

# 光学学报

## 纯随机相位板散斑去相关光学相干层析成像

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**摘要** 光学相干层析成像(OCT)的图像质量会受到散斑噪声的影响,限制了OCT在临床诊断中的应用。叠加取平均是一种降噪的常用方法,作为相干噪声,散斑降噪的关键在于降低用于叠加的图像之间的散斑相关度。提出了一种基于纯随机相位板的散斑去相关OCT系统(PSD-OCT)。利用纯随机相位板调制样品光的波前相位以实现散斑去相关,从而为采用叠加取平均降低OCT图像噪声的方法提供低相关数据。成像实验证明了纯随机相位板能够降低散斑相关度,提升叠加图像的散斑信噪比,使得生物样品的精细结构更为清晰明显。与传统OCT的相关叠加相比,PSD-OCT的去相关叠加可以大幅降低散斑噪声从而增强OCT图像的视觉可见性,且无需搭建复杂系统,具有广泛的生物医学成像应用前景。

**关键词** 成像系统; 成像系统噪声; 光学相干层析; 散斑; 随机相位板; 波前调制

中图分类号 O436 文献标志码 A

DOI: 10.3788/AOS221191

### 1 引言

光学相干层析成像(OCT)是一种非侵入式的光学成像技术,近年来已成为生物体成像的研究热点,被广泛应用于医学诊断领域中<sup>[1-7]</sup>。作为一种基于低相干光干涉原理的成像技术,OCT存在散斑现象,在图像上呈现为明暗斑点噪声<sup>[8]</sup>。散斑会破坏OCT图像细节并降低图像质量,不利于医学诊断。

多次采样取平均是降低加性噪声的一种常用方式,现有的商业化OCT仪器,如Heidelberger Druckmaschinen Aktiengesellschaft、深圳莫廷医疗科技有限公司等公司的产品,常通过在样品同一位置处连续采样100张B-scan图像进行叠加来提高成像质量。然而,散斑噪声属于相干乘性噪声,多帧图像之间的散斑相关度极高,上述方法作为一种相关叠加方式,无法有效地降低散斑噪声。除此之外,在OCT的临床应用中,患者的肌肉微动限制了采集时间,这对系统成像速度提出了要求,而大量的采样不利于实现高速实时成像。若能够采用去相关叠加降噪方法,即在多次采样之前先降低散斑相关度,再叠加平均,则可以用较少的采样次数达到更好的散斑抑制效果。现阶段研究人员已经提出了多种散斑去相关方法,包括偏振<sup>[9]</sup>、波长<sup>[10-11]</sup>、角度<sup>[12-13]</sup>、空间<sup>[14-15]</sup>和自适应光学<sup>[16-18]</sup>等。这些方法的局限性:可获取的低相关图像数量有限;整体系统庞大复杂,成本过高。

针对上述限制,研究人员提出了利用相位调制器来进行散斑调制,在每次采样时调制散射波前来改变散斑图案。这种方法可获取的低相关图像数量不限,且结构简单、易于实现。研究者们现已成功将磨砂玻璃扩散片作为相位调制器用于光谱OCT的散斑去相关,并在活体成像中实现了散斑降噪<sup>[19-20]</sup>。然而,扩散片的一个表面为磨砂面,其高梯度的厚度变化在调制相位的同时也调制了振幅,这会极大地损耗透射光功率。同时,不同A-scan的损耗率不一致会引入二维扫描时的照明可变性,出现明显的纵向成像黑线。多次采样叠加在抑制散斑的同时也能够抑制该现象,研究者已经验证了100 frame的平均足以改善照明可变性<sup>[19]</sup>,但叠加张数较少时则难以避免。

本文提出了一种基于纯随机相位板的散斑去相关OCT(PSD-OCT),该系统基于扫频OCT搭建,使用纯随机相位板(PRPP)作为相位调制器来实现去相关叠加降噪。PRPP为一片专门设计的用于调制波前相位的二元衍射光学元件,其具有0~2π的随机相位分布,能够保障对样品光的纯相位调制,避免成像信号的降低和照明可变性的引入。PSD-OCT以简单、低成本的结构实现低噪声成像,可揭示OCT图像中被散斑覆盖的细微结构,具有广泛的临床应用前景,这将使得医生对相关疾病的诊断更为准确,并降低后续的OCT图像增强、轮廓提取等算法的实

收稿日期: 2022-05-24; 修回日期: 2022-06-21; 录用日期: 2022-06-30; 网络首发日期: 2022-07-10

基金项目: 国家重点研发计划(2017YFC0109901)、天津市自然科学基金(15JCQNJC14200)

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现难度。

## 2 原理及仿真

### 2.1 去相关叠加原理

OCT的最小可分辨成像单元内包含多个位置随机的散射元,这些散射元不可被分辨,其背向散射光之间会进行相干叠加,产生散斑。Goodman曾将光学散斑描述为多个具有随机相位的矢量分量所叠加的矢量和<sup>[8]</sup>,其数学模型可表述为

$$I = \left| \sum_{n=1}^N \gamma_n \right| = \left| \sum_{n=1}^N a_n \exp(i\phi_n) \right|, \quad (1)$$

式中: $I$ 为像素灰度值(光强); $N$ 为散射元的个数; $\gamma_n$ 为第 $n$ 个散射元所产生的样品光与参考光的复相干度; $a_n$ 为第 $n$ 个散射元的反射系数; $\phi_n$ 为因第 $n$ 个散射元的轴向位置与参考镜的位置差所产生的相位。

$I \in \left[ 0, \sum_{n=1}^N a_n \right]$ 为一随机结果,其取值取决于每个散射元的相位 $\phi_n$ ,在OCT图像上呈现为覆盖在信号上的明暗斑点。

PRPP通过调控相位来改变矢量和的幅值,在多次采样之间改变散斑的明暗特征,实现散斑去相关。对经相位调制之后的 $M$ 张图像进行去相关叠加,平均幅值为

$$I_M = \frac{1}{M} \sum_{m=1}^M \left| \sum_{n=1}^N a_n \exp[i(\phi_n + \theta_{x,t})] \right|, \quad (2)$$

式中: $\theta_{x,t}$ 为PRPP引入的相位调制量,其为空间和时间的变化量,其中下角标 $x$ 表示第 $n$ 个散射体在PRPP上相对应的共轭位置, $t$ 表示第 $m$ 次采样的时间。

从统计学来分析, $I$ 与 $I_M$ 为离散型的随机变量,其数学期望值可表征有效信号的大小,标准差则可表征散斑噪声的多少。叠加平均的本质是在保持期望不变的同时降低标准差,其目的是在保留有效信号不变的前提下抑制散斑噪声。

### 2.2 散斑信噪比与灰度分布曲线分析

散斑噪声可以通过OCT图像中感兴趣区域(ROI)内的有效信号与散斑噪声的比值,即散斑信噪比( $R_{SSN}$ )来量化,其计算方法为图像均匀区域内灰度的平均值与标准差之比<sup>[9]</sup>,该比值越大,表明噪声越小、图像越平滑。假设对 $M$ 张灰度相关系数为 $r(0 \leq r \leq 1)$ 的图像进行叠加平均,平均之后的 $R_{SSN}^{(M)}$ 与单张图像的 $R_{SSN}^{(1)}$ 比值<sup>[21-22]</sup>为

$$\frac{R_{SSN}^{(M)}}{R_{SSN}^{(1)}} = \frac{\sqrt{M}}{\sqrt{1 + (M - 1)r}}, \quad (3)$$

可见该比值与相关系数的平方根成反比例关系,相关系数越小,散斑降噪效果越好。由于传统OCT为相关叠加模式,故图像之间的散斑相关度极高,信噪比的提升较少。散斑去相关OCT系统采用去相关叠加,通过降低图像之间的相关度来提高散斑信噪比。与相关叠

加相比,去相关叠加能够更加显著地降低散斑噪声。

OCT图像的灰度分布曲线可以直观地衡量噪声的多少。由于标准差被用于刻画变量与其期望值的偏离程度,因此噪声越少就意味着灰度分布越集中,表现为分布曲线的“高”和“瘦”。由式(1)可推得,OCT散斑 $I$ 遵循瑞利分布<sup>[8,23-24]</sup>,去相关叠加使得其变化为灰度分布更集中的类泊松分布,这表明散斑噪声得到了抑制。

### 2.3 仿 真

利用Matlab仿真三层散射体的散斑图案叠加结果,并以第三层散射体作为ROI来计算图像的相关系数、散斑信噪比和灰度分布曲线,结果如图1所示。图1(a)为20张相同散斑图案的叠加平均结果,其可以模拟极限情况下的传统OCT完全相关( $r=1$ )叠加成像,此时图像中存在大量的明暗斑点噪声( $R_{SSN}=1.26$ )。值得注意的是,在传统OCT实际成像时,由于存在光源输出相位不稳定、样品肌肉微动、背景噪声等因素,故图像之间并不完全相关,但其相关系数仍处于较高水准。图1(b)为20张随机生成的不同散斑图案的叠加平均结果,其可以模拟经理想去相关( $r \approx 0.42$ )之后的PSD-OCT叠加成像,此时 $R_{SSN}=1.89$ 。可以发现:PSD-OCT的散斑现象得到了很好的抑制,层与层之间的层析界线更为清晰明确;散斑信噪比提升了1.5倍,与式(3)的计算结果相一致;与OCT相比,PSD-OCT的灰度分布曲线更高更窄,灰度级的离散程度降低,证明去相关叠加能够减少噪声。

## 3 实验装置

### 3.1 PSD-OCT系统

搭建了如图2所示的PSD-OCT系统。本系统的光源是波段为 $(1060 \pm 40)\text{nm}$ 、扫频速度为100 kHz的扫频激光光源(Santec, HSL-1),整个成像系统依据光纤型迈克耳孙干涉仪结构搭建。在样品臂中,经准直之后的激光束进入由二维扫描振镜和扫描透镜组成的远心扫描装置中,再被后继透镜组聚焦至成像样品上。样品与参考镜的返回光在分光比为50:50的耦合器中干涉,干涉光分两路进入平衡探测器(Thorlabs, PDB471C)中,再利用采样率为1 GSa/s的高速数据采集卡(AlazarTech, ATS9371)进行采集。高性能计算机基于C#完成系统控制、成像后处理和图像实时监控。

后继透镜组的作用在于产生一组物像共轭面。作为相位调制器的纯随机相位板放置于扫描透镜与后继透镜组之间的焦平面处,由于共轭关系,故成像样品所在的物平面与PRPP所在的调制平面互为物像面。在对样品的同一成像位置处进行连续采样时,PRPP在垂直于光轴的平面上移动以改变样品臂照明光和散射光的波前相位分布,再借助共轭关系实现对物点的随机相位调制。PRPP所产生的时变相位改变了OCT

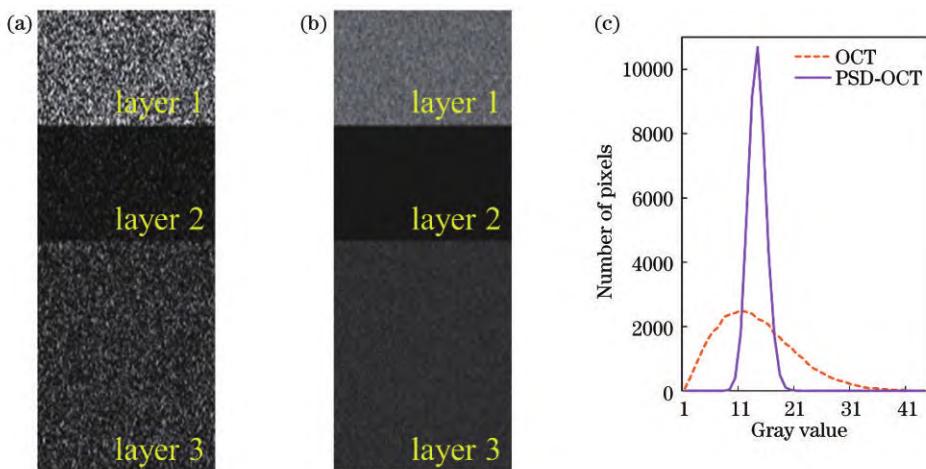


图1 三层散射体仿真结果。(a)传统OCT仿真结果;(b)PSD-OCT仿真结果;(c)灰度分布曲线

Fig. 1 Simulation results of three-layer scatterer. (a) Simulation result obtained by conventional OCT; (b) simulation result obtained by PSD-OCT; (c) gray distribution curves

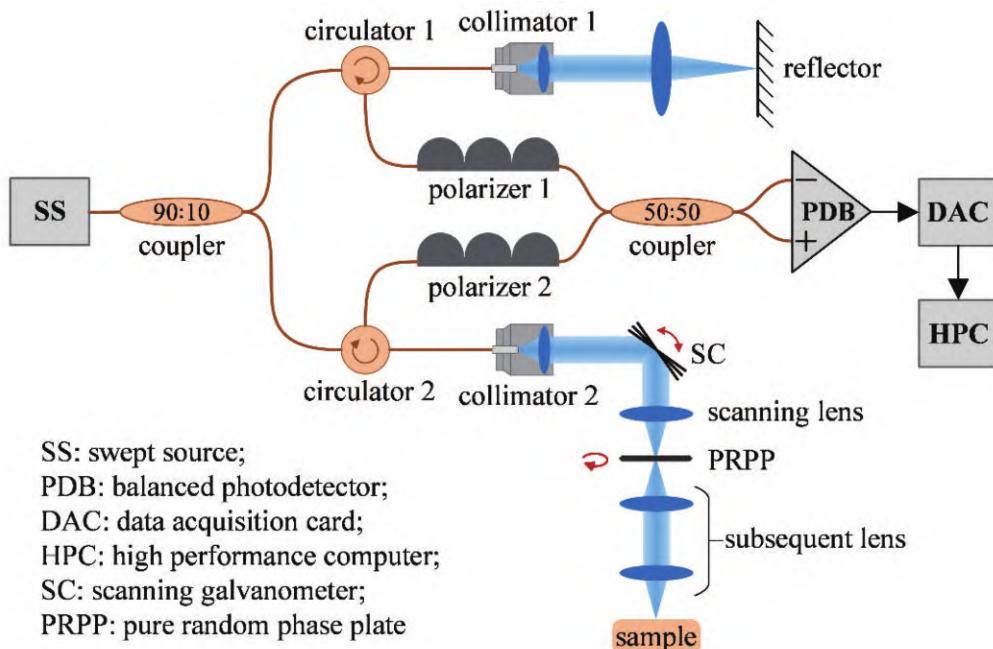


图2 PSD-OCT系统实验装置图  
Fig. 2 Experimental setup of PSD-OCT system

散斑形态,使得每一帧图像都具有不同的散斑图案。

### 3.2 纯随机相位板

PSD-OCT系统中的PRPP为一种二元衍射光学元件,该元件利用激光直写技术改变液晶分子的排布,可形成 $0\sim2\pi$ 的随机相位分布。PRPP采用三明治结构,由产生相移的高分子液晶聚合物薄膜和两片对红外波段具有高透射率的N-BK7窗口片组成。该结构可避免磨砂表面所引起的光线偏转,保证对光波的纯相位调制,降低光功率损耗。

相位调制功能由聚合物薄膜上的径向周期性相位分布来实现,将一个相位周期单元定义为相元。PRPP所产生的时变相位可用于调制散射波前的畸变。在理

想情况下,一个相元的共轭像只覆盖一个散射体,此时调制效果最佳。若相元尺寸过大,一个相元将覆盖多个散射体。若相元尺寸过小,则PRPP产生的波前起伏过于密集,失去相位调制作用,且该情况对加工工艺提出了极高的要求。PRPP的相移区域由大小为 $10\mu\text{m}\times10\mu\text{m}$ 的方形相元构成。由于生物组织可以被认为是由细胞构成的散射体,细胞的尺度为几微米至几十微米不等,因此 $10\mu\text{m}$ 大小的相元适用于生物组织成像。PRPP工作过程示意图如图3所示,旋转的PRPP放置于透镜焦平面处以产生时变相移。圆圈所示为二维横向扫描时的聚焦高斯光斑,其直径为 $38\mu\text{m}$ ,面积可覆盖PRPP中约12个相元,可产生约12个相位起伏来调

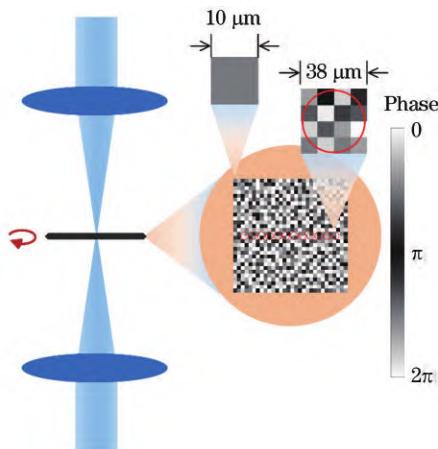


图3 PRPP工作示意图

Fig. 3 Schematic diagram of PRPP operation

制成像波前。由于横向扫描光斑在PRPP上的聚焦点的位置不同,这使得一帧图像的A-scan之间相移互不

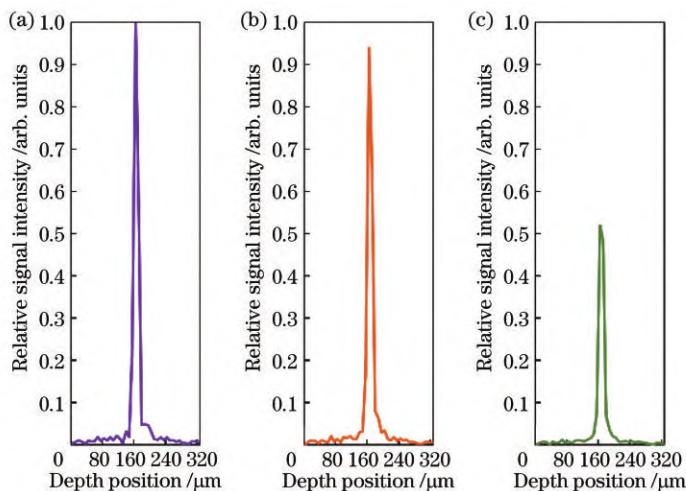


图4 添加不同相位调制器时反射镜的成像对比。(a)不添加相位调制器;(b)添加PRPP;(c)添加扩散片

Fig. 4 Imaging comparison of mirror with different phase modulators. (a) No phase modulator; (b) with PRPP; (c) with diffuser

表1 添加不同相位调制器时的信号强度和损耗

Table 1 Signal intensity and loss with different phase modulators

Phase modulator	Relative signal intensity / arb. units	Signal loss / %
Nothing	1.00	
PRPP	0.94	6
Diffuser	0.52	48

#### 4.2 散射体模型成像实验

对聚二甲基硅氧烷-二氧化钛(PDMS-TiO<sub>2</sub>)散射体模型进行成像实验,对比传统OCT的相关叠加成像结果与PSD-OCT的去相关叠加成像结果,并计算ROI(图5矩形实线框)的图像相关系数r、不同叠加张数M时的散斑信噪比 $R_{\text{SSN}}^{(M)}/R_{\text{SSN}}^{(1)}$ 和灰度分布曲线,结果如图5和图6所示。散射体模型由将二氧化钛粉末添加进聚二甲基硅氧烷中制作所得<sup>[19]</sup>。从图5可以发

相同,故增加了随机调制的有效性。

## 4 实验

### 4.1 引入损耗分析

为验证PRPP对样品臂往返光功率的衰减低于扩散片,使用反射镜进行单张的一维成像对比实验。将平面反射镜作为成像样品,在样品臂光路中分别添加PRPP与扩散片(Thorlabs, DG10-1500-B),获取其与不添加相位调制器时相比的相对峰值信号强度,并计算信号强度的损耗率,结果如图4和表1所示。可以发现,添加PRPP后信号损耗了6%,而添加扩散片后信号损耗了48%,是PRPP情况的8倍。定义图像对比度为信号强度与背景强度的差值,受益于PRPP较低的光损耗,PSD-OCT在二维成像时可以有效地避免成像信号的大幅下降,保证OCT系统的成像对比度不因PRPP的添加而降低。

现,随着M的增大,相关叠加图像中的散斑并未被很好地平滑,而去相关叠加图像中的散斑抑制效果明显。经散斑去相关之后,图像的相关度r由0.93降至0.49,接近于仿真的理想结果(0.42),表明PRPP具有优异的散斑去相关能力,这是导致去相关叠加的降噪效果优于相关叠加的关键。散斑信噪比结果如图6(a)、(b)所示,其中实验值是由叠加图像测量得到的散斑信噪比,理论值是由式(3)计算得到的散斑信噪比。可以发现,随着M的增大,相关叠加图像的信噪比提升不大,而去相关叠加图像的信噪比得到了显著提升并与理论计算结果相符合,且当叠加10张之后,提升趋势逐渐趋于平缓。灰度分布曲线如图6(c)、(d)所示。可以发现,相较于相关叠加图像,去相关叠加图像经多张叠加之后的灰度分布更为集中,且在叠加10张之后趋于一致。上述分析结果表明,PSD-OCT能够大幅降低图像相关系数,且与仿真结果相近,证明了该系统

具有接近理想的散斑去相关效果。得益于PRPP优异的去相关能力,PSD-OCT可以有效地平滑散斑噪声,由于在叠加张数达到10之后降噪效果趋于饱和,因此成像时仅需在样品同一成像位置处连续采样10次,在

有效降噪的同时可极大地节省采样时间,且不受照明可变性的影响。相对地,由于相关系数接近1,故传统OCT的散斑信噪比和灰度值分布基本保持不变,散斑抑制效果微乎其微。

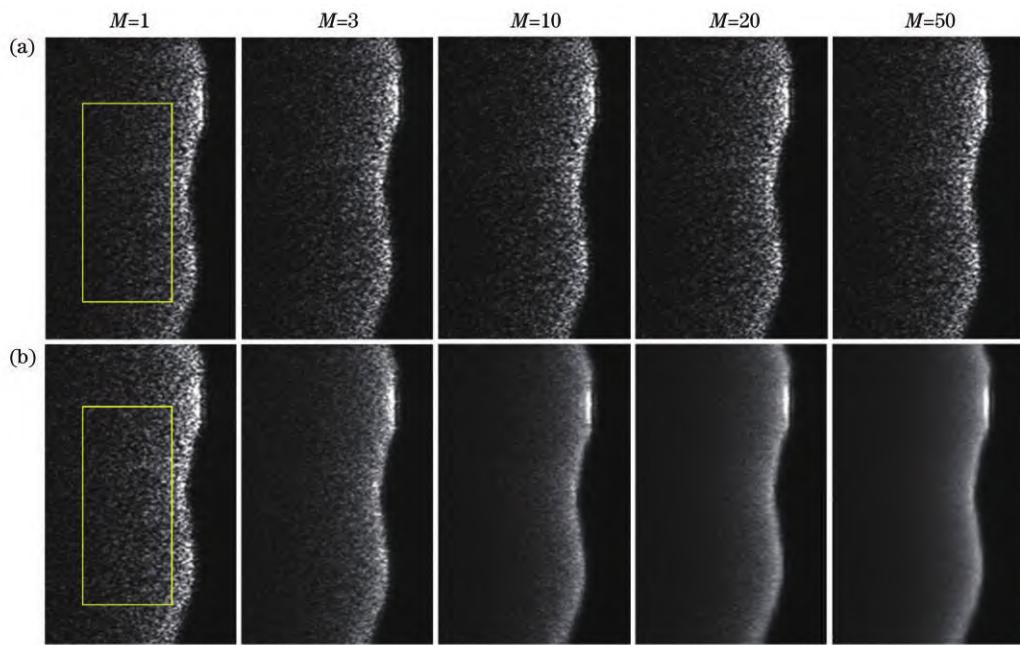


图5 PDMS-TiO<sub>2</sub>成像结果。(a)传统OCT得到的不同M下的相关叠加成像结果;(b)PSD-OCT得到的不同M下的去相关叠加成像结果

Fig. 5 Imaging results of PDMS-TiO<sub>2</sub>. (a) Correlation superposition imaging results obtained by conventional OCT under different  $M$ ; (b) decorrelation superposition imaging results obtained by PSD-OCT under different  $M$

#### 4.3 活体成像实验

对人类指甲和指尖皮肤进行成像,实验结果分别如图7和图8所示。成像时在志愿者的指甲和指尖皮肤表面涂抹稀释的甘油以抑制表面的高反射。比较传统OCT与PSD-OCT的成像结果( $M=10$ )可以看出,去相关叠加图像中的颗粒状散斑噪声被抑制,且组织间的层析特征更为清晰。从图7可以发现:传统OCT成像中的背侧甲板与腹侧甲板的交界线几乎无法分辨,而PSD-OCT的成像结果中可以分辨出这两层组织,如左列两幅图所示,其中箭头指向背侧甲板与腹侧甲板的交界线;甲母质的存在也因颗粒感的减弱而变得更为清晰,如右列两幅图所示。截取腹侧甲板区域作为ROI(矩形实线框)计算其散斑信噪比,可得 $R_{SSN}^{OCT}=2.58$ 、 $R_{SSN}^{PSD-OCT}=4.17$ ,去相关之后叠加图像的散斑信噪比提升1.6倍。从图8(a)、(b)可以发现,表皮层与真皮层之间的边界因散斑的抑制而显示得更为清晰且连续,其中虚线框标注出了表皮层与真皮层的交界处,放大图中的实线箭头指向表皮层与真皮层的交界线。图8(c)为图8(a)、(b)虚线框区域的放大图中虚线箭头标记的沿深度方向的灰度值,其中左侧横实线代表表皮层的平均灰度值,右侧横实线代表真皮层的平均灰度值,左侧箭头指向表皮层与真皮层的边界,右侧箭头指向散斑噪声。可以直观地看出:相关叠

加图像的灰度值起伏大,受散斑噪声破坏严重,因组织分界结构所产生的灰度值跃变与因散斑噪声所产生的灰度值跃变相当,前者作为成像的有用信息难以与后者区分;去相关叠加图像的灰度值起伏较为平滑,表皮层与真皮层分界处的灰度值跃变未被散斑噪声淹没,层析结构明显。

## 5 讨 论

基于PRPP的散斑去相关方法是低成本实现OCT图像降噪的一个发展方向。PRPP能够大幅降低散斑相关度,这使得叠加平均可以有效地降低散斑对成像的影响,仅10张叠加便足以抑制散斑现象。传统OCT因散斑相关度接近1,故虽然其叠加成像可以抑制光噪声、暗噪声等加性白噪声<sup>[25]</sup>,但是无法改善与成像样品息息相关的乘性散斑噪声。PRPP所引入的信号损耗率低,在有效降噪的同时可避免因额外光学器件的加入所导致的成像对比度降低和照明可变性现象的出现。

PSD-OCT无需复杂的系统设计,且结构简单紧凑,故其具有普适性,可用于包括眼科、脑肿瘤、心脏病等相关疾病诊断的潜在临床应用中,以及手持式、内窥式和大型OCT仪器中。PRPP同样可应用于光谱OCT系统中,其与扫频OCT的不同之处在于:在一个

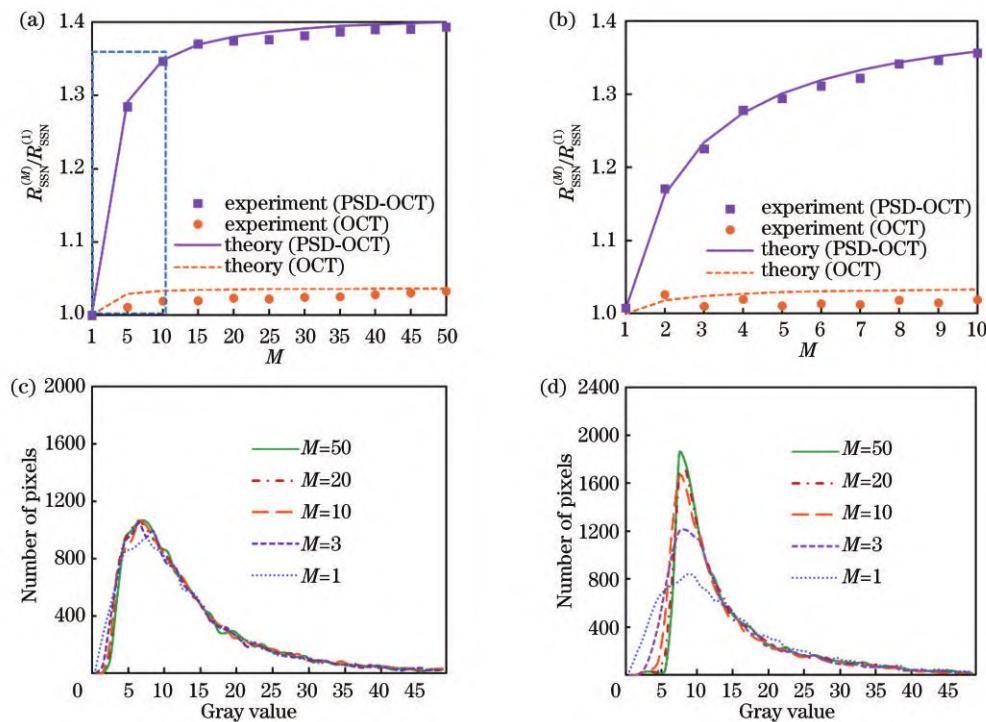


图 6 PDMS-TiO<sub>2</sub>成像结果的数据分析。(a)散斑信噪比与M的关系曲线;(b)图6(a)中虚线框的放大结果;(c)传统OCT得到的不同M下的灰度分布曲线;(d)PSD-OCT得到的不同M下的灰度分布曲线

Fig. 6 Data analysis of PDMS-TiO<sub>2</sub> imaging results. (a) Speckle signal-to-noise ratio varying with  $M$ ; (b) enlarged result of dashed box in Fig. 6 (a); (c) gray distribution curves obtained by conventional OCT under different  $M$ ; (d) gray distribution curves obtained by PSD-OCT under different  $M$

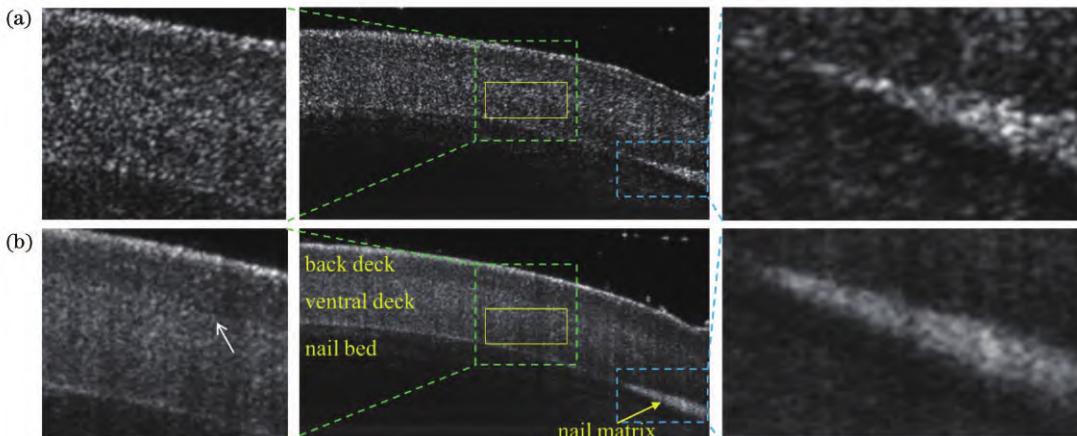


图 7 人类指甲成像。(a)传统OCT相关叠加成像结果;(b)PSD-OCT去相关叠加成像结果

Fig. 7 Imaging of human nail. (a) Correlation superposition imaging result obtained by conventional OCT; (b) decorrelation superposition imaging result obtained by PSD-OCT

扫频周期内,扫频OCT分时接收干涉光谱而光谱OCT同时接收。因此,扫频OCT中的PRPP移动速度不宜过快,避免在扫频周期内引入时变相移,而光谱OCT不受该限制。散斑降噪可以被设计为单独的功能模块,即插即用,设计者只需保证在OCT光学镜组中存在成像共轭面使得其能够轻松插入PRPP。值得注意的是,虽然散斑会破坏图像所携带的信息,但是有一些采用相位和散斑方差方法的功能性扩展OCT系统是依赖于成像物本身散斑图案的变化来获取所需信

息的,如多普勒OCT和OCT血管成像等<sup>[26-28]</sup>。光束中引入的相移会影响图像携带的散斑信息,故PRPP不适用于部分功能性OCT。

## 6 结 论

提出了一种利用PRPP作为相位调制器的散斑去相关OCT技术,即PSD-OCT系统,可以有效地降低成像中的散斑噪声。PRPP通过产生时变相移来调制样品光的波前相位分布,具有优异的散斑去相关能力。

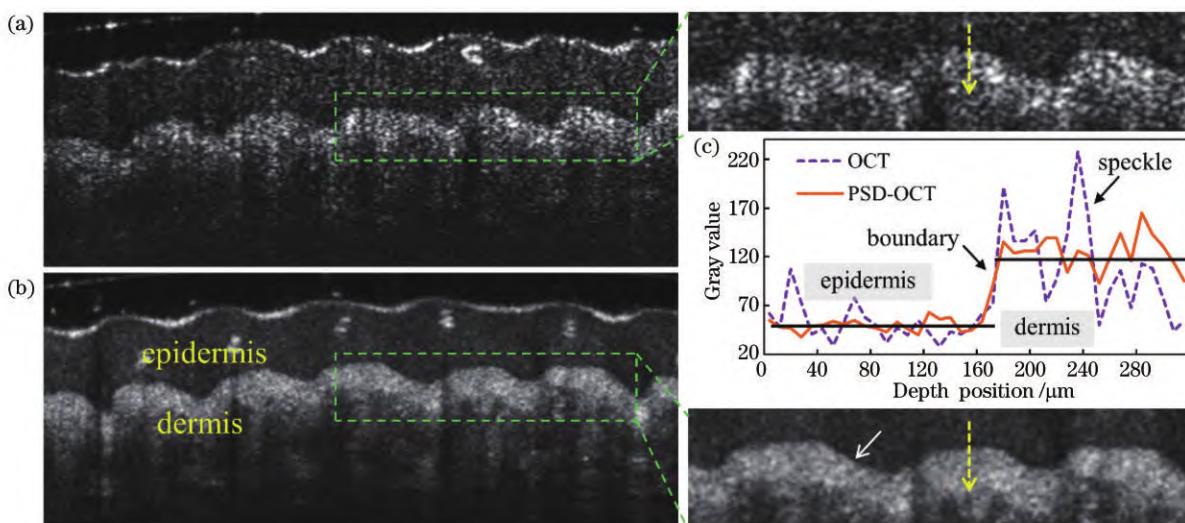


图8 人类指尖成像。(a)传统OCT相关叠加成像结果;(b)PSD-OCT去相关叠加成像结果;(c)在8(a)、(b)虚线框区域的放大图中由虚线箭头标记的沿深度方向的灰度值

Fig. 8 Imaging of human fingertip. (a) Correlation superposition imaging result obtained by conventional OCT; (b) decorrelation superposition imaging result obtained by PSD-OCT; (c) gray values along depth direction marked by dashed arrows in enlarged view of dashed boxes in Figs. 8 (a) and 8 (b)

成功地实现了扫频OCT系统的低散斑活体成像,证明了与传统OCT相比,PSD-OCT具有显著的散斑抑制效果,能够揭示样品中原本被散斑破坏的细节信息,可更为清晰地显示生物组织的细微结构和层析特征。

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## Speckle Decorrelation Optical Coherence Tomography Using Pure Random Phase Plate

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### Abstract

**Objective** Optical coherence tomography (OCT) is a non-invasive optical imaging technology. In recent years, it has become a research hotspot of biological imaging and has been widely used in the field of medical diagnosis. As an imaging technology based on the principle of low coherent light interference, OCT is susceptible to speckle noise. Speckles will destroy details of OCT images and reduce image quality, which imposes significant limitations on the clinical application potential of OCT. Superposition is a common method to reduce additive white noise. However, speckle noise belongs to the multiplicative noise. In order to suppress speckles more effectively, it is necessary to use speckle decorrelation technology to reduce the speckle correlation between images for superimposition, which is called the decorrelation superimposition method. Decorrelation superimposition can improve the speckle signal-to-noise ratios of superimposed images. Up to now, researchers have proposed a variety of speckle decorrelation technologies, but they face the following limitations: the number of available decorrelation images is limited; the overall system is bulky, complex, and expensive; the transmitted light power is greatly lost, and illumination variability during two-dimensional scanning is introduced. In this study, a speckle decorrelation OCT system using a pure random phase plate (PSD-OCT) is reported. The system uses a tailored pure random phase plate (PRPP) to achieve speckle decorrelation, which can avoid the loss of light power and the introduction of illumination variability, and has a simple and low-cost structure. PSD-OCT helps obtain low-noise imaging results.

**Methods** The PSD-OCT system is built based on swept-source OCT. The system uses a PRPP to modulate the wavefront phase of the sample light, and changes the gray value characteristics of speckles when images for superimposition are collected to realize speckle decorrelation, so as to provide low correlation images for decorrelation superposition method and reduce OCT speckle noise. PRPP is a specially designed binary diffractive optical element used to modulate the wavefront phase of OCT, with periodic random phase distribution of  $0\text{--}2\pi$  in the radial direction. The PRPP is placed on the focal plane between the scanning lens and the subsequent lens of a sample arm. Due to the conjugate relationship, the object plane of the imaging sample and the modulation plane of the PRPP are object-image conjugate planes. When the sample is continuously collected at the same imaging position, PRPP moves on the plane perpendicular to the optical axis to change the wavefront phase distribution of the illumination and scattered light of the sample arm, and then realizes the random phase modulation of the object plane through the conjugate relationship. The phase shift of PRPP

with time changes the OCT speckle pattern, which makes each image have different speckle patterns, realizes decorrelation superimposition, and reduces speckle noise.

**Results and Discussions** The simulation results of the three-layer scatterer (Fig. 1) show that when the image is decorrelated and then superimposed, the speckle phenomenon of superimposed images is well suppressed, and the tomographic boundary between layers is clearer. In addition, the speckle signal-to-noise ratio is increased by 1.5 times. The result demonstrates that decorrelation superimposition can reduce noise. It can be seen from the imaging results of the scatterer model that PRPP reduces the correlation coefficient between multiple images used for superimposition from 0.93 to 0.49 (Fig. 5), which is close to the ideal result of the simulation (0.42). Such results demonstrate that the PSD-OCT system has a nearly ideal speckle decorrelation effect. After speckle decorrelation, the signal-to-noise ratios of superimposed images are significantly improved, and speckle noise is smoothed. By comparing the imaging results of human nails and fingertip skin of traditional OCT and PSD-OCT (Figs. 7 and 8), it can be seen that compared with traditional OCT, the granular speckle noise in the superimposed images obtained by PSD-OCT is suppressed, and tomographic structure features between tissues are clearer. To sum up, our experimental results show that PSD-OCT can reduce speckle correlation, improve the speckle signal-to-noise ratio, and observe finer and clearer biological structures.

**Conclusions** In this study, a speckle decorrelation OCT technology using PRPP as a phase modulator is proposed, and a low speckle OCT imaging *in vivo* is successfully realized by using the decorrelation superposition method. PRPP modulates the wavefront phase distribution of the sample light by generating a time-varying phase shift, and it has excellent speckle decorrelation ability, which makes superposition effectively reduce the impact of speckles on imaging and thus enhances the visual visibility of OCT images. The low signal loss rate introduced by PRPP can avoid the image contrast reduction and illumination variability caused by additional optical devices during operation. Our study shows that compared with traditional OCT, PSD-OCT has achieved a remarkable speckle suppression effect with a simple and compact structure. This system can reveal details of samples originally covered and damaged by speckles, and can more clearly show the fine structure and chromatographic characteristics of biological tissues. PSD-OCT has a wide application prospect in the biomedical imaging field, which will enable doctors to diagnose related diseases more accurately and reduce the difficulty of algorithms including OCT image enhancement, contour extraction, and so on.

**Key words** imaging systems; noise in imaging systems; optical coherence tomography; speckle; random phase plate; wavefront modulation