

Author's Accepted Manuscript

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PII: S1751-6161(18)30989-5
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jmbbm.2018.08.027>
Reference: JMBBM2938

To appear in: *Journal of the Mechanical Behavior of Biomedical Materials*

Received date: 3 July 2018
Revised date: 10 August 2018
Accepted date: 19 August 2018

Cite this article as: E.D. Krech, E.S. Cadel, R.M. Barrett and E.A. Friis, Effect of compliant layers within piezoelectric composites on power generation providing electrical stimulation in low frequency applications, *Journal of the Mechanical Behavior of Biomedical Materials*, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jmbbm.2018.08.027>

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Effect of compliant layers within piezoelectric composites on power generation providing electrical stimulation in low frequency applications

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Declarations of interest: none

Abstract:

For patients that use tobacco or have diabetes, bone healing after orthopedic procedures is challenging. Direct current electrical stimulation has shown success clinically to significantly improve bone healing in these difficult-to-fuse populations. Energy harvesting with piezoelectric material has gained popularity in the last decade, but is challenging at low frequencies due to material properties that limit total power generation at these frequencies. Stacked generators have been used to increase power generation at lower voltage levels but have not been widely explored as a load-bearing biomaterial to provide DC stimulation. To match structural compliance levels and increase efficiency of power generation at low frequencies, the effect of compliant layers between piezoelectric discs was investigated. Compliant Layer Adaptive Composite Stacks (CLACS) were manufactured using five PZT discs connected electrically in parallel and stacked mechanically in series with a layer of low modulus epoxy between each disc. The stacks were encapsulated, keeping PZT and overall volume constant. Each stack was electromechanically tested by varying load, frequency, and resistance. As compliant layer thickness increased, power generation increased significantly across all loads, frequencies, and resistances measured. As expected, increase in frequency significantly increased power output for all groups. Similarly, an increase applied peak-to-peak mechanical load also significantly increased power output. The novel use of CLACS for power generation under load and frequencies experienced by typical orthopedic implants could provide an effective method to harvest energy and provide power without the use of a battery in multiple low frequency applications.

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