



8-2016

# Strain Energy Absorption Corresponds to Decreased Incidence of Ventricular Fibrillation in a Commotio Cordis Model

Kayt E. Frisch

*Dordt College*, [kayt.frisch@dordt.edu](mailto:kayt.frisch@dordt.edu)

Mark S. Link

*Tufts Medical Center*

John Van Weelden

Follow this and additional works at: [http://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/faculty\\_work](http://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/faculty_work)



Part of the [Biomechanical Engineering Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Frisch, Kayt E.; Link, Mark S.; and Van Weelden, John, "Strain Energy Absorption Corresponds to Decreased Incidence of Ventricular Fibrillation in a Commotio Cordis Model" (2016). *Faculty Work: Comprehensive List*. Paper 571.

[http://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/faculty\\_work/571](http://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/faculty_work/571)

This Conference Presentation is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Collections @ Dordt. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Work: Comprehensive List by an authorized administrator of Digital Collections @ Dordt. For more information, please contact [ingrid.mulder@dordt.edu](mailto:ingrid.mulder@dordt.edu).

---

# Strain Energy Absorption Corresponds to Decreased Incidence of Ventricular Fibrillation in a Commotio Cordis Model

## **Abstract**

A healthy teenage boy is playing high school baseball, when he is struck in the chest by the ball; minutes later, his heart is experiencing ventricular fibrillation (VF) and the only way to resuscitate him is to use a defibrillator. This phenomenon, is known as Commotio Cordis (CC), and occurs as many as 20 times each year in the United States. CC most frequently occurs in sports with small balls (e.g. baseball or lacrosse) and requires a specific set of circumstances—a projectile with a certain amount of energy that impacts directly over the left ventricle of the heart during a ~15ms window during the upstroke of the heartbeat's T-wave. While it might seem that commercially available chest protectors would prevent CC, the sad reality is that they don't – 20% of recorded cases have been wearing chest protectors, and studies using a porcine animal model have shown that none of the protectors tested significantly reduced the incidence of VF [1]. There is a need to determine protector materials that might prevent CC from occurring. The goal of this study is to determine whether the energy absorption of potential protector materials correlates with the occurrence of VF in a porcine model.

## **Keywords**

energy, ventricular fibrillation, commotio cordis, chest protector

## **Disciplines**

Biomechanical Engineering

## **Comments**

Poster presented at the American Society of Biomechanics Annual Meeting, held at the Raleigh Convention Center in Raleigh, North Carolina, from August 2-5, 2016.

# Can Chest Protectors Increase Survival in Commotio Cordis?

Strain Energy Absorption Corresponds To Decreased Incidence Of Ventricular Fibrillation

Kayt E. Frisch<sup>1\*</sup>, John Van Weelden<sup>2</sup> and Mark S. Link<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Dordt College, <sup>2</sup> Lynden Door Inc., <sup>3</sup> Tufts Medical Center



## Introduction

### What is Commotio Cordis (CC) & How common is it?

- CC is death after a sudden chest wall impact with no structural damage (lacerations, broken ribs, etc.)
- CC occurs 15-20 times annually in the United States
- Historically victims are 96% male and 80% and <18 years old

### What causes CC?

CC occurs when an impact meets all of the following (Fig 1):

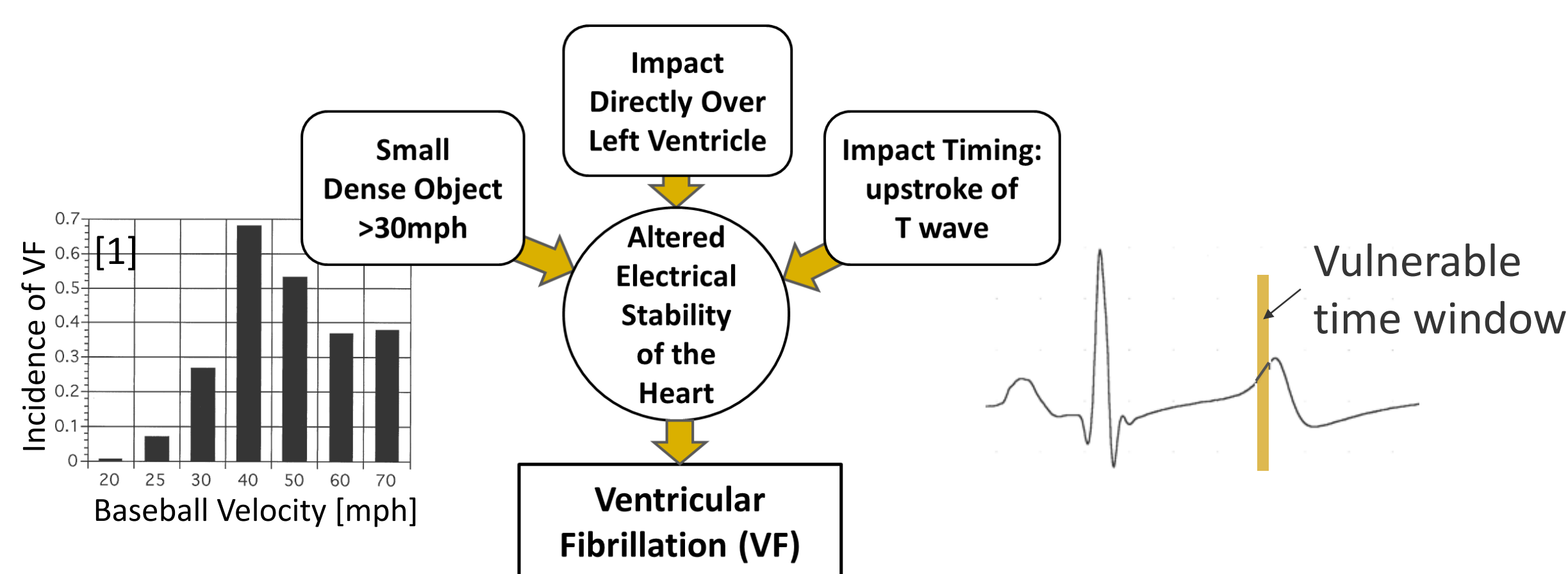


Figure 1: The combination of factors that lead to VF in a CC model

### Would it help if athletes wore chest protectors?

- 20% of victims of recorded victims wore chest protectors
- 0 of 12 commercial chest protectors significantly decreased VF occurrence in a porcine model [2]

### What are you doing about it?

We hypothesize that a material's energy absorption properties decrease the occurrence of VF in a porcine model.

## Methods

### Chest Barrier Materials

A 6mm thick dense foam barrier was tested: (Fig 2):

1. Alone
2. + laminate
3. + laminate & 6mm memory foam
4. + laminate & 8mm memory foam

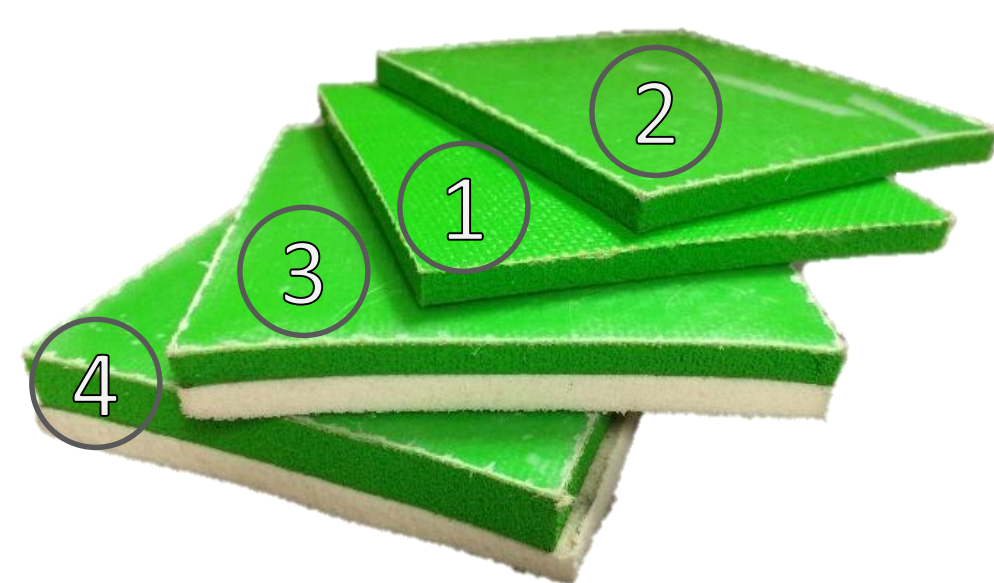


Figure 2: Barrier Materials

### Animal Testing

Juvenile male swine were prepared and tested using the setup in Fig 3 and the standard procedure described by Link et al [3]. Briefly:

- lacrosse ball impact
  - ✓ 40mph
  - ✓ directly over the left ventricle
  - ✓ during the vulnerable portion of the cardiac cycle
- Repeat impacts were delivered if vital signs returned to pre-impact baseline
- Chest barrier materials were placed directly over the left ventricle prior to impact
- Control tests used no barrier material
- Impacts were given in a random order

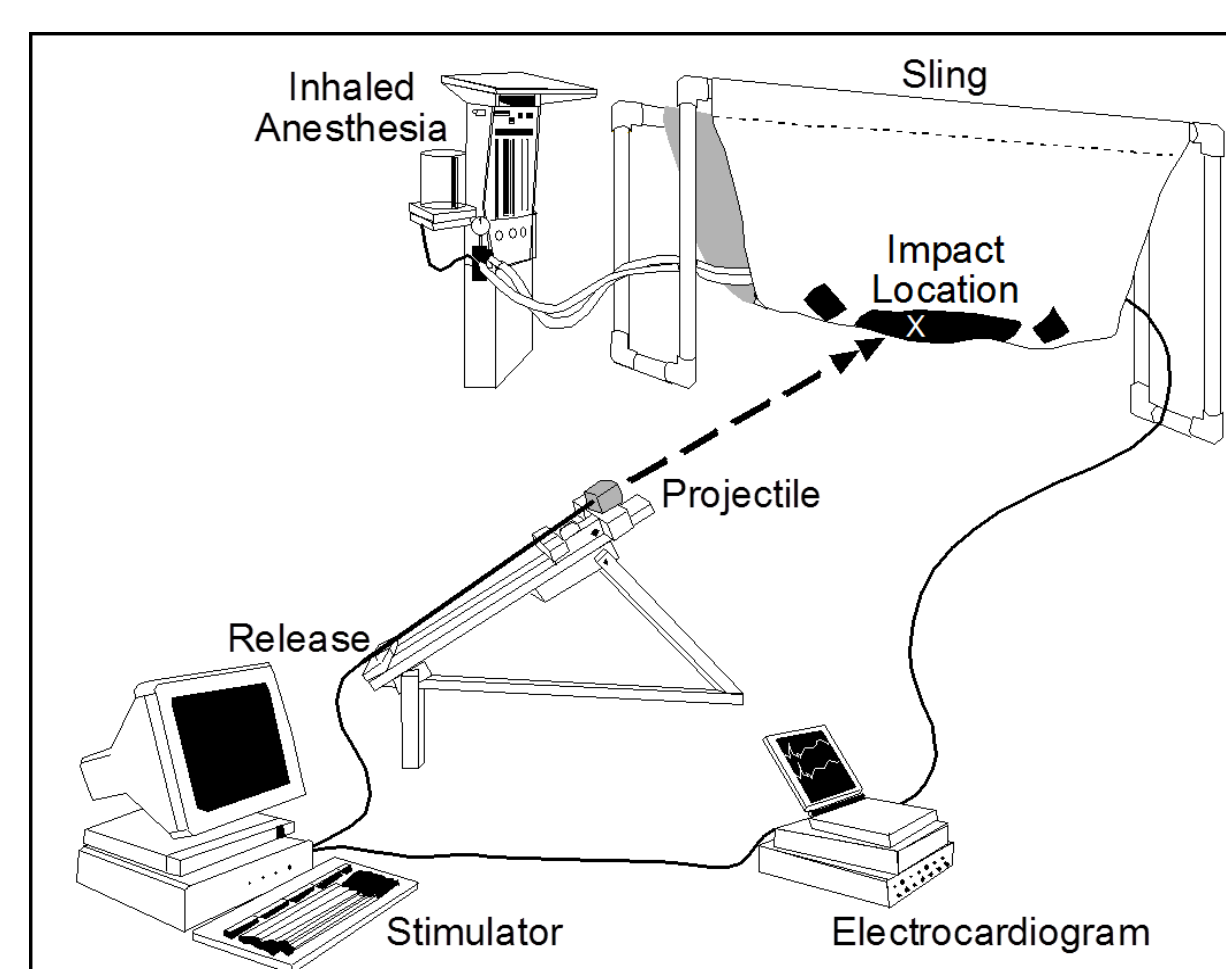


Figure 3: Animal Testing Setup

### Material Testing

Quasi-static loading according to ASTM standards for cellular plastics

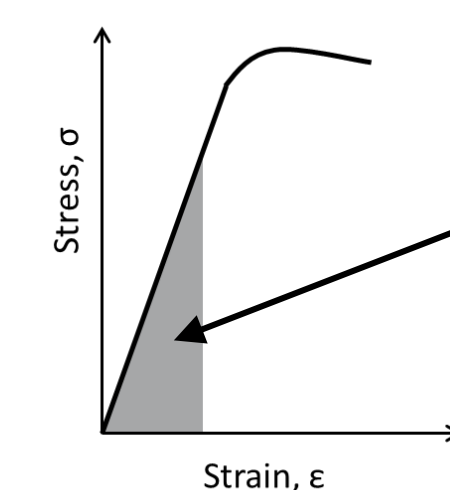
- Materials placed between flat plates and compressed at 60mm/min to a peak force of 360N (equivalent to a 40mph impact by a lacrosse ball [4])
- Calculated stress and strain from recorded force & displacement
- Calculated energy absorption efficiency for each material
- Compared quasi-static peak efficiency with occurrence of VF during animal tests

## References

- [1] Link MS, et al, *J. Am. Coll. Cardiol.*, **41**, 99–104, 2003. [3] Link MS, et al, *N. Engl. J. Med.*, **338**, 1805–11, 1998.  
[2] Weinstock J, et al. *Pediatrics*, **117**, e656–62, 2006. [4] Dau N, et al, *Stapp Car Crash J*, **55**, 251–79, 2011.

## Energy Absorption Efficiency

- Strain energy density is the area under the stress-strain curve



$$\text{Strain Energy Density} = \int_0^e \sigma(\epsilon) d\epsilon$$

Units Check Out:

$$Pa = \frac{N}{m^2} = \frac{N \cdot m}{m^2 \cdot m} = \frac{J}{m^3}$$

- Energy absorption efficiency characterizes a materials ability to absorb stress as it compresses by normalizing the energy absorbed by the stress applied:

$$E = \frac{\int_0^e \sigma(\epsilon) d\epsilon}{\sigma}$$

## Results

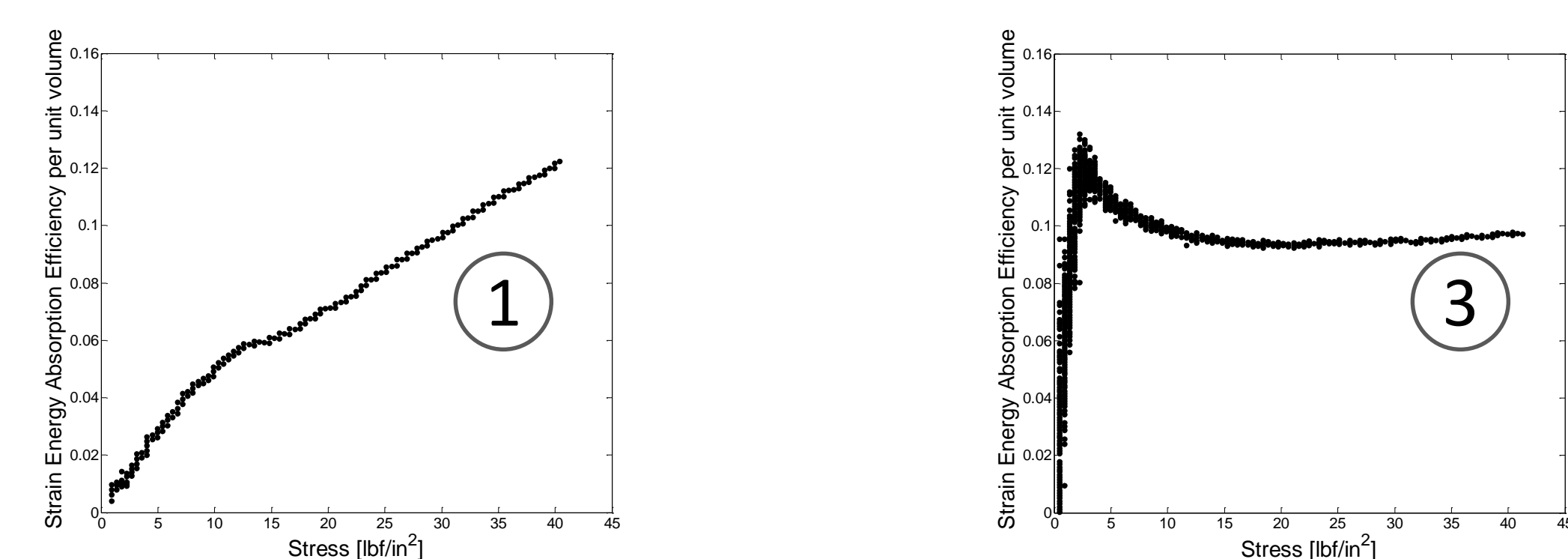


Figure 4: Strain Energy Efficiency curves for materials 1 & 3. Notice the shape contrast between the hard foam only (steadily increasing trend) vs the soft-hard combination (rapid peak followed by a plateau).

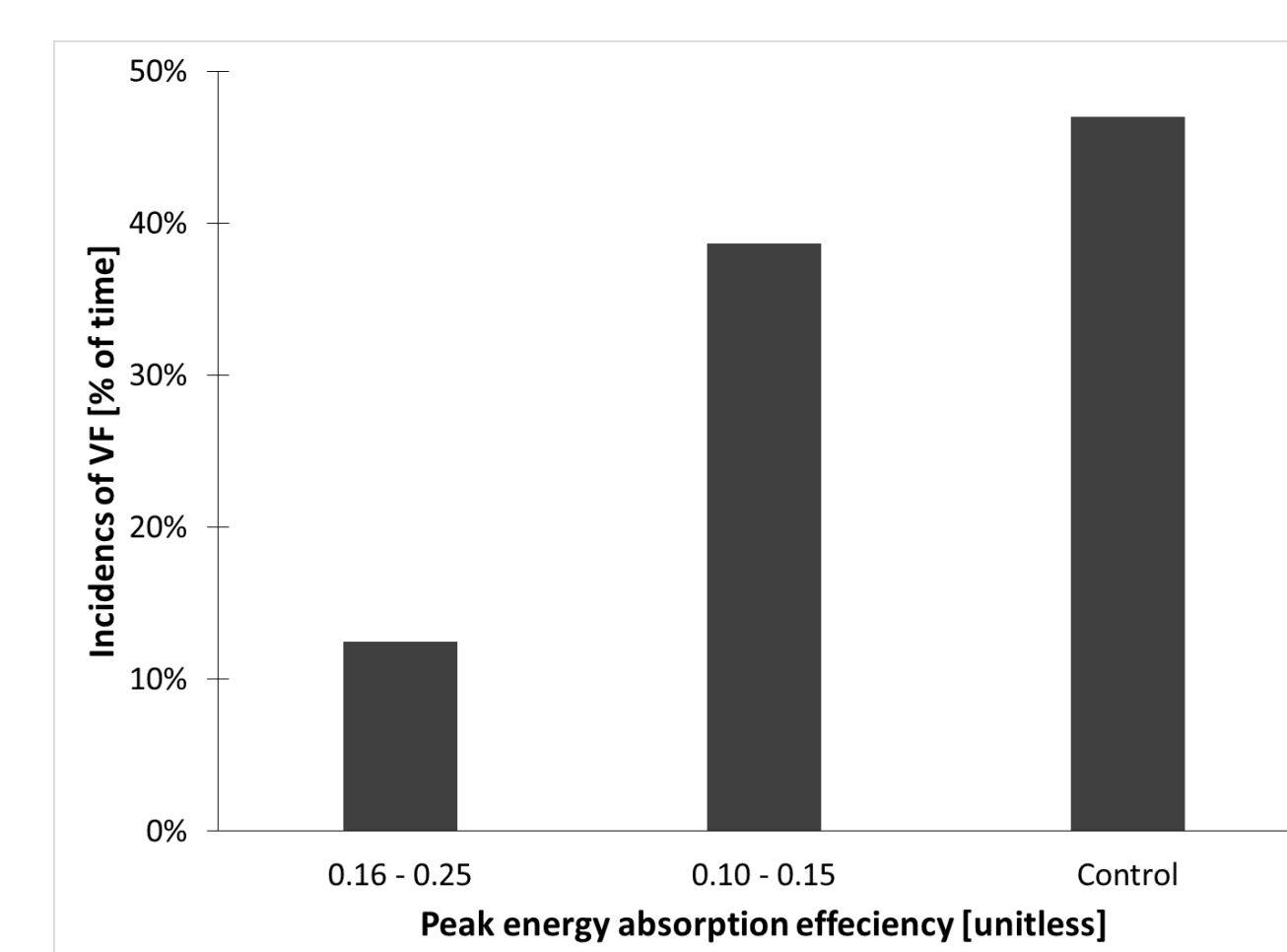


Figure 5: Animals wearing barriers with a higher % peak energy efficiency experienced fewer instances of VF

## Discussion & Conclusion

### Why look at energy characteristics instead of stiffness?

- We tried that and it didn't work
- The most successful material failure theories are energy-based (e.g. von mises failure theory)
- Energy efficiency allows us to observe a material's energy absorption characteristics during an impact
- Mechanical systems can be tuned to avoid particular energy states (resonance); possibly chest barriers could be also

### What is your most interesting finding?

- For these materials, a higher peak energy absorption efficiency corresponds to a decreased occurrence of VF (Fig. 5).

### What is your current challenge?

- How to measure the frequency response of the chest wall in a living creature. Any ideas?