

**DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT OF
WATERLESS URINAL SYSTEMS AND
NUTRIENT RECOVERY PROCESSES FROM
STORED URINE**

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**CENTRE FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT & TECHNOLOGY
INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY DELHI**

APRIL 2012

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Design and Development of Waterless Urinal Systems and Nutrient Recovery Processes from Stored Urine

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**Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
to**



INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY DELHI

APRIL 2012

Dedicated to

My Parents Shri R Subbaian and Shrimati S Rajamma

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled "*Design and Development of Waterless Urinal Systems and Nutrient Recovery Processes from Stored Urine*", being submitted by S Ramesh Sakhivel, to the Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi for the award of degree of **Doctor of Philosophy**, is a record of bonafide research work carried out by him. He has worked under my supervision and guidance in conformity with the rules and regulations of the Indian Institute of Technology Delhi. He has fulfilled the requirements for the submission of this thesis, which to my knowledge has reached the requisite standard. The research report and the results presented in this thesis have not been submitted, in part or in full, to any other University or institute for the award of any degree or diploma.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to my research supervisor Dr V M Chariar for his continuous encouragement and guidance during the course of this research study. His words of wisdom and untiring support in the design and execution of this study made it possible for me to carry on this work even what appeared to be difficult to achieve. My profound thanks are due to him for providing me an opportunity to work on this very interesting and pertinent topic.

This thesis would not have been possible without the support and guidance of my Eawag EPP supervisors, Ms Elizabeth Tilley and Dr. Kai M Udert. I remain indebted to them for their valuable advice and discussions towards making this study a reality.

I am thankful to Prof. Mukesh Khare, Department of Civil Engineering, Prof A K Nema, Department of Civil Engineering and Prof V K Vijay, Centre for Rural Development and Technology (CRDT) for their valuable inputs at various stages of this study as part of the Student Research Committee (SRC).

I would like to thank Eawag for awarding me the EPP fellowship to conduct studies on struvite recovery at Eawag, Switzerland. My thanks are due to all the Eawag staff for their kind support and guidance. In particular, I would like to thank Dr Christian Zurbrugg, Dr Cristoph Luthi, Dr Linda Strande, Dr Stefan Diener, Ms Petra Kholer, Ms Yvonne Voegeli, Ms Caterina Dalla Torre, Mr Bastian Etter and Dr Samuel Luzi for the valuable discussions and encouragement extended during my stay at Eawag.

I am thankful to Ms Karin Rottermann, Ms Claudia Bänninger and Mr Brian Sinnet of Eawag for analyzing numerous samples required for this study. My special thanks to Ms Vanessa Sternitzke (Eawag), Dr Ralf Kägi (Eawag) and Dr Gwen Lesaout (Swiss Federal Laboratories for Materials Science and Technology, Empa) for their patient support with XRD measurements.

I would also like to acknowledge the funding support of UNICEF to conduct this study. I am thankful to Ms Lizette Burgers (Former Chief of WES), Dr Aidan Cronin (WES Specialist), Dr Manish Kumar (Former WES Specialist), Mr Prakash Kumar (Former SEI-UNICEF Consultant), Mr Omprakash Mago (Finance Officer) and Ms Jessinda Mathews (Secretary) of UNICEF New Delhi for the support extended to this study.

The field work in Trichy was facilitated by Mr Subburaman, Director of SCOPE and his staff members Mr Mahaboob, Mr Ganapathy, Mr Mathiallagan, Mr Selvaraj and Mr Natarajan. My sincere thanks go to all of them for assisting me during this period. I am very grateful to Mr Natarajan and our project assistant, “the wise old man”, Mr Perumal who assisted me in conducting the experiments even under very difficult circumstances. I am also thankful to the Principals and staff of Government

Schools in Musiri for their support in establishing urinal collection facilities in the schools.

My sincere appreciation goes to Mr Ajit Seshadri, Former Head of Environment Wing, Vigyan Vijay Foundation, New Delhi, for the support extended to me for conducting this study at IIT Delhi.

The support extended by laboratory staff at IIT Delhi, SPECTRO Labs (New Delhi), SITRA (Coimbatore) is deeply acknowledged. My thanks are also due to several technicians who helped me in the fabrication of proto-types and in the installation of facilities for conducting field level experiments.

The secretarial assistance for bringing this thesis to its present form and for all other logistical support provided in the course of this study by Mr Arun Shanker, Senior Project Assistant and Mr Rohan Kumar, Project Attendant in Dr Chariar's Office is gratefully acknowledged.

I am thankful to my fellow doctoral students Mr Ganesh Prabhu, Mr Azizur Rahman, Mr Sanjay Kumar, Mr Naresh Sharma, Mr Chandrasekar Verma, Dr Gopinath and Dr Charru Malhotra for their constant encouragement and their invaluable support during various stages of this study. I also extend my appreciation to fellow Eawagers, Mr Loic Decrey, Mr Innocent Kamara, Mr Nicolas Estoppey, Mr Mingma Sherpa, Ms Camilla Archetti and Ms Sabrina Bahnmueller for their support and taking me around to some of the beautiful places in Switzerland during my stay at Eawag.

I thank all my friends for the support extended to me during this exciting journey. In particular, I was fortunate to have had the support and advice of Mr. Venkat Velagela, Mr Bhaskar, Mr Satish Kumar, Mr Hirudiaraj, Mr Ajit Saxena, Mr Muralidharan, Mr Sridhar, Mr Raja and Mr Nagarajan at various stages of this work.

I would like to thank family members of Dr Chariar for their warm hospitality during my visits to their home even on holidays to discuss issues related to the study. I am thankful to Ms Kaushalya Chariar for her constant encouragement and motivation.

Last but not the last, I would like to record my deepest appreciation to all my family members for their love and constant prayers. I am thankful to my wife Jayanthi and daughter Swekha for their unconditional support during this study.

(S Ramesh Sakthivel)

Abstract

Waterless urinals can assist in conservation of water and reduce the volume of wastewater generated. However, existing models of waterless urinals available in the market are expensive to install and maintain. Performance and cost effectiveness of a waterless urinal system depends primarily on odour prevention traps installed in the system. Therefore, "Zerodor" - an odour trap working on the principle of a ball valve was developed in this study (Patent Protected). The design of odour trap was kept similar to a normal waste coupler installed in conventional urinal pans to reduce the costs of new installations and retrofitting existing urinals.

Hydrolysis of urea present in human urine into ammonia generates odour in urinals. Therefore, odour control efficiency of the odour trap developed was determined. In addition, a membrane based odour trap being installed in India and a normal urinal without an odour trap were also used in the study for the purpose of comparison and control measurements respectively. Over 98% reduction in the ammonia released was observed by use of "Zerodor" - the odour trap developed in the study. Performance of "Zerodor" was found to be superior to the membrane trap which was studied for purpose of comparison. Particle flow analysis and test for resistance to clogging conducted revealed comparable performance of the odour trap developed with the membrane trap used in the study. Analysis of installation and maintenance costs reveal that adoption of "Zerodor" can significantly reduce the installation and maintenance costs associated with waterless urinals.

Source separation of urine and harvesting of its nutrients can reduce the nutrient loads in wastewaters. Diminishing global phosphorus reserves call for identification of suitable alternatives to meet the future demand for phosphate based fertilisers. In this context, phosphorus recovery from urine assumes greater importance. Struvite precipitation from stored urine can be effected by addition of an external magnesium source. However, relatively little work has been done on the kinetics of struvite precipitation from urine, although the body of work is growing. In this study, dissolution of magnesium and struvite precipitation experiments with stored urine using $\text{MgCl}_2 \cdot 6\text{H}_2\text{O}$, $\text{MgSO}_4 \cdot 7\text{H}_2\text{O}$, MgO , $\text{Mg}(\text{OH})_2$ and bittern were conducted. In addition, wood ash has been tested as an alternative magnesium source to reduce cost of struvite production.

Over 98% phosphate removal was observed for all the conventional magnesium sources used. The reaction time taken for 95% phosphate removal observed were in the order of; bittern > $\text{MgSO}_4 \cdot 7\text{H}_2\text{O}$ > $\text{MgCl}_2 \cdot 6\text{H}_2\text{O}$ > MgO > $\text{Mg}(\text{OH})_2$ with a reaction time of 0.9, 1.8, 2.9, 5.4 and 536 minutes, respectively. Results of dissolution and precipitation experiments reveal that struvite crystallisation process is the rate limiting step for phosphate removal for bittern, $\text{MgSO}_4 \cdot 7\text{H}_2\text{O}$ and $\text{MgCl}_2 \cdot 6\text{H}_2\text{O}$, while dissolution of magnesium was found to be the rate limiting step for MgO and $\text{Mg}(\text{OH})_2$. However, the rapid phosphate removal rate observed for MgO is comparable to bittern, $\text{MgSO}_4 \cdot 7\text{H}_2\text{O}$ and $\text{MgCl}_2 \cdot 6\text{H}_2\text{O}$. Presence of phosphate in urine hinders dissolution of $\text{Mg}(\text{OH})_2$, and therefore it is not a suitable magnesium source.

In the experiments conducted using wood ash, 99% of the phosphate removal was observed. Depending on the wood ash used, the precipitate can contain high concentrations of heavy metals. This could be problematic if the precipitate were used as fertiliser depending on the applicable fertiliser regulations. The financial analysis of struvite precipitation revealed that wood ash and bittern are considerably cheaper than industrially produced magnesium sources. However, transportation cost of bittern to inland locations would increase the cost of struvite production. The precipitate obtained using wood ash is more like a soil conditioner enhanced with phosphorus than a phosphate fertilizer. Therefore, a direct comparison with magnesium sources that produce pure struvite is not possible.

Although the process of struvite precipitation from urine is relatively simple, transportation cost of urine renders the process unviable at a central level. The operations of fluidised bed reactors, which are often used for struvite production at a centralised level, are also relatively complicated. Based on the literature available, it was hypothesised that developing a simple flow through reactor can aid economical production of struvite from stored urine which offers optimal conditions. In this study, a continuous up-flow struvite reactor was developed for low-cost struvite precipitation from stored urine at a decentralised level. Experiments were conducted to determine precipitation and recovery efficiencies of phosphate.

Around 85% precipitation and 81% recovery efficiencies of phosphate by the continuous up-flow struvite reactor designed was observed. The experiments conducted reveal that precipitation of struvite from urine using bittern can be achieved without stirring. The morphology and particle size of struvite obtained are in agreement with previous studies. Scale formation on the components of reactor observed was minimal. A comparative analysis with a manually operated low-cost struvite reactor developed in Nepal, shows that struvite production by use of reactor developed in this study could be economically viable at community scale because of lower operating costs.

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