



HAL
open science

Mechanical behaviour of annulus fibrosus: the role of the fluid phase

Fabien Cherblanc, Dominique Ambard, Adrien Baldit, J.M. Lafosse

► **To cite this version:**

Fabien Cherblanc, Dominique Ambard, Adrien Baldit, J.M. Lafosse. Mechanical behaviour of annulus fibrosus: the role of the fluid phase. 3rd International Conference on Porous Media, Mar 2011, France. pp.Clé USB. hal-00623367

HAL Id: hal-00623367

<https://hal.science/hal-00623367>

Submitted on 14 Sep 2011

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

Mechanical behaviour of annulus fibrosus: the role of the fluid phase

F. Cherblanc^a, D. Ambard^a, A. Baldit^a, J.M. Lafosse^b

^aLMGC, CNRS, University Montpellier 2, 34095 Montpellier cedex 5, France

^bCHU Purpan, Toulouse, France

Key words: intervertebral disc, poro-mechanical behaviour, Poisson's ratio

1. Introduction

The intervertebral disc is a highly-specialized element of the spine that provides flexibility and dissipative capacities. When mechanical loads are transmitted along the spine, the intervertebral disc mainly supports compression and bending stresses. This results in a hydrostatic excessive pressure in the central nucleus pulposus (NP) and generates circumferential tensile stresses in the surrounding annulus fibrosus (AF). To hold these large circumferential strains, the AF tissue is composed of a woven oriented structure of collagen fibres embedded in a highly hydrated matrix. This layout provides some interesting mechanical properties, i.e., an anisotropic and non-linear behaviour is observed when subjected to uniaxial tensile tests [3, 2, 1].

Actually, intervertebral disk tissues can be assimilated to porous media where the liquid phase flow plays a major role in the macroscopic mechanical behaviour. This is classically described by a poro-elastic formulation. The coupling effects between mechanical strains and viscous flows is of major importance when dealing with cell nutrition issues. Indeed, convective flows generated by macroscopic strains enhance to the nutrients transport from vertebrae towards NP cells. When subjected to loading cycles, alternating fluid flows can increase mass exchanges between inner and outer tissues. The strong anisotropy of AF properties could leads to particular flow repartitions that cannot be recovered by classical poro-elastic formulations.

2. Materials and methods

Lumbar discs (L3-L4) were harvested from cadaver of a domestic pig and separated from the vertebral bodies by blunt dissection. From each quadrant (Fig. 1a), one plane-parallel ($2 \times 2 \times 10$ mm) specimen was carved out using a specific tool. Both specimen ends were glued into aluminium rings using cyanoacrylate adhesive (Fig. 1b).

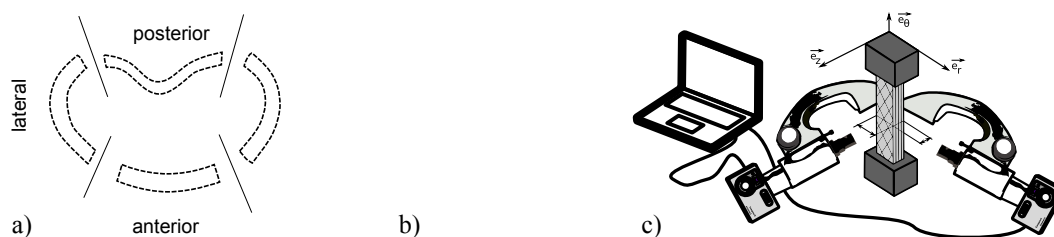


Figure 1: a) Lumbar disc with specimens locations; b) Annulus specimen with aluminium rings; c) Experimental device

The testing device was composed of a Texture Analyzer (LF-Plus, Lloyd Instruments) with a 50 N load cell. The fixed grip was placed inside a transparent bath filled with a 0.15 mol/l *NaCl* solution thermo-regulated at $T = 37^\circ\text{C}$. Two optical microscopes (ZEISS) equipped with digital video cameras were positioned perpendicularly to the tensile direction, \vec{e}_θ , to visualise the transverse thicknesses of samples (Fig. 1c). Each sample was immersed into the thermo-regulated bath between the device grips and stretched during 3 loading cycles from 0 to 1 mm lengthening in order to reach a maximum longitudinal strain of $\varepsilon_{max} = 10\%$. Consecutively, a relaxation test was performed.

3. Experimental results

Considering the evolution of the circumferential tensile stress as a function of strain, a strong non-linear behaviour is systematically observed (Fig. 2a). This leads to the stiffening of the intervertebral disc tissue for large strains. Under loading cycles, a significant hysteresis is observed. This agrees with the essential dissipative function of intervertebral discs. In the second cycle, the dissipated energy is generally lower while the successive cycles converge towards a single curve.

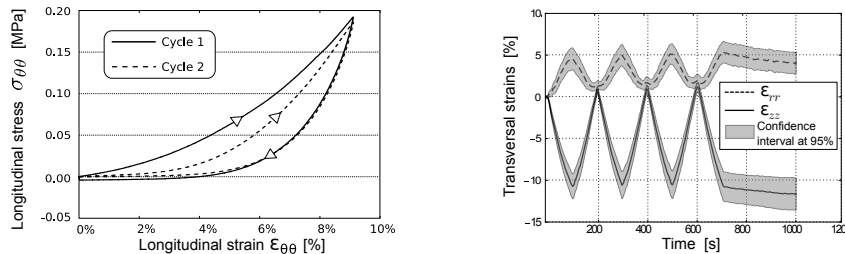


Figure 2: Annulus sample subjected to a cycling uniaxial tensile test - a) Longitudinal stress, σ_θ , as a function of longitudinal strain, $\epsilon_{\theta\theta}$; b) Transverse strains, ϵ_{zz} and ϵ_{rr} , as functions of time, t .

Regarding to the strain in the plan of fibres, ϵ_{zz} , a linear reversible response is consistently observed (Fig. 2b). The Poisson's ratio computed are $\nu_{\theta z} = 0.9 \pm 0.25$. These values lie outside of the regular range valid for isotropic material, $-1 \leq \nu \leq 0.5$. Indeed, the transverse behaviour in the plan of fibres is governed by the reorientation of fibres along the loading direction. In the plan of lamellae, ϵ_{rr} , the linear swelling leads to a negative value of the Poisson's ratio. The strong transverse shrinkage in the plan of fibres generates a fluid over-pressure inside the porous matrix that discharges in the perpendicular direction, i.e., the direction of lamellae.

4. Microstructural model

Based on these observations, a FEM of the AF tissue is proposed. It integrates lengthy elastic cables embedded in a poro-elastic matrix (Fig 3b). With few physical parameters, this model recovers the main features of annulus mechanical behaviour: non-linear stiffness, hysteresis, fibres reorientation, transverse strains (Fig. 3c). This model underlines the strong influence of the initial fibres angle, i.e., a non-linear behaviour is obtained only for a limited range of the initial fibres angle, $\theta_0 \approx 25^\circ$, close to the value directly measured on outer annulus.

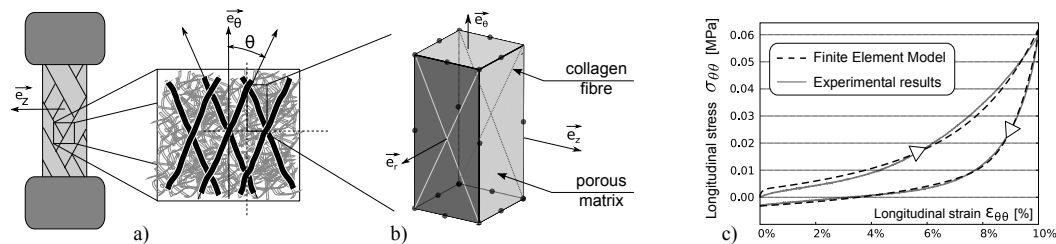


Figure 3: a) Description of internal microstructure of AF tissue; b) Finite element model of AF microstructure; c) Comparison between experimental measures and computed behaviour.

References

- [1] Ambard D., Cherblanc F., Mechanical behavior of annulus fibrosus: a microstructural model of fibers reorientation, *Annals of Biomedical Engineering*, 37, 2256–2265 (2009)
- [2] Guerin H. A. L., Elliott D. M., Degeneration affects the fiber reorientation of human annulus fibrosus under tensile load, *Journal of Biomechanics*, 39, 1410–1418 (2006)
- [3] Wagner D. R., Lotz J. C., Theoretical model and experimental results for the nonlinear elastic behavior of human annulus fibrosus. *Journal of Orthopaedic Research*, 22, 901–909 (2004)