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<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Hayakawa, Y; Yamamoto, K; Kousuge, Y; Kobayashi, N; Wakoh, M; Sekiguchi, H; Yakushiji, M; Farman, AG</td>
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Clinical Report

CLINICAL VALIDITY OF THE INTERACTIVE AND LOW-DOSE THREE-DIMENSIONAL DENTO-ALVEOLAR IMAGING SYSTEM, TUNED-APERTURE COMPUTED TOMOGRAPHY

YOSHIHIKO HAYAKAWA*, KAZUHIRO YAMAMOTO*, YUJI KOUSUGE*, NORIO KOBAYASHI*, MAMORU WAKOH*, HIROSHI SEKIGUCHI**, MASASHI YAKUSHIJI** and ALLAN G. FARMAN***

* Department of Oral and Maxillofacial Radiology, Tokyo Dental College, 1-2-2 Masago, Mihama-ku, Chiba 261-8502, Japan
** Department of Pediatric Dentistry, Tokyo Dental College, 1-2-2 Masago, Mihama-ku, Chiba 261-8502, Japan
*** Division of Radiology and Imaging Sciences, Department of Surgical and Hospital Dentistry, School of Dentistry, The University of Louisville, Louisville, Ky 40292 USA

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Abstract

Based on technical studies and clinical examinations, the clinical value of a new three-dimensional dento-alveolar imaging system, Tuned-Aperture Computed Tomography (TACT®), were examined for dental applications. TACT is a conventional and low-cost tomosynthesis method in which the benefit of digitization is fully utilized. The clinical information yield of TACT has been examined for the detection of dental caries, periodontal defects and radicular fractures, and also for the pre-surgical assessment of implant placement and impacted teeth. In this article, we introduce basic TACT technology, review the literature pertaining to in vitro and in vivo studies, and describe the outline of our study of TACT to determine its clinical value in the assessment of impacted maxillary teeth.

Key words: Tuned-aperture computed tomography—Intraoral radiography—Tomosynthesis—Impactions—Flat panel detector

INTRODUCTION

Because newly developed, small, flat-panel detectors with high sensitivity to X-ray and comparatively low-noise characteristics have been utilized for intraoral radiography, tomosynthesis has become practical for dento-alveolar imaging. TACT®, Tuned-Aperture Computed Tomography, is an interactive, low-dose, low-cost, three-dimensional (3-D)
TACT is a technique for 3-D diagnostic imaging which can be carried out with low dosage. Application of the algorithm is not only applied to dento-alveolar imaging but also to digital mammography and scintimammography. TACT technology is now licensed to Instrumentarium Imaging (Tuusula, Finland).

As shown in Fig. 1, intraoral radiographs are made in different directions while a small flat-panel detector is held in the oral cavity. The images are obtained by “component projections” and are called TACT basis images. The projections are made at different angles and repeated four to six times. The TACT workbench (Verify Software, Winston-Salem, North Carolina, USA) stacks the images, inputs locations of fiduciary markers for each basis image, and reconstructs a series of arbitrary multi-planar cross-sectional images. Such reconstruction of a series of arbitrary section images can produce pseudo-holograms. Iterative restoration to remove blurring is also available after three-dimensional models are built. TACT is based on tomosynthesis and aperture theory.
non-destructive quantification of osseous changes within healing bony defects.\textsuperscript{20,21} Ramesh et al. conducted research on the detection of simulated periodontal defects and concluded that TACT images processed by weak iterative restoration provided the best performance.\textsuperscript{22} Nair et al. also reported that TACT performed significantly better than planar images for the detectability of trauma-induced radicular fractures, vertical root fractures, and mandibular fractures in their \textit{in vitro} studies.\textsuperscript{18,19}

Implants: The clinical value of TACT for presurgical implant imaging was examined by Liang et al., who found that TACT may provide an alternative to conventional tomography for dental implant imaging.\textsuperscript{14,15} Morant et al. reported that TACT was significantly more accurate than standard application of the buccal object rule for assessing the relationship between tooth roots and the inferior alveolar canal.\textsuperscript{17}

Since 1998, we have also reported several basic studies of TACT, including collaborative work with the inventor, Webber.\textsuperscript{9,34,35,39} We analyzed the accuracy of depth discrimination affected by projection geometry and the number of projections in our studies.

\section*{CLINICAL APPLICATION: IMPACTED TOOTH ASSESSMENT}

As a further step in our research, we performed a clinical study on the diagnostic information yield of TACT in the assessment of impacted teeth in comparison with conventional dentoalveolar imaging.\textsuperscript{11,36–38}

1. Procedures for TACT

A small flat-panel detector system, CompuRay\textsuperscript{7} (Yoshida Dental Trading, Tokyo, Japan) was employed as the intraoral X-ray detector. This is known as the RVG-ui sensor (Trophy Radiology, Marne-la-Vallée, France) in the rest of the world. Basis images are collected and stacked. The input of each projection position using the fiduciary marker on individual images is carried out, and a reconstruction algorithm is applied. Stability for maintaining continuity in geometric projection conditions is required for the generation of 3D images, such as CT, at the time of collection of image data. However, TACT enables an arbitrary setup of projection directions, because the position of the fiducial marker is always available. The operation for cross-sectional reconstruction can be carried out interactively. The
reconstruction of a series of dento-alveolar depths is easily realized in compliance with diagnostic tasks. A selected screen of the TACT Workbench is shown in Fig. 2.

In accordance with the results of previous in vitro studies, in which influences of the number of and the angle of component projections to the accuracy of depth discrimination were reported, five or six component projections with conical beam-projection array per reconstruction, and approximately 20 degrees of angular disparity were chosen. The fiduciary marker we used was a 1.5 mm diameter X-Spot® lead pellet (Beekley, Bristol, Connecticut, USA). The X-Spot was packed under an adhesive tab used to help keep track of sensor positioning. The coordinates on each image were inputted into a reconstruction algorithm as reference points.

2. Case presentation

The case presented in Fig. 3 is an examination of an impacted tooth in the anterior region of the maxilla. Impacted teeth do often occur in the anterior maxilla, and their occurrence is significant in early mixed dentition in view of both esthetics and occlusion. TACT was applied for the radiological diagnosis of the status of the impacted tooth and its positional relationship with surrounding tissue and adjacent teeth. Various radiographic techniques have been reported for recognizing the position of an impacted (clinically “missing”) tooth. Radiological diagnosis is necessary for clarifying the morphologic status of impacted teeth and their relationship with the surrounding tissues. Traditionally, the intraoral radiograph with an orthogonal projection has been used with an additional mesial, distal, inferior, or superior projection. With such parallax methods, the position of the impacted tooth in relation to its surrounding tissues can be estimated, but with limited accuracy. Given these limitations, it is possible that TACT might be used to study the morphology of impacted teeth in the incisor and canine regions of the maxilla.

As indicated in Fig. 3, TACT revealed the morphological relationship between the impacted tooth and surrounding tissues,
including the regular teeth. Both the impacted
tooth and the roots of adjacent teeth are
sharply depicted in different sectional images
with different depths in the buccolingual
direction. All the TACT images were pro-
cessed by the installed iterative restoration to
remove blurring.

3. Statistical analysis

Previously, TACT has been compared vari-
ously with conventional intraoral, occlusal,
rotational panoramic, and lateral cephalo-
graphic examinations of impacted maxillary
incisors. Since the results are already pub-
lished \(^{37,38}\), only a brief outline is given in this
report. TACT was used to examine 20 dental
impactions in 20 patients. Sixteen dentists
trained to read TACT image reconstructions
independently carried out the following tasks:
(1) clarity of depiction of the impacted tooth
and its surrounding tissues, (2) estimation
of confidence in clinical assessments of the
patient by using the provided images, and
(3) estimation of the diagnostic potential of
TACT for altering the selection of treatment
options. Table 1 lists the seven objective criteria
for the evaluation of image clarity and an
additional two subjective assessments. The
continuous confidence-rating method was
employed for each evaluation (Fig. 4). Mean

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<th>Evaluation items:</th>
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<th>50</th>
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<tr>
<td>No. 1 to No. 7</td>
<td>unclear</td>
<td>clear</td>
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<tr>
<th>Evaluation items:</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>50</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. 8 and No. 9</td>
<td>not sufficient</td>
<td>sufficient</td>
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Fig. 4 A continuous confidence rating method. A bar
of 50 mm length for each evaluation item is given
on each observer’s sheet. Each observer indepen-
dently selected an optimal position on the bar
dependent on his/her opinion. Each observer
was instructed in advance that the range gradu-
ally changed from poor (at 0), to substandard,
acceptable, good, and finally excellent (at 50)
in sequence.

scores compare the observers’ evaluations for structural clarity, observers’ perceptions of the potential for TACT altering patient’s treatment options, and observers’ confidence in the reading of the position of the impacted
tooth. Collected data were analyzed by means
of t-tests performed with StatView (Abacus
Concepts, Berkeley, Calif. USA). The \( a \, priori \)
was set at 0.05.

Mean scores and 95% confidence intervals
The first such study was reported by the inventor, Webber and Messura. His group concluded that TACT displays were more diagnostically informative and had more impact on potential treatment options than did conventional radiographs. Some in vitro studies, which were mentioned in the short review section, indicated that TACT is sensitive or compatible in comparison with conventional dento-alveolar radiography examinations to detect dental caries, periodontal bone dynamics and other diagnostic tasks. Since the image detector of intraoral radiography is changed from film to flat-panel detector (CCD or C-MOS sensor), TACT becomes convenient as such digital procedures are utilized. The digital revolution of the recent decade has put interactive and low-dose three-dimensional imaging systems, such as TACT tomosynthesis, into practice.

In a recent study, TACT projection data was utilized for rendering 3-D models for quantitative analysis of image subtraction methods. Our research on TACT imaging, which was recently published, is the second in vivo study. The first such study was reported by the inventor, Webber and Messura. His group concluded that TACT displays were more diagnostically informative and had more impact on potential treatment options than did conventional radiographs. Some in vitro studies, which were mentioned in the short review section, indicated that TACT is sensitive or compatible in comparison with conventional dento-alveolar radiography examinations to detect dental caries, periodontal bone dynamics and other diagnostic tasks.

Since the image detector of intraoral radiography is changed from film to flat-panel detector (CCD or C-MOS sensor), TACT becomes convenient as such digital procedures are utilized. The digital revolution of the recent decade has put interactive and low-dose three-dimensional imaging systems, such as TACT tomosynthesis, into practice. In a recent study, TACT projection data was utilized for rendering 3-D models for quantitative analysis of image subtraction methods. In addition to research for the optimization of TACT procedures and algorithms, Webber recently used a hand-held X-ray system, in an attempt to increase the user-
friendliness of TACT for the use in dental offices.

For the last decade, researchers have carried out 3-D dento-alveolar imaging by using single- or multi-row spiral CT and cone-beam CT images. In comparison with such CT systems, TACT is characterized by a low-cost and low-dose 3-D image-forming system, which has been demanded by the medical and dental community in recent years. In this article, we introduced the basic TACT technology, reviewed the literature, and described the outline of our study. Our in vivo study shows the validity of using interactive 3-D TACT to improve the benefits of a digital flat-panel detector employed for intraoral radiography in the assessment of dental impactions.

REFERENCES


Reprint requests to:
Dr. Yoshihiro Hayakawa
Department of Oral and Maxillofacial Radiology,
Tokyo Dental College,
1-2-2 Masago, Mihama-ku,
Chiba 261-8502, Japan