# The elastohydrodynamics of a simplified model of human birth

Roseanna Gossmann
AoPS Academy
Art of Problem Solving

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# None of this would have happened without...

Megan C. Leftwich, Alexa Baumer
The George Washington University
Lisa Fauci
Tulane University

# The Human Birth Problem

Maternal mortality and morbidity in the US [1]

- higher than most other “high-income” countries
- increasing over time

Caesarean delivery

- 32% of all deliveries in the US [2]
- WHO recommends 10-15% [3]
- linked to higher mortality [4] and morbidity [5] rates

[1] *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*, 2015
[2] *CDC National Center for Health Statistics*, 2015
[3] *WHO Statement on Caesarean Section Rates*, 2015
[4] Buhimschi, Buhimschi, *Clinical Obstetrics and Gynecology*, 2006
[5] Burrows, Meyn, Weber, *Obstetrics&Gynecology*, 2004

# Motivation

A better understanding of the mechanics of human birth may decrease the incidence of unnecessary surgical delivery.

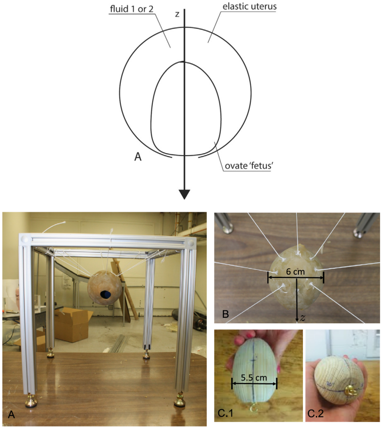
# Considering Fluid Dynamics Is Essential

Amniotic fluid is highly variable

- in volume [6]
- in rheological properties [7]

It is unknown how these fluid properties affect the transfer of force from the uterus onto the baby during delivery.

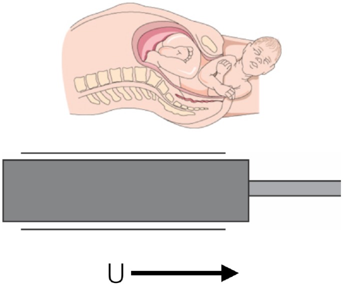
Fluid dynamics were shown to significantly affect the force necessary for delivery in a model vacuum-assisted delivery. [8]

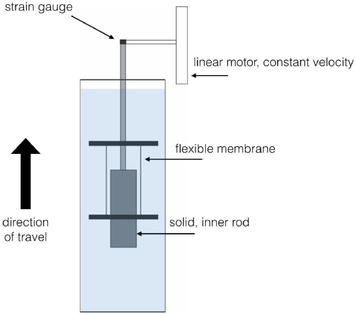



Experimental set-up at Leftwich laboratory for model vacuum-assisted delivery. [3]


[6] Brace, Wolf, *American J. of Obstetrics and Gynecology*, 1989
[7] Uyeno, *J. of Biological Chemistry*, 1919
[8] Lehn, Baumer, Leftwich, *J. of Biomechanics*, 2016

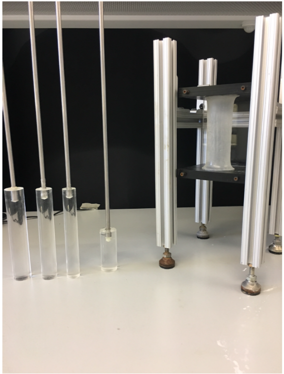
# A Simplified Physical Experiment

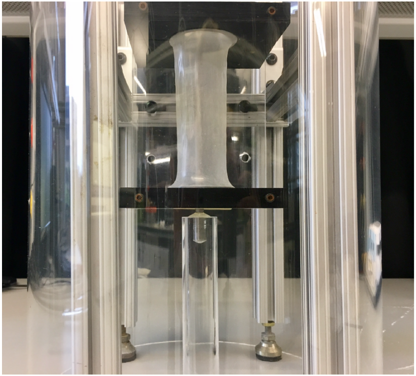



Schematics courtesy of Alexa Baumer, Leftwich laboratory, The George Washington University

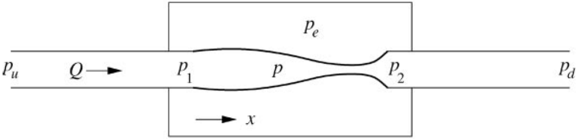
# A Simplified Physical Experiment





Physical experiment at Leftwich laboratory, The George Washington University

# Flow Through Elastic Tubes



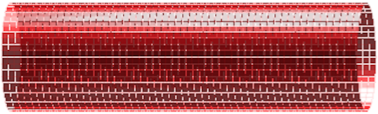

The Starling Resistor [10] model

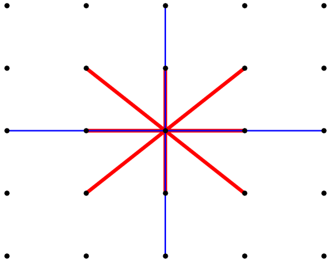
- elastic tubing mounted at ends on rigid tubes (see figure)
- when approximated by a ring, buckling with *n*-fold symmetry [11,12]
- 3D shell models for elastic tube in Stokes and N-S flow [9]
- fiber tube models mimic muscle architecture with varied buckling behavior [13,14,15]


Figure: [9] Grotberg, Jensen, *Annual Rev. Fluid Mech.*, 2004
[10] Knowlton, Starling, *J. of Physiology*, 1912
[11] Tadjbakhsh, Odeh, *J. of Mathematical Analysis and Applications*, 1967
[12] Flaherty, Keller, Rubinow, *SIAM J. of Applied Math*, 1972
[13] Rosar, Peskin, *New York J. of Math*, 2001
[14] El Hamdaoui, Merodio, Ogden, *International J. of Solids and Structures*, 2015
[15] Qi, Gao, Ogden, Hill, Holzapfel, Han, Luo, *J. of Mech. Behavior of Biomed. Materials*, 2015

# Spring Network Model of Elastic Tube

- Tube modeled by network of Hookean springs oriented longitudinally, circumferentially, and helically.
- Force at point $\mathbf{x}_l$ due to spring from point $\mathbf{x}_m$:
  $\mathbf{g}(\mathbf{x}_l) = \tau \left( \frac{\|\mathbf{x}_m - \mathbf{x}_l\|}{\Delta_{lm}} - 1 \right) \frac{(\mathbf{x}_m - \mathbf{x}_l)}{\|\mathbf{x}_m - \mathbf{x}_l\|}$
- Total force due to springs at the points $\mathbf{x}_l$ is the sum of forces from 10 to 16 springs connected to $\mathbf{x}_l$.





# Spring Network Model of Elastic Tube

Total elastic energy stored in the discrete spring system [16]:

$$E_n = \sum_{\text{springs}} \frac{\tau}{2\Delta_{lm}} \left( ||\mathbf{x}_m - \mathbf{x}_l|| - \Delta_{lm} \right)^2$$

where $\tau$ is the spring constant of every spring, $\Delta_{lm}$ is the spring resting length.

Total elastic energy stored in a homogeneous elastic tube [17]:

$$E = \frac{1}{2} A \beta^2 L$$

where $A = \mathcal{E} I$ is the bending stiffness of the tube, $\mathcal{E}$ is the tube's Young's modulus, $I$ is the tube's second moment of area, $\beta$ its curvature, and $L$ its length.

By enforcing $E_n = E$ for various curvatures $\beta$, we can relate individual spring stiffness to macroscopic elastic energy to choose $\tau$.

[16] Nguyen, Fauci. *J. of The Royal Soc. Interface*, 2014
[17] Kelly. 2013

# Method of Regularized Stokeslets [18]

Stokes equations for regularized forces:

$$0 = \mu \Delta \mathbf{u} - \nabla p + \mathbf{f}_0 \phi_\varepsilon(\mathbf{x} - \mathbf{x}_0)$$
$$0 = \nabla \cdot \mathbf{u}$$

Solution to regularized Stokes equations:

$$\mathbf{u}(\mathbf{x}) = \frac{1}{\mu}(\mathbf{f}_0 \cdot \nabla)\nabla B\varepsilon - \mathbf{f}_0 G_\varepsilon$$

where $\Delta G_\varepsilon = \phi_\varepsilon(\mathbf{x} - \mathbf{x}_0), \Delta B_\varepsilon = G_\varepsilon$.

We use the blob function $\phi_\varepsilon = \frac{15\varepsilon^4}{8\pi(||\mathbf{x}-\mathbf{x}_0||^2+\varepsilon^2)^{(7/2)}}$. [19]

[18] Cortez, *SIAM J. Sci. Comp.*, 2001
[19] Cortez, Fauci, Medovikov, *Physics of Fluids*, 2005

# Algorithm

Using the solution to the regularized Stokes equations $\mathbf{u} = A\mathbf{f}$

(1) Calculate spring forces in the tube based on its deformation. Calculate the velocity they induce on the inner cylinder and fixed tube ends (matrix multiplication).

(2) Solve for additional forces necessary on inner cylinder and tube ends to achieve prescribed velocities, using BiCGSTAB iterative method to solve linear system. [20]

(3) Evaluate the velocity at points on tube (matrix multiplication).

(4) Update the tube and rod positions using these velocities and prescribed velocities one step forward in time, using Forward Euler time-stepping.

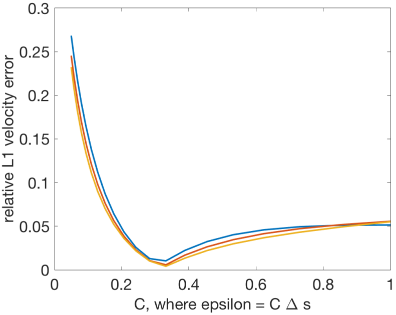
(5) Repeat.

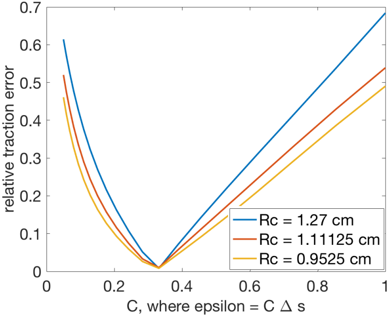
[20] Van der Vorst, *SIAM J. Sci. Stat. Comput.*, 1992

# Model Validation and Regularization Parameter Choice

For concentric rigid cylinders of infinite length, with outer tube of radius $R_T$ fixed and inner cylinder of radius $R_C$ moving at constant velocity $U$:

- Velocity profile between cylinders is given by: $u(r) = \frac{U(\ln(R_t) - \ln(r))}{\ln(R_t) - \ln(R_c)}$
- Traction at a point on the side of inner cylinder is: $t = \frac{\mu U}{R_c \ln\left(\frac{R_T}{R_C}\right)}$
- Compared to numerical results for finite-length concentric rigid cylinders:



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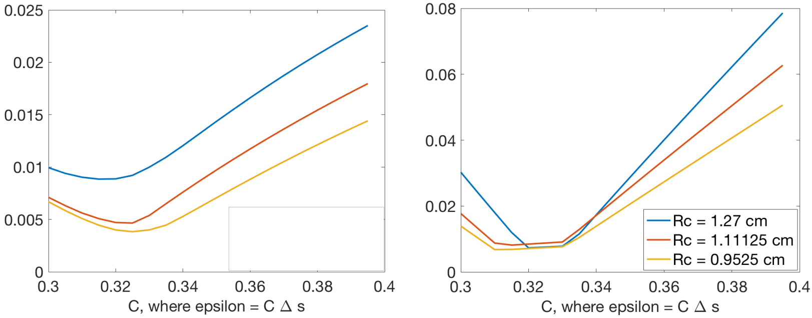
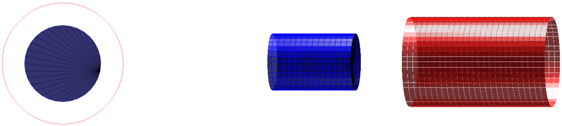
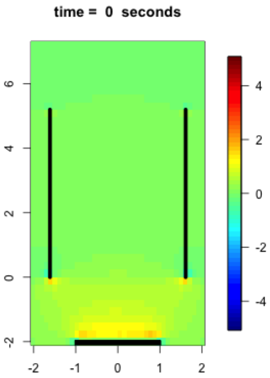


# A case study

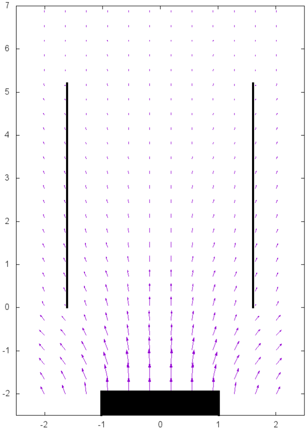


# A case study

Fluid pressure

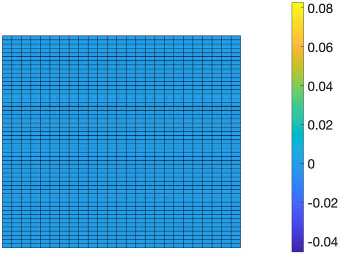



Fluid velocity

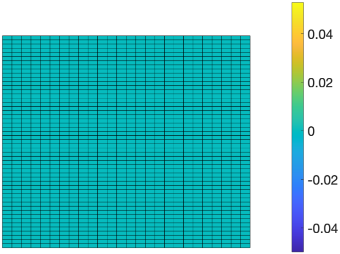


# A case study

Longitudinal strain




Circumferential strain



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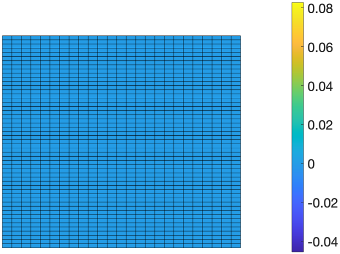
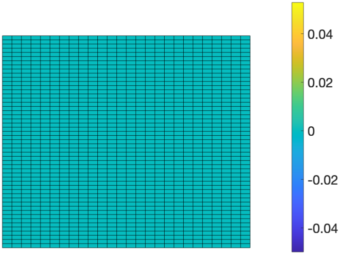
Longitudinal strain

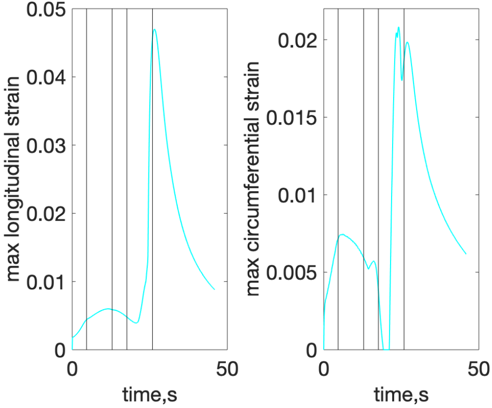



Circumferential strain



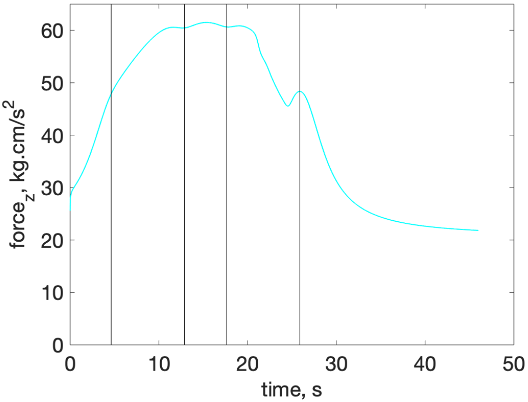
# A case study

Tube deformation over time



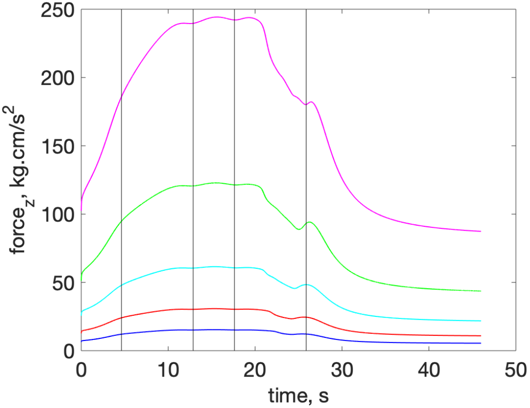
# A case study

Force on inner cylinder to achieve prescribed velocity



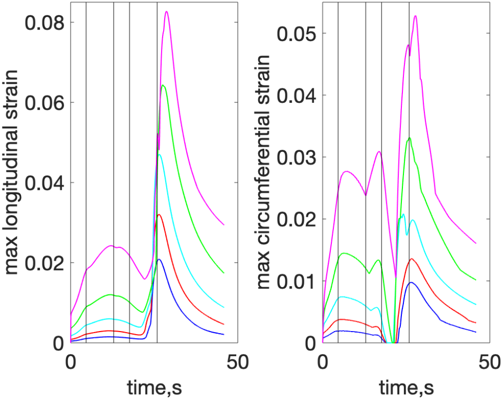
# Effect of varying velocity

Force on inner cylinder to achieve varying prescribed velocity



# Effect of varying velocity

Tube deformation for varying prescribed velocity



# Tube number

We aim to find a "tube number" similar to the "sperm number" used to classify buckling in elastic fibers, in order to predict tube buckling behavior.

Similar in form to

- $\eta_1 = \Lambda \left( \frac{\xi_\perp}{TA} \right)^{1/4}$
  where $\Lambda$ is the wave length of the buckling, $\xi_\perp$ is a perpendicular resistance coefficient, $T$ is a characteristic time, $A$ is the bending rigidity of the fiber [21]
- $\eta_2 = \frac{8\pi\mu\dot{\gamma}L^4}{-\log(\lambda^2 e)A}$
  where $\mu$ is fluid viscosity, $\dot{\gamma}$ is a strain rate, $\lambda$ is fiber's aspect ratio [22]

[21] Lauga, Eloy, *J. Fluid Mech.*, 2013
[22] Yang, Fauci, *J. Fluid Mech.*, 2017

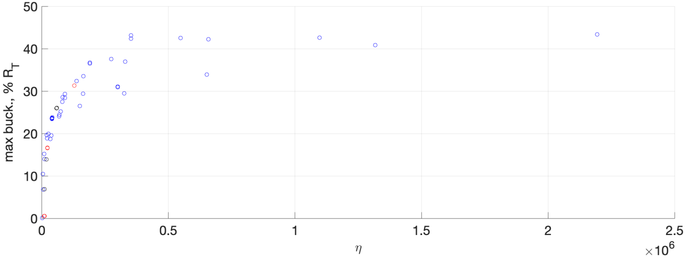
# Tube number

$$\eta = \frac{\xi_{\perp}\dot{\gamma}L^4}{\mathcal{E}I} = \frac{\mu U L_T^4}{(R_T - R_C)R_T \ln\left(\frac{R_T}{R_C}\right) h^3 \mathcal{E}}$$

where $\mu$ is fluid viscosity, $U$ inner cylinder velocity, $L_T$ tube length, $R_T$ tube radius, $R_C$ inner cylinder radius, $h$ tube wall thickness, $\mathcal{E}$ Young's modulus of tube

# Tube number

Effect of varying $\eta$



# Algorithm 2 (no prescribed velocity)

A modification:

- force input is more realistic for biological applications than prescribed velocity
- force input gives us the freedom to activate the tube

we build an elastic spring cylinder, with every point connected to every other point by a spring with force

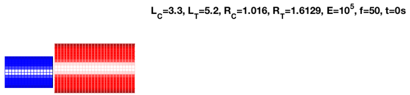
$$\mathbf{g}_c(\mathbf{x}_l) = \tau_c \left( \frac{\|\mathbf{x}_m - \mathbf{x}_l\|}{\Delta_{lm}} - 1 \right) \frac{(\mathbf{x}_m - \mathbf{x}_l)}{\|\mathbf{x}_m - \mathbf{x}_l\|}$$

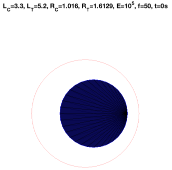
and we anchor the tube ends with forces that penalize moving away from their initial positions

$$\mathbf{g}_p(\mathbf{x}_l) = \tau_p ||\mathbf{x}_m - \mathbf{x}_l||(\mathbf{x}_m - \mathbf{x}_l)$$

# Inner cylinder alignment

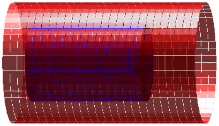
Inner cylinder shifted 0.25 cm toward tube wall



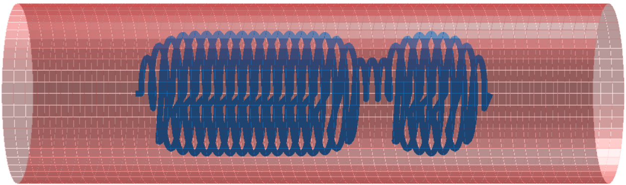



# Peristaltic contractions - contracting tube

$L_C$=3.3, $L_T$=5.2, $R_C$=1.016, $R_T$=1.6129, $E=10^5$, f=1, U=2, t=0s



t=0s



# Conclusions

- Preliminary model of human birth so far used to
  - relate size, velocity, and initial position of inner cylinder to forces on inner cylinder and strain and deformation in tube
  - activate tube with peristaltic contractions
  - predict tube buckling behavior based on system parameters
- Future developments
  - biologically based model of birth canal (closed end, muscle structure)
  - rheological properties of amniotic fluid and other involved fluids
  - shape and elasticity of 'fetus'
- End goal:
  - a numerical model able to predict the circumstances under which vaginal birth can progress successfully, and when it may become unsafe