

# Does needle rotation improve lesion targeting?

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## Abstract

**Background** Image-guided robots are manipulators that operate based on medical images. Perhaps the most common class of image-guided robots are robots for needle interventions. Typically, these robots actively position and/or orient a needle guide, but needle insertion is still done by the physician. While this arrangement may have safety advantages and keep the physician in control of needle insertion, actuated needle drivers can incorporate other useful features.

**Methods** We first present a new needle driver that can actively insert and rotate a needle. With this device we investigate the use of needle rotation in controlled in-vitro experiments performed with a specially developed revolving needle driver.

**Results** These experiments show that needle rotation can improve targeting and may reduce errors by as much as 70%.

**Conclusion** The new needle driver provides a unique kinematic architecture that enables insertion with a compact mechanism. Perhaps the most interesting conclusion of the study is that lesions of soft tissue organs may not be perfectly targeted with a needle without using special techniques, either manually or with a robotic device. The results of this study show that needle rotation may be an effective method of reducing targeting errors. Copyright © 2011 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

**Keywords** robot; needle driver; image guide

## Introduction

The growing acceptance of minimally invasive treatments as an alternative to open surgery has created a demand for more accurate and precise surgical technologies. Medical robots are one technology that could contribute to this need.

Needle insertion is a commonly performed component of minimally invasive procedures and clinical interventions and is extensively used for diagnostic and therapeutic purposes (1). These procedures include percutaneous organ or tumour biopsy, cryo- or radiofrequency needle insertion for tumour-ablative therapies, such as percutaneous liver tumour ablation, and brachytherapy needle insertion for uterine or prostate cancer treatment. Other needle-based procedures include vessel needle access as the initial part of all endovascular procedures, and percutaneous needle insertion for drainage treatment, such as percutaneous cholecystostomy tube insertion for gallbladder decompression, or as the initial step in more complicated procedures, such as percutaneous nephrolithotripsy.

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Substantial improvements have been made in this field from the time when technology limited physician's feedback to simple palpation of suspicious lesions for planning biopsy needle access. Improvements include refinements in needle technology, such as: optimizing thickness, point geometry and triggering mechanisms; using advanced imaging modalities for guiding purposes; and ultimately incorporating medical robots to place the needle. These improvements made precise needle targeting feasible and more reliable, and continued work promises to further advance these technologies.

However, there are still technological challenges to be overcome, including problems related to needle bending, soft tissue deflection and breath-induced movements (2,3), which influence the overall targeting accuracy. Needle delivery errors have a direct impact on the outcome of the procedure. Moreover, complications may also be related to needle misplacement. The common assumption is that the needle remains straight during insertion, yet this is not always the case, particularly with thinner needles. During insertion the needle is likely to encounter variable resistance as it crosses heterogeneous tissues (4). The axial force of needle insertion is related to tissue characteristics and needle mechanical and geometric properties, e.g. in percutaneous kidney access the needle encounters a tougher layer of skin, softer muscle and fat, then easily passes the parenchyma, to finally 'poke' the collecting system. Even though the main components of these forces are axial, tissue deflections may create lateral displacements and forces that cause needle bending and mis-targeting in both lateral and axial directions. Therefore, even if the needle is directly aimed at the target before the insertion, the needle may not hit it due to these factors.

Some investigators have proposed methods for modelling forces during insertion (4–6), representing force balance in a classic free-body diagram. Axial forces include cutting, friction and clamping forces. The cutting force is assumed to be the force acting at the needle point while advancing the needle. Its magnitude is affected by the shape of the needle point and tissue characteristics. The friction force acts mainly along the needle shaft and is assumed to have Coulomb static, kinetic and viscous friction components. A so-called 'clamping' force is also considered for the wedging effort of the needle point to make room for its passage, the magnitude of this force being affected by the needle gauge. However, the variability and uncertainty of soft tissue properties along the needle path make it difficult to create realistic models and predictions of needle insertion. Nevertheless, this has been an area of active research (4,7–9).

Other solutions have been proposed to improve targeting precision and accuracy, including the use of needles with a diamond point rather than a bevelled point to minimize lateral drift, the use of high-velocity insertion, rotary or linear oscillations, and needle rotation (7,10–13). The effect of needle geometry on insertion

forces and needle bending was shown to be significant (4) and, as well known by clinicians, bevelled point needles drift laterally. Techniques have been introduced for overcoming the drift (10), including midway opposite rotation, needle rotation and model-based rotation, depending on tissue and needle properties. Needle-steering methods have been proposed to overcome bending and soft tissue deflections by real-time needle control. These methods aim to reach the target while avoiding obstacles or critical structures along the needle path (14–17).

Experiments analysing the influence of insertion speed revealed that speed typically increases axial forces and hence eventually causes more tissue deflection and target displacement (12). However, it is likely that high-velocity insertions (needle 'shooting') could potentially improve targeting (18–21). In any case, during minimally invasive procedures quick insertions could be employed to minimize errors contributed by patient and physiological motion. Linear oscillation of the needle was found to minimize target displacement but led to added tissue damage (12). Rotary oscillation at low frequency made little difference; in fact this increased axial forces, which were directly related to target displacement.

However, continuous needle rotation may be beneficial. As shown in this paper and observed by others (13), continuous needle rotation lowers lateral needle deflection, which maintains the needle on a straighter path and reduces needle friction, causing less soft tissue compression and target displacement. Our experiments are performed with a specially designed robot equipped with a custom needle driver, the revolving needle driver (RND). The driver supports the needle from its barrel and head and can rotate the needle in a drill-like motion. Built-in force sensors are used to measure the forces exerted on the needle. The driver was designed to be used in conjunction with our AcuBot robot system (22), which was intended mainly for X-ray-guided interventions and can be installed on computed tomography (CT) scanners.

Most image-guided robots position and orientate a needle guide. The needle is then manually placed through the guide (23). This approach has certain advantages, such as keeping the physician in direct control of the needle, instrument simplicity and perhaps facilitating regulatory approvals for clinical trials and use. However, the use of a fully actuated needle driver allows for fully automated robotic image-guided procedures, as shown by others (13,24–26) and presented herein.

In this paper we present a feature-rich needle driver and the results of a set of *in vitro* experiments to assess the influence of rotation on axial resistance forces and target displacement. The conclusions summarize the results and offer suggestions that could be instrumental with other devices, as well as manual needle handling.

## Methods

### Revolving needle driver (RND) and robotic system

The revolving needle driver (RND) has the main function of inserting and retracting a needle. The driver also presents other degrees of freedom (DOF) and auxiliary features. The RND could be used independently (handheld or supported by a positioning arm) or in conjunction with image-guided robots, such as the AcuBot robot (22) developed in our laboratory. The AcuBot presents a bridge-like structure that mounts over the table of a CT scanner and compact geometry near its distal end that enables it to fit within the bore of the scanner. The AcuBot base provides the RND with 5 DOF. The RND is supported by the remote centre of motion (RCM) module (27,28), a passive positioning arm, a 3-DOF Cartesian positioning stage and a bridge support over the table. Figure 1 shows the RND supported by the RCM and the AcuBot robot attached to its control cabinet when not in use.

The RCM is a 2-DOF robotic orientation module that orientates the RND about two orthogonal directions ( $R_x$  and  $R_z$ ) while maintaining the fixed location of the RCM point at the tip of the bottom nozzle point. In operation, the tip of the needle is aligned with the bottom nozzle point and placed at the desired skin entry point. The RND presents two decoupled DOF for inserting the needle ( $T_y$ ) and rotating it ( $R_y$ ).

### Needle insertion mechanism

Traditionally, translational motion is created with slider (prismatic, translational) joints. However, these mechanisms are commonly longer than their stroke, which makes the driver taller than the needle it handles. This may create interference problems when operating in the compact space of a medical imager. The RND uses a

novel compact mechanism to achieve quasi-linear motion with rotary joints. The kinematic diagram of the needle insertion mechanism is presented in Figure 2.

The mechanism consists of a crank  $P_1-P_2$ , the rod  $P_2-P_4$ , the pin (revolute) joints  $P_1$ ,  $P_2$  and  $P_3$  and the slider joint  $P_3$ ; the pin and slider joints  $P_3$  have normal

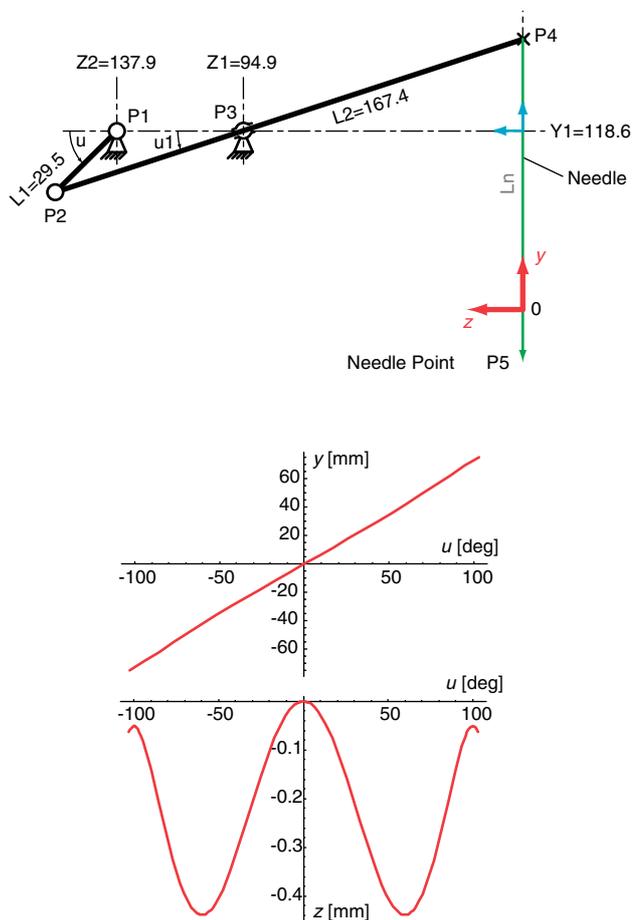


Figure 2. Kinematic diagram of the needle insertion mechanism (left). The  $y$  and  $z$  coordinates of the needle point as a function of the driving crank angle  $u$  (right)

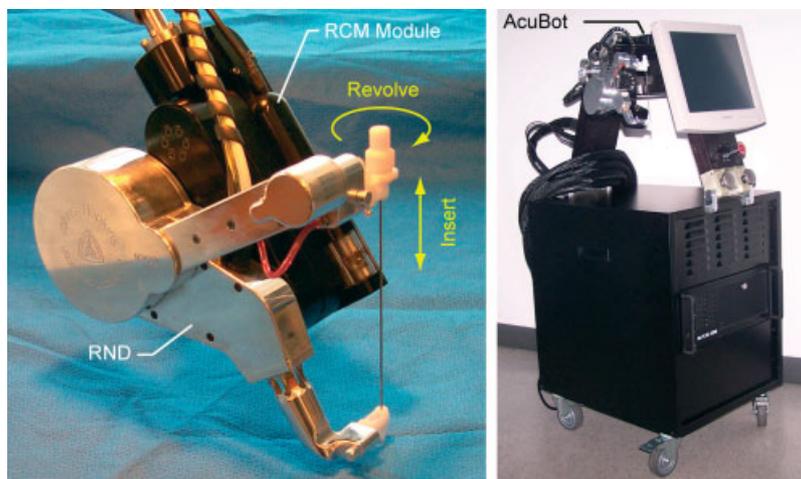


Figure 1. Revolving needle driver supported by the RCM orientation module (left) and the AcuBot robot with its control cabinet (right)

intersecting axes. Near-linear motion of the end point  $P_4$  (needle head) along the axis  $Y$  is achieved by optimizing the size of the mechanism, where the optimum values (scalable) are shown in the figure. The direct kinematics of the mechanism, describing the position of the needle point  $P_5$  in the  $XYZ$  coordinate system as a function of the crank angle  $u$ , is given in equations (1):

$$y(u) = L_1 \sin(u) \left( \frac{L_2}{(L_1 \cos(u) - Z_1 + Z_2)} - 1 \right) + Y_1 - L_n$$

$$z(u) = L_1 \cos(u) - \frac{L_2}{\sqrt{1 + \frac{L_1^2 \sin^2(u)}{(L_1 \cos(u) - Z_1 + Z_2)^2}}} + Z_2 \quad (1)$$

The dependence of the  $y$  and  $z$  coordinates on the driving angle  $u$  is also shown in Figure 2. These show that the insertion motion is nearly linear, with a small lateral displacement ( $<0.5$  mm). As shown later, the lateral displacement effect on the direction of the needle is further minimized by the needle guide of the nozzle.

Closed loop control of the crank angle  $u$  is performed with feedback from the motor encoder. A redundant encoder is used for safety purposes, along with a watchdog circuit. The encoder is custom constructed with two optical sensors (Omron EE-SPX842) spaced to implement a quadrature encoder over the teeth of the final gear of the transmission chain (Berg PFA 94-80, 80 teeth).

The orientation of the rod  $P_2$ - $P_4$  changes when the needle is inserted. Therefore, a parallel motion mechanism is used to maintain the direction of the needle head during insertion, as shown in Figure 3. This mechanism uses two belts, connected between equal pair pulleys  $P_1$ - $P_2$  and  $P_2$ - $P_4$ . Because the first pulley  $P_1$  is connected to the base of the RND, the end pulley  $P_4$  maintains the same orientation (parallel mechanism), independent of the position of the needle insertion mechanism. The head of the needle is driven by pulley  $P_4$ , which presents quasi-translational motion.

## Needle rotation and release mechanisms

The needle is spun from its head through a gear transmission, as shown in Figure 4. The head of the needle is fitted with a gear that can be easily placed by hand. Needle adapters are used to accommodate commercial needles of various sizes (Cook DGB-18-15.0 needle shown). The nozzle of the driver is sized to match the gauge of the needle. A small size geared servomotor (Maxon Motor) is enclosed in the  $P_4$  body.

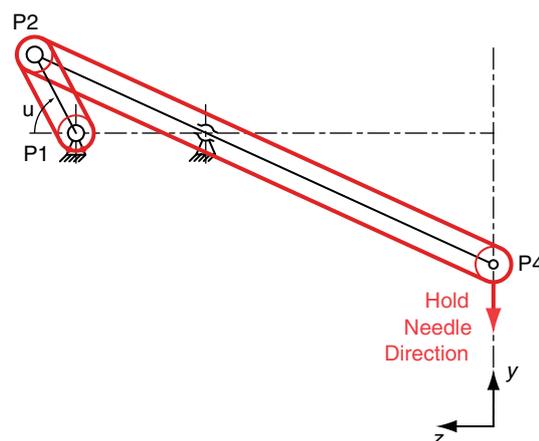


Figure 3. Parallel motion mechanism used over the needle insertion mechanism to maintain the direction of the needle during insertion

The needle driver can also release the needle on command. As shown in Figure 5, the needle is held with two grippers at the head of the needle and at the bottom through the nozzle. The head gripper revolves and inserts the needle while the nozzle guides its direction. Each gripper has two finger-like arms that clip (fasten) for holding and move outwards to release the needle. Mounting the needle is done manually by closing the fingers, while the release is actuated by a common pneumatic command that simultaneously releases both finger mechanisms. An outward opening motion was provided so that the release action does not disturb the position of the needle but simply lets go.

For sterilization, the driver is covered with a sterile bag that also covers the other parts of the robotic arm. The two needle adapters and the two grippers are sterilized and disposable. The grippers pierce through the sterile bag and mount with eccentric locks.

## Force sensors

Two custom-built force sensors are part of the driver. One sensor measures the three force components exerted at the nozzle point. The other sensor measures the axial force of needle insertion, using a custom torque sensor connected on the transmission chain of the insertion axis with full-bridge thin-beam load cells (Omega LCL-005). The nozzle sensor is custom-built within the lower arm supporting the barrel gripper (Figure 6). Six stress concentration regions have been modelled for six identical strain gauges (HBM 1-LY13-3/120) to measure the corresponding stains. Their geometry was modelled using geometric element modelling methods in Pro/Engineer (Parametric Technology Corp.), so that the resulting strains fall within the measurement range of the strain gauges (0–50 N forces were simulated at the nozzle point about the  $XYZ$  directions).

**Does needle rotation improve lesion targeting?**

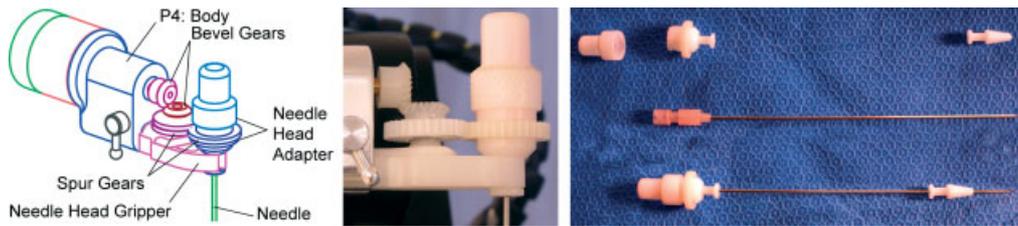


Figure 4. Needle head gripper assembly with rotation mechanism and needle adapters with gear for revolving

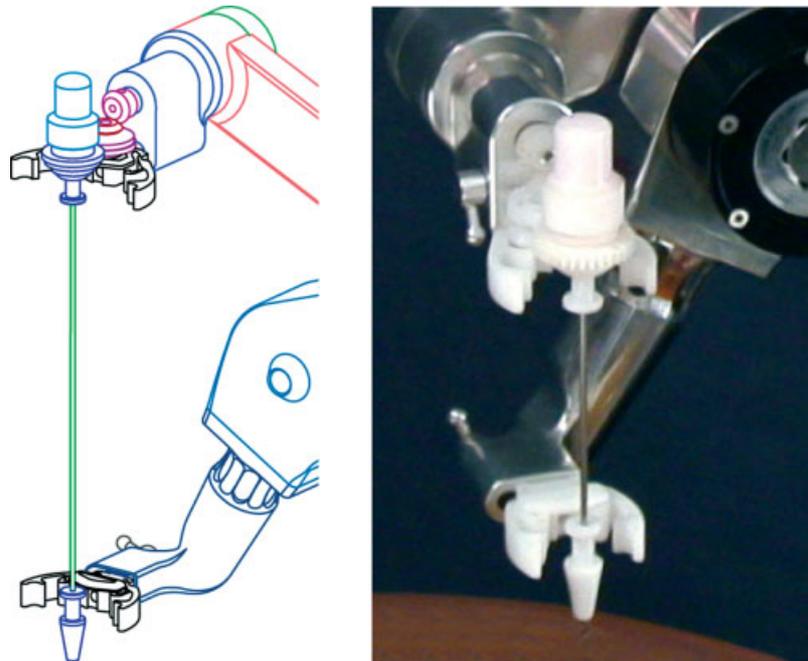


Figure 5. Grippers swing aside to release needle under computer control

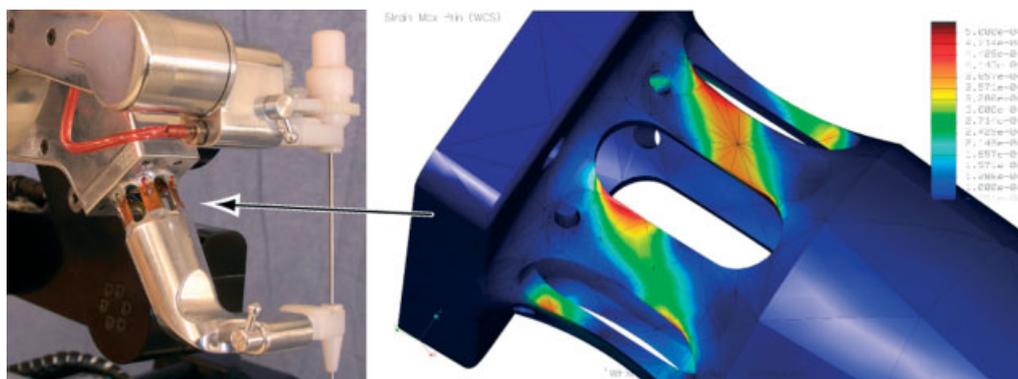


Figure 6. Experimental set-up: AcuBot robot with RND and translucent gelatin box (left), needle and targets (right)

The mapping  $K$  of the six-dimensional (6D) strain space  $X$  and the 3D Cartesian space of forces  $F$  is chosen as:

$$\begin{matrix} \vec{F} \\ [3 \times 1] \end{matrix} = \begin{matrix} K \\ [3 \times 6] \end{matrix} \begin{matrix} \vec{X} \\ [6 \times 1] \end{matrix} \quad (2)$$

where the calibration matrix  $K$  is determined using a linear least-squares method over a set of  $m \geq 6$  calibration experiments, with singular value decomposition (SVD) of

the strain matrix  $X$  augmented over  $m$  experiments:

$$\begin{aligned} F &= K \cdot U \cdot [diagW] \cdot V^T \\ K &= F \cdot V \cdot [diagW]^T \cdot U^T \end{aligned} \quad (3)$$

With geometric element model simulated data, the calibration errors are in the order of 0.01% measured on the force vector norm. The experimental calibration of the sensor is facilitated by the RCM orientation module

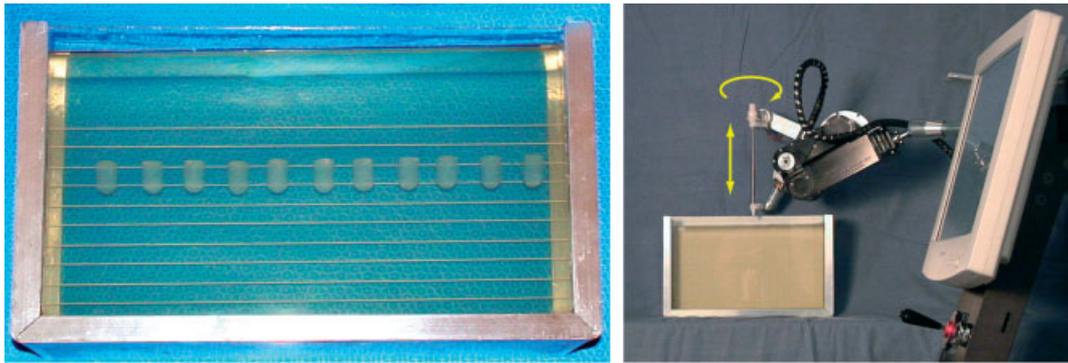


Figure 7. Built-in custom nozzle force sensor and geometric element model design

supporting the RND, which can precisely change the orientation of the needle nozzle so that the sensor may easily be calibrated against a scale. The nozzle is pressed against the scale to various loads (range 1–25 N) and RCM angles spanning the motion envelope. The components of the force  $\vec{F}$  are determined by projecting the scale reading in the  $XYZ$  directions according to the inclination angles of the RCM module. The corresponding strain vector  $\vec{X}$  is read from the gauges. Experimentally, the sensor was successfully calibrated with <5% norm errors.

### Gelatin mock-up design and construction

A mock-up was made, embedding stiffer targets within a softer gelatin base contained within a transparent box. The box includes an aluminium frame and glass panes (260 mm length  $\times$  160 mm height  $\times$  50 mm width). The box was filled with transparent gelatin embedding 12 targets, 10 mm diameter  $\times$  15 mm tall, so that the needle and the targets can be visually observed during the experiments, as shown in Figure 7. Horizontal thin rubber strings spaced 10 mm apart are tied inside the box to show the deformations of the gelatin base. The strings are not attached to the targets.

The targets are made of 300 Bloom gelatin powder (FX Warehouse Inc., FL, USA) in solution with sorbitol, glycerin and water (in 3:3:2:1 parts by volume, respectively), mixed well and heated to boiling. The solution is poured into a mould, cooled and extracted. Each target is then briefly submersed in molten wax and cooled to create a thin isolation layer. Twelve equally spaced targets are suspended on needles supported from the top of the box. The stiffness of the targets is approximately 50 points on the Shore OO scale.

The gelatin base is made of the same 300 Bloom powder but 12% concentration in water, mixed and heated to 55–60°C until it becomes clear. The gelatin is then carefully poured into the box until it covers the targets. The wax coat prevents the two gelatin components from mixing because of its higher melting point. When cooled, the needles suspending the targets

are withdrawn and gelatin base is added to fill the mock-up box. The mock-up is then placed in a refrigerator and maintained above freezing temperature overnight. On the morning of the experiment, the gel is left to warm at room temperature for 1 h before needle insertion experiments begin. The stiffness of the gelatin base is in the order of 20 Shore OO.

The above design has been conceptualized and refined starting from an initial experimental set-up in which swine kidneys were placed in the gelatin base. However, in this set-up experimental measurements were highly dependent on the location of needle insertion within the heterogeneous kidney target. Soft rubber targets were also considered, but high friction between the metallic needle and rubber was unrealistic. The homogeneous gelatin-based target described above does not include natural tissues but provides a controllable environment for comparing insertions. For simplicity, direct correlation of absolute value mechanical properties of the mock-up with natural tissues was not addressed. The mock-up simulates relative stiffness differences of pathological nodules within an organ but is not a model of a specific organ such as kidney, liver, lung, etc. The model was designed to controllably determine the effect of revolving the needle. Eight mock-ups were made using the same box.

### Experimental set-up and statistical analysis

Diamond point (triangular pyramid) 18 gauge needles (Cook DGB-18-15.0) were inserted, using the robot, through the gelatin towards 90 mm deep targets with speeds of 5, 25 and 50 mm/s. The second independent variable was the rotation of the needle, set at 0, 5, 52 and 101 rpm (speed was selected with a slider control). Rotation at 52 rpm was done both throughout the insertion or only for 5 s after reaching the target point, as shown in Table 1. Eleven insertions per group were performed, using eight mock-ups, and a target was not hit more than twice in order to maintain its bond to the gelatin base.

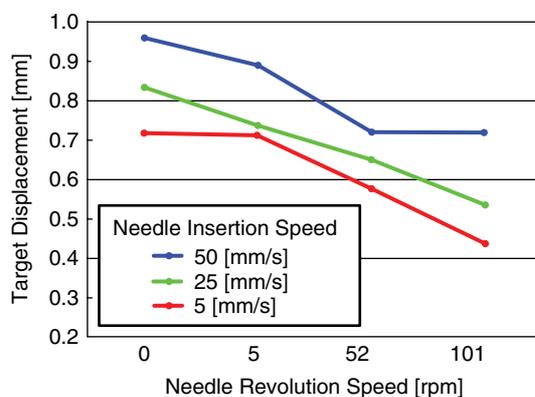
## Does needle rotation improve lesion targeting?

**Table 1. Experimental design: 15 groups, five groups per insertion speed, 11 replicated tests per group**

Experimental group	Insertion speed (mm/s)	Rotation speed (rpm)	Rotation method
1	5	0	No rotation (control)
2		5	Rotate throughout insertion (pre-revolve)
3		52	Rotate after reaching target point (post-revolve)
4		101	
5		52	
6	25	0	No rotation (control)
7		5	Rotate throughout insertion (pre-revolve)
8		52	Rotate after reaching target point (post-revolve)
9		101	
10		52	
11	50	0	No rotation (control)
12		5	Rotate throughout insertion (pre-revolve)
13		52	Rotate after reaching target point (post-revolve)
14		101	
15		52	

Axial forces and needle position were recorded every 0.2 s during insertion. Digital high-definition video camera recording (Sony HDR-HC1) at 29 frames/s was used for measuring the displacement of the target. The camera was placed at 200 mm from the mock-up and the scale was measured from a calibrated background. The frame sequences were processed with Adobe Premiere and Photoshop (Adobe Systems Inc.). Images captured provided target displacement measurements with a scale of 14 pixels/mm. The shape of the target was superimposed over the images to determine its location, as shown in Figure 8.

Displacements and forces with rotation were compared relative to the control group (no rotation) using Student's *t*-test.  $p \leq 0.05$  was considered significant.



**Figure 8. Target displacement vs. needle rotation speed for three speeds of needle insertion**

## Results

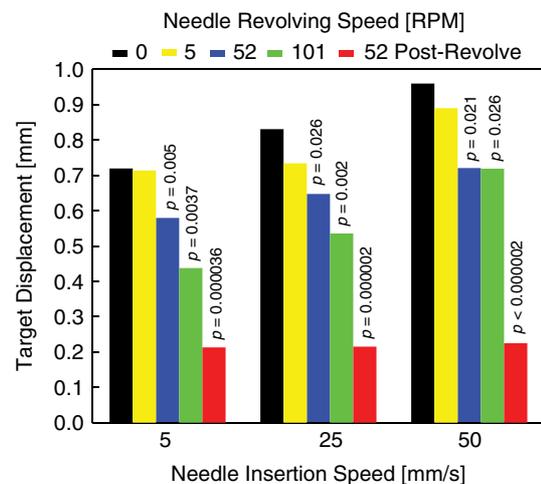
### Target displacement

As expected, these controlled and visually observable experiments confirmed that the targets are pushed by the needle when the needle starts to penetrate the target, because the targets are stiffer than the gelatin base [see Supporting information, Figure S1 (movie)]. The experiments also showed that the speed of needle insertion and its rotation affects the amount of displacement.

As shown in Figure 9, the displacement of the target is directly related to the speed of insertion and inversely related to revolution. Each point in this graph averages the results of one experiment group (as defined in Table 1), consisting of 11 needle insertions. Without rotation, the average target displacements are 0.72, 0.83 and 0.96 mm for insertion speeds of 5, 25 and 50 mm/s, respectively. But with rotation (101 rpm) these displacements diminish to 0.44, 0.54 and 0.72 mm, respectively. Relative to the no-rotation control, rotation gives 39.2%, 35.5% and 25.1% improvements. These changes are statistically significant for the two higher rotary speeds (52 and 101 rpm) in all experiment sets, but not as pronounced for the lower speed (5 rpm).

It should be noted that the experiments above measure the displacement of the target as soon as the insertion stops (pre-revolve). However, a very interesting observation is that a substantial target displacement reduction can be achieved by rotating the needle after insertion (post-revolve). Post-revolve can be done either by continuing the insertion rotation or starting rotation after insertion.

The bar graph in Figure 10 gathers the no-, pre- and post-revolve average results of all groups of experiments. For the three speeds of insertion (5, 25 and 50 mm/s), the reductions in displacement achieved by post-revolve



**Figure 9. Target displacements with no-revolve, when rotating while inserting (pre-revolve) and rotating after the insertion (post-revolve). The confidence in the lower results relative to the no-revolve control is shown by the probability values (*p*)**

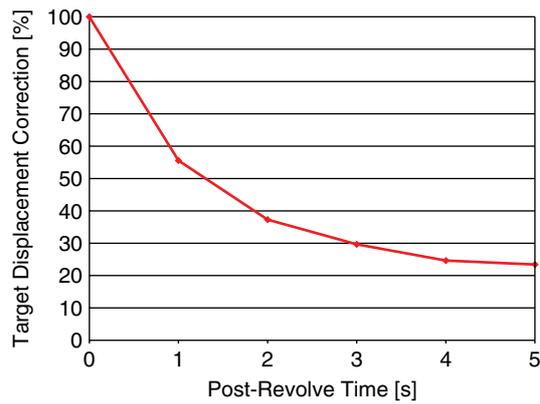


Figure 10. Target displacement during 5 s post-rotate (52 rpm) shows that the target moves backward over the needle, reducing targeting errors

(52 rpm) with and relative to no pre-rotate are 70.4%, 74.1% and 76.6% and are statistically significant for all cases.

Another interesting observation is the time-domain target displacement induced by the post-rotate, as depicted in Figure 11. Post-rotate causes the target that was pushed by the insertion to back up over the needle, thus reducing the initial displacement. The exponential decay approaches asymptotically a remnant targeting error (displacement) within a short time. Based on this observation, 5 s of revolution time was used for all post-rotate experiments described.

Although post-rotate displacement corrections are similar between no- and pre-rotate experiments, pre-rotate may make a difference in terms of the possible

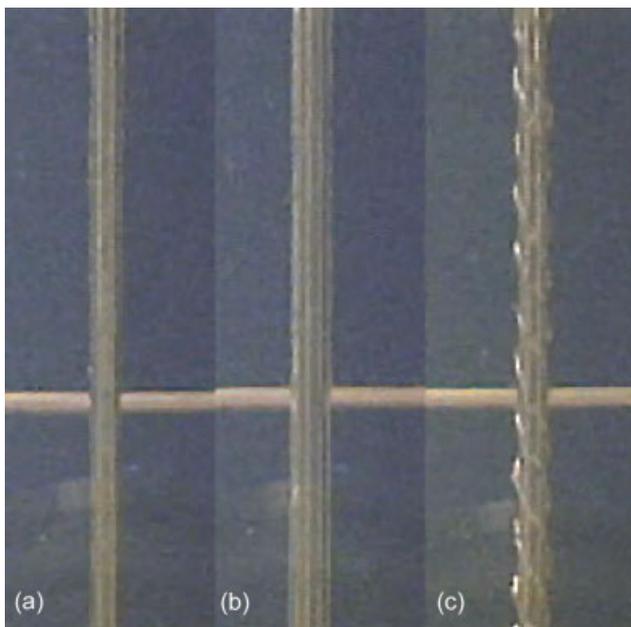


Figure 11. Three images of the needle shaft inserted in the gelatin with: (a) no pre-rotate, showing no apparent gelatin marks; (b) no pre-rotate, but post-rotate showing no apparent gelatin marks; and (c) pre-rotate (5 mm/s and 52 rpm), showing helical marks in the gelatin

tissue damage that the rotating needle may cause during insertion. Figure 12 shows a detailed view of the needle path in the no-rotate, no pre-rotate with post-rotate, and pre-rotate cases. It appears that rotating the needle during insertion leaves spiral marks on the gelatin path. These are more pronounced with higher revolution and lower insertion speeds (finer pitch). In contrast, post-rotate did not show this pattern. All these experiments used diamond point needles. With bevel points and high speed rotation more tissue damage could possibly occur, but this was not investigated in this study.

## Force of needle insertion

The force required to insert the needle through the gelatin mass and then the target varies with the depth of needle insertion. For this reason all targets were placed at a constant depth. The axial force applied by the needle immediately after the insertion was evaluated for all experiments. Each bar graph in Figure 12 shows the average force of needle insertion over the 11 insertions in each group of experiments. As for the displacements, the force is higher for faster insertions and for lower-revolution speeds. Without rotation, forces are 2.36, 2.54 and 3.35 N for insertion speeds of 5, 25 and 50 mm/s, respectively. With 101 rpm rotation, the respective forces are 1.67, 1.69 and 2.88 N, representing a reduction of 29.3%, 33.7% and 13.9%.

In the second following the insertion, the above remnant forces show an average reduction of 27.5% without rotation, and can be further reduced by post-rotate to 33.2%, 52.6% and 58.6% of the original values for the 5, 52 and 101 rpm groups.

## Discussion

Percutaneous needle insertion is a commonly performed minimally invasive procedure, and several researchers

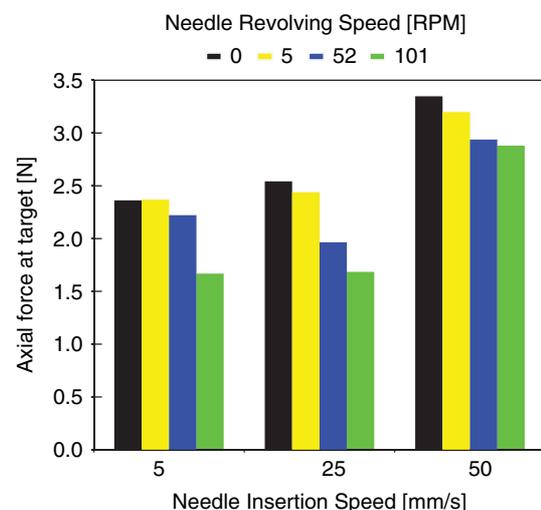


Figure 12. Axial needle force measured at target point vs. needle insertion speed for several needle revolution speeds

## Does needle rotation improve lesion targeting?

have developed robotic systems to assist in the procedure. There are simplicity advantages in manually inserting the needle through a guide, keeping the physician in direct control of the needle and perhaps allowing for simpler regulatory approvals in using these image-guided systems in clinical trials and practice. However, manually inserting the needle reduces the utility of a fully automated system. Automated needle drivers are preferable for certain procedures, including X-ray guidance for reducing radiation exposure, and closed-bore MRI scanners, where manual access at the isocentre is difficult (21,29). Moreover, needle drivers can have additional features, such as rotating the needle as presented here.

The revolving needle driver includes two decoupled DOF for insertion and needle rotation. A new kinematic architecture is used for the needle insertion mechanism that makes it more compact than typical linear stage-based drivers. The kinematics are based on a crank hinged slider rod mechanism that was optimized to render quasi-linear motion. The needle is driven from its head and guided by a nozzle. Two grippers release the needle under a common command. Standard needles of all sizes and types can be used with custom-made adapters. Force sensors measure the force at the nozzle and the force of insertion.

A special gelatin mock-up with targets has been developed so that the effect of rotation can be visually observed and measured in a controllable validation set-up. Experiments using the RND show that forces and target displacements are reduced by rotation. This is likely achieved by breaking static friction on the barrel of the needle. Displacements and forces were quantified. Both are reduced by slower insertions and faster rotation. Forces and displacements are directly related, but strain–stress linearity could not be validated, suggesting that characteristics and effects during needle insertion include components that are beyond elastic and viscous components.

Although rotating the needle provided improved targeting when performed during insertion at high revolve : insert velocity ratios, marks were clearly observable along the tract. This raised concerns about possible tissue damage in clinical use, which does not necessarily preclude the use of rotation but should be considered in risk analyses and raises awareness of the type of needle point used and the magnitude of rotation. However, post-revolving the needle proved highly beneficial and did not create tissue-damage concerns. Experiments showed that rotating the needle in place after insertion helps the target to back up over the needle, much closer to its intended target point, lowering static insertion displacement errors by as much as 70%. However, post-revolve reduces only target displacements, whereas rotating the needle during insertion may provide a straighter trajectory during insertion. This effect has been observed, but represents the object of future experiments.

It is interesting to observe that the conclusion of the study matches and validates the technique that some

skilled physicians use manually, by rolling the needle back and forth between their fingers. In addition, the study shows that just a few rotations are sufficient to reduce most of the displacement and that, even if prolonged rotation is used, these errors are not corrected entirely. To target a stiffer nodule, one would also have to practise an overshoot (insert the needle slightly deeper), but anticipating the amount is a very challenging task that will require comprehensive modelling of live tissues. Trial and error correction under direct image guidance remains a solid practical method as it is commonly done, but even so a level of error is still expected. As shown, with rotation target displacement errors are substantially reduced in a simple manner.

## Conclusion

An active needle driver is presented, including decoupled needle revolving capabilities. The mechanism used for inserting the needle presents an original kinematic structure that makes its body shorter than the needle it handles. The needle insertion study uses a controlled experimental set-up to observe how well a needle can target a stiffer lesion of a soft tissue organ, measuring target displacements in the direction of the needle. *In vitro* experiments show that the needle always displaces the target. Perfect targeting cannot be achieved without special techniques and/or devices. Targeting error corrections of as much as 70% can be achieved by revolving the needle. In this respect, revolving the needle does not necessarily have to be concomitant with insertion. Post-revolving the needle was also shown to provide similar benefits. The results could have implications for future developments in robotic needle placement.

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## Supporting Information

The following supporting information may be found in the online version of this article:

Movie S1. The needle is first advanced to the desired depth in front of the mockup box and the intended target point is marked with a cross. Then, the needle is inserted though the mockup, without rotation (no pre-revolve). This shows how the needle pushes a stiffer target. When rotation is started (post-revolve), the target backs over the needle reducing the error.

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