Development of an elastography bench for MR exam of small samples

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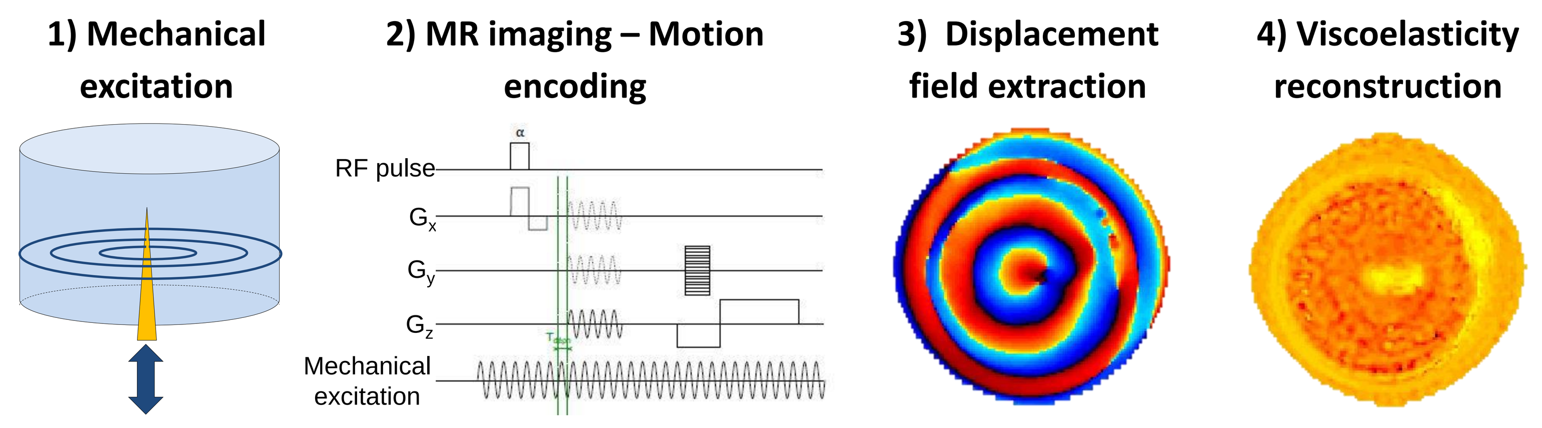
[1]Univ. Lyon, INSA-Lyon, Université Claude Bernard Lyon 1, UJM-Saint Etienne, CNRS, Inserm, CREATIS UMR 5220, U1206, FF-69000, LYON, France; [2]Université Lyon 1, CNRS, INSA, CPE-Lyon, ICBMS, UMR 5246, 43 Boulevard du 11 Novembre 1918, 69622 Villeurbanne Cedex, France; [3]General Electric Healthcare, Buc, France; [4]Lyon Neuroscience Research Center, CNRS UMR5292, INSERM U1028, Université Lyon 1, Lyon, France.

Introduction

Extraction of biomechanical parameters for small samples via Magnetic Resonance Elastography (MRE):



Need of: - **Wave amplitude > µm**
- **High signal to noise ratio (SNR) with high resolution**
- **Low cost and handy design**

Methods

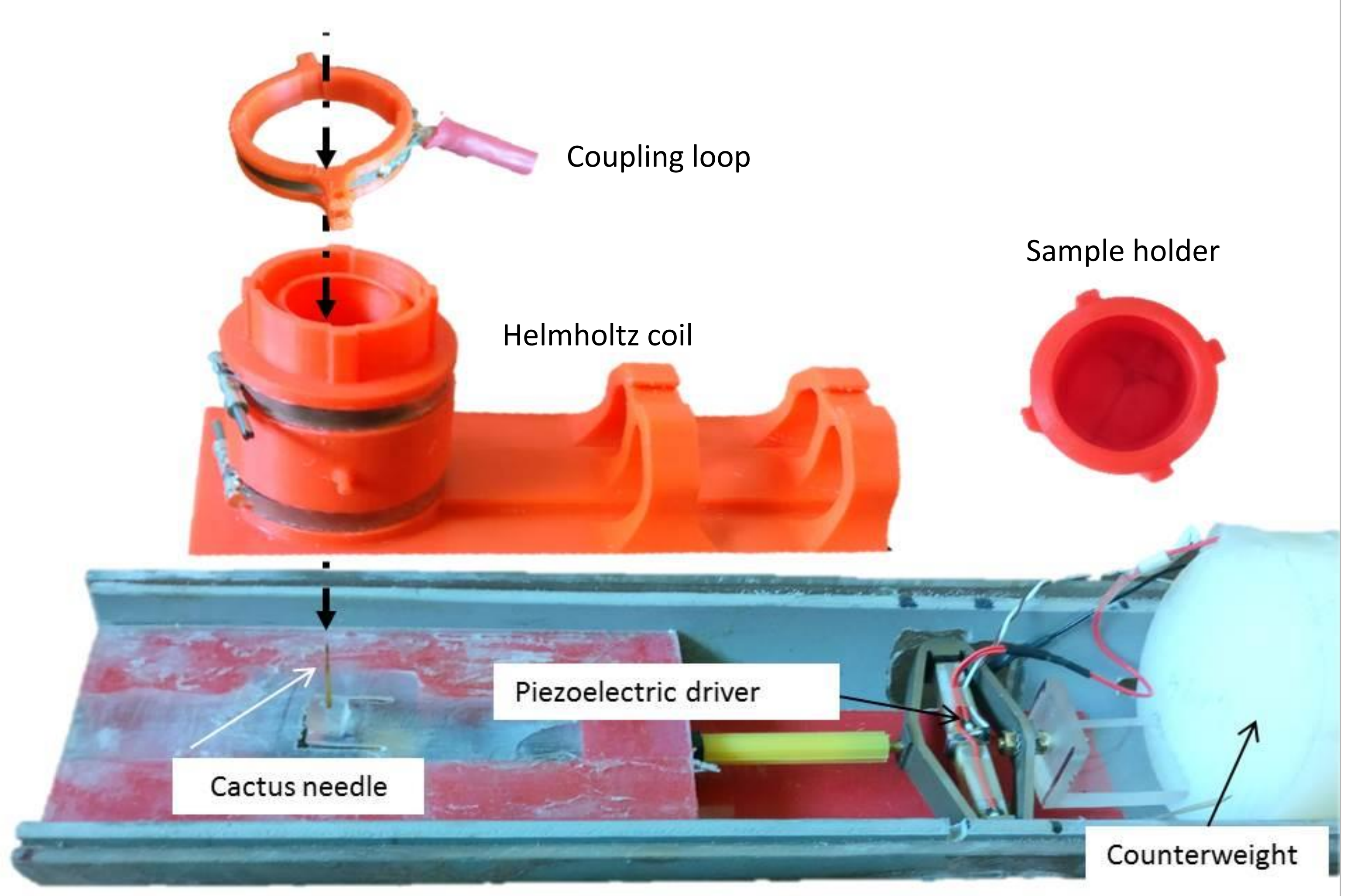


Figure 1. 3D-printed device on top of a classical elastography setup:
- Helmholtz coil (Ø = 36 mm):
  Tuning: capacity trimmers
  Matching: Coupling loop (inductive coupling)
- Sample holder gliding into the coil

Acquisition on a Bruker 4.7 T scanner for fibrin and agarose 1,5% gels and an *ex vivo* rat brain:

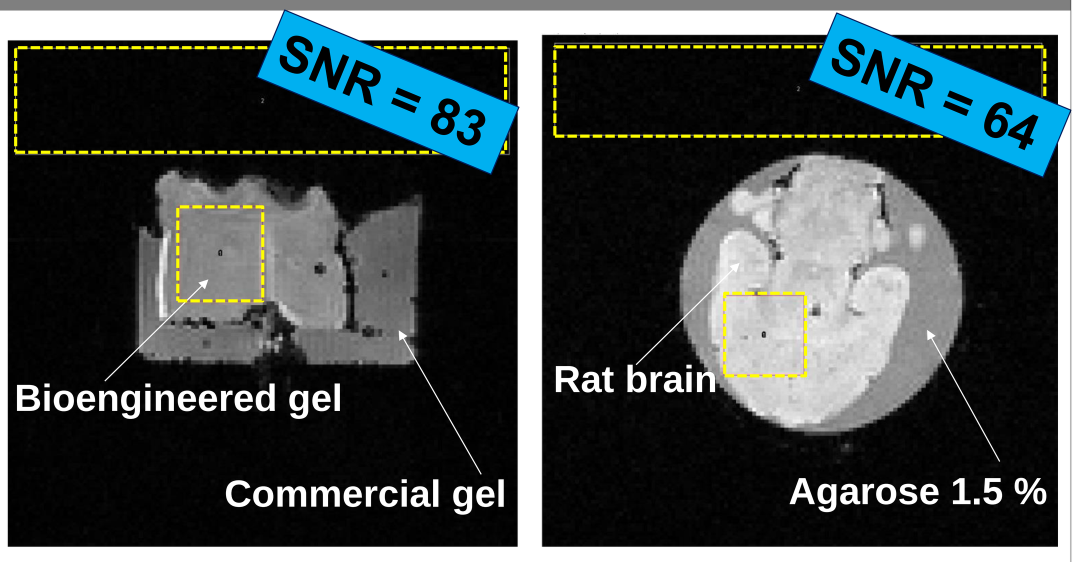
Acquisition parameters	FLASH 3D	Turbo spin echo (MRE)
TR/TE (ms)	15/6	2000/18 - 24
Voxel size (mm)	0.312x0.312x0.625	0.312x0.312x0.625
FOV (mm)	40 x 40	40 x 40
Flip angle (°)	15	X
Reception bandwidth (kHz)	50	50
Acquisition time (min)	2	17
Excitation frequency (Hz)	X	600 – 1000

Table 1. Acquisition parameters for an anatomical (FLASH) sequence and a conventional spin echo based elastography sequence

Results

Figure 2. SNR worked out on central slices of a FLASH sequence for a bioengineered gel and a rat brain:

$SNR_{gel} = 83$
$SNR_{brain} = 64$



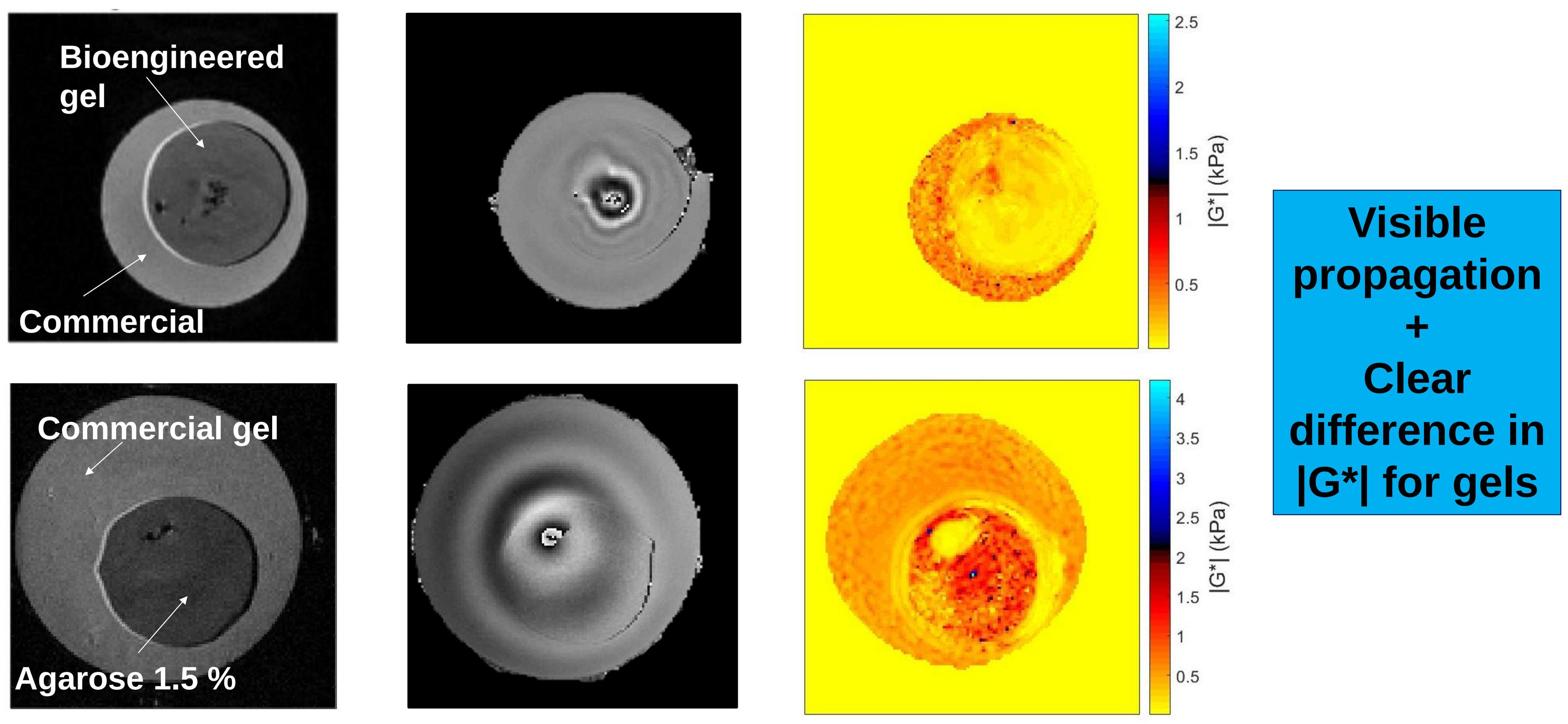


Figure 3. Magnitude, phase and reconstructed magnitude of the complex shear modulus |G*| obtained by MRE at 600 Hz for the bioengineered gel and an 1.5% agarose gel, both embedded in a commercial gel. Total displacement magnitude <A> was 3.8 µm for the first gel and 25.5 µm for the agarose gel after bench improvement. |G*| = 1.4± 0.5 and 7.3 ± 3.9 kPa, respectively.

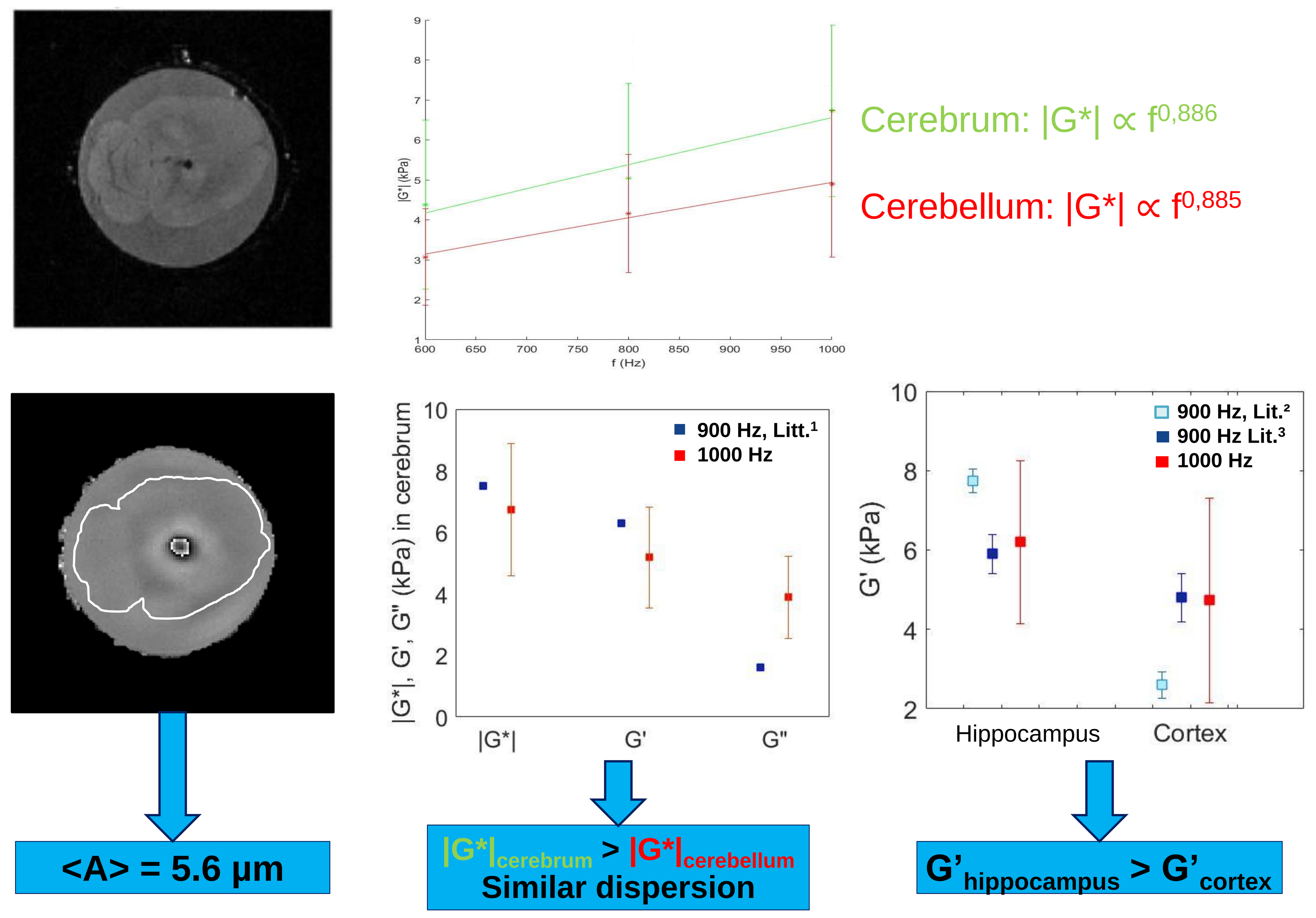
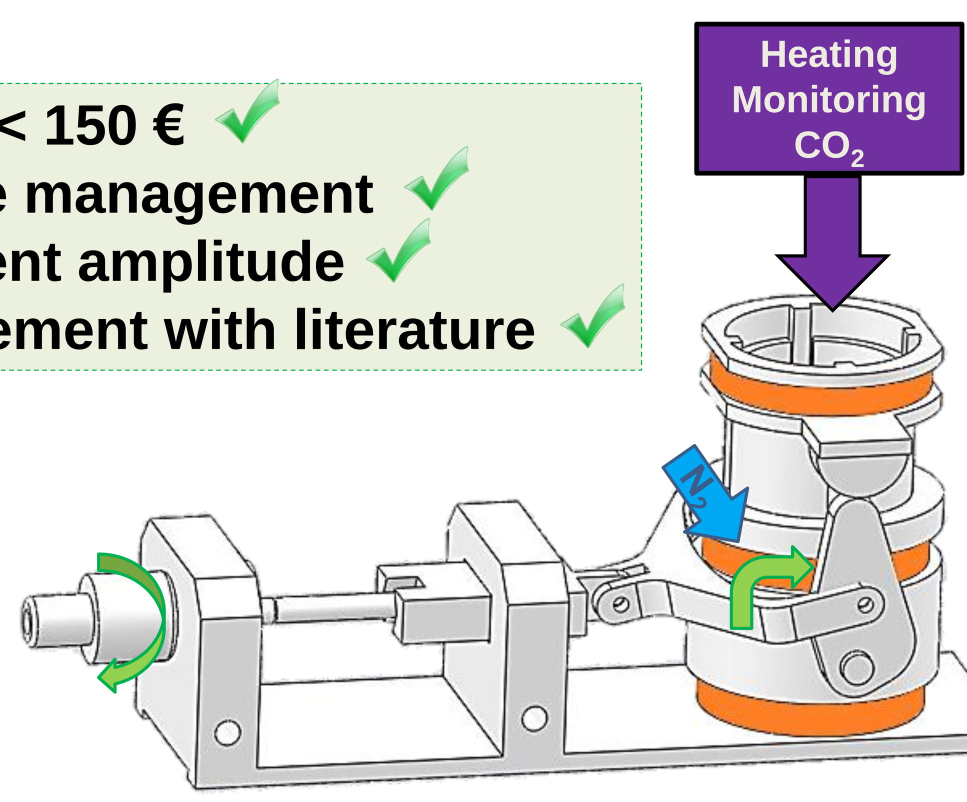


Figure 4. Magnitude and phase images of a fresh *ex vivo* rat brain for an excitation frequency of 600 Hz. Comparison of extracted biomechanical parameters G' (conservation modulus), G" (loss modulus) and |G*| with literature data

Discussion and Conclusion

Cost < 150 € ✓
Easy sample management ✓
Displacement amplitude ✓
Brain data in agreement with literature ✓



Planned improvements, in order to enable:
- **imaging of samples containing living cells: heating and its monitoring + gas arrival**
- **further improvement the SNR: N_2 arrival for coil cooling**
- **easier matching: lever system for the coupling loop.**

Perspectives: *ex vivo* acquisitions on rodent brains with neurological lesions (fibrillar aggregates of proteins, demyelination).

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References: (1) Millward *et al.*, NMR Biomed., vol 28 2015. (2) Munder *et al.*, J. Magn. Reson. Imaging, 2017. (3) Boulet *et al.*, J. Neurosci. Methods, vol 201, 2011.

Contact: Mathilde.Bigot@creatis.insa-lyon.fr