The GeneEngine platform is a compact series of devices for point-of-care-use. The cartridge illustrated was supplied by Hahn-Schickard/IMTEK, Freiburg.

The supplied software allows automatic evaluation of fluorescence in real-time, e.g. on the basis of camera images.

GeneEngine PLATFORM
FAST AND AUTOMATED PCR THERMOCYCLERS

Point-of-care PCR diagnostics

Fast, bedside diagnostics is becoming more and more important in modern medicine. This is the only way in which doctors can start direct and targeted treatment. Against this backdrop, Fraunhofer IPM has fully automated diagnostics of blood samples on the basis of polymerase chain reaction (PCR) in a compact point-of-care system. This was obtained by the use of microfluidic disposable cartridges developed by Hahn-Schickard/IMTEK, Freiburg. Precise pumping of the reagents in the cartridges is achieved by utilizing inertial forces by means of precisely controlled rotational movements. This allows the entire reaction to occur in purely passive, low-cost disposable products. However, this system advantage makes stringent demands on the processing equipment. The GeneEngine platform by Fraunhofer IPM can serve as a technological basis for tailor-made solutions for thermal, optical and mechanical handling of microfluidic cartridges – automatically and fast (Fig. 1).

Fast reaction process, sensitive detection

The GeneEngine platform is designed to conduct the entire reaction including real-time evaluation automatically. The system achieves maximum values for heating and cooling rates and also for sensitivity and speed of detection (see information box). Careful optimization of all modules allows fully automatic PCR diagnosis from the instant of sampling without intermediate manual steps with a high degree of multiplexing in under 45 minutes. New types of concept even lead us to anticipate a further halving of the diagnosis time.

Fraunhofer Institute for Physical Measurement Techniques IPM
Heidenhofstrasse 8
D-79110 Freiburg, Germany

Contact
Dr. Benedikt Hauer
Optical Surface Analytics
Phone +49 761 8857-516
benedikt.hauer@ipm.fraunhofer.de

PD Dr. Albrecht Brandenburg
Optical Surface Analytics
Phone +49 761 8857-306
albrecht.brandenburg@ipm.fraunhofer.de

www.ipm.fraunhofer.de
Individual adaptation

Fraunhofer IPM has many years of experience in designing PCR thermocyclers and handling microfluidic cartridges. The GeneEngine platform features a modular design in order to allow flexible adaptations to meet the requirements of the relevant microfluidic structures. Individual components of the optical, thermal or mechanical modules can be adapted and combined virtually at will. The main focus is always on optimization in order to achieve a fast and reliable overall reaction. Options already implemented are listed in the information box.

Options implemented

- Fast fluorescence detection via laser excitation
- Large-area fluorescence detection via camera
- Parallel fluorescence excitation at various wavelengths
- Complex rotation protocols for demanding microfluidics
- Separate temperature regulation in various zones
- Optimized tempering cycles by simulation

We can also supply customized adaptations or new developments at any time.

System integration

The devices of the GeneEngine series have been developed to meet the demands of medicine in practice. This includes complete integration of all components in a compact and reliable device which is simple to handle. Our expertise in this context has been proven in numerous successful joint ventures with industrial companies. For applications in research and development or for customer-specific laboratory tasks specific GeneEngines can be developed and manufactured as one-off devices. Series production with licensing by an OEM partner is also possible.

Performance features

- Process duration: approx. 45 minutes with 40 cycles (including automatic sample pre-processing)
- Speed of rotation with fluorescence detection: up to 50 Hz
- Heating rate / cooling rate: 8 K/s / -3 K/s
- Temperature stability: ± 1 K in the reaction chambers
- Software: Fully automated

All specifications and features are subject to modification without notice.