

光学学报

高能工业 CT 电子直线加速器焦点测量方法与装置 研制

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摘要 电子直线加速器焦点尺寸是影响高能工业 CT 空间分辨率等关键技术指标的主要因素之一。IEC 62976—2021 和 GB/T 20129—2015 的“三明治”法(或称叠片法)是现行的无损检测用电子直线加速器焦点测试标准。但在实际操作中,该方法不仅过程繁琐,且在胶片曝光、冲洗、条纹计数等过程中人为因素影响大。此外,理论仿真发现“三明治”测试模块的金属片及塑胶片厚度对测量结果影响的误差超过 $\pm 12.5\%$ 。针对该方法的不足,研究并设计了一套焦点测量方法和装置——狭缝平移扫描法及装置,并进行焦点扫描测试和 CT 空间分辨率验证等实验。结果表明,所提方法相对于“三明治”法,测量结果客观、准确、重复性好,这对于电子直线加速器的焦点尺寸精确测量和高能工业 CT 系统性能评估和优化设计具有重要意义。

关键词 X 射线光学; 高能工业 CT; 电子直线加速器; 焦点尺寸; 蒙特卡罗方法

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1 引言

高能工业 CT 系统采用射线能量高、剂量率大的电子直线加速器(LINAC)作为 X 射线源,具有检测速度快、检测工件尺寸大、信噪比高、图像质量好等优点,对保障航空航天、机械电子等行业的关键构件和大型装备的质量检测和制造工艺控制有重大应用价值^[1-5]。空间分辨率是工业 CT 系统鉴别和区分微小缺陷能力的度量,是评价工业 CT 图像质量的核心指标之一,直接反映工业 CT 系统性能的优劣^[6-7]。射线源焦点尺寸是影响工业 CT 空间分辨率等关键指标的主要因素之一^[8-9]。准确测量电子直线加速器焦点尺寸,对于高能工业 CT 系统的优化设计以及性能评估有重要意义。

但由于电子直线加速器产生的 X 射线能量高、剂量率大、穿透能力强,准确测量电子直线加速器焦点尺寸存在种种困难。李成刚等^[10]通过方孔编码成像的方法获得高能 X 射线源焦点尺寸及强度分布。陈浩等^[11]基于小孔成像原理,采用钨-铜合金制成的狭缝代替小孔测量电子直线加速器焦点尺寸。Munro 等^[12]和 Jaffray 等^[13]利用 CT 重建技术,结合通过狭缝在不同侧面和角度位置测量的透射率来表征电子直线加速器束斑。但目前无损检测用(包括 DR/CT)电子直线加速器焦点尺寸测试标准一般采用国际电工委员会标准

IEC 62976—2021 中提出的“三明治”法(国标 GB/T 20129—2015 称之为叠片法)^[14-15]。该方法采用薄金属片和塑胶片相互交叠的“三明治”测试模块对焦点进行胶片拍摄,不仅测量过程繁琐,而且胶片曝光、冲洗、条纹计数等过程受人为因素影响大,测量结果误差大。Gao 等^[16]通过数值计算得到叠片法输出响应曲线与焦点尺寸的对应关系,并通过实验数据反推出射线源焦点尺寸。Yeboah^[17]和苏志军等^[18]用半高宽测量代替条纹计数的方法改进“三明治”法,在一定程度上提高了测量精度。但这些方法主要基于胶片曝光等过程,因此未能从根本上克服“三明治”法存在的种种不足。

本文采用蒙特卡罗方法仿真分析“三明治”法金属片、塑胶片厚度等影响因素给测量结果带来的误差值,针对“三明治”方法存在的不足,提出一种新的焦点尺寸测量方法——狭缝平移扫描法,并进行焦点扫描测试和高能工业 CT 空间分辨率验证等实验。结果表明,该方法相对于“三明治”法,人为因素干扰少,重复性好,测量结果客观、准确。

2 电子直线加速器焦点尺寸测量方法

2.1 驻波电子直线加速管结构及 X 射线焦点

高能工业 CT 驻波直线加速管由加速腔、耦合腔、

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电子束流通道、射线靶等部分组成,如图 1(a)所示。电子枪发出的电子束经加速后轰击到射线靶上,绝大部分电子能量转化为热量,少部分能量通过轫致辐射转化为 X 射线。电子束轰击到靶上的部位即 X 射线焦点,如图 1(b)所示。理论上,X 射线焦点尺寸主要由电子束的直径决定,同时也与电子束位置稳定性、电子束能量、靶材料、靶几何尺寸等因素有关。

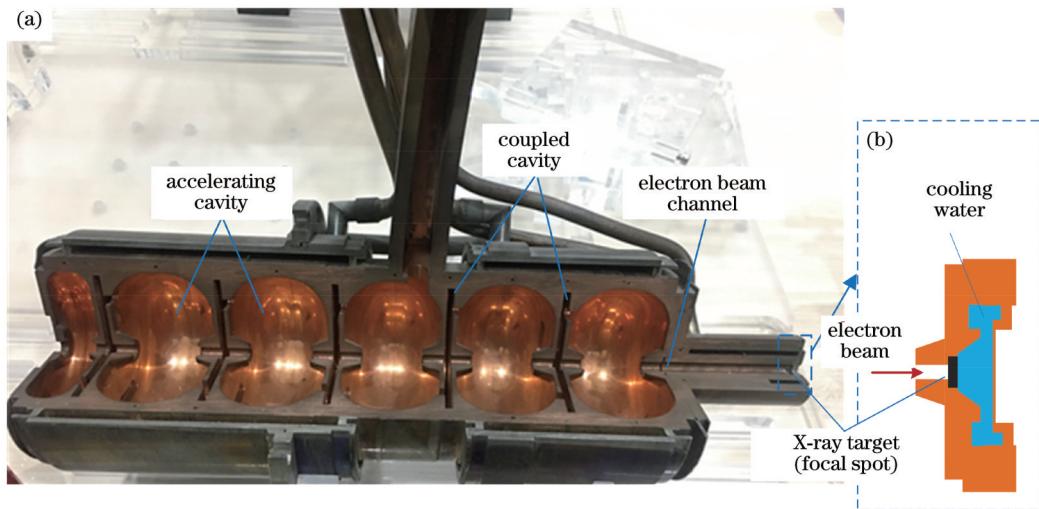


图 1 驻波加速管结构示意图。(a)驻波加速管剖面结构图;(b)射线靶结构、焦点位置放大示意图

Fig. 1 Schematic diagrams of the structure of standing wave accelerating tube. (a) Sectional structure diagram of standing wave accelerating tube; (b) amplification diagram of X-ray target structure and focal spot position

2.2 “三明治”法

目前电子直线加速器 X 射线焦点尺寸测量标准方法主要为 IEC 62976—2021 和 GB/T 20129—2015 的“三明治”法(叠片法),如图 2(a)所示,“三明治”测试

模块长 250 mm,高、宽不小于 60 mm,由较高原子序数且厚度均匀的金属片(如铅、铜)和有机薄膜(如聚乙烯)逐层间隔排列而成,金属片厚度 h_1 不大于 0.1 mm,塑胶片厚度 h_2 不大于 0.3 mm。

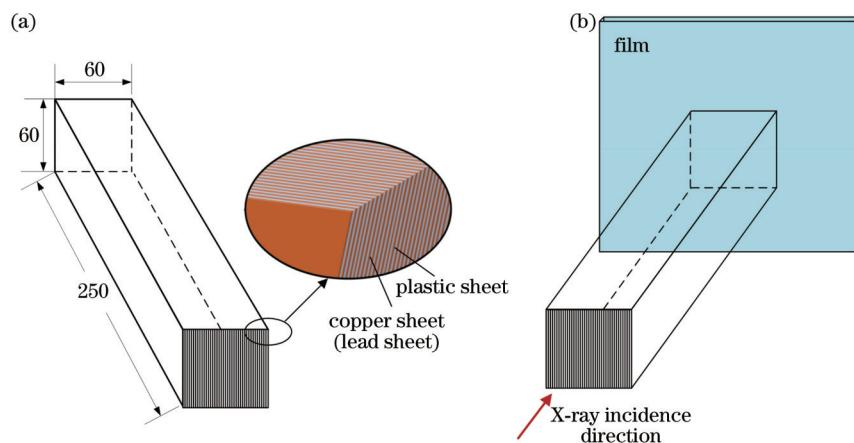


图 2 “三明治”法示意图。(a)“三明治”测试模块结构;(b)测试方法

Fig. 2 Schematic diagram of "Sandwich" test method. (a) Structure of "Sandwich" test module; (b) test method

如图 2(b)所示,测量过程中胶片紧贴“三明治”测试模块后端放置,射线束穿过塑胶片使胶片感光,经过胶片显影、冲洗后,胶片上显示数根黑白相间的条纹,如图 3(a)所示。由黑度计或胶片扫描仪绘制条纹的灰度曲线,取黑度大于中心条纹黑度 50% 的条纹数 n ,相应的焦点尺寸 D_i 为

$$D_i = n(h_1 + h_2) \quad (1)$$

图 3 为“三明治”法测量 9 MeV 驻波电子直线加速

器得到的结果,铜片厚度为 0.1 mm,塑胶片厚度为 0.23 mm。由图 3(c)中的条纹灰度分布曲线可知,黑度大于中心条纹黑度 50% 的条纹数 n 约为 4~5。由式(1)可计算出焦点尺寸 D_i 为 1.32~1.65 mm。将测试模块放置于距加速器靶面 300、500、800 mm 等不同距离处,得到不同距离处的 D_i 值,用最小二乘法进行线性拟合得到焦点有效尺寸 D 。

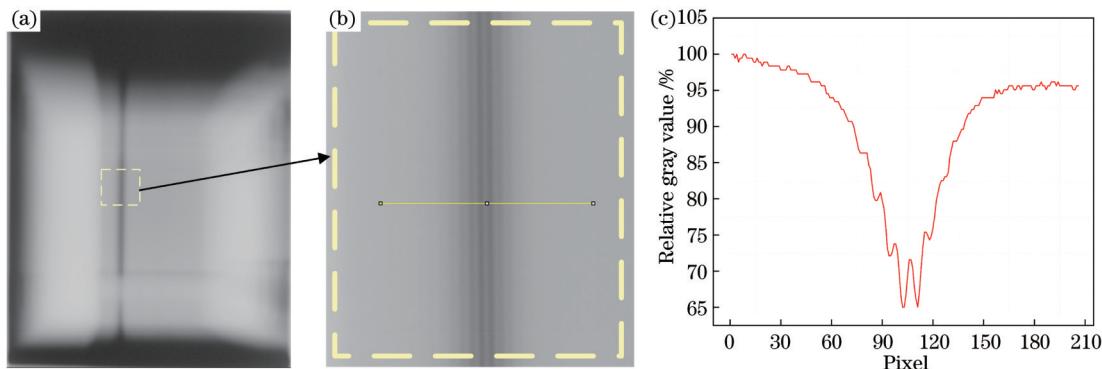


图3 “三明治”法焦点尺寸测量结果。(a)胶片曝光图像;(b)条纹放大图像;(c)条纹灰度分布曲线

Fig. 3 Focal spot measurement results of "Sandwich" test method. (a) Film exposure image; (b) stripe enlarged image; (c) stripe gray distribution curve

2.3 “三明治”法测量结果误差影响

然而在实际操作中,不同的检测人员对图3中的条纹数量n的判断可能不一样,可能认为有4条,也有可能认为是5条。因此人的主观因素带来的误差超过20%。另外,由于电子直线加速器剂量率大,“三明治”法胶片的曝光时间一般只有几s,而加速器开机启动出束阶段,剂量率一直上升且并不稳定,故胶片的曝光剂量、曝光时间很难精确控制,从而影响胶片的条纹对

比度。此外,胶片的显影、定影等冲洗过程易受环境、显影剂浓度、显影定影时间等多种因素影响,导致测量结果重复性较差。图4是对图3中的相同9 MeV驻波直线加速器焦点尺寸测量结果,图4(b)中黑度大于中心条纹黑度50%的条纹数n约为6~7。图4(c)为两次测量灰度曲线的比较,测量误差达到30%以上。因此,现行“三明治”电子直线加速器焦点测试方法受人为、环境、实验条件等因素影响大,重复性较差。

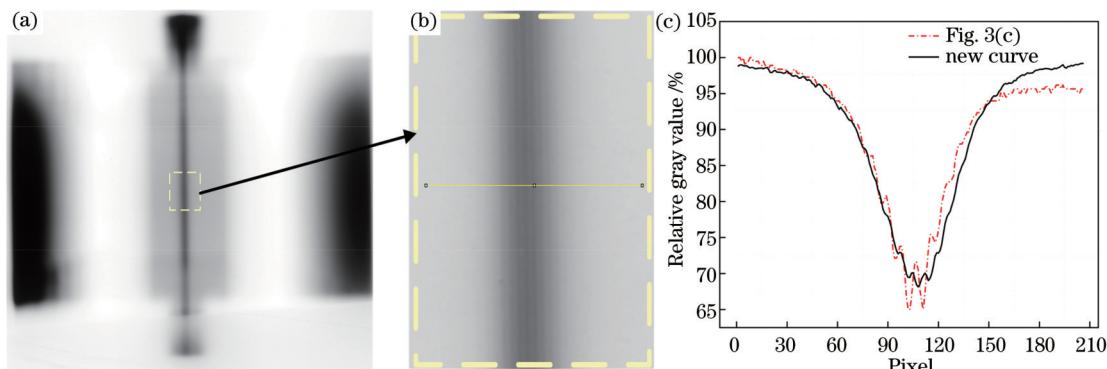


图4 “三明治”法两次测量焦点尺寸结果比较。(a)胶片曝光图像;(b)条纹放大图像;(c)两次测量条纹灰度曲线对比图像

Fig. 4 Comparison of the results of two measurements of the focal spot size by "Sandwich" test method. (a) Film exposure image; (b) stripe enlarged image; (c) comparison image of two measurement stripe gray curve

除受上述人为、环境、实验条件等因素影响外,IEC 62976—2021和GB/T 20129—2015中未对“三明治”测试模块的金属片和塑胶片的厚度作严格规定,仅仅规定金属片的厚度 h_1 不大于0.1 mm,塑胶片的厚度 h_2 不大于0.3 mm。但由测量方法原理可知,金属片和塑胶片的厚度并非越薄越好,且不同厚度的金属片、塑胶片组合带来的测量误差不可忽略。

蒙特卡罗方法是随着计算机的发展出现的以概率统计理论为指导的一类数值计算方法,已经成为解决复杂材料结构中高能辐射(粒子)的玻尔兹曼线性传输方程的首选工具^[19]。蒙特卡罗方法可以精确模拟加速器中的物理过程,得到表征加速器性能的物理量^[20-23]。本研究利用蒙特卡罗粒子仿真软件BEAMnrc构建电

子直线加速器射线源,焦点设置为X射线强度为高斯分布的半高宽2 mm的理想焦斑。“三明治”测试模块的铜金属片、塑胶片的厚度设置如表1所示。X射线穿过不同厚度的金属片、塑胶片的“三明治”测试模块后,X射线强度分布如图5所示,横直线为中心条纹50%强度值,由此可以得到相应的条纹数n,该值以及由式(1)计算得到的焦点尺寸值均列于表1中。仿真结果表明,不同金属片、塑胶片厚度的组合得到的焦点尺寸测量误差可达±12.5%。因此,在测量过程中须考虑不同金属片、塑胶片厚度对结果误差的影响。总之,IEC 62976—2021和GB/T 20129—2015的“三明治”法(叠片法),其测量结果受很多主、客观因素的影响,结果准确性、重复性较差。

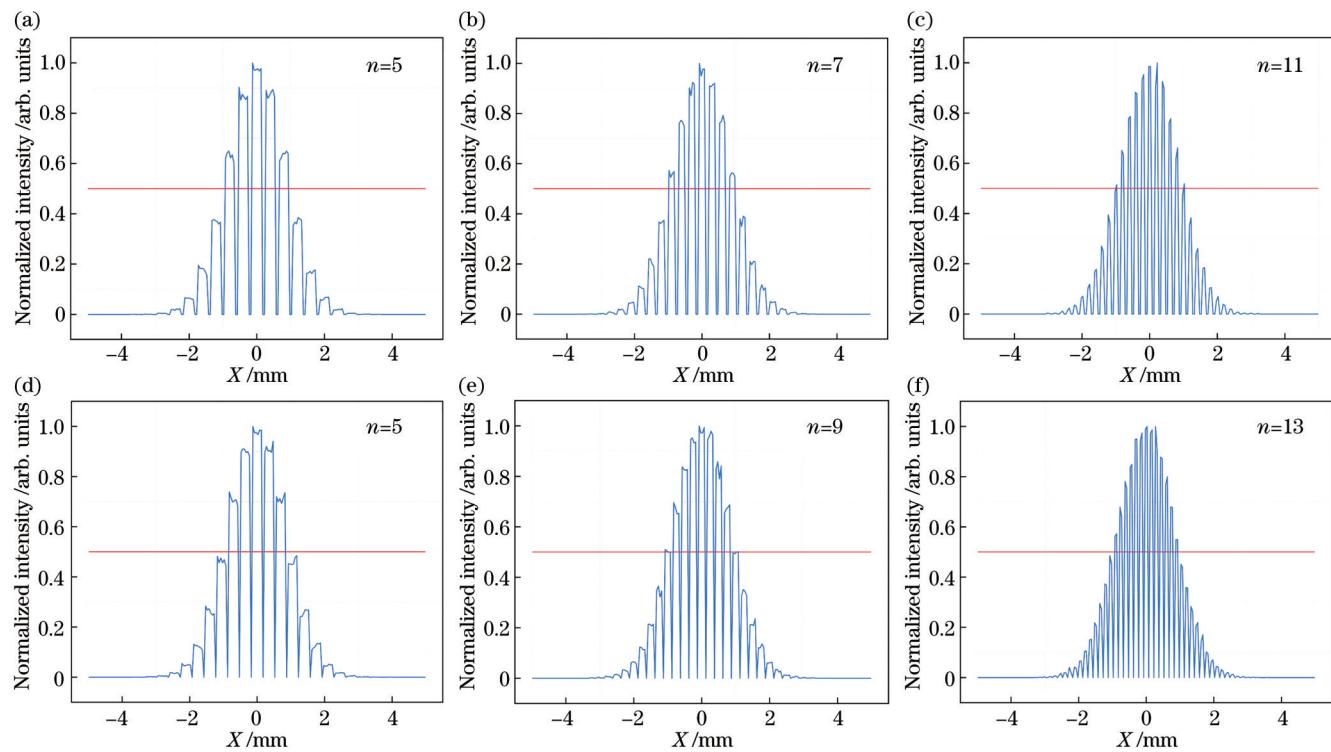


图 5 不同铜金属片、塑胶片组合“三明治”法仿真结果。(a)组合 1;(b)组合 2;(c)组合 3;(d)组合 4;(e)组合 5;(f)组合 6

Fig. 5 Simulation results of "Sandwich" test method with different copper metal and plastic sheets combinations. (a) Combination 1; (b) combination 2; (c) combination 3; (d) combination 4; (e) combination 5; (f) combination 6

表 1 金属片、塑胶片组合及仿真焦点尺寸值

Table 1 Metal sheets, plastic sheets combinations, and simulation focal spot size value

Combination	Metal sheet h_1 /mm	Plastic sheet h_2 /mm	Number of stripes n	Focal spot size /mm	Error /%
1	0.10	0.3	5	2.00	0.0
2	0.10	0.2	7	2.10	5.0
3	0.10	0.1	11	2.20	10.0
4	0.05	0.3	5	1.75	-12.5
5	0.05	0.2	9	2.25	12.5
6	0.05	0.1	13	1.95	-2.5

3 狹缝平移扫描法

3.1 测量原理

采用两块不锈钢块，中间刻槽构成一条缝宽 0.1 mm、长约 200 mm 的狭缝。狭缝安装在可以沿水平或竖直方向移动的滑台上，狭缝后装有探测器及数据采集模块，如图 6 所示。工作原理如图 7 所示，电子直线加速器焦点发出的 X 射线穿过狭缝后，由探测器获取该位置的数据。狭缝沿垂直于 X 射线轴线的方向以步进方式进行平移扫描，每步进一步，探测器即实时采集该位置的数据。这样随着狭缝的平移运动，就能获得加速器焦点的 X 射线强度分布曲线，曲线的半高宽即为加速器焦点尺寸。

3.2 焦点扫描测试实验

通过狭缝平移扫描法多次测量 9 MeV 驻波电子直线加速器的 X 射线焦点尺寸，如图 8 所示，设置焦点

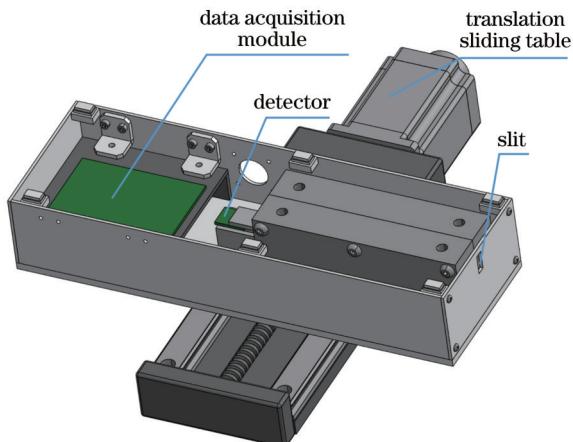


图 6 狹缝平移扫描法装置结构示意图

Fig. 6 Device structure schematic diagram of the slit translation scanning test method

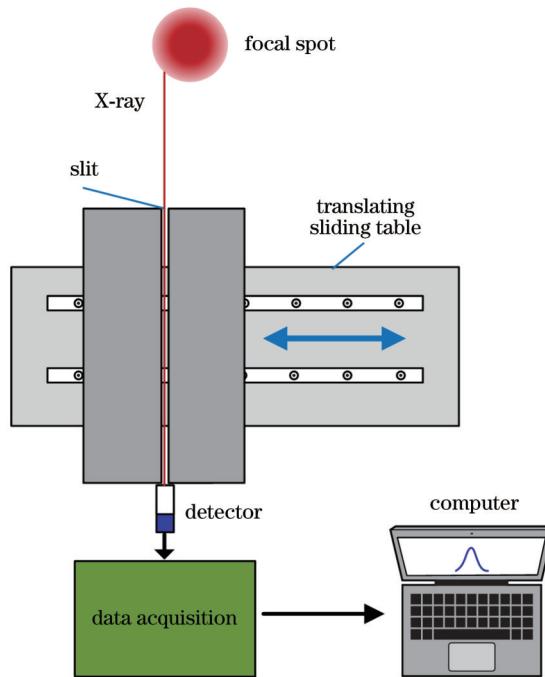


图7 狹縫平移扫描法工作原理图

Fig. 7 Working principle diagram of the slit translation scanning test method

中心附近为0点,从-4 mm到4 mm的范围进行平移扫描,步进距离为0.2 mm。图9为狭缝平移扫描法测得的焦点X射线强度分布图,取图9曲线的半高宽计算得到焦点尺寸值。表2为每次测量得到的焦点尺寸值,并比较其与多次测量平均值之间的误差。

在狭缝平移扫描法测量过程中,电子直线加速器保持正常工作状态(重复频率100 Hz,剂量率波动小于5%),探测器每个位置的数据采集时间为5 s,总共扫描采集40个位置的数据,总时间为200 s。由表2和图9测量结果可知,狭缝平移扫描法多次测量结果的最大误差有±0.95%,且测量重复性好。与“三明治”法相比,狭缝平移扫描法测量过程中受人为、环境温度湿度等因素的影响小,解决了“三明治”法测量精度受金属片、塑胶片厚度影响的问题,其测量结果更加客观、准确。

3.3 高能工业CT空间分辨率验证实验

理论上电子直线加速器的焦点尺寸是决定工业CT极限空间分辨率的主要因素之一。工业CT的有效射束宽度(W_{BW})从物理上确定了CT系统的空间分辨率,其表达式^[24]为

表2 狹縫平移扫描法6次焦点尺寸测量结果

Table 2 Six measurements of focal size using slit translation scanning method

No.	Focal spot size /mm	Error /%	No.	Focal spot size /mm	Error /%
1	2.12	0.95	4	2.08	-0.95
2	2.11	0.48	5	2.09	-0.48
3	2.12	0.95	6	2.09	-0.48

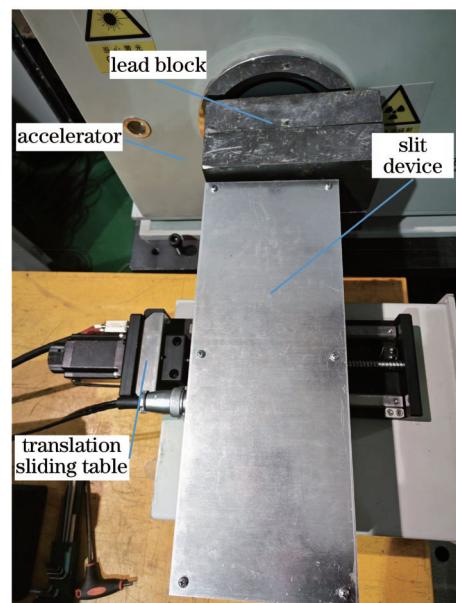


图8 狹縫平移扫描法实验布置图

Fig. 8 Experimental layout of the slit translation scanning test method

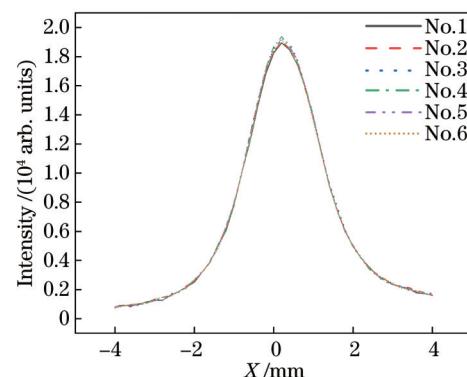


图9 狹縫平移扫描法测得的焦点强度分布图

Fig. 9 Focal spot intensity distribution measured by the slit translation scanning test method

$$W_{BW} = \frac{\sqrt{[d(M-1)]^2 + a^2}}{M}, \quad (2)$$

式中: d 为X射线源焦点尺寸; a 为单个探测器通道宽度; M 为CT系统的几何放大倍数。如果已知探测器通道宽度 a 和几何放大倍数 M ,并测出CT系统的极限空间分辨率,理论上可得到电子直线加速器焦点大小。为进一步验证狭缝平移扫描法的准确性,对高能工业CT系统进行空间分辨率测试,其中,射线源为9 MeV驻波电子直线加速器,型号ZCA-9/3000,探测器为

PaxScan2530HE面阵探测器。标准线对卡CT图如图10(a)所示,图中从左到右分别为1.67、2.00、2.50、3.33 lp/mm,图10(b)为对应的线对灰度分布图,拟合的调制传递函数(MTF)曲线(拟合度0.991)如图10(c)所示。

该高能工业CT成像系统 a 为0.067 mm, M 为1.042。在工程应用中,通常取MTF曲线为0.1

(10%)时的分辨率作为工业CT系统的标称空间分辨率^[25]。由图10(c)中的拟合MTF曲线可以得到该CT系统的空间分辨率约为4.82 lp/mm。对于CT成像系统,成像空间分辨率通常为有效射束宽度的一半^[26-27],由此计算得该CT系统的有效射束宽度值为0.104^[28]。由式(2)即可计算得到该加速器焦点尺寸为2.02 mm。

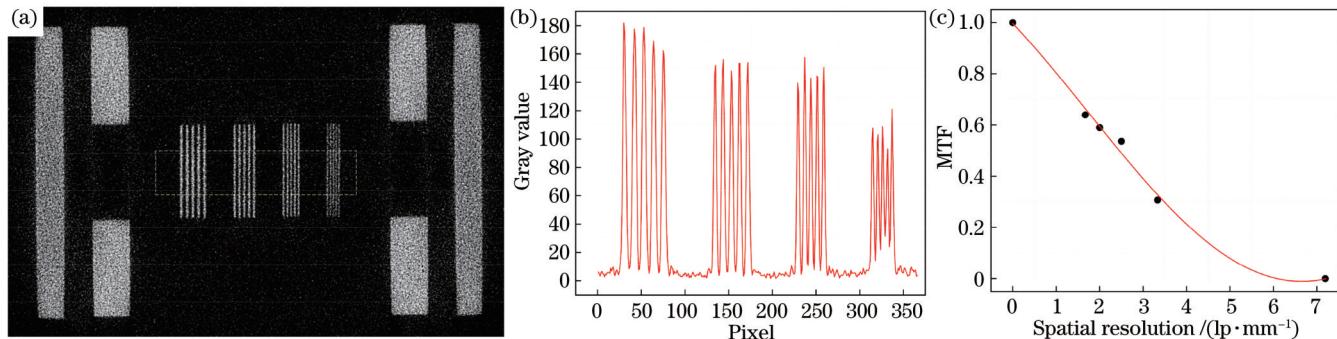


图10 高能工业CT空间分辨率测试图。(a)线对卡CT扫描图;(b)线对卡灰度曲线;(c)拟合MTF曲线

Fig. 10 Spatial resolution test chart of the high energy industrial CT. (a) CT scan image of wire pair; (b) gray curve of wire pair; (c) fitting MTF curve

表2中狭缝平移扫描法测得的9 MeV电子直线加速器焦点尺寸平均值为2.10 mm,与CT空间分辨率计算得到焦点值吻合得很好。由此可进一步验证相对于IEC 62976—2021和GB/T 20129—2015的“三明治”法(叠片法),狭缝平移扫描法焦点尺寸测量结果更为准确、客观。

4 结 论

焦点尺寸是高能工业CT电子直线加速器主要性能参数,决定了CT系统的空间分辨率等关键指标,准确、客观测量电子直线加速器焦点尺寸,对于评估高能工业CT系统性能有重要意义。IEC 62976—2021和GB/T 20129—2015“三明治”法(叠片法)是现行无损检测用(含DR/CT)电子直线加速器焦点尺寸测试标准。但在焦点测量实际操作中,不仅过程繁琐,且在胶片曝光、冲洗、条纹计数等过程中受环境、实验条件以及人的主观因素影响大。此外,通过理论仿真发现“三明治”测试模块的金属片及塑胶片厚度对测量结果影响误差超过±12.5%。因此,“三明治”法测量结果误差大,重复性差。针对这些不足,研究并设计了一套新的焦点尺寸测量方法和装置——狭缝平移扫描法及装置,并进行焦点扫描测试和高能工业CT空间分辨率验证等实验。实验结果表明,相对于“三明治”法,所提方法的测量结果客观、准确、重复性好,这对于电子直线加速器的性能评估和高能工业CT系统的优化设计具有重要意义。

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Focal Spot Measurement Method and Device for High-Energy Industrial CT Electron Linear Accelerator

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Abstract

Objective Accurately measuring the focal spot size of the electron linear accelerator is important for the optimized design and performance evaluation of high-energy industrial CT systems. However, due to the high energy, high dose rate, and

strong penetration ability of X-ray generated by the electron linear accelerator, there are difficulties in accurate measurement of the focal spot size. Currently, the main test standard for the focal spot size of the electron linear accelerator is the "Sandwich" test method proposed in the IEC 62976—2021 (or stacking test method in GB/T 20129—2015). However, this method is not only cumbersome in the actual measurement, but also seriously affected by human factors during film exposure, processing, and streak counting. Meanwhile, the thicknesses of the metal and plastic sheets of the "Sandwich" test module have a significant influence on the measurement results of the focal spot size. To this end, we propose a slit translation scanning test method which is more objective, accurate, and better repeatable than the "Sandwich" test method.

Methods The limitations of the "Sandwich" test method are analyzed by experiments and simulations. First, two measurements of the focal spot size of the 9 MeV electron linear accelerator are conducted using the "Sandwich" test method with reference to IEC 62976—2021 and GB/T 20129—2015. The differences between the two measurements are compared and the reasons are analyzed. Then we employ the Monte Carlo particle simulation software BEAMnrc to construct the electron linear accelerator and simulate the effect of different metal and plastic sheet thicknesses of the "Sandwich" test module on the focal spot size measurement results. After analyzing the disadvantages of the "Sandwich" test method, the device structure and measurement principle of the slit translation scanning test method are presented. The focal spot size of a 9 MeV electron linear accelerator is measured several times using the slit translation scanning test method for comparison with the "Sandwich" method. Finally, to further validate the accuracy of the proposed test method, we deduce the focal spot size of the electron linear accelerator by measuring the spatial resolution of the CT system and compare it with the results measured by the slit translation scanning test method.

Results and Discussions In the actual measurement of the "Sandwich" test method, it is difficult to precisely control the exposure dose and exposure time of the film, which affects the stripe contrast of the film. Meanwhile, the developing and fixing process of the film is easily affected by the environment, developer concentration, developing and fixing time, and other factors to result in poor repeatability of the measurement results. Figs. 3 and 4 show that the measurement result error for the same electron linear accelerator can be more than 30%. Additionally, the simulation results in Fig. 5 and Table 1 indicate the measurement error of the focal spot size obtained from different thicknesses of metal and plastic sheets of the "Sandwich" test module can be up to $\pm 12.5\%$. Therefore, the influence of different metal and plastic sheet thicknesses on the measurement error must be considered in the "Sandwich" test method. For the slit translation scanning test method, Table 2 and Fig. 9 reveal that the maximum error of its multiple measurements is only $\pm 0.95\%$, and the measurement is little affected by the dose rate fluctuation of the electron linear accelerator and not affected by the exposure time. Thus, the measurement repeatability is good. In addition, the focal spot size of the electron linear accelerator calculated by equation (2) is the same as that measured by the slit translation scanning test method. Thus, the focal spot size measurement results of the slit translation scanning test method are more accurate and objective than the "Sandwich" test method of IEC 62976—2021 and GB/T 20129—2015.

Conclusions We study and design a new set of measurement methods and devices for focal spot size, which is the slit translation scanning test method and device to address the shortcomings of the "Sandwich" test method for the focal spot size measurement of electron linear accelerator, as specified in IEC 62976—2021 and GB/T 20129—2015. The "Sandwich" test method is not only cumbersome in practice, but also greatly influenced by the environment, experimental conditions, and human subjective factors during the film exposure, processing, and streak counting. Additionally, theoretical simulation reveals that the thicknesses of the metal and plastic sheets of the "Sandwich" test module introduce a measurement error of more than $\pm 12.5\%$. To verify the new measurement method, we conduct experiments such as focal spot size measurement and verification of spatial resolution of high-energy industrial CT. The experimental results demonstrate that compared with the "Sandwich" test method, this new method provides objective, accurate, and repeatable measurement results. These findings are of significance for the performance evaluation of electron linear accelerators and optimized design of high-energy industrial CT systems.

Key words X-ray optics; high-energy industrial CT; electron linear accelerator; focal spot size; Monte Carlo method