

MU filters and hdEMG processing pipelines

LSPO Lab (presenter Aleš Holobar), University of Maribor

ales.holobar@um.si



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MOTIVATION

Motor Unit (MU) identification offers valuable insight into **neural codes & behaviour**:

- In non-fatiguing voluntary contractions MUs fire asynchronously
- Pathologies change the MU firing & synchronization patterns
- In elicited contractions, MU firings are highly (but not completely) synchronised
- MU firing patter in always sparse.





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Holobar & Farina: IEEE Sig. Proc. Magazine, 2021

Surface EMG mixing models: signal-based approach



IYBRID



Isometric HDEMG model: Convolutive





Intramuscular vs. surface EMG



- Surface EMG: 0-500 Hz, several tens of MUs
- Intramuscular EMG: 0-5000 Hz, low number of MUs
- Surface MUAPs: smooth (low-frequency) & longer (15 ms)
- Intramuscular MUAPs: sharper & shorter (5 ms)

Research



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Merletti et al. Critical Reviews in Biomedical Engineering, 2010





Isometric voluntary contractions – surface HDEMG

Asynchronous MU firings, stationary MUAPs







Holobar & Farina: Physiological Measurement, 2014

Processing pipeline







Processing pipeline: Segment A

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HDEMG acquisition – electrode fixation





Processing pipeline







Processing pipeline: Segment B





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Nonlinear transformations of EMG are forbidden



- Nonlinear transformations are forbidden!
 - They destroy the linear superimposition of MUAPs (i.e. linear mixing model)
- Nonlinear transformations are forbidden!
 - They introduce additional crossterms (i.e., cross spike trains between any pair of active MUs)
 - $(a+b)^2 \neq a^2 + b^2$
 - a spike train 1
 - **b** spike train 2
 - 2*ab*-crossterm between spike train 1 and 2
- Nonlinear transformations are really bad idea!
- And they are forbidden!



B2 - Line interference: zero-phase filtering or...



HYBRID **NEURO**

Avoid nonlinear techniques in filtering or preprocessing!

B3 – EMG channels (VL muscle)







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B1 – ICA components (VL muscle) WHYBRID



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B2 – Noisy component removal







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B3 – Artefact removal: Multivariate Time Series Anomaly Detection Using Graph Neural Network (MATLAB)





https://www.mathworks.com/help/deeplearning/ug/multivariate-timeseries-anomaly-detection-using-graph-neural-network.html



B3 – Artefact removal





Processing pipeline







Processing pipeline: Segment C

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Isometric HDEMG model: Convolutive







• Mixing matrix of convolution kernels (MUAPs):





noise

• Extended vector of pulse sources:



Convolution Kernel Compensation (CKC)



hdEMG model: $y(n) = Ht(n) + \omega(n)$

MU spike trains: $t_j(n) = \sum_k \delta(n - \tau_j(k))$, j=1...N

$$MUAPs: \overline{\mathbf{H}} = [\overline{\mathbf{H}_{1}} \dots \overline{\mathbf{H}_{N}}] \qquad \overline{\mathbf{H}_{j}} = \begin{bmatrix} \overline{h_{1j}}(0) & \dots & \overline{h_{1j}}(L) \\ \vdots & \ddots & \vdots \\ \overline{h_{Mj}}(0) & \dots & \overline{h_{Mj}}(L) \end{bmatrix}$$
$$KC: \hat{t}_{j}(n) = \mathbf{c}_{t_{j}y}^{T} \mathbf{C}_{y}^{-1} \mathbf{y}(n) = \mathbf{c}_{t_{j}t}^{T} \mathbf{H}^{T} \mathbf{H}^{-T} \mathbf{C}_{t}^{-1} \mathbf{H} \mathbf{H}^{-1} \mathbf{t}(n) \approx \mathbf{c}_{t_{j}t}^{T} \mathbf{C}_{t}^{-1} \mathbf{t}(n)$$

MU filter $\mathbf{c}_{t_i y}^{\mathrm{T}} \mathbf{C}_{y}^{-1}$ needs to be estimated for every motor unit





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C3 – **MU filter estimation**







Škarabot et al. The Journal of Physiology, 2023

C4 – Accuracy assessment: PNR



Iteration = 1, PNR = 6.9 dB



Pulse-to-Noise Ratio (PNR):

- applied to EVERY identified motor unit
- no additional experimental costs
- indicator of the accuracy of motor unit identification



A. Holobar, D. Zazula: *IEEE Trans. on Signal Processing,* 2007, vol. 55, pp. 4487-4496. Holobar, Minetto & Farina. *Journal of Neural Engineering*, 2014.

C4 – Accuracy assessment: PNR



Simultaneous surface & intramuscular EMG acquistion



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Holobar et al. J. Neural Eng. 2014

C1 - EMG channel selection & extension



C1 - EMG channel selection & extension (






Abductor Pollicis Brevis muscle





First dorsal interosseous muscle





Gastrocnemius Medialis Muscle





Gastrocnemius Lateralis Muscle



C4 - Bad MU removal





Processing pipeline







Processing pipeline: Segment D

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D2- MU spike outliers removal







D3- Iterative spike-based MU optimization









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D5 - Witness-based spike sorting



- Selected MU spikes in identified spike train act as witnesses of decomposition accuracy.
- Witnesses are used to test other spikes.
- Tested spike cannot be its own witness.













Processing pipeline









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EXAMPLE 1: MU tracking across different contraction levels

Frančič & Holobar, IEEE Access 2021



First Dorsal Interosseous (FDI)



	10	20	applicatio 30	n MVC % 40	50	70
10	10.4 ± 3 (20, 30, 40, 50, 70)	8.7 ± 2.7 (30, 40, 50, 70)	7.4 ± 2.7 (40, 50, 70)	3.9 ± 4	3.3 ± 3.6	1.7 ± 2.1
20	9.7 ± 2.8 (20, 50, 70)	13.6 ± 2.1 (40, 50, 70)	12 ± 2.1 (40, 50, 70)	9.4 ± 2.8 (50, 70)	5.9 ± 3.6 (70)	2 ± 2.8
∾ 0 M 20 20	7.9 ± 3.7 (20, 30, 40)	12.9 ± 3.3 (³⁰⁾	16.7 ± 2.9 (40, 50, 70)	14.7 ± 3.5 (50, 70)	10.4 ± 4.9 (70)	5.1 ± 4.8
stimation 05	4.7 ± 3.9 (20, 30, 40, 50)	9.3 ± 3.5 (40, 50)	13.1 ± 4.5 (40)	15.9 ± 4.5 (70)	14.6 ± 4.2 (70)	8.6 ± 5.4
Φ 50	3.6 ± 4.3 (20, 30, 40, 50, 70)	7.1 ± 4.9 (40, 50, 70)	10 ± 4.4 (50, 70)	12 ± 4.5 (50)	15.9 ± 3.1 (70)	12.3 ± 3.7
70	1.9 ± 3.6 (30, 40, 50, 70)	2.7 ± 4.4 (30, 40, 50, 70)	4.3 ± 4.3 (50, 70)	6.1 ± 5.8 (50, 70)	9.7 ± 5.6 (70)	15.6 ± 5.6



Research

EXAMPLE 2:

MU tracking across different contraction levels

Frančič & Holobar, IEEE Access 2021



		N T	lo. of trad ibialis An applicatio	cked MUs terior (TA n MVC %		HYBF Neuf
	10	20	30	50	60	70
10	11.7 ± 5.2 (20, 30, 50, 60, 70)	6 ± 4.8 (30, 50, 60, 70)	3.1 ± 4.5 (70)	0.3 ± 0.5	0.1 ± 0.3	0.2 ± 0.4
20	6.4 ± 4.5 (20, 50, 60, 70)	13.8 ± 5.4 (30, 50, 60, 70)	7.6 ± 6.3 (50, 60, 70)	1.8 ± 2.8 (60, 70)	0.2 ± 0.4	0.1 ± 0.3
° 2 MVC	4.8 ± 4.6 (20, 30, 70)	9.4 ± 5.4 (30, 50, 60, 70)	14.1 ± 6 (50, 60, 70)	3.7 ± 3.4 (60, 70)	1.1 ± 1.5	0.2 ± 0.7
stimation 05	2 ± 3 (30, 50, 60)	4.3 ± 5.7 (30, 50, 60)	8.8 ± 5.9 (50, 70)	17.2 ± 6.4 (60, 70)	8.9 ± 5.9 (70)	1.2 ± 1.3
ω 60	1 ± 1.7 (30, 50, 60, 70)	2.1 ± 2.2 (30, 50, 60)	5.7 ± 3.1 (50, 60)	14 ± 5.3 (60, 70)	16.9 ± 6.7 (70)	5.3 ± 4.6
70	0.2 ± 0.7 (20, 30, 50, 60, 70)	0.2 ± 0.7 (30, 50, 60, 70)	1.6 ± 1.7 (50, 60, 70)	7.1 ± 4 (60, 70)	11 ± 5.3 (70)	13.8 ± 4.7

EXAMPLE 4: MU tracking across different contraction levels

Frančič & Holobar, IEEE Access 2021



		No. of tracked MUs Biceps Brachi (BB)					
	10	20	30	50	60	70	
10	5.8 ± 2.9 (20, 30, 50, 60)	0.5 ± 0.8 (50)	0.7 ± 1.2 (50)	0.5 ± 0.5	0.3 ± 0.5	0.7 ± 1.6	
20	2 ± 2.4	4.7 ± 3 (30, 50, 60, 70)	2.2 ± 2.6	1.3 ± 2 (60)	1 ± 1.3	0.5 ± 0.8	
° 30 00 00 0	0.8 ± 2 (30, 50, 70)	2.5 ± 4 (30, 60)	6 ± 3 (50, 60, 70)	2.3 ± 2.1	0.8 ± 0.8	0.5 ± 0.8	
stimatio	0.5 ± 1.2 (30, 50, 60, 70)	1 ± 2 (50, 70)	2.8 ± 3.2	6.8 ± 2.9 (60, 70)	1.7 ± 2	0.3 ± 0.8	
ω 60	0.5 ± 1.2 (50, 60, 70)	0.2 ± 0.4 (50, 60, 70)	1.7 ± 2.4	4.2 ± 4.3 (60, 70)	5.8 ± 4 (70)	0.2 ± 0.4	
70	0 ± 0 (20, 50, 70)	0 ± 0 (50, 70)	0.8 ± 1.2	1.7 ± 1.2	0.7 ± 1.2 (70)	4.8 ± 4.1	



Segment E - Physiological assessment: Isometric voluntary contractions

Physiological Assessment & Applications



Voluntary contractions: identified MUs

Gastrocnemius medialis, 30% MVC





Smoothed MU discharge rates



Gastrocnemius medialis, 30% MVC

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Activity index (AI)

hdEMG model: $\mathbf{y}(n) = \overline{\mathbf{H}}\overline{\mathbf{t}}(n) + \boldsymbol{\omega}(n)$

MU spike trains: $t_j(n) = \sum_k \delta\left(n - \tau_j(k)\right), j=1...N$ MUAPs: $\overline{\mathbf{H}} = [\overline{\mathbf{H}_1} \dots \overline{\mathbf{H}_N}]$ $\overline{\mathbf{H}_j} = \begin{bmatrix} \overline{h_{1j}}(0) & \dots & \overline{h_{1j}}(L) \\ \vdots & \ddots & \vdots \\ \overline{h_{Mj}}(0) & \dots & \overline{h_{Mj}}(L) \end{bmatrix}$

CKC: $\hat{t}_j(n) = \mathbf{c}_{t_j \mathbf{y}}^T \mathbf{C}_{\mathbf{y}}^{-1} \mathbf{y}(n) \approx \mathbf{c}_{t_j \mathbf{t}}^T \mathbf{C}_{\mathbf{t}}^{-1} \mathbf{t}(n)$

MU filter $\mathbf{c}_{t_i y}^{\mathrm{T}} \mathbf{C}_{y}^{-1}$ needs to be estimated for every motor unit

CST – sum of individual MU spike trains (Negro & Farina, J. of Physiology 2011)

Activity Index: $AI(n) = y(n)^T C_y^{-1} y(n) \approx \overline{t}(n)^T C_{\overline{t}}^{-1} \overline{t}(n)$ superimposed spike trains from all MUs in the detection volume





Activity index & coherence between GL and GM

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MUs

0.5



Kutoš et al. Activity index outperforms cumulative spike train and amplitude envelopes in surface EMG coherence analysis, ISEK2024.

IFLIRO



Segment E - Physiological assessment: Dynamic & fatiguing contractions

MUAPs are not stationary – they can change intensively & fast



Shortening of Biceps Brachii



Glaser & Holobar, IEEE TNSRE 2019

The Fatigue Plot





Global metrics (RMS, ARV, MNF, MDF) are easy to calculate but tricky to interpret. Their values depend on many internal factors.







Dynamic HDEMG model



MUAPs are functions of time

- Repeated dynamic contractions: cyclostationary
- Nonrepeated dynamic or/and fatiguing contractions: nonstationary





MUAP shape prediction on each HDEMG channel

Can we predict the change of MUAP based on already identified changes?

Can we integrate this prediction into MU filter?





Kramberger & Holobar, IEEE Access 2021

MU tracking

Kramberger & Holobar, IEEE Access 2021

MU 5







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Processing pipeline







Processing pipeline








Segment E - Physiological assessment: Elicited contractions

Reflexes, Electrical or Magnetic Stimulations



Voluntary vs. elicited contraction: MU firing patterns & EMG





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Segment C – MU filter estimation





H reflexes – soleus

- 12 healthy males (33.6 ± 5.8 years, 79 ± 4.8 kg, 1,81± 0.05 m)
- HD-EMG at 5120 Hz
- Voluntary contractions
 - 10, 20, 30, 40, 50 and 70 %MVC
- Constant current high voltage stimulator
 - rectangular electrical impulses (1 ms) to the tibial nerve
- 60 H-reflexes evoked at three levels of muscle activity:
 - rest (REST)
 - plantar flexion at 10% (C10)
 - plantar flexion at 20% of MVC (C20)







Kalc et al. IEEE Trans. on Neural Sys. and Rehab. Eng. 31 (2022)

H reflexes –soleus

Kalc et al. IEEE Trans. on Neural Sys. and Rehab. Eng. 31 (2022)





H – REST



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H – 10% MVC (C10)





Segment F - Physiological assessment: EEG processing

Physiological Assessment & Applications



EMG & EEG: pathological tremor

Holobar & Farina: IEEE Sig. Proc. Magazine, 2021

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CONCLUSIONS



- HDEMG processing pipelines are relatively complex & contain main parameters
- Well defined quality measures support informative parameter selection
- Different steps/segments of pipelines updated independently
- Pipelines need to be adapted to the signal acquisition conditions (isometric, dynamic, elicited).
- "Per aspera ad astra" in all the pipeline's segments





Questions?



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