

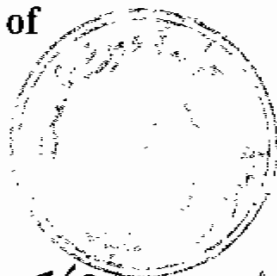
THE USE OF LASERS IN PEDIATRIC SURGERY

Thesis

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the Master Degree in Surgery

84

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(M.B., B. Ch.)



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Table of Contents

Subject	Page
Acknowledgment	
List of figures	
History of Laser & Quantum theory of radiation	1
Basic principles of light nature	2
Laser physics	4
Characteristics of laser lights	4
Laser Devices	7
Laser tissue interaction	9
Modes of operation	14
Laser delivery systems	18
Medical lasers	19
Carbon dioxide laser	19
Argon laser	20
Neodymium: Yttrium-Garnet laser (Nd: YAG)	21
Potassium titanyl phosphate laser (KTP)	22
Dye lasers	22
Excimer lasers	23
Other Lasers	24
Laser Safety Issues	24
Laser Hazard Classification	27
Occupational Exposure Limits	28
Delayed Effects and Future Considerations	28
Laser Application in Pediatric Surgery	29
Cutaneous Vascular Malformations	29
Endoscopic Airway Applications	30
Applications in Gastroenterology	31
Applications for Laparoscopic and Thoracoscopic Procedures	31
Applications in Parenchymal Surgery and Tumor Resections	32
Applications in Urology	32
Fetal Surgery	32
Vascular and Endovascular Procedures	33
Material	34
Methods	37
Results	52
Discussion	64
Summary and Conclusion	79
References	82
Arabic Summary	95

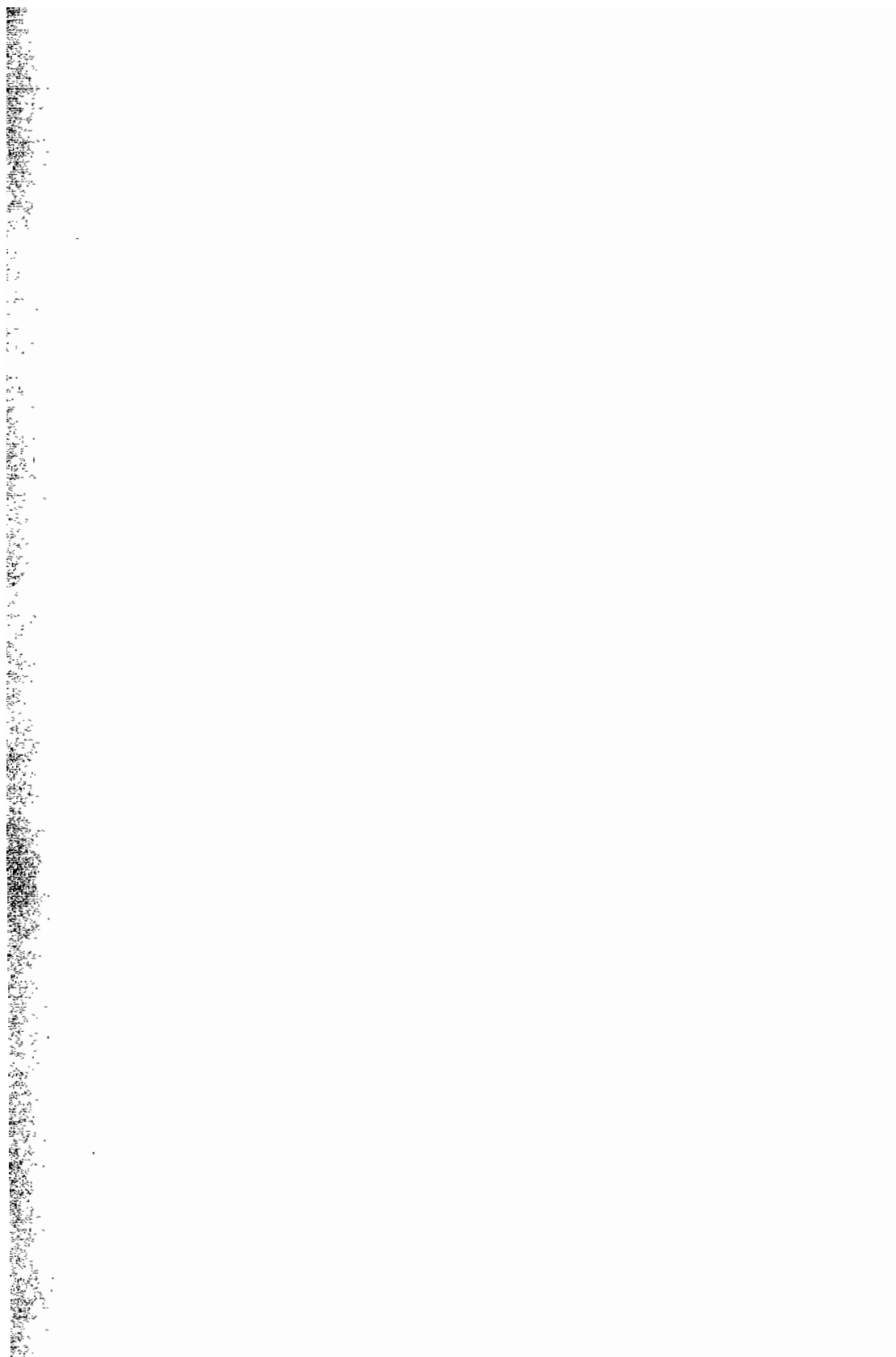


List of Tables of Figures

Subject	Fig.&Table
The first laser	1
Electromagnetic spectrum	2
Wave characteristics	3
Spontaneous and stimulated emission of photons	4
Comparison of Laser and ordinary light source	5
Characteristics of laser lights- Coherence	6
Characteristics of laser lights-Collimation	7
Characteristics of laser lights-Monochromaticity	8
Light particles	9
Basic components of Laser system	10
Feed back in the Laser chamber	11
Magnification of a section of the Laser dielectric mirror	12
Patterns of Laser-tissue interactions	13
Zones of injury after the application of laser energy to tissues	14
Mode of operation	15
Laser delivery system with articulated arms	16
Surgical hand piece	17
Fiberoptic cables	18
Laser beam with focusing lens	19
Laser delivery system using fiberoptic cable	20
Nd:YAG Laser(combo 10w64/532xj laserr system surgilase Co, Warwik, Rt)	21
Microsurgical CO2 Laser	22
Methods of Nd:YAG Laser Photocoagulation of Hemangiomas: Extra lesions methods	23
Methods of Nd:YAG Laser Photocoagulation of Hemangiomas: Intra lesions methods	24
Cases subjected to Nd:YAG Laser Surgical excision	25
Cases treated by KTP Laser	26



Introduction & Laser Physics



Laser is an acronym derived from the phase light amplification by stimulated emission of radiation. Laser thus refers to a process by which light waves are amplified and not merely to the device that produces this effect.

History of laser

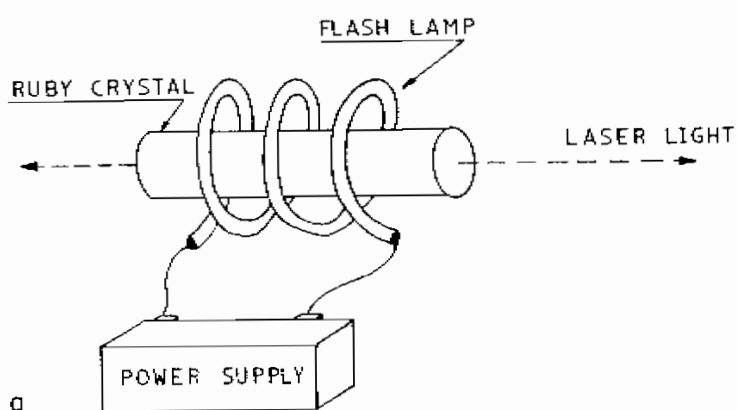
The process of stimulated emission was first described by Albert Einstein in the early 1900s as an offshoot of his quest to show the inherent singular nature of the four basic forces of the universe.

Quantum theory of radiation (1917)

Einstein²⁴ stated that under certain circumstances an atom can absorb light or other forms of radiation and then be stimulated to give back its borrowed energy. He defined light (traveling electromagnetic wave) as a form of energy particles, and photon as a unit of this energy (Maimon & Gebson⁵⁸ 1986). The practical significant of Einstein's discovery was in 1953. Townes constructed the first laser as an acronym for microwave amplification by stimulated emission of radiation .

The first laser was constructed by Theodore Maimon⁵⁷ in 1960 (fig 1). He used a small rod of synthetic ruby as laser medium. Ruby is predominantly Al_2O_3 with a small percentage of Cr_3O_4 held in the crystal lattice.

In 1961 Gonson developed the ND: YAG (neodymium doped yttrium aluminum garnet) laser. In the same year, Javen et al.



a



b

FIGURE 1 (a) Schematic drawing of the first laser. (b) Photograph of the first laser. (Courtesy of Dr. T. Maiman.)

developed the first gas laser and demonstrated the first continuously operating laser using a mixture of helium and neon (Fuller³⁰ 1987). In 1962 an Argon laser wave was developed by Bennet¹⁴ et al. The carbon dioxide laser was introduced by Patel⁶⁹ et al in 1964. Following this there was a great advancement in the use of laser in many fields including surgery⁷⁰.

Basic principles to understand what is meant by laser

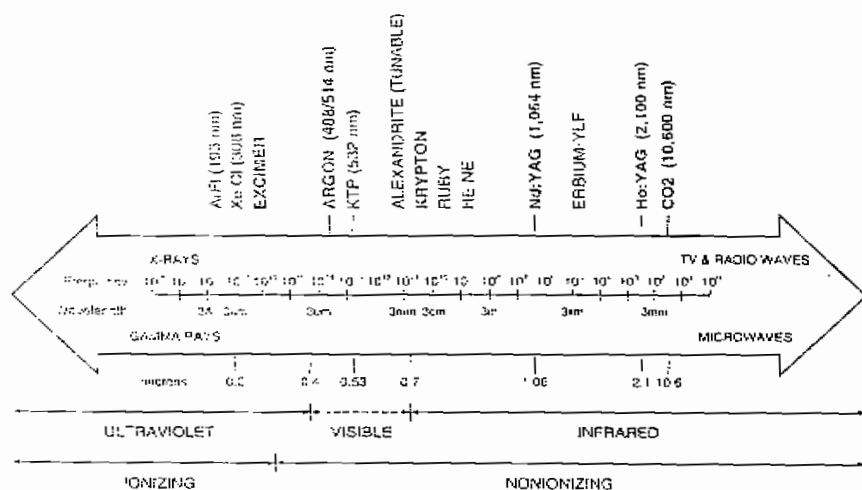
It is first necessary to gain an understanding of the nature of light itself. **Light** is only one small portion of a continuum of electromagnetic energy that goes from cosmic rays to radio waves (fig. 2).

The term light is used to refer to an electromagnetic wave. These waves are characterized by four qualities: wavelength (λ), frequency (f), velocity (v), and amplitude (A) (fig. 3).

The **wavelength** is the distance between two successive crests. The wavelength of visible light waves range from about 385 to 760 nanometers (nm) (fig. 2). The color of visible light is determined by the wavelength. The chart of the electromagnetic spectrum is organized according to wavelength. We usually speak of the wavelength of laser light in terms of nanometers (nm) and at times in terms of micrometers (μm) or angstrom units (\AA).

Amplitude refers to the height of the wave form.

The **frequency** of a wave is the number of waves passing a given point per second and is usually expressed in cycles per second, or



ELECTROMAGNETIC SPECTRUM

FIGURE 2 The accepted electromagnetic (EM) spectrum. All lasers are represented on the EM spectrum depending on their specific wavelength.

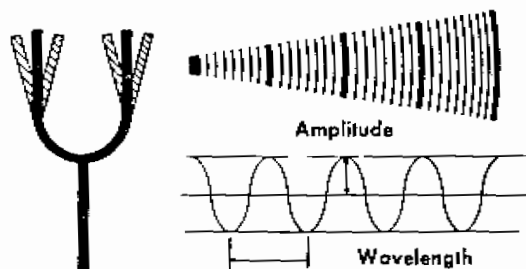


Fig 3 —Wave characteristics.