic channel and a lower layer containing a fluid reservoir ^[50].

Since fluid shear stress is very important in the function of the kidneys, Frohlich et al. ^[51] developed a microscale tissue modeling device (MTMD) to represent an accurate renal system. This device focuses on utilizing fluid shear stress and a topographical pattern to mimic its *in vivo* counterpart. The device consisted of a lower silicon plate that contained sub-micron topographical features such as grooves and pitches, and an upper PDMS layer containing a microfluidic path. The human renal proximal tubule cell line HK-2 was chosen to represent the tissue. The HK-2 cells were stained with ZO-1 fluorescence to analyze the tight junction formation. Blank substrates in the presence of FSS showed a much lower ZO-1 intensity and a more disorderly array of cell structure. Topographic substrates without FSS showed a higher ZO-1 intensity and a better array of the cell layer. In the presence of both, the cells showed a well-defined tight junction with good intensity. Therefore, while FSS seems to play a bigger role in the modeling of the kidney, a combination of both yields the best results.

The role F-actin plays in the transportation of nutrients across the membrane was also analyzed by Ferrell et al.^[52], who used electrodes designed to take TEER measurements to analyze a working kidney bioreactor under fluid shear stress conditions. TEER measurements have shown to provide excellent inside into the tight junction permeability properties of a cell culture. Additionally, transportation properties were analyzed, with special focus on the structure of tight junctions (ZO-1) and cilia formation (acetylated α -tubulin) within the cells, and the F-actin cytoskeleton array that facilitates transfer. The device consisted of an apical chamber complete with 8 microfluidic channels and a basolateral chamber used as a reservoir. An array of 200µm diameter posts was used to support the membrane on the bottom chamber and allow fluid transport. A polycarbonate membrane was connected to separate the two chambers. A perfusion circuit was created, consisting of the bioreactor, a perfusion pump, and a medium reservoir, all connected through silicone tubing. For TEER analysis, electrodes were inserted within the tubing, with the ends exposed within the bioreactor. Additionally, all trials were conducted within an incubator. A shear stress of 1 dyn cm⁻² was used for fluid shear stress trials. Both human renal epithelial cells (HREC) and

MDCK cells were cultivated on the membrane. Initial culturing results showed that the MDCK cells were able to form a monolayer within 3-5 days, while the HREC cells took 10 days. Staining techniques were used to analyze the formation of tight junction proteins, cilia, and F-actin (HREC only). Both ZO-1 proteins and acetylated α -tubulin were observed in the model, showing well-defined borders and distinct formations (Fig. 7a-b). Additionally, the role of F-actin in static conditions showed a normal layout of F-actin (Fig. 7c), while fluid shear stress conditions showed the F-actin surrounding the cell (Fig. 7d). It is believed that this is a normal response of the cytoskeleton to shear stress and is similar to what happens in the cells of humans. The system was then monitored with the addition of Ca^{2+} into the medium, which is known to have a positive effect on the structure of tight junctions. A switch technique was used to measure transient changes, where the system would switch between using a medium containing normal levels of Ca^{2+} to low levels of Ca^{2+} . After analysis, normal levels of Ca^{2+} were restored and the system was allowed to recover. The switch from normal to low levels of Ca²⁺ showed a TEER that contained 45% of its original resistance. Using inulin as a marker, the results showed a large increase in leakage rate when the switch to low Ca²⁺ levels was made (from $0.09 \pm 0.03 \ \mu g \ cm^{-2} \ min^{-1}$ to $0.39 \pm 0.09 \ \mu g$ cm⁻² min⁻¹), showing the potential breakdowns of cell interactions when transient changes are applied.



Fig. 7. Immunofluorescence staining results depicting the formation of a) MDCK monolayer and b) HREC monolayer, each containing well-defined tight junctions (green outline) and primary cilia (red dots addressed by arrows). Additionally, HREC was stained for F-actin analysis under c) static conditions and d) fluid shear stress conditions. Arrows in Fig. 7c indicate F-actin fibers. Scale bars in Fig. 7b and Fig. 7d are at 25µm^[52].

Analysis of mass transfer has also yielded results ^[53]. Ramello et al. ^[54] investigated the properties of mass transfer in a microfluidic kidney model. They also analyzed the transportation by using different drugs. The study used MDCK cells on a polyethersulfone (PES) membrane inside a PDMS chip. The chip contains an upper and lower chamber, each containing an inlet, outlet, peristaltic pump, and filtration chamber in co-current circulation. This was done to create a system in which one chamber contains a reservoir of filtrate while the other contains retentate. The retentate circulation would initially contain the molecule used for inspection, while the filtrate circulation would capture the filtered molecule. Molecules used for this experiment were chosen based on their variety in size. Caffeine was used as a small marker, vitamin B12 was used as a medium marker, and albumin was used as a large marker. The value of cell membrane permeability before mass transfer studies was measured as being equal to $1.8 \pm 0.2 \text{ mL/(min cm}^2 \text{ bar)}$, and the value without cells was 9 ± 3 $mL/(min cm^2 bar)$. Trials involving mass transfer were compared with mathematical models, with cells and without cells on the membrane. The results showed an inverse relationship with molecular weight; there was a notable increase in mass transfer as the molecular weight decreased. Mass transfer through a membrane without cells yielded higher rates of mass transfer for all trials. When treating the cells as a separate diffusive layer, the mathematical models fit the experiment results perfectly. In an attempt to model toxicity in the system, acrolein was used at varying concentrations. For each molecule tested, there appeared to be a threshold in which acrolein did not play a factor in the mass transfer of the system. The larger the molecular weight, the higher the threshold. Above this threshold, the diffusive coefficient was found to be higher than trials without acrolein. A second threshold was observed, in which surpassing it yielded a time-dependent mass transfer rate. The permeability of the membrane was measured after the acrolein trials, which revealed an increased permeability of 8 mL/(min cm^2 bar). Thus, these experiments showed the effects of molecular weight and toxicity on the permeability and mass transport properties of the

system. These results agreed with past research and mathematical models and have shown that they can be a useful model for modeling mass transport on a renal biochip.

2.3.5 Heart

The function and development of the heart mainly depends on the response of the cardiac cells and the mechanical stress. In order to have new successful drugs and medicine, it is important to understand the biological functions of the heart. Current cell culture systems fail to accurately represent the physical, mechanical, and biological functions of the heart. There have been studies that have tried to model the heart; however, most are two dimensional, and although they do show some mechanical properties, they are not the best for accurately mimicking the human heart as they do not have complete heart properties and do not allow for fluid flow or similar work ^[55]. For this reason, three dimensional microfluidic systems for the heart are being explored as well.

Many groups have designed various systems to model the human heart and to mimic the key mechanical functions and properties ^[56]. Due to the advantages of 3D microfluidic systems, there has been a shift towards using these designs to represent cardiac situations ^[57]. Giridharan et al. ^[58] developed a model designed to replicate physical loading in the left ventricle. This microfluidic cardiac cell culture model (μ CCCM) contains a cell culture chamber, a pump, a collapsible pulsatile valve, and an adjustable hemostatic valve. The cell culture chamber consists of a PDMS membrane between two polycarbonate plates, milled with microfluidic channels to create perfusion through the membrane. The embryonic cardiomyoblast cell line H9C2 was used for cultivation on the membrane. The pump serves the purpose of supplying flow, and therefore shear stress and fluid transport, to the system. The pulsatile valve is used to produce mechanical stress into the system in the form of pressure build-up in the cell culture chamber, resulting in the stretching of the membrane. A closed valve builds pressure while an open valve relieves pressure, thereby being capable of representing cardiac preloading. The hemostatic valve is used to control flow resistance, and is a representation of afterloading. These devices are connected as a circuit to provide circulating fluid flow. This device was first tested by applying different levels of pressure for a variety of membrane thicknesses. The strain was found to be inversely proportional to membrane thickness, displaying a 20% strain for a 139µm thick membrane and 60% for a 93µm thick membrane. Next, the device was characterized for normal conditions, as well as for abnormal conditions such as: heart failure, hypertension, hypotension, tachycardia, and bradycardia. The simulation of cardiac disorders was done through the programmable valves connected to the system. Values obtain from these trials depict fairly comparable results with their in vivo counterpart. When comparing the cellular make-up between static trials and the trials within the μ CCCM, results showed that the static culture make-up resembled fibroblasts, with randomized F-actin, while the µCCCM displayed a rectangular, boxy makeup with aligned F-actin. This shows the capabilities inherit in modern microfluidic cardiac models, especially when considering abnormal heard conditions.

When dealing with *in vitro* microdevices for tissue engineering or drug delivery ^[59], external power sources are depended upon to supply energy into the system. However, if the device requires implantation into an *in vivo* source, external power sources must be eliminated. Tanaka et al. ^[60] fabricated a micro spherical pump made from cardiomyocytes to represent the heart functions. The hollow sphere was created by inserting a capillary tube through the entirety of a sugar ball, so that both ends of the capillary could be observed

outside of the ball. A layer of PDMS was applied around the sugar ball, and the capillary tube was pulled back to allow a second capillary tube to connect to the other side, and both tubes were glued into place. A pump was applied through one of the capillary and water was introduced to dissolve the sugar. This resulted in a hollow sphere with a thickness of 250µm (**Fig. 8a**). Rat cardiomyocyte cells were cultured and placed on the surface of the PDMS sphere. Spontaneous pulsating was observed within one hour of incubation, which eventually became periodic beating (**Fig. 8b**). Fluoro Sphere particles were introduced into the medium for tracking. The results were determined with a particle displacement data set which estimated the parameters for the performance of the fluid bio-actuation. The following equation was used to describe the change in microchannel volume as a function of the change in chamber volume:

$$\Delta v = 1/2\Delta V \tag{2}$$

where Δv is the volume change in the microchannel and ΔV is the volume change in the chamber. Using $\Delta v=0.5x\pi r^2$ as an approximation due to its circular cross-section, where x is the displacement of particles near the capillary center and r is the inside radius of the capillary, ΔV was found to be 2.2nL. From there, the following equation was used:

$$Q=f\Delta V \tag{3}$$

where Q is the flow rate and f is the beat frequency. They found that f was 0.6Hz at 37° C, which resulted in a final Q value of 0.047 μ L min⁻¹. Long-term trials showed that the device could be functional for up to 5 days. They compared it to other typical micro chemical systems and showed that it is possible to use the system Tanaka et al. made in micro chemical or biochemical applications. They confirmed that their device was flexible and biocompatible and very similar to other polymer pump actuators. They concluded that if their

heart device functioned continuously for at least 5 days, the cells of cardiomyocytes that were inside the sphere would live for that amount of time as well. They stated that this can be used to mimic animal hearts; however, it is worth noting that there are multiple chamber valves and walls required for this process. To do this they used an *in situ* laser photofabrication technique. These results and their microspherical heart pump are very important as it is a step towards having electric powerless bio-actuators for fluids in implants and also for micro model cardiovascular circulatory systems for monitoring applications.



Fig. 8. Diagram of the micro spherical heart pump, shown in A) a full view, diplaying the components of the device and medium brought in through port A and expelled through port B. Additionally, B) a cross-sectional view is shown. The layer containing the rat cardiomyocytes can be seen, with red arrows shown to display their contracting nature on top of the PDMS sphere ^[60].

A different study to that done by Giridharan et al. and Tanaka et al. was done by Li et al. ^[61], who fabricated a microfluidic chip that uses integrated acoustic wave sensors to analyze cardiomyocyte contraction. The sensor works by applying a voltage to the electrodes

located on both sides of a flat quartz crystal plate. The voltage induces acoustic waves from the crystal due to the piezoelectric effect. These acoustic waves will be produced in the thickness-shear mode (TSM) and applied to the cardiomyocyte cells. Any change in stiffness will result in a modified resonant frequency. This method can be used to identify pulsating properties of the cells. The device consists of an upper glass plate milled with microfluidic channels and a bottom quartz crystal plate acting as the TSM sensor. Cells were fit into the channels of the glass plate. Data showed that the device without the channel plate was capable of reacting to changes in the system for all parameters. Changes in the system include additions of cell suspension and a bath solution. The parameters were shown to make corresponding changes at the intervals at which the changes in the system were applied. The experiment was then run using the channel plate. The results showed mixed results that only proved that the system wasn't fully capable of responding to the acoustic waves. The group believes that offsetting contractions may have been one of the underlying problems in the experiment, and therefore a shorter interval between data points may be able to rectify this problem.

While not falling into the classic mold of organ-on-a-chip systems, the method of testing extracting organ tissue instead of cultivating cells is another potential method for understanding organ function *in vitro*. Owaki et al. ^[62] proposed a microvascular connection method called the "suction-induced vascular fixation method" or SVF method. They were able to use tissue from an extracted chick heart and connect it to their microfluidic system. The SVF method consists of using a suction technique to bring all the blood vessels through a microfluidic device. This constrains the vessels so that they are easily manipulated and can be analyzed with less degrees of freedom. The microfluidic device consists of a PDMS layer

containing holes designed for integration with the blood vessels of the chick heart, as well as a perfusion chamber to maintain functions of the organ. Due to the variability and uncertainty of blood vessel diameters, the device allows several vessels through one hole if the vessels prove to have a smaller diameter than expected, and can also be rejected if the vessel diameter is too large. While the main goal of their experiment was to design an alternative method to handle the analysis of organ tissue, an addition test was done in which a solution was sent through the device and into the embryonic heart. The results showed that a periodic circulation could be achieved through this method, and the heart was able to periodic beat using this method.

2.3.6 Vasculature

Endothelial cells that line blood vessels are designed for functions such as: facilitating blood flow, enabling nutrient transfer through the vessel, and regulating surrounding tissue growth ^[63]. A viable microcirculation is required in *in vitro* models if we are to interconnect organs. This will be especially important if a "human-on-a-chip" design is created. However, this section will focus on a microfluidic model for isolated vasculature. It is vital to have a realistic *in vitro* model for drug development and the study of cell-cell interactions.

Research into 3D *in vitro* vasculature has produced a variety of results ^[64]. However, the design of functional artificial vasculatures has been a difficult hurdle to overcome. Borenstein et al. ^[65] have specifically addressed this issue in their design. The microchip design displayed one inlet and outlet, with a bifurcating microchannel network stemming from each end and joined such that the design showed a symmetric pattern. To better mimic human vasculature, all channels were designed with circular cross-sections, and each new

generation of bifurcation had a smaller cross-sectional area than the last (**Fig. 9**). The diameters chosen for each subsequent channel were based off of Murray's Law. Polystyrene was used as the material for the chip due to its stability and a better understanding of the surface properties. Two layers, each containing the network with cross-sectional channels, were created using an electroplating technique. Human umbilical vein endothelial cells (HUVEC) were cultivated on the inner surface of the channels. Results showed a stable and consistent monolayer throughout the channels. Thus, the goal of creating a microfluidic chip capable of accurately representing human vasculature proved successful. While flow was not examined in this experiment, the circular cross-sections and smooth transitions between bifurcations and diameter changes have potential for use in microfluidic vasculature chip designs.



Fig. 9. Image taken of the device. A network of bifurcating channels, each level containing a diameter smaller than the last, is shown. The scale bar is displayed at A) 1mm and B) 500 μ m ^[65].

In pursuit of a physiologically similar vasculature model, considerations such as multi-cell interaction and dynamic stress on the system should be considered. The design created by Srigunapalan et al. ^[66] looked at the effects of shear stress, monocyte-EC adhesion through TNF- α stimulation, and monocyte transmigration on a microfluidic vasculature system. The device consists of two PDMS layers, with the top layer displaying a straight

microchannel and the bottom player displaying an S-shaped microchannel. A polyethylene membrane containing 8µm pores is used to separate the two layers. Circulation of flow was provided through a peristaltic pump that would take media from a reservoir compartment and feed it through a damper, followed by the microfluidic chip, then back into the reservoir, completing the cycle. The purpose of the damper was to force continuous flow (as opposed to pulsatile flow) into the chip. Porcine aortic endothelial cells (PAEC) were chosen for the EC and were cultivated on the top of the membrane. Initial trials tested this system under static and dynamic conditions, with dynamic conditions providing a shear stress of 20 dynes cm⁻². Results showed elongation of the PAEC for dynamic trials. Further trials introduced TNF-a stimulation into the culture, followed by monocytes (RAW264.7 cells) applied with fluorescent dye. Monocyte adhesion was tested as a function of both TNF- α stimulation and its static/dynamic state. Results showed that TNF- α was the biggest factor in monocyte adhesion, while the trials under fluid shear stress proved to have slightly better adhesion capabilities than their static counterparts. Trials done for testing transmigration used THP-1 cells for monocytes. THP-1 was introduced in the top channel and adhered to the PAEC. Transmigration effects were observed through the membrane as the monocytes travelled into the bottom channel. Stimulus effects were observed with the protein MCP-1, introduced solely in the bottom channel. Results from these trials showed that the introduction of MCP-1 lead to a roughly ten-fold increase in the number of transmigrated monocytes per square millimeter. Therefore, the effects of cell-cell interaction and stimuli replicated various scenarios in a microfluidic vasculature chip. The best conditions for *in vitro* monocyte adhesion are with TNF- α stimulation and fluid shear stress conditions, and the best conditions for transmigration are with MCP-1 stimulation. This shows how additional

considerations within the device to mimic *in vivo* vasculature have the potential to produce the best results.

2.3.7 Other Organs

While the organs with the most prevalent research have been highlighted in previous sections, organ-on-a-chip systems have the potential to be used for many different organs. Researchers have been able to branch out in this respect and explore different ideas in unique systems tailored to their chosen organ. Additionally, microfluidic organ-on-a-chip systems with cancerous organs will be explored, as well as multi-organ chips aimed to produce results working towards a body-on-a-chip.

2.3.7.1 Bone marrow

Torisawa et al. ^[67] designed a working bone marrow-on-a-chip device to replicate *in vivo* functions and study the effects of radiation-induced toxicity. The design features a PDMS cylindrical ring containing demineralized bone powder (DBP) and bone morphogenetic protein 2 and 4 (BMP2, BMP4). A PDMS cap was placed over the top cavity of the ring to better regulate adipocytes for better hematopoiesis. Cultivation of these materials within the device was performed *in vivo* through implantation within a mouse. After 4-8 weeks, new bone structures were formed with a marrow inner region showing signs of cellular activity. The most prominent cells within the marrow were hematopoietic cells. Cultivation for 8 weeks within the mouse yielded the best results, with an array of cells that mimicked naturally grown bone marrow. Once the artificial bone marrow was removed from the rat, it was placed within a microfluidic PDMS chip (**Fig. 10a-b**). This chip contained PDMS layers

containing microchannels designed above and below it. Two porous membrane layers were positioned between the layers containing microchannels and the culture chamber. The device showed it was capable of maintaining its structure and function for up a week with a medium containing cytokines. In comparison with naturally grown bone marrow extracted and cultured in a static system, the results from the microfluidic system showed similar functionality and viability of long-term hematopoietic stem cells (HSC). Freshly isolated bone marrow from both systems displayed the highest number of long-term HSC, with each subsequent day showing a decrease in that value. Additionally, the naturally grown static trial also displayed a significant increase in progenitor cells after a period of time compared to freshly isolated bone marrow. Further trials exposed the microfluidic bone marrow device to γ -radiation to observe the toxic effects on the organs functionality and cell viability. For control purposes, a system of the previously mentioned static culture with naturally grown bone marrow, as well as live mice, were tested as well. The various cell viabilities were tested at different radiation dosages. The results showed an inverse relationship between γ radiation dosage and cell viability for the HSC, progenitors, lymphoids, and myeloids. Granulocyte colony-stimulating factor (G-CSF), shown to inhibit radiation effects and promote recover of bone marrow in mice, was also tested in this fashion. Results showed that G-CSF did indeed provide a higher cell viability for bone marrow cells. Thus, the system was able to provide *in vitro* bone marrow functionality under normal conditions and toxic conditions that are comparable to *in vivo* results. Future toxicity tests with bone marrow diseases have the potential to be utilized using this technique.



Fig. 10. A) Process of obtaining bone marrow cells highlighting the several key steps: implanting the device containing bone-inducing materials within the mouse, letting it cultivate within the mouse for 8 weeks, and introducing the eBM (engineered bone marrow) into the chip. B) Images of this process can be seen, shown before implantation (left), after extraction from the mouse (middle), and the chip containing the eBM in its entirety. Scale bar is at 2mm ^[67].

2.3.7.2 Brain

Delivery of drugs and nutrients into the brain is regulated by the blood-brain barrier (BBB). On the blood side of the barrier lies a complex array of vascular endothelial cells, and on the brain side lies the central nervous system. Issues maintaining functionality of the BBB can result in neurological disorders. Thus, it is important to understand and test the effects that drugs might have on the BBB through *in vitro* design. Therefore, with respect to the brain, most microfluidic models will feature a BBB-on-a-chip ^[68]. Griep et al. ^[69] designed a working BBB-on-a-chip and tested its functionality through TEER measurements. Two

PDMS layers were constructed with a straight microfluidic channel that was positioned so that the top channel was perpendicular to the bottom channel. Additional grooves were created to fit in the electrodes for TEER measuring. A polycarbonate membrane was positioned between the two layers. Human brain endothelial cells (hCMEC/D3) were cultivated in the top channel and showed a confluent monolayer within 1 day. TEER results showed similar results between a static culture and the BBB chip, both displaying tight junctions and a confluent monolayer. Next, the effects of fluid shear stress on the hCMEC/D3 were tested. After 3 days of normal function in the device, the BBB chip was exposed to shear stress of 5.8 dyn cm⁻² for 18 hours. Results showed that the TEER value triple during the duration that shear stress was applied to the system. Afterwards, the effects of TNF- α stimulation was tested on the device. Directly following the 18 hours of exposure to fluid shear stress, 1 ng/ml of TNF- α was introduced to the system for 2 hours. Results showed that the TEER value dropped 10-fold when TNF- α was introduced. While this may show that the effects from TNF- α in the system make a much bigger impact than fluid shear stress, it is important to note that increasing TEER values is much more difficult to achieve than decreasing, since even the slighted gap in the cell monolayer can significantly reduce TEER values ^[3a]. This experiment shows the capabilities of BBB models, with research already capable of considering the biochemical and mechanical factors that may contribute to its function.

2.3.7.3 Spleen

In the human body, the spleen serves the role of filtering blood, recycling red blood cells, and containing a reserve of white blood cells. While a spleen can be removed from the body

without suffering fatal injuries, it still serves important roles; of which an in vitro understanding can benefit, especially with an ultimate goal of creating a "body-on-a-chip." A "splenon-on-a-chip" design was created by Rigat-Brugarolas et al.^[70]. This design mimics the red pulp area of the spleen by creating a fast-flow layer and a slow-flow layer. The fluid going through the slow-flow layer travels through a straight channel representing the 10% of blood that goes through a filtration process, where unhealthy red blood cells are destroyed. This channel also contains an area filled with a pillar matrix, thereby impeding the flow and increasing the density in that area, representing a reticular mesh observed in an *in vivo* spleen. The fluid going through the fast-flow layer travels in a zig-zag pattern representing the rest of the blood going through the bypass of the filtration process. This device is connected to a syringe pump, providing flow at 5 μ l min⁻¹. Deformability studies can be performed on the device, with cells incapable of deforming showing constriction in the channels. Initial tests in the microfluidic system looked at the differences in deformability between new and aged red blood cells (RBC's). Results showed that ages RBCs showed less deformability than new RBCs. The infected red blood cell (iRBC), Plasmodium yoelii-GFP, was then tested and compared to healthy RBCs. The results showed that healthy RBCs had a deformation measurement of roughly 19%, whereas the unhealthy iRBCs had a deformation measurement of roughly 34%. This device shows a unique way of representing a 3D microfluidic spleen capable of identifying pathogens based on their deformability.

2.3.7.4 Cancer/Tumor

Modeling *in vitro* microfluidic chips to represent *in vivo* cancerous situations is a popular area of research. Models involving lung ^[71], breast ^[72], prostate ^[73], pancreas ^[74], brain ^[75]

cancer have been created. Song et al. ^[76] designed a microfluidic device to replicate the functionalities of breast cancer cells in a vasculature system. The design consists of two PDMS layers containing microchannels, and a polyester membrane positioned between the layers. The microchannel on the top layer contains a funnel-shaped inlet with a straight channel, while the bottom layer contains two straight channels located perpendicular to the top channel (Fig. 11A, D). Human dermal microvascular endothelial cells (HDMEC) are cultivated on the top of the membrane (Fig. 11C). Trials consisted of introducing chemokines (CXCL12) contained in the medium through the lower channels, with breast cancer cells (MDA-MB-231) circulating through the top channel, with a focus on the adherence of the cancer cells on the endothelial cells in the overlapping channels (Fig. 11B, E, F). One of the contributing factors to cancer cell adhesion to the endothelial walls is the expressions of CXCR4 and CXCR7 receptors. Therefore, trials using cancer cells expressing CXCR4 (231-CXCR4) and CXCR7 (231-CXCR7) were also used to study their effects. Results showed that all three trials showed increased adhesion with faster flow rates. A significantly larger adhesive ability was also noted for trials containing CXCL12 in the HDMEC than trials without it. However, the ratio of treated cells to untreated cells showed similar values for all three. Therefore, while CXCL-12 enhances adhesion, it is independent of CXCR4 and CXCR7. To study the role HDMEC plays on adhesion, new trials were conducted in which the HDMEC monolayer was treated with CXCL12, which is known to up-regulate CXCR4, TNF- α , which is known to up-regulate both CXCR4 and CXCR7, and AMD3100 in combination with CXCL12, which inhibits binding for CXCL12-CXCR4, but not CXCL12-CXCR7. These were tested in the downstream channel to observe the effects (Fig. 11G). Results showed that inhibiting the CXCL12-CXCR4 connection led to the lowest

percentage of adhesion. This experiment showed not only a microfluidic device capable of replicating a microenvironment resembling breast cancer adhesion to the human vasculature, but also showed that disabling certain chemokine connections may prove to be an important step towards the regulation of metastasis.



Fig. 11. Design of the device, showing A) a layer-by-layer layout of the two PDMS layers with a membrane in-between them. B) A cross-sectional view of the device can be seen at the location where the channels overlap, showing the flow of medium with cultured cells. C) HDMEC cultivation shown by region (upstream, middle, downstream) through phase contrast imaging (scale bar at 800µm). D) An actual photo of the device, with a quarter for

scale. *E*) Aerial view of the device, showing the locations of overlap, as well as the direction of flow. *F*) Interaction of HDMEC cells with flow from lower channel can be seen through fluorescent staining. Fluorescent dye was administered in the lower channels, showing interaction with the sections overlying the bottom channels, but not in the middle (scale bar at $800\mu m$). *G*) Adhesion of MDA-MD-231, with TNF- α treated only at the downstream channel (scale bar at $200\mu m$)^[76].

Cancer migration to bone is another scenario that has been researched. Bersini et al. ^[8] created a microfluidic system to look at the interaction between breast cancer cells within a microenvironment used to represent bone structure. The device uses 3 microchannels with 8 hydrogel regions within 4 hydrogel channels. Culture media flows through the 3 microchannels, with HUVEC cells cultivated in the central channel. Cultivated hBM-MSC bone marrow cells within a collagen type 1 solution were injected into the 4 hydrogel channels structured with ECM. This produced an osteo-cell region within the hydrogel channel. After 3 days of cultivation, breast cancer cells (MDA-MB-231) were introduced to the system. Trials focused on observing the cross-talk between the osteo-cell regions and the breast cancer cells. Specifically, the interactions of CXCL5, a chemokine derived from the hBM-MSC, and the CXCR2 receptor from MDA-MB-231. Results showed that in comparison to a gel only region (38%), the osteo-cell hydrogel region contained more transmigrated cancer cells (78%). These cancer cells were also able to penetrate deeper into the osteo-cell microenvironment. Additionally, the transmigrated cells showed signs of proliferation within the osteo-cell region. These proliferated cancer cells formed in clumps ranging from 4-60 cells. These results were successful in showing a functional cancer-bone

cross-talk environment. Additionally, their environment promoted cancer cell transmigration, both in quantity and depth. Taking this into account, along with the observations of cancer cell metastasis within the osteo-cell region after transmigration, it is clear that the osteo-cell region provided a suitable environment for cancer cells.

A design focused on the extravasation of cancer cells through an endothelial barrier was developed by Jeon et al. ^[77]. Similar to the previous design, this design contained three microfluidic channels with hydrogel compartments separating each channel. These hydrogel compartments contained an ECM structure. Human microvascular endothelial cells (hMVECs) were seeded within the central channel and cultured in the device. The cell line MDA-MB-231 was used to represent the tumor cells. These cells were also introduced into the central challenge after a confluent monolayer of hMVEC cells were formed. Results showed a successful extravasation of tumor cells through the endothelial barrier, with signs of proliferation in the ECM gel. Additionally, it was found that the number of extravasated cells stagnated after the first day, in agreement with *in vivo* studies.

2.3.7.5 Multiple Organs

As briefly discussed earlier in this paper, organ-on-a-chip technology can be applied to a system of multiple organs, and sometimes dubbed "human-on-a-chip," depending on how large of a portion of the human body the device represents. This has been the focal point to some research topics ^[78]. Multiple organs-on-a-chip provide their own challenges mainly due to their complexity. Organ-organ interactions themselves add another layer of complexity to the system ^[79]. Scaling from a multiple organ-on-a-chip in order to apply to *in vivo* humans is a challenge in and of itself ^[80]. Before body-on-a-chip systems can be implemented, consideration of the scaling effect between these micro-representations of organs with their actual *in vivo* counterparts must be done. Wikswo et al. ^[80a] broke this idea down into several groups.

First, an allometric scaling can be done to represent organs. Because humans scale allometrically, scaling differences between interconnected organ-on-a-chip systems provide an especially difficult challenge for researchers. Not only would scaling involve considerations for the mass allometrics of the organs, but properties such as blood circulation and pulse would also be affected by scaling. Another consideration would be the aspects and properties of organs that are independent of size, which may fail or become dysfunctional when scaled.

The second approach towards dealing with scaling is considering the human-on-achip as only a portion of the human body, dubbed "histological sections". In this respect, scaling considerations become unnecessary. The design can be such that the designed section of the organ only needs to perform the physiological duties associated with that section, eliminating some of the complexity of mimicking *in vivo* organs. Issues can arise when combining these sections due to either misrepresenting the organ-organ interactions by not considering the effects of a missing section of one of the organs or by not accounting for the scales of the sections relative to each other.

The third approach is to scale with consideration to organ functions. In other words, the preservation of the important organ functions is paramount when scaling in this respect.

The drawback for this approach is that it may oversimplify the design to the point where various results aren't translatable.

Work done by Zhang et al.^[81], combined a multi-channel three dimensional cell culture system with compartments for different cells. Four different organs were tested in this system: C3A cells (liver), A549 cells (lung), HK-2 cells (kidney) and HPA cells (fat). All organs were connected and a "common medium" (CM) was created to keep the functions of each individual cell line. Results showed that all but the HK-2 cells were able to function at expected levels, with HK-2 functionality decreased 10%. Despite this shortcoming, the medium was deemed suitable for the experiment. The cells were connected to a reservoir containing the medium, with connections to an inlet directly attached to each cell group. The effects of TGF- β 1 were tested in the multi-chip. Results showed that it did have the capabilities of promoting cell growth in A549, HK-2, and HPA cells. However, it also resulted in a much lower viability of C3A cells. To counteract this effect, gelatin microspheres were fabricated, with the ability to control the release of TGF- β 1 so that it is only delivered in the A549 cell group. The results showed that A549 cells were indeed stimulated without adverse effects to any other cells. This experiment is capable of testing the multi-organ implications from drug toxicity testing.

A microscale cell culture analog (µCCA) based on a pharmacokineticpharmacodynamic (PK-PD) mathematical model has also been explored as a means to create a "body-on-a-chip" ^[82]. This model has the potential to be able to mathematically predict and map out the pharmacological effects of a drug. Sung et al. ^[83] tested the capabilities of PK-PD modeling with a multi-organ chip device designed to test drug toxicity. Three different cell lines were cultivated in separate cell culture chambers: HepG2/C3A (liver), HCT-116

(tumor), and Kasumi-1 (marrow). A reservoir containing suitable medium is fed into the three cell culture chambers. Flow was induced through a rocking motion, allowing gravity to control the flow rate. This devices changes course every 3 minutes, ensuring that good viability is maintained throughout the device. Layout of the device can be seen in **Fig. 12**. Trials were done in which 5-fluorouracil (5-FU), an anti-cancer drug, was introduced into the medium. Different trials were done at varying concentrations. Both PK-PD modeling and experimental testing were done to observe the results. Results from experimental data show similar trends. Further trials were conducted using both 5-FU and uracil, which is known as a modulator of 5-FU. Results showed a decline in viability between all three cell groups. Through this experiment, PK-PD modeling and microfluidic multi-organ functionality were combined to test the functionality when introduced to a drug test. The results obtained from this experiment are promising, and may lead to future studies in this area.



Fig. 12. Layout of the device, showing A) the layer-by-layer design, and B) the image of the assembled device, with a quarter for scale ^[83].

A sample design of a body-on-a-chip was designed using chips discussed in this paper (**Fig. 13.**). When inter-connecting organ-on-a-chips, it is vital to recognize which
organs must interact with others, and conversely, which organs must be separated from others. The medium introduced must be able to interact with the various cells without harming them.



Fig. 13. Sample construction of a body-on-a-chip using microfluidic chips discussed in this paper. Drug testing would begin at the lung ^[26] or gut ^[40], with the liver ^[16] only accessible through the gut. From there, the flow would travel in the blood, reaching the kidney ^[50], heart ^[58], bone marrow ^[67], brain ^[69], spleen ^[70], and vasculature ^[66].

2.4 Summary Table

The table categorizes each work based on the type of organ, type of testing, details of the design and experiments, and the cells used.

| Orga n | Type of testing | Details | Cultured cells in device | Author |
|-----------|-------------------------------|--|---|---------------------------------------|
| Liver | Toxicity / Drug Testing | Created 3D HepaTox Chip for hepatotoxicity testing | Harvested rat hepatocytes | Toh et al. [13] |
| | | Encapsulated hepatocytes in 3D microtissues to study the interactions of drugs | Harvested rat hepatocytes | Li et al. ^[12a] |
| | | MODS platform for hepatotoxicity screening | HepG2 and NIH-3T3 | Au et al. [17b] |
| | | Characterizing the toxicity of several compounds using liver co-culture and SMART-scale analysis | HepG2/C3A and MDCK | Shintu et al. ^[20] |
| | | Drug metabolism using liver and intestinal slices | Harvested rat liver and intestinal slices | van Midwoud [22] |
| | | Testing the effects of ethanol- induced toxicity on liver slices | Harvested rat liver slices | Hattersle y et al. ^[21] |
| | Functio nal analysis | Creating model with bile canaliculi formation | Harvested rat hepatocytes | Nakao et al. ^[14] |
| | | Incorperated biosensors for pH monitoring in chip | HepG2 | Schober et al. ^[15] |
| | | The kinetic reactions representing metabolism, measured and compared with mathematical model | Harvested rat liver microsomes | Lee et al. [16] |

Table 1. Summary of organ-on-a-chip devices listed in order of type of organ.

| | | Liver sinusoid pattern assembly | Primary human | Schütte |
|------|-------------------------------|---|---|------------------------------------|
| | | through use of dielectrophoresis | hepatocytes and endothelial cells | et al. ^[18] |
| | | Mimicking of the acinus function in the liver | Hepatocytes and nonparenchymal cells | Bhushan et al. ^[17a] |
| | | Liver and skin co-culture used to test long-term functionality under | HHSteC and skin biopsies | Wagner et al. ^[19] |
| | | Created IIDMP to evaluate dynamic organ-organ interactions of the liver and intestine | HepG2/C3A and Caco-2 TC7 | Bricks et al. ^[23] |
| Lung | Toxicity / Drug Testing | Modeling disease functions through a chip undergoing cyclic mechanical strain | Human alveolar epithelial/microvasc ular endothelial cells | Huh et al. ^[27] |
| | | Cellular response and resistance to anticancer drug testing | SK-MES-1 | Siyan et al. ^[32] |
| | | Modeling the nasal epithelium for formaldehyde toxicity testing | NIH/3T3 and hNESPC | Wang et al. ^[34] |
| | Functio nal analysis | Representing pulmonary diseases through propogating liquid plugs | SAEC | Huh et al. [25] |
| | | Analysis of the role of surfactants in liquid plug injury | A549, ATCC | Tavana et al. ^[26] |
| | | Testing the transport properties with physiological "breathing" chip design | Human alveolar epithelial/microvasc ular endothelial cells | Huh et al. [7] |
| | | Observing cellular injury through both solid and fluid mechanical stress | A549, AEC | Douville et al. ^[28] |
| | | Producing suitable levels of gas transfer for artificial lung applications | N/A | Kniazeva et al. ^[29] |
| | | Gaseous exchange in vascular network through creation of free- standing membranes | N/A | Sreenivas an et al. [31] |
| | | Optimizing flow and gaseous exchange through use of a vascular scaffold | N/A | Hoganson et al. ^[30] |

| Intest | Toxicity | μCCA model to study GI tract and | Caco-2 and | Mahler et |
|------------|-------------------------------|--|------------|---|
| ine | / Drug Testing | predict drug toxicity | HepG2/C3A | al. ^[36] |
| | | Testing drug permeability in the intestinal epithelial cell membrane through use of microhole trapping | Caco-2 | Yeon et al. ^[44] |
| | Functio nal analysis | Use of hydrogels as a platform for cultivated cells in a GI tract design | Caco-2 | Sung et al. ^[38] |
| | | Functional model for potential integration in a body-on-a-chip design | Caco-2 | Esch et al. ^[37a] |
| | | Compound analysis through pH control with respect to GI tract activity | N/A | Morimot o et al. ^[37b] |
| | | Mimicking the function of mucus secretion in the stomach | N/A | Li et al. [37c] |
| | | Characteristing flow and transport properties of the instines using a villi scaffold | Caco-2 | Kim et al. ^[37d] |
| | | Modeling lipid digestion in various gastrointestinal conditions | N/A | Marze et al. ^[37e] |
| | | Analyzing signals through bacteria- cell interaction in GI tract | HeLa S3 | Kim et al. [39] |
| | | Utilizing mechanical stress and microbes in a gut-on-a-chip | Caco-2 | Kim et al. [40] |
| | | Generation of 3D intestinal villi through introduction of mechanical stress | Caco-2 | Kim et al. [41] |
| | | Use of polarized cells to create microenvironment suited for long- term perfusion | Caco-2 | Kimura et al. ^[42] |
| | | Testing the permeation abilities and intestinal absorption through microfluidics | Caco-2 | lmura et al. ^[43] |
| Kidne y | Toxicity / Drug Testing | Testing the effects of drugs on the profliferation of a dynamic kidney microfluidic chip | MDCK | Baudoin et al. ^[47] |

| | | Exposure to fluid flow to create functionality and measure nephrotoxicity activity | Human kidney proximal tubular epithelial cells | Jang et al. ^[50] |
|-------|----------------------------|--|--|---|
| | Functio nal analysis | Using optical vortices to enhance the functions of a blood cleaner-on- a-chip | N/A | Suwanpa yak et al. ^[46a] |
| | | Fabricating a nanofiber membrane for filtration in a microfluidic design | N/A | Lee et al. [46b] |
| | | Analyzing the gene and protein expression in MDCK cells | MDCK | Snouber et al. ^[46c] |
| | | Role of patterned membrane in renal chip function | HK-2 and RPTEC | Frohlich et al. ^[46d] |
| | | Use of adipose-derived stem cells in enhacing renal properties and functions | MDCK and CG-ASC | Huang et al. ^[46e] |
| | | Utilization of fluid shear stress to enhance renal functions | IMCD | Jang et al. ^[48] |
| | | Collecting duct-on-a-chip to investigate the effects of changes within a renal environment | IMCD | Jang et al. ^[49] |
| | | MTMD capable of utilizing fluid shear stress and topographical patterns | НК-2 | Frohlich et al. ^[51] |
| | | Using TEER measurements to analyze a working kidney bioreactor under fluid shear stress conditions | HREC and MDCK | Ferrell et al. ^[52] |
| | | Analyzing filtration for mass transfer capabilities modeling a glomerular unit | N/A | Ould-Dris et al. ^[53] |
| | | Investigation of the properties of mass transfer and drug transport in MDCK cells | MDCK | Ramello et al. ^[54] |
| Heart | Functio nal analysis | Studying the contraction of a single cardiomyocyte | Harvested rabbit heart tissue | Li et al. ^[57a] |
| | | Measurements conducted through electrode array analyzing a functioning cardiomyocyte | Harvested rabbit ventricular myocytes | Cheng et al. ^[57b] |
| | | Effects of myocardial injury in a micropillar array environment | H9C2 | Ren et al. |

| | | Reconstituting Barth's syndrome through a functional heart-on-a-chip | iPSC-CM | Wang et al. ^[57d] |
|----------------------|-------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|--|
| | | Studying the functions of skeletal myoblasts for myocardial injury | H9C2 and L6 myoblasts | He et al. ^[57e] |
| | | Replicating physical loading in the left ventricle through a µCCCM | H9C2 | Giridhara n et al. ^[58] |
| | | Fabrication of micro spherical pump made from cardiomyocytes | Rat cardiomyocyte cells | Tanaka et al. ^[60] |
| | | TSM sensor for acoustic wave analysis of cardiomyocyte contractions | Rat ventricular cardiomyocytes | Li et al. [61] |
| | | SVF method for organ tissue analysis | Chick heart | Owaki et al. ^[62] |
| Vasc ulatu re | Functio nal analysis | Implantable microfluidic device for formation of vasculature | hEPC | Kim et al. ^[64a] |
| | | Studying the effects of the architecture in the vasculature through ECM distribution | HUVEC | Baker et al. ^[64b] |
| | | Creation of vasculature network through material fracture | N/A | Huang et al. ^[64c] |
| | | Establishing vasculature transport for use in multi-organ applciations | HDMEC | Schimek et al. ^[64d] |
| | | Creating diffusive vasculature network from hydrogel | pHUVEC | Mu et al. ^[64e] |
| | | Using TEMS to replicate vasculature environment | HUVEC, hCMEC/D3, BT-474/PC3 | Tourovsk aia et al. ^[64f] |
| | | Bifurcating microchannel vasculature network with circular cross-sections | HUVEC | Borenstei n et al. ^[65] |
| | | Effects of shear stress, monocyte-EC adhesion, and monocyte transmigration on a vasculature system | PAEC, RAW264.7, THP-1 | Srigunapa lan et al. ^[66] |
| Bone Marr ow | Toxicity / Drug Testing | Radiation-induced toxicity effects on a bone marrow-on-a-chip | hematopoietic and adipocyte cells | Torisawa et al. ^[67] |
| Canc er/Tu mor | Toxicity / Drug Testing | Studying chemotherapy resistance using a lung cancer microfluidic model | SPCA1 | Zhang et al. ^[71a] |

| | | Effects of anticancer drugs on lung and stromal cells | SPCA1 and HFL1 | Xu et al. [71b] |
|-------|-------------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| | | Analysis of CTCs in multiple lung cancer cell lines | A459, SK-MES-1, and H446 | Huang et al. ^[71c] |
| | | Analysis of chemotherapy resistance and inhibitors for lung cancer model | SPCA1 | Meng et al. ^[71d] |
| | | Observing the effects of various drugs on breast cancer cells through a droplet microfluidic device | MDC-MB-231 | Gong et al. ^[72d] |
| | Functio nal analysis | MMICH platform for diagnosis of breast cancer | AU-565, SK-BR-3, HCC70, and MCF-7 | Kim et al. ^[72a] |
| | | Detection of breast cancer recurrence using PDMAEMA | N/A | Chen et al. ^[72b] |
| | | Modeling the transition from DCIS to IDC for breast cancer analysis | MCF-DCIS and HMF | Sung et al. ^[72c] |
| | | CTC capture and analysis for prostate cancer in a GEDI device | U937, PC-3, LNCaP, and C4-2 | Kirby et al. ^[73a] |
| | | EIS biosensor for prostate cancer screening | N/A | Chiriacò et al ^[73b] |
| | | Separation of prostate cancer cells from white blood cells using acoustophoresis | DU145, PC3, LNCaP | Augustss on et al. [73c] |
| | | Recreating prostate cancer microenvironment using fluid shear stress | PC-3 | Liu et al. ^[73d] |
| | | Analysis of CTC in pancreatic cancer cell line | MCF-7, Hs578T, and SW620 | Kamande et al. ^[74] |
| | | Using an MCS for characterization of brain cancer cells | A172, 1321N1, L0329, and L0367 | Khan et al. ^[75] |
| | | Replicating the functionalities of breast cancer cells ina vasculature system | HDMEC and MDA- MB-231 | Song et al. ^[76] |
| | | Observing the effects of breast cancer cells within a bone structure microenvironment | HUVEC, hBM-MSC, and MDA-MB-231 | Bersini et al. ^[8] |
| | | Extravasation of cancer cells through an endothelial barrier | hMVEC and MDA- MB-231 | Jeon et al. ^[77] |
| Brain | Toxicity / Drug Testing | Drug permeability testing through the BBB | HUVEC | Yeon et al. ^[68c] |

| | Functio nal analysis | Creation and utilization of a SyM- BBB to monitor tight junctions and permeability | RBE4 | Prabhaka rpandian et al. ^[68a] |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|--|---|---|
| | | Analysis of µBBB device to replicate permeability and cell characteristics | b.END3 and C8D1A | Booth et al. ^[68b] |
| | | Integrating collagen into BBB model capable of permeability and shear stress analysis | Endothelial cell, pericyte, and astroglia | Shibata et al. ^[68d] |
| | | Use of TEER measurements to test functionality of BBB-on-a-chip | hCMEC/D3 | Griep et al. ^[69] |
| Splee n | Functio nal analysis | Fast-flow/Slow-flow device for testing deformability of RBC in the spleen model | N/A | Rigat- Brugarola s et al. ^[70] |
| Multi ple Orga ns | Toxicity / Drug Testing | Multi-cell design for monitoring glucose concentration in the presense of various metabolites | Omental adipose tissue, HUVEC, and HepG2 | lori et al. ^[78b] |
| | | Monitoring the multi-organ implications from drug toxicity testing | C3A, A549, HK-2, and HPA | Zhang et al. ^[81] |
| | | Testing toxicity effects on multi-cell device complete with a hydrogel structural microenvironment | HCT-116, GepG2/C3A, and Kasumi-1 | Sung et al. ^[82b] |
| | | μCCA based on PK-PD model to predict pharmacological effects of a drug | HCT-116, GepG2/C3A, and Kasumi-1 | Sung et al. ^[83] |
| | Functio nal analysis | Hanging drop technique for fabrication of multi-cell device | HCT-116 eGFP and rLiMT | Frey et al. ^[78a] |

2.5 Conclusions

Organ-on-a-chip systems are still a relatively new area of research, but have shown the potential to produce successful results with few caveats. For this reason, it is important to be able to expand the horizon with these systems and explore new ideas within this area. In a broader sense, this research promotes the exploration of cheap, reliable alternatives to other forms of drug testing. Organ-on-a-chip designs have the potential to be mass produced and

use few amounts of materials. This would have the potential of being used universally, including underdeveloped countries.

However, there are still steps needed to be taken in order to reach this level of reliability. While most tests have shown the ability to mimic organ functions and reactions, these are still not at the level to be a successful alternative to *in vivo* studies. Issues with inducing all the potential mechanical forces, achieving respectable permeation rates, producing efficient flow through polymer compartments, and recreating the microscale ecosystem of organisms, cells, bacteria that are relevant to the function of the organs, are considerations that require continued improvement. Additionally, single organ studies neglect to consider the implications that other organs within the same flow would have on that organ. Body-on-a-chip studies show great promise in this respect, but issues with components positively effecting one culture and negatively affecting another must be corrected. Methods like creating a gelatin microsphere for time-release drugs or providing a common medium to the system have shown promise as a way to integrate multiple cell cultures.

Through this review, individual organs are analyzed, with attention brought to their design, materials, objectives, and results. Additionally, multi-organ systems are discussed, with a sample model of a "body-on-a-chip" created using designs mentioned in this paper. While it may not be as straightforward as simply connecting the designs with one another, this construction of a body-on-a-chip shows that the ability to create a successful body-on-a-chip is not inconceivable with successful designs of individual organs.

73

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CHAPTER 3

DESIGN AND FABRICATION

3.1 Design Considerations

In determining the size and geometry of the design, there are two important considerations that will greatly affect the ability of the chip to diffuse properly: crosssectional geometry and flow path.

In looking at the cross-sectional geometry, many different shapes were considered. Sharp et al.⁴ looked at how the cross-sectional geometry would affect the Reynolds number and velocity of the flow. A summary of the results can be seen in **Table 1**. For each given cross-sectional geometry, the Reynolds number (given in terms of the friction factor) and the ratio of maximum fluid velocity to bulk velocity were analyzed, where f is the friction factor, Re is the Reynolds number, u_{max} is the maximum fluid velocity, and u_B is the bulk velocity As part of the analysis of fully developed flow through these geometries, Sharp et al. concluded that the geometry plays a relatively small role in controlling the Reynolds number and velocity through the microchannels.

However, the flow velocity and Reynolds number aren't the only relevant parameters that will determine the channel design. Another parameter that needs to be considered when designing the channel is the particle transport properties.

In considering particle transport, it is important to bring the particles close to the area of interaction. For the organ-on-a-chip, this would be the membrane that is positioned between the channels.

A rectangular cross-section was chosen for two reasons. First, in inertial focusing

| Cross Section | f Re | u_{max}/u_B |
|----------------------------|---|---|
| D=2a | 64 | 2.000 |
| z d 2a 2a | 56.92 | 2.0962 |
| 2b 2a α=b/a | $\begin{array}{l} 96[1 - 1.3553\alpha + 1.9467\alpha^2 \\ - 1.7012\alpha^3 + 0.9564\alpha^4 \\ - 0.2537\alpha^5] \end{array}$ | _ |
| $\alpha \longrightarrow 0$ | 96 | 1.5000 |
| 60° | 60 | _ |
| 2b | 2b/2a 4.000 55.66 2.000 55.22 1.000 56.60 0.500 62.77 0.250 72.20 | 2.181 2.162 2.119 1.969 1.766 |
| 2a 2b | 1.000 56.15 | 2.137 |

Table 2. Various cross-sectional geometries and their resulting parameters.⁴

applications, laminar flow in rectangular cross-sections typically group particles in two distinct pockets located close to the walls of the longer sides, due to both the Reynolds number and the particle confinement ratio.⁵ Bringing particles closer to the wall adjacent to the membrane will provide the system with a greater percentage of diffusion from one

channel to another. A visual representation of this can be seen in **Figure 14**. Second, the simplicity of a rectangular channel allows for straight walls, containing no bends, which can be easily manufactured by a variety of methods.



Figure 14. The effect of cross-sectional geometry in particle distribution in square and rectangular ducts with $a_p/D_h \ge 0.07$, where a_p is the diameter of the particle and D_h is the hydraulic diameter of the microchannel. The particle distribution is shown as the Reynolds number increases from 5 (bottom) to 20 (middle) to 100 (top).⁵

While the Reynolds number and particle confinement ratio are responsible for particle distribution in straight channels, it is also important to consider whether curvature in the flow path would be beneficial for the design. This property is controlled by the Dean flow. Martel et al.⁶ analyzed the role of the Dean flow in a rectangular cross-sectional duct. The studies looked at not only how the channel curvature controlled the particle distribution, but also

how the size of the particles were affected by the degree of curvature. The results can be seen in **Figure 15**.



Figure 15. The effect of curvature on particles of various sizes in a duct with a rectangular cross-section. The particles have a particle confinement ratio of: $\lambda_{Blue} = 0.066$, $\lambda_{Green} = 0.149$, and $\lambda_{Red} = 0.225$. The curvature ratio is displayed (δ) for 4 different curvatures (a-d). The Reynolds number is given as Re_c = 419.⁶

From this, it is clear that curvature along the lateral position will not be of benefit to this project, and curvature along the vertical position would prove to be too complex from a manufacturing standpoint. Therefore, in the area of diffusive interaction, a straight channel will be the most beneficial.

From these considerations, the channel layout was created. **Figure 16**. shows a diagram displaying this layout. The inlets and outlets were designed such that they would be angled away from the other channel, therefore giving sufficient space to allow for connective tubing to be attached. Dimension sizes were chosen to be physiologically similar to its *in vivo* counterparts.



Figure 16. Channel layout of the placenta-on-a-chip, displaying an (a) aerial view of the channels and a (b) cross-sectional view of the overlapping midsection of the channels. In this design, red corresponds to the fetal stream and blue corresponds to the maternal stream. The green area represents the nanoporous membrane separating the channels.

3.2 PMMA fabrication

Initially, Polymethyl Methacrylate (PMMA) was chosen to be the material used for constructing the layers containing the microchannels, due to the fact that it is biocompatible, allowing it to be used in cell culture applications, and clear, allowing the interaction sight located between the layers to be seen through a microscope.

The process of making the channels on PMMA consisted of using a micromilling technique. Modelling software (SolidWorks, USA) was first used to design the prototype

channel layout. Once the layout was configured, the spatial coordinates were implemented into a G-code, which was able to carve out the channel path with the dimensions specified earlier.

3.3 Soft lithography

The master mold was created using a soft lithography technique on a silicon wafer (Silicon Sense, Boise, ID). In this technique, the wafer was initially cleaned and placed into a plasma cleaner (Femto Science, South Korea) for 5 minutes. Then, the wafer was spin-coated with SU-8 50 negative photoresist (MicroChem, USA) to achieve a film thickness of 100 μ m. A two step soft bake was then applied to the wafer; 10 minutes at 65 °C followed by 30 minutes at 95 °C. The wafer is then exposed to UV radiation from a photolithography machine (Kaon Tech, South Korea). The SU-8 is designed to be highly sensitive in this specific range of radiation (350-400 nm) and any direct UV exposure leads to cross-linking of the material. Therefore, a mask containing a clear layout of the channels was place over the wafer so that the channel layout becomes the only thing exposed to UV directly. An exposure energy of roughly 480 mJ/cm² was then applied to the chip. A two step post exposure bake (PEB) was then applied to the wafer afterwards; 1 minute at 65 °C followed by 10 minutes at 95 °C. Afterwards, the wafer was immersed in a SU-8 Developer solution (MicroChem, USA). At this stage, the SU-8 that was not cross-linked from UV exposure is dissolved, leaving only the negative of the channel layout. Once the SU-8 is properly dissolved, the wafer is then rinsed and dried.

3.4 PDMS fabrication

PDMS was used as the material of the layers containing microfluidic channels. PDMS was created by mixing prepolymer (Dow Corning, USA) and curing agent (Dow Corning, USA) at a 10:1 w/w ratio. The silicon wafer master mold described previously was used as the template for the PDMS. The resulting height and width of the channels were 100 µm and 400 µm, respectively. For the top layer, PDMS was poured into the master mold and sealed in a vacuum chamber for 20 minutes to release any trapped bubbles within the PDMS. Any additional bubbles on the surface were removed and the wafer was heated at 95 °C for 30 minutes. Once solidified, the individual layers were removed from the mold and 1 mm inlet/outlet holes were punched out. For the bottom layer, PDMS was spin-coated onto the wafer at 300 rpm for 30 seconds, followed by 10 rpm for 10 seconds. Bubbles on the surface were removed and the wafer was heated at 95 °C for 10 minutes. Once the PDMS solidified, the layer was irreversibly bonded to a 25mm x 40mm microscope cover glass slide. This allowed the channels to be located close in proximity to the glass slide, making it easier to observe through an inverted microscope.

3.5 Membrane/Vitrified Collagen

A nanoporous (0.4 µm diameter pores) PETE membrane was placed between the two PDMS layers. The PETE membrane was obtained by cutting the membrane from a Transwell® well plate with membrane insert (Corning Incorporated, USA).

In a process known as collagen vitrification, a collagen gel solution can be kept dormant in a dried state, and then reactivated and gellified again once it is wetted. The

85

collagen solution was composed of 11 mg/ml rat tail collagen 1 (BD Biosciences, USA), deionized water, and Dulbecco's Modified Eagle Medium (DMEM, HyClone, USA) supplemented with 10% fetal bovine serum (FBS) and 100 units/ml penicillin/streptomycin. When mixing, all components were kept on ice to prevent premature gelation. The solution consisted of equal parts DMEM and collagen/de-ionized water, with a final collagen concentration of 2.5 mg/ml.

The collagen solution was prepared and allowed to dry on the membrane for 24 hours. Once dried, the top and bottom layers of PDMS were treated in the plasma cleaner and the membrane was positioned over the midsection of the channels before bonding.

3.6 References

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CHAPTER 4

CELL CULTURE

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will briefly go over the general process used for bringing up, maintaining, splitting, and refreezing cell lines in this project. Cell culture processes were in accordance to standard practices set by the original manufacturers⁷.

4.2 Bringing up original cell lines

Vials containing the original cell lines were kept in deep freeze in liquid nitrogen tanks (-200°C). Once ready, they were quickly thawed in a water bath until only a sliver of ice was left in the vial. While this process occurs, roughly 10ml of media is brought into a T-75 flask and is kept in an incubator at 37°C and 5% CO₂ for 20 minutes. Once the vial is ready, the contents are brought into the T-75 flask containing the pertinent media. From there, the flask in kept in the incubator.

4.3 Maintaining cell lines

Cells in T-75 flasks are checked daily and refreshed with new media periodically. When new media is introduced into the flask, it is first warmed up in a water bath kept at 37°C for 20 minutes before being brought into the flask. Discarded media is put into a waste conical tube and mixed with at least equal parts ethanol. This mixture is left for at least 24 hours before being properly disposed. Once refreshed, the flask is placed back in the incubator.

4.4 Splitting cell lines

Splitting is the process in which cells are removed from their current flasks and brought into one or several new flasks. In this process, the original media is first disposed (using the same disposal processes as mentioned in the previous section). The wall of the flask containing cells is then rinsed using several ml of cell stripping agent (such as Trypsin). After rinsing, the cell stripping agent is immediately disposed. Next, 1ml of cell stripping agent is added into the flask, and is allowed to settle on the bottom of the flask (side containing cells). During this time, cells are slowly stripped away from the bottom of the flask and become suspended in the media. Once most of the cells are stripped from the flask wall, the contents of the flask are then collected in a 15ml conical tube. Additionally media is added to the tube in order for the liquid to be at exactly 10ml. Then, the tube is brought to a centrifuge (Gizmo Supply Electric Centrifuge 800-1, Gizmo Supply Co., U.S.) and balanced using another tube containing the same amount of liquid. The needed relative centrifugal force (RCF) and centrifugation time varies depending on the cell line. To convert between RCF and revolutions per minute (RPM), the following equation becomes important

$$RCF = 11.18 \times r \times \left(\frac{Q}{1000}\right)^2$$

where RCF is relative centrifugal force expressed as a factor of g, r is the radius from the center of the rotor to the end of the conical tube, and Q is the revolutions per minute. After centrifugation, the liquid solution is disposed and the leftover pellet of cells is resuspended in fresh media and brought into a new flask (or flasks). Additional media is then added to the flask until the desired amount is obtained.

88

4.5 Refreezing cell lines

Freezing down cells after sufficient splitting is a good way of maintaining a good supply of cells for long term research. When freezing, a freeze media must first be created. This is typically done using 10% DMSO along with 90% complete media. Cells are then stripped and centrifuged (as described previously), with the leftover pellet being resuspended in the new freeze media. After resuspension, roughly 1ml is introduced into each freezing vial. There is some flexibility in the amount of cells required for each vial, but a sufficient amount of cells are needed into to restart the vial once the time comes for thawing. Once the freezing vials are filled, they are stored in a -80°C freezer overnight, then brought down in a liquid nitrogen tank the following day.

4.6 Controlling cell density

Before introducing cells into the chip, it is important to be able to know the density of the cells within the media. To do this requires obtaining a pellet of cells, through the centrifugation processes mentioned in Section 4.4. Once a pellet is formed and the media solution is discarded, a small amount of fresh media is added (between 50-300µl depending on the size of the pellet). The cells are then resuspended in this media until the concentration is uniform. Next, 10µl of the cells are mixed with 40µl of Trypan Blue Stain (0.4%) (Gibco, U.S.). Then, 10µl of this new mixture is obtained and then introduced into a hemocytometer (LW Scientific, U.S.) and observed under a microscope. The purpose of the hemocytometer is to produce an easy-to-see grid of known size, so that a cell count can result in an estimate of the cell density. When looking through at a hemocytometer through a microscope, a grid of 25 squares (5 x 5), each containing their own 25 squares, can be seen in the center.

89

To find the cell density, the number of visible cells in this grid must first be counted. To account for the 1:5 ratio of dilution from adding Trypan Blue, the number of counted cells must be multiplied by 5. To scale it into terms of cells per ml, that count number must then be multiplied by 10⁴. For example, if a cell count of 40 was observed within the hemocytometer grid, the resulting cell density would be considered 2 million cells/ml.

In order to change the density to a desirable value, the following equation must be considered:

$$\frac{V_1}{V_2} = \frac{\rho_1}{\rho_2}$$

where V_1 and ρ_1 are the initial volume of the cell solution and initial cell density, respectively, and V_2 is the volume needed to obtain the desired cell density, ρ_2 . When looking to change the cell density, it is important to note that V_2 must be greater than V_1 . That is, when changing the cell density, it is far easier to add more media to dilute the solution than to take media away from the solution. For example, if the original cell density was 2 million/ml and the initial volume of the solution was 300µl, and the desired cell density was 5 million/ml, solving for V_2 would yield a needed volume of 750µl. In other words, 450µl would need to be added to the solution.

4.7 References

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CHAPTER 5

PRELIMINARY TESTING OF THE DESIGN ON A LIVER-ON-A-CHIP PLATFORM

5.1 Introduction

In the human body, the liver is responsible for regulating protein and glucose intake, removing and breaking down toxins, and processing nutrients in the bloodstream. The liver is unique in that it is mostly composed of one type of cell. These cells are known as hepatocyte cells, and they play a large role in the functionality of the liver⁸. Understandably, when growing these cells *in vitro*, these cells show an affinity for clumping together. In designing an *in vitro* liver, researchers have utilized these unique characteristics when creating their respective liver-on-a-chip platforms⁹.

This chapter outlines a supplemental project in which the placenta-on-a-chip channel layout designed from the previous chapter (using PDMS) was tested on a liver-on-a-chip platform. Both a healthy liver model and a model of the liver undergoing ethanol-induced toxicity were analyzed, in the hopes that this technology could map both ideal and non-ideal conditions.

5.2 Cell Culture

HUVECs were cultured in Endothelial Growth Medium (EGM-2 MV, Lonza). HepG2 cells were cultured in DMEM supplemented with 10% FBS and 100 units/ml penicillin/streptomycin. Both cell lines were kept in an incubator providing 37 °C and 5% CO₂.

5.3 Cell Integration into Chip

Before cell loading, the tubing and syringes were sterilized with 70% isopropyl alcohol, followed by 20 minutes of UV radiation. Once the device was set up, the cells were stripped from their Petri dishes and concentrated to their intended densities. The density of HUVECs was brought to 5 x 10^6 cells/ml and the density of HepG2 was brought to 1.5×10^6 cells/ml. In order to make the HepG2 cells more physiologically representative, a fibrin gel was made in order to suspend the cells. The fibrin solution consisted of 20 mg of Fibrinogen from bovine plasma (Sigma-Aldrich, USA) mixed with 2 ml of phosphate buffered saline (PBS). The HepG2 was suspended in a fibrin gel solution at a volume ratio of 1:3, followed by 1 µl of Trombin. This mixture was then injected directly into the bottom channel and seeded at 1.5×10^6 cells/ml. This gave the cells a 3D environment more similar to the bulk of hepatocyte cells seen *in vivo*. The HUVEC cells were injected into the top channel and seeded at 5×10^6 cells/ml. Flow was introduced into the top channel containing HUVEC cells

5.4 Construction of a liver-on-a-chip

Twelve chips were designed; 6 were incubated for 4 hours and the other six were incubated for 6 hours after the introduction of cells. Among these groups of six, 4 were connected to the syringe pump and had continuous flow, while the other two remained static. Additionally, between the dynamic and static flow groups, each had one chip designed without a collagen coating on the membrane. Thus, the effects of different variables on the system could be observed. **Figure 17.** shows the layout of this design.



Figure 17. Experimental set-up for dynamic flow through chips under various conditions. Flow is introduced through the use of a syringe pump. From the syringe, the medium enters the chip through the HUVEC inlet hole, and exits through the outlet. The outlet flow is then delivered into a waste vial. Design allows for multiple chips to be handled simultaneously.

As indicated by Figure 18., once the cells were injected into the channel, they

showed good density and were seeded appropriately.



Figure 18. Image of cells after introduction into the chip. Note that the channel arriving from the upper left of the figure contains the smaller, oblong HUVEC cells, while the lower channel contains the bulkier and more sparely spaced HepG2 cells. The channel width is set at 400 μ m

5.5 Maintenance of a liver-on-a-chip

Maintenance proved to be a difficult task in this design. The small cross-section of the channel made even smaller flow rates detrimental to the cells. Initial flow rate was 60 μ l/hr. Results showed a massive decrease in the HUVEC cell population after 24 hours. The system was then adjusted to 6 μ l/hr and run for 72 hours.

5.6 Introduction of ethanol-induced toxicity

Once cells were maintaining in their dynamic state for 72 hours, ethanol at various concentrations was introduced into the chip. The ethanol concentrations were tested at 0 mmol/l, 17.4 mmol/l, 52.1 mmol/l, and 104 mmol/l. This corresponds to a BAC of 0, 0.08, 0.24, and 0.48 percent by volume, respectively. The ethanol was introduced in both the 4 and 6 hour trials in chips that contained the collagen membrane and cells. Flow rates remained unchanged and the system was run for 24 hours.

After 24 hours, a live/dead staining method was implemented, in which dead cells are stained in red and live cells are stained in green. The staining solution consisted of 2ml of PBS, 4µl of red-fluorescent ethidium homodimer 1 solution (EthD-1), 1µl of greenfluorescent calcein-AM, (Sigma-Aldrich, USA), and 0.6 µl of Hoechst.

Results were consistent with what was expected for the trial. Cells contained low viability once flow was induced. The cells that remained were pushed towards the wall and any viability that remained was killed off by the ethanol. **Figure. 19.** displays an example of one of the fluorescent images taken, showing minimal cell adherence.

Future steps in testing the adherence capabilities as a function of adherence time and flow rate to improve overall viabilities can prove to be vital for ethanol trials, where degradation of cell viability is a concern.



Figure 19. DAPI image of cells. Cells display low viability and density.

5.7 References

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CHAPTER 6

PLACENTA-ON-A-CHIP

6.1 Introduction

Organ-on-a-chip technology is a relatively new field in which the properties of microfluidics are utilized within a biomimetic cell culture model. They show promise as a novel platform in drug testing and toxicology applications due to several key advantages. Their large surface area-to-volume ratio ensure that diffusive forces dominate over bulk forces.

This has led to a vast increase in popularity over the recent years, as researchers have found them to be a more appealing alternative to other drug testing methods. From this, researchers have split into subsects that focus on a specific organ, including the: lungs, liver, intestines, heart, vasculature, and many others.

Contrary to this, however, research regarding a "placenta-on-a-chip" have been few and far between. Miura et al.¹⁰ created a placenta-on-a-chip with cells grown on both sides of a collagen vitrigel membrane. Results showed that it was capable of forming confluent cell layers and transcellular transport of compounds through the membrane. Recently, Lee et al.¹¹ created a placenta-on-a-chip using JEG-3 trophoblast cells as their epithelial cell layer. Their device had no membrane, but instead used a vitrified collagen to create the barrier separating their channels. Once the device was set up, they measured the glucose transfer capabilities of the device and monitored the cell growth and viability during dynamic trials.

In the body, the placenta is responsible for nutrient, waste, and gas exchange between the mother and fetus, as well as providing other needs such as endocrine function and important antibodies¹². The placental barrier refers to the barrier that separates the maternal blood from the fetal blood. In humans, this barrier is composed of 3 main layers: the vascular endothelium, the extracellular matrix (ECM), and the trophoblast (epithelium). The layout of the placenta, with specific focus on the placental barrier, can be seen in **Figure 20**.

The formation of this barrier starts with the recruiting of trophoblast cells from the uterus. These cells invade the intervillous space and attach to one another to form the chorionic villi. There are two types of trophoblasts prevalent in the placenta: cytotrophoblast and syncytiotrophoblast. The cytotrophoblasts are mononuclear and are responsible for breaking down ECM within the chorionic villi to make the space that will eventually be taken over by the umbilical blood vessels. After completing their function, they are capable of fusing together to form a syncytrotrophoblast layer. This lies in the outermost layer of the chorionic villi and is in contact with the maternal blood, therefore making it extremely important in nutrient/waste exchange applications.

The middle layer of the barrier is composed of the extracellular matrix. This matrix is comprised of the "fluff" separating the endothelial and epithelial layers. The ECM provides the cell layers with support, separation, and crosstalk (either cell-cell or cell-ECM).

As stated previously, once the chorionic villi are hollowed out from the cytotrophoblasts, the fetal blood vessels are able to work their way inside of them. Therefore, when considering the barrier between bloodstreams, the layer that will be in contact with the fetal blood is the vascular endothelium of these blood vessels. The vascular endothelium is responsible for controlling particle transfer through the membrane, controlling the blood pressure, and aiding in the repair of damaged tissue.

99

In this work, these three layers are approximated on a microfluidic organ-on-a-chip platform to create a "placenta-on-a-chip.' Human umbilical vein endothelial cells are used to represent the vascular endothelium, BeWo choriocarcinoma cells are used to represent the trophoblast, and a type 1 collagen solution overlaying a nanoporous polyethylene terephthalate (PETE) membrane is used to represent the ECM.



Figure 20. Development of the fetus through use of the placenta and the placental barrier.

6.2 Materials and methods

In determining the size and geometry of the design, there are two important considerations that will greatly affect the ability of the chip to diffuse properly: cross-sectional geometry and flow path.
In looking at the cross-sectional geometry, many different shapes were considered. Sharp et al.⁴ looked at how the cross-sectional geometry would affect the Reynolds number and velocity of the flow. For each given cross-sectional geometry, the Reynolds number (given in terms of the friction factor) and the ratio of maximum fluid velocity to bulk velocity were analyzed. As part of the analysis of fully developed flow through these geometries, Sharp et al. concluded that the geometry plays a relatively small role in controlling the Reynolds number and velocity through the microchannels.

However, the flow velocity and Reynolds number aren't the only relevant parameters that will determine the channel design. Another parameter that needs to be considered when designing the channel is the particle transport properties.

In considering particle transport, it is important to bring the particles close to the area of interaction. For the organ-on-a-chip, this would be the membrane that is positioned between the channels.

A rectangular cross-section was chosen for two reasons. First, in inertial focusing applications, laminar flow in rectangular cross-sections typically group particles in two distinct pockets located close to the walls of the longer sides, due to both the Reynolds number and the particle confinement ratio.⁵ Bringing particles closer to the wall adjacent to the membrane will provide the system with a greater percentage of diffusion from one channel to another. Second, the simplicity of a rectangular channel allows for straight walls, containing no bends, which can be easily manufactured by a variety of methods.

While the Reynolds number and particle confinement ratio are responsible for particle distribution in straight channels, it is also important to consider whether curvature in the flow path would be beneficial for the design. This property is controlled by the Dean flow. Martel

et al.⁶ analyzed the role of the Dean flow in a rectangular cross-sectional duct. The studies looked at not only how the channel curvature controlled the particle distribution, but also how the size of the particles were affected by the degree of curvature.

From this, it is clear that curvature along the lateral position will not be of benefit to this project, and curvature along the vertical position would prove to be too complex from a manufacturing standpoint. Therefore, in the area of diffusive interaction, a straight channel will be the most beneficial.

From these considerations, the channel layout was created. **Figure 21**. shows a diagram displaying this layout. The inlets and outlets were designed such that they would be angled away from the other channel, therefore giving sufficient space to allow for connective tubing to be attached. Dimension sizes were chosen to be physiologically similar to its *in vivo* counterparts.



Figure 21. Channel layout of the placenta-on-a-chip, displaying an (a) aerial view of the channels and a (b) cross-sectional view of the overlapping midsection of the channels. In this design, red corresponds to the fetal stream and blue corresponds to the maternal stream. The green area represents the nanoporous membrane separating the channels.

Initially, Polymethyl Methacrylate (PMMA) was chosen to be the material used for constructing the layers containing the microchannels, due to the fact that it is biocompatible, allowing it to be used in cell culture applications, and clear, allowing the interaction sight located between the layers to be seen through a microscope.

The process of making the channels on PMMA consisted of using a micromilling technique. Modelling software (SolidWorks, USA) was first used to design the prototype channel layout. Once the layout was configured, the spatial coordinates were implemented into a G-code, which was able to carve out the channel path with the dimensions specified earlier.

Due to issues with stress breaks from the mechanical sealing process involved with PMMA, a PDMS based design was considered and implemented. The master mold was created using a soft lithography technique on a silicon wafer (Silicon Sense, Boise, ID). In this technique, the wafer was initially cleaned and placed into a plasma cleaner (Femto Science, South Korea) for 5 minutes. Then, the wafer was spin-coated with SU-8 50 negative photoresist (MicroChem, USA) to achieve a film thickness of 100 µm. A two step soft bake was then applied to the wafer; 10 minutes at 65 °C followed by 30 minutes at 95 °C. The wafer is then exposed to UV radiation from a photolithography machine (Kaon Tech, South Korea). The SU-8 is designed to be highly sensitive in this specific range of radiation (350-400 nm) and any direct UV exposure leads to cross-linking of the material. Therefore, a mask containing a clear layout of the channels was place over the wafer so that the channel layout becomes the only thing exposed to UV directly. An exposure energy of roughly 480 mJ/cm² was then applied to the chip. A two-step post exposure bake (PEB) was then applied to the wafer afterwards; 1 minute at 65 °C followed by 10 minutes at 95 °C. Afterwards, the wafer was immersed in a SU-8 Developer solution (MicroChem, USA). At this stage, the SU-8 that was not cross-linked from UV exposure is dissolved, leaving only the negative of the channel layout. Once the SU-8 is properly dissolved, the wafer is then rinsed and dried.

PDMS was used as the material of the layers containing microfluidic channels. PDMS was created by mixing prepolymer (Dow Corning, USA) and curing agent (Dow Corning, USA) at a 10:1 w/w ratio. The silicon wafer master mold described previously was used as the template for the PDMS. The resulting height and width of the channels were 100

µm and 400 µm, respectively. For the top layer, PDMS was poured into the master mold and sealed in a vacuum chamber for 20 minutes to release any trapped bubbles within the PDMS. Any additional bubbles on the surface were removed and the wafer was heated at 95 °C for 30 minutes. Once solidified, the individual layers were removed from the mold and 1 mm inlet/outlet holes were punched out. For the bottom layer, PDMS was spin-coated onto the wafer at 300 rpm for 30 seconds, followed by 10 rpm for 10 seconds. Bubbles on the surface were removed and the wafer was heated at 95 °C for 10 minutes. Once the PDMS solidified, the layer was irreversibly bonded to a 25mm x 40mm microscope cover glass slide. This allowed the channels to be located close in proximity to the glass slide, making it easier to observe through an inverted microscope.

A nanoporous (0.4 µm diameter pores) PETE membrane was placed between the two PDMS layers. The PETE membrane was obtained by cutting the membrane from a Transwell® well plate with membrane insert (Corning Incorporated, USA).

In a process known as collagen vitrification, a collagen gel solution can be kept dormant in a dried state, and then reactivated and gellified again once it is wetted. The collagen solution was composed of 11 mg/ml rat tail collagen 1 (BD Biosciences, USA), deionized water, and Dulbecco's Modified Eagle Medium (DMEM, HyClone, USA) supplemented with 10% fetal bovine serum (FBS) and 100 units/ml penicillin/streptomycin. When mixing, all components were kept on ice to prevent premature gelation. The solution consisted of equal parts DMEM and collagen/de-ionized water, with a final collagen concentration of 2.5 mg/ml.

The collagen solution was prepared and allowed to dry on the membrane for 24 hours. Once dried, the top and bottom layers of PDMS were treated in the plasma cleaner and the membrane was positioned over the midsection of the channels before bonding.

The HUVEC cells were chosen to represent the endothelial layer of the device, cultured in an EGM-2 media. The human trophoblast cell line BeWo was chosen to represent the epithelial layer. The media used for the BeWo cells was F-12K, supplemented with 10% FBS.

6.3 Results and discussion

After sterilization of the device through ethanol and UV radiation (as previously described), HUVEC cells were first injected into the top channel of the chip at a seeding density of 5x10⁶ cell/ml. To give the cells sufficient adherence, the chips were brought into an incubator (37°C, 5% CO₂) and left for 12 hours to allow for attachment to the membrane. After sufficient time was given, the BeWo cell line was injected into the bottom channel of the chip at a seeding density of 5x10⁶ cell/ml. Before injection, HUVEC cells were stained with CellTrackerTM Green CMFDA fluorescent dye (Life Technologies, Eugene, OR) and BeWo cells were stained with CellTrackerTM Orange CMRA fluorescent dye (Life Technologies, Eugene, OR). Fluorescent and bright field images taken before media flow can be seen in **Figure 22**. A look through the different filters allows us to key in on the specific cells of interest. For the HUVECs, a green fluorescent protein (GFP) filter is used, and for the BeWo cell line, a red fluorescent protein (RFP) filter is used. The system was observed through an inverted microscope (Axio Observer Z1 Inverted Microscope, Zeiss, Oberkochen, Germany).



Figure 22. Injected HUVEC (green) and BeWo (red) cells before the start of the trial, seen through: A) GFP filter, B) RFP filter, C) Brightfield, and D) GFP + RFP + Brightfield. Scale bar is at 200 μ m.

Once the cells were attached on the membrane within the chip, constant media flow was administered to the chip via syringes containing the cell media positioned on a double syringe pump (Cole-Parmer, Veron Hills, IL). Silicon tubing (HelixMark, Carpinteria, CA) with an inner diameter of 0.04 inches and outer diameter of 0.085 inches was used to connect the syringes to the inlets of the chip. Tubing was also connected to the outputs of the chip, which directed the media out of the chip to be collected, either as waste or for further analysis. The flow rate used for both channels in this system was 6 µl/hr. Long-term maintenance studies were performed on the chips once it was shown that the cells were able to adhere to the membrane and get nourishment from the media flow. The system was allowed to flow for 5 days. Afterwards, the system was checked under the same filters. **Figure 23** shows the resulting images.



Figure 23. Injected HUVEC (green) and BeWo (red) cells after 5 days of flow, seen through: A) GFP filter, B) RFP filter, C) Brightfield, and D) GFP + RFP + Brightfield. Scale bar is at 200 μ m.

6.4 Conclusion

This technique shows how these pertinent cell lines can be introduced into a

microfluidic design in order to create a biomimetic microsystem resembling the placenta.

Starting with the basic microfluidic phenomena that control particle density and dispersion, a model was designed the exploit these phenomena in order to create a drug testing platform resembling the placenta. Using this platform, cells were chosen based on their physiological traits and were successfully introduced into the device. This device was then able to be monitored for a significantly long term.

Cells shown after long term maintenance showed some migration, specifically towards the walls of the channels. This may be due to insufficient adherence of the cells or due to the strength of the flow in the channels. The decrease in cell density would suggest the latter, however, cells shown in **Figure 22** display weak structural integrity that would suggest that they aren't firmly attached to the membrane. These aspects can be further inspected to improve the functionality of the device.

With the successful integration of cells into the microfluidic device, more avenues for analysis can be considered. One aspect to consider is the measurement of markers specific to the placenta. Protein-expressing markers provide a good indication of how well the system is operating and how similar it is to the *in vivo* environment. For example, E-cadherin, which is known for its role in cell-cell adhesion and epithelial cell signaling, can be found in the placenta at distinctly higher levels *in vivo* than *in vitro*. Additionally, an analysis of the impact of various flow rates and cell adhesion times can also be considered.

Additionally, more studies can be done looking at the transepithelial electrical resistance (TEER) measurement. The TEER measurements prove useful in analyzing the confluency of the cell layer.

Another area worth considering for future study is the role of ethanol-induced toxicity for the placenta-on-a-chip. Like the liver-on-a-chip discussed earlier, ethanol contained

within the maternal media stream can be representative of the blood alcohol content seen in

cases involving fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. This could prove a useful tool in not only

being able to use the placenta-on-a-chip in a healthy and functioning placenta, but also in

mapping non-ideal scenarios.

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CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

7.1 Conclusion

In this design, a successful integration of cells into these organ-on-a-chip devices show the potential for 3D microfluidic devices to be used in drug testing and toxicology applications. Using a soft lithography method, a master mold was created and used to make PDMS layers that contained microchannels. Between the layers contained a PETE membrane with collagen acting as the extracellular matrix (ECM). As such, this model represented the simplified organ microenvironment, in which cells could be seeding into the device and integrate themselves into the ECM coated membrane. The future work laid out indicates that the scope of this project is truly large and can continue to be examined and studied in the nearby future.