

# Microfluidic collagen patterning for tendon regeneration

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# Microfluidic Collagen Patterning For Tendon Regeneration

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## INTRODUCTION

Tendon injuries are a common but challenging clinical problem due to the limited healing capacity of the tissue. Tendon tissue is predominantly comprised of aligned type-I collagen fibers, which are responsible for the mechanical strength of the tissue and provide a unique microenvironment for tendon cells.

## AIM

The aim of this project is to develop an *in vitro* model that mimics a tendon-like microenvironment. To this end, a microfluidic collagen patterning platform was developed, in which arrayed pillars in combination with laminar flow were used to control the orientation of collagen fibers.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Device design

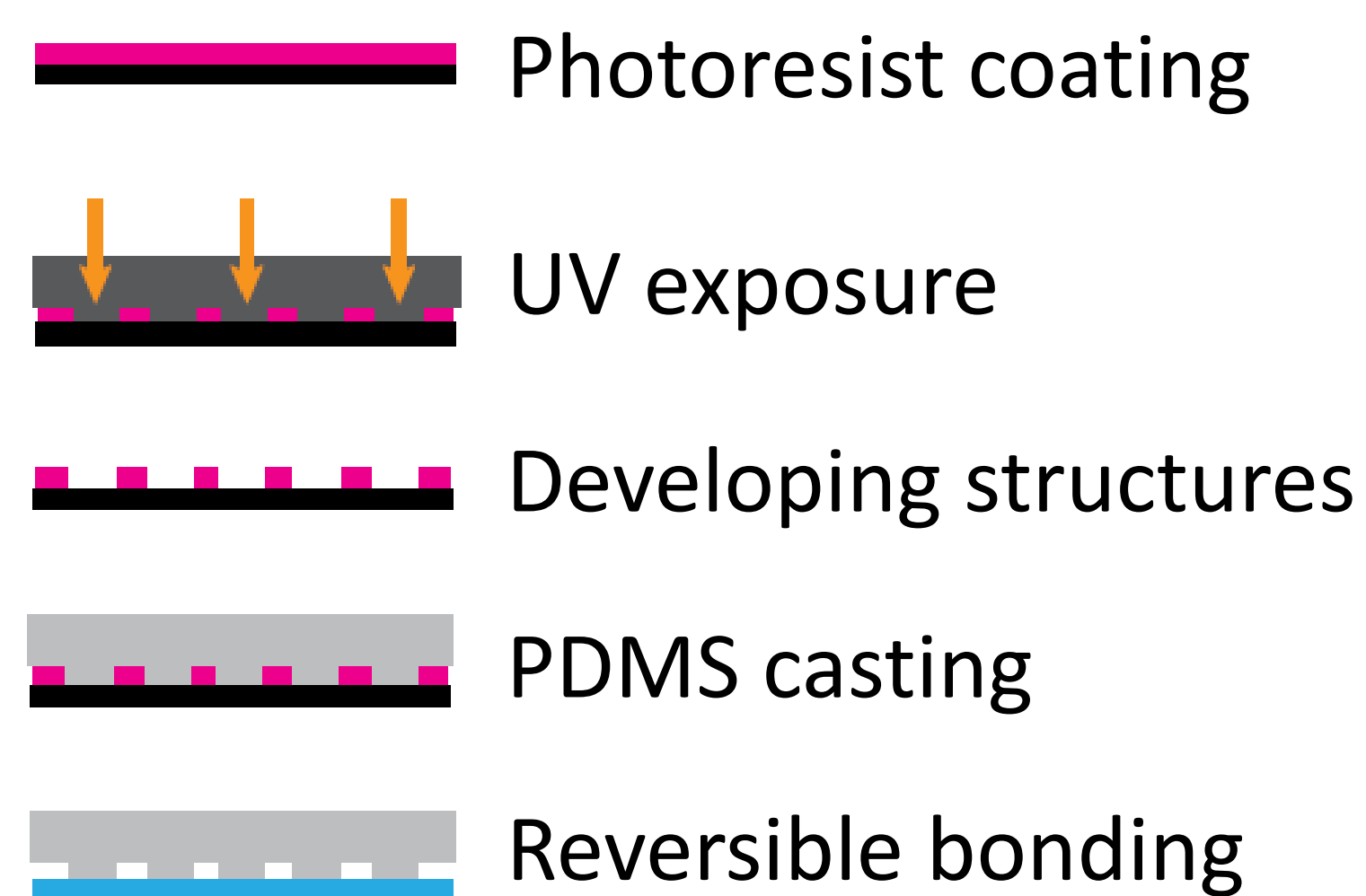
Computer-aided design



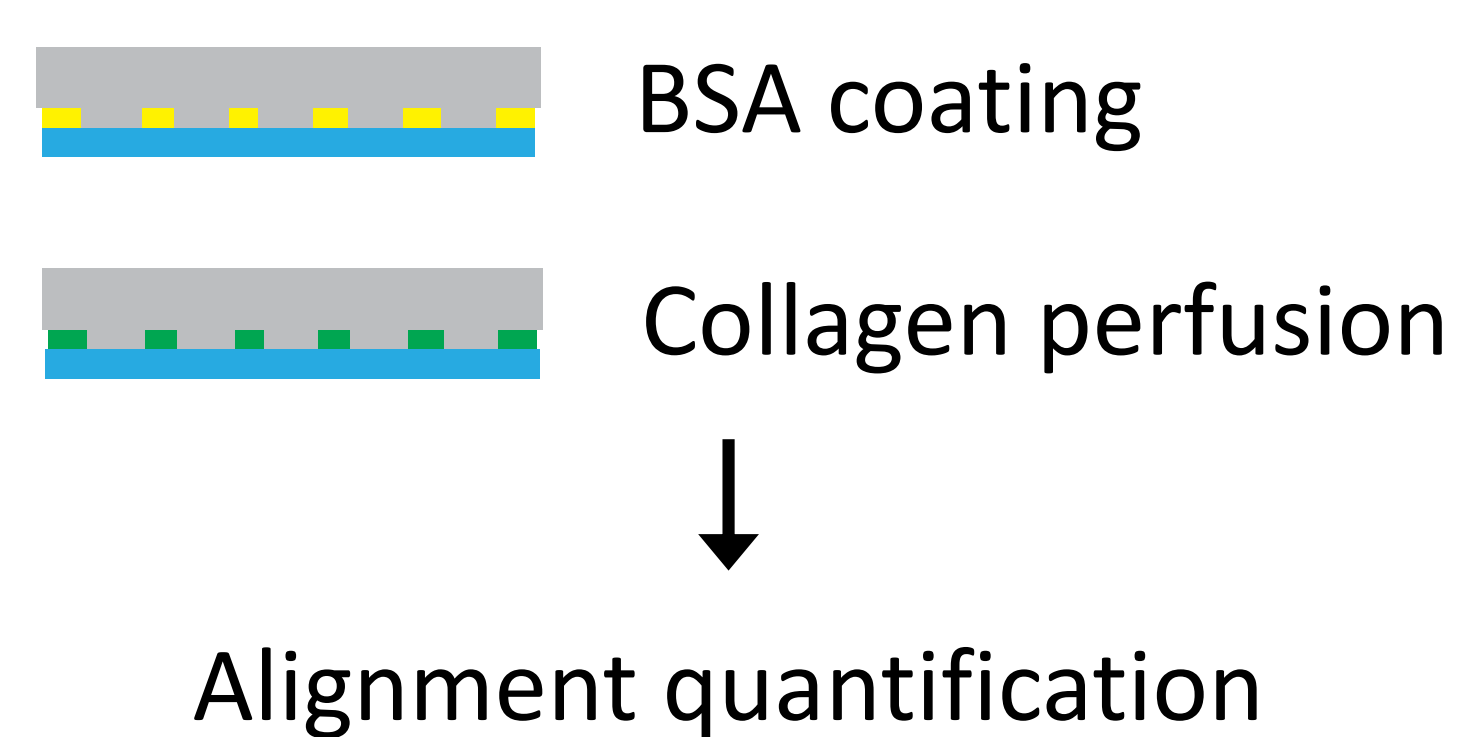
Computational modeling



### Fabrication

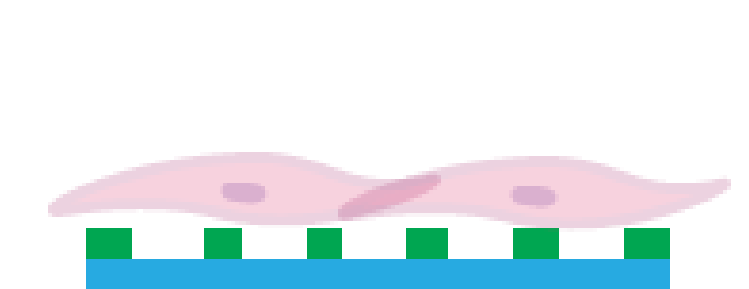


### Collagen patterning



Alignment quantification

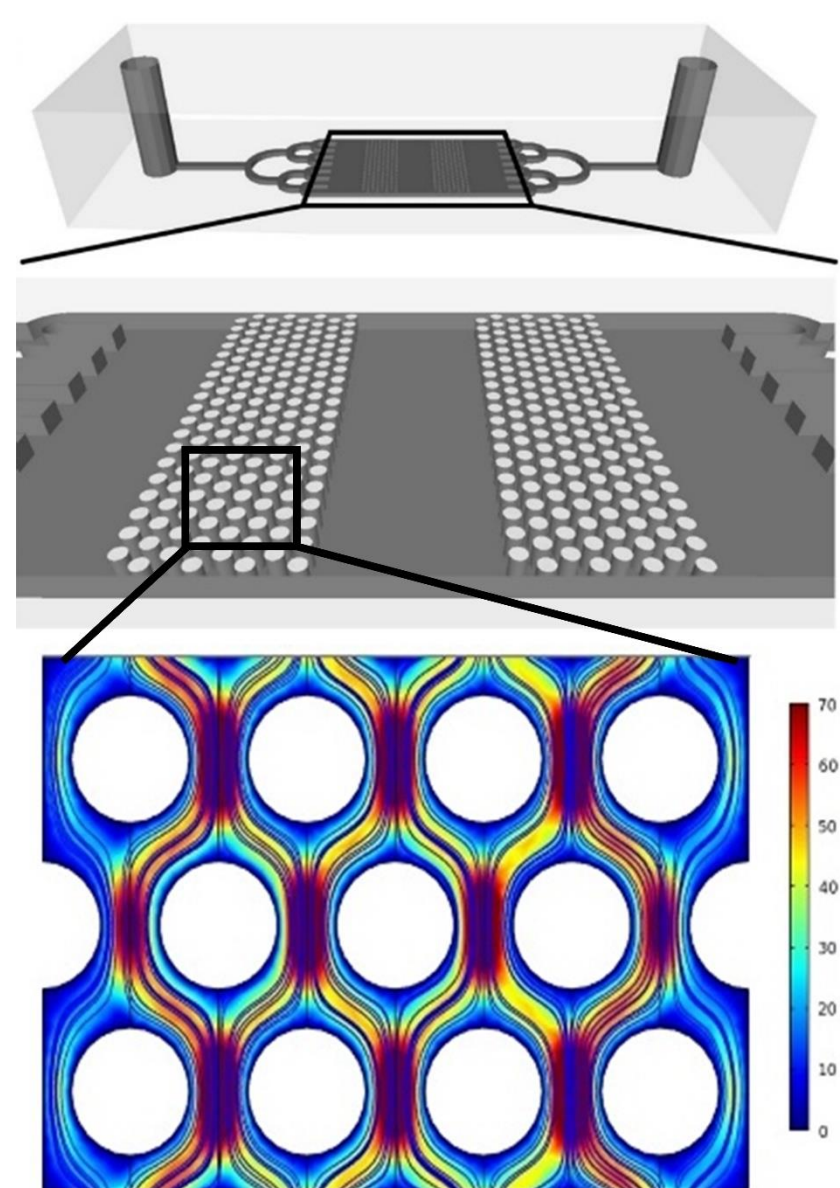
### Cell culture



Cell morphology  
Tenogenic marker expression

## RESULTS

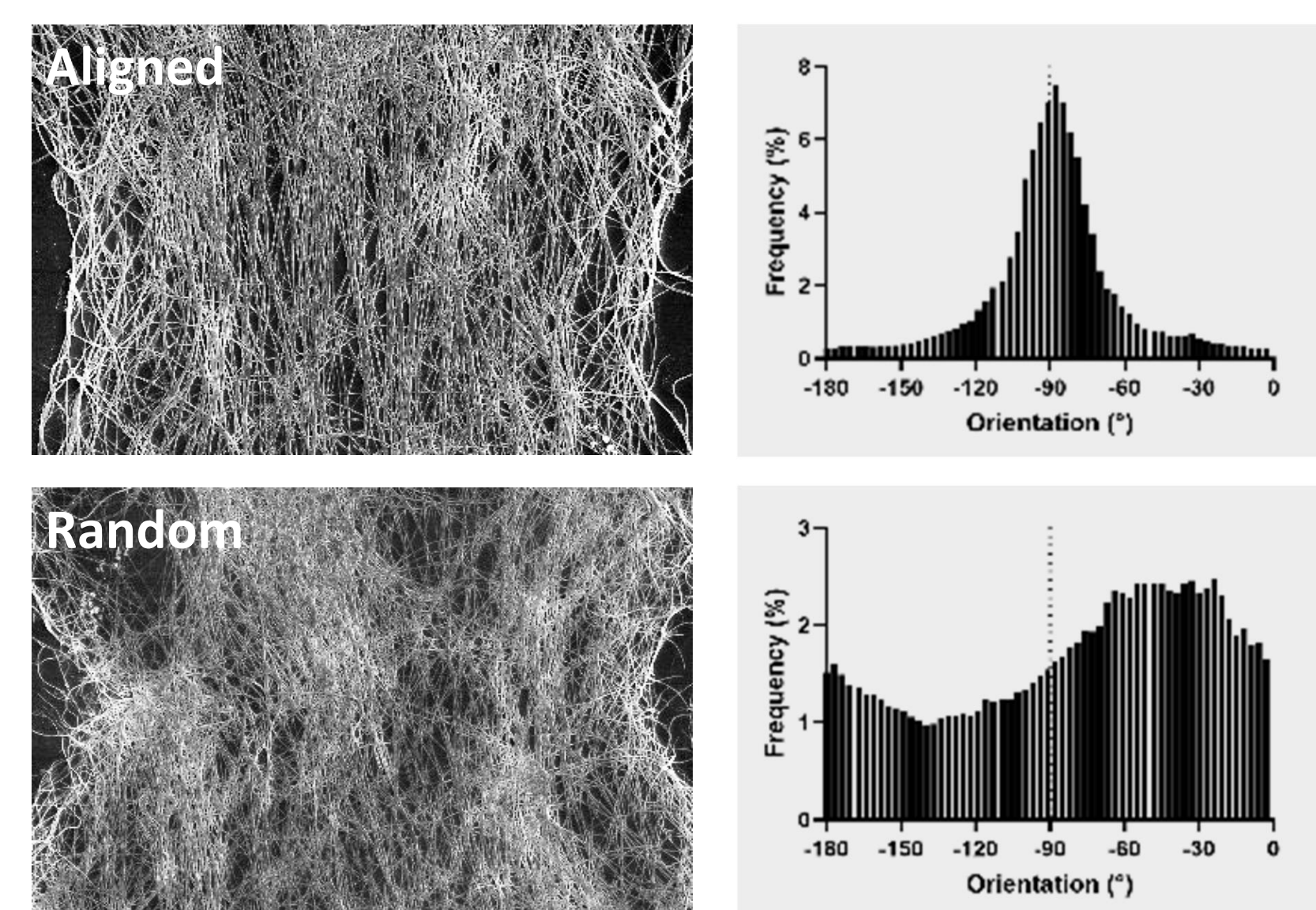
### Hydrodynamic focusing



Microfluidic device with the arrays of micropillars with a diameter of 50  $\mu\text{m}$  and a pillar-to-pillar spacing of 50  $\mu\text{m}$  were designed and fabricated.

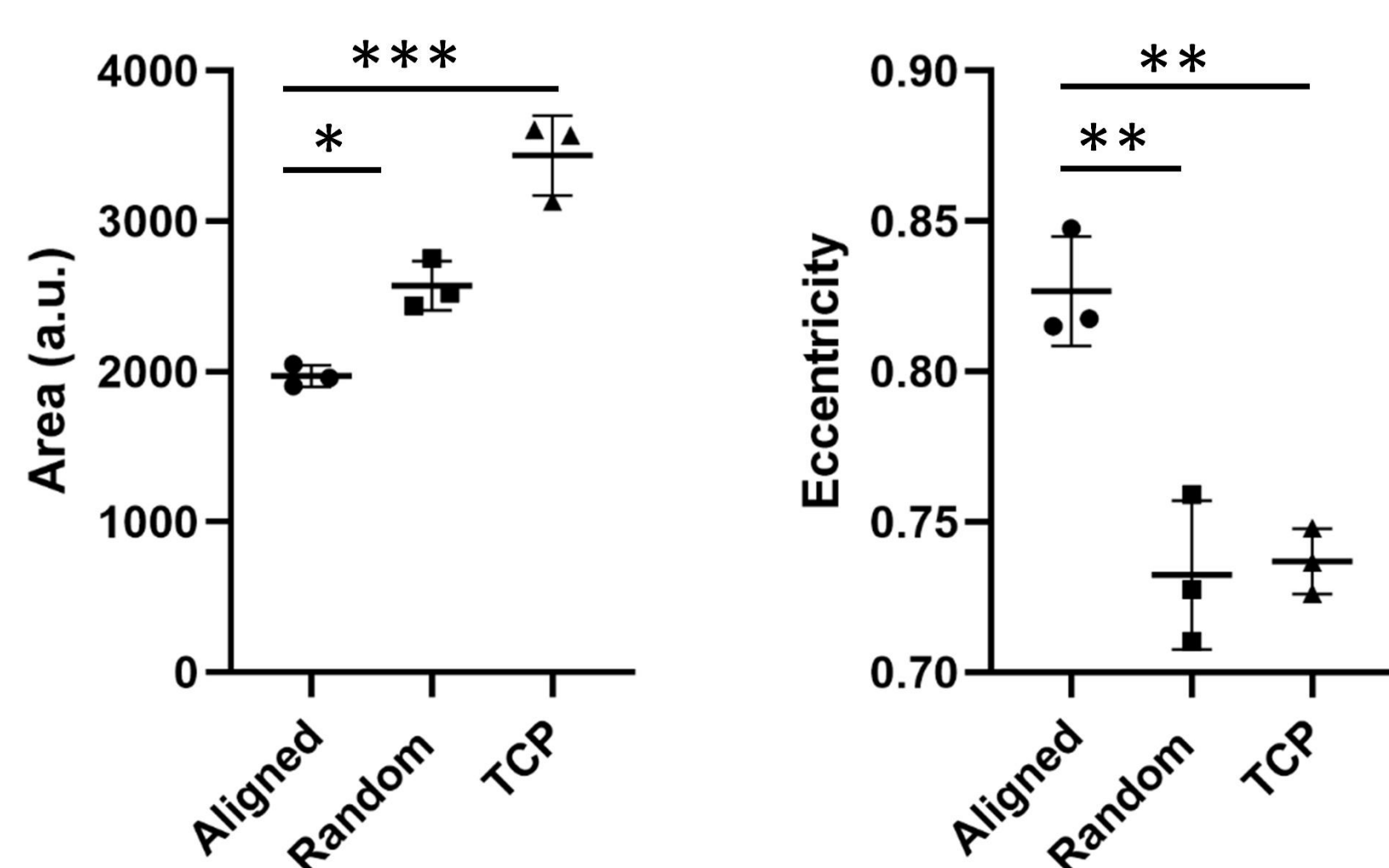
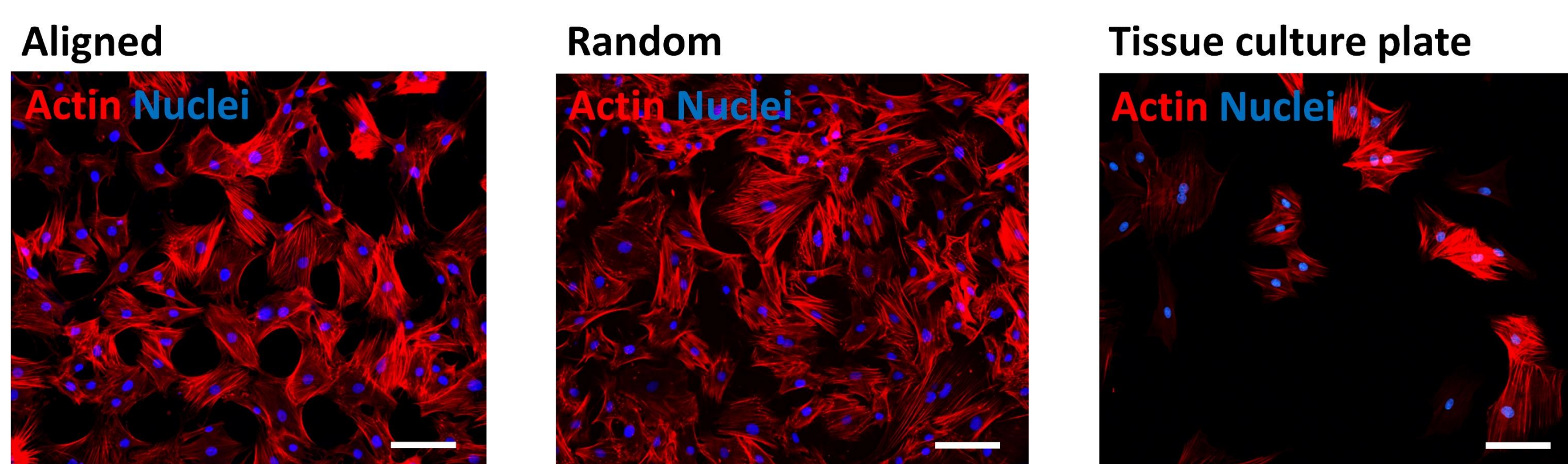
Computational modeling of fluid flows in the microchannel shows hydrodynamic focusing in the region between the pillars.

### Collagen alignment quantification



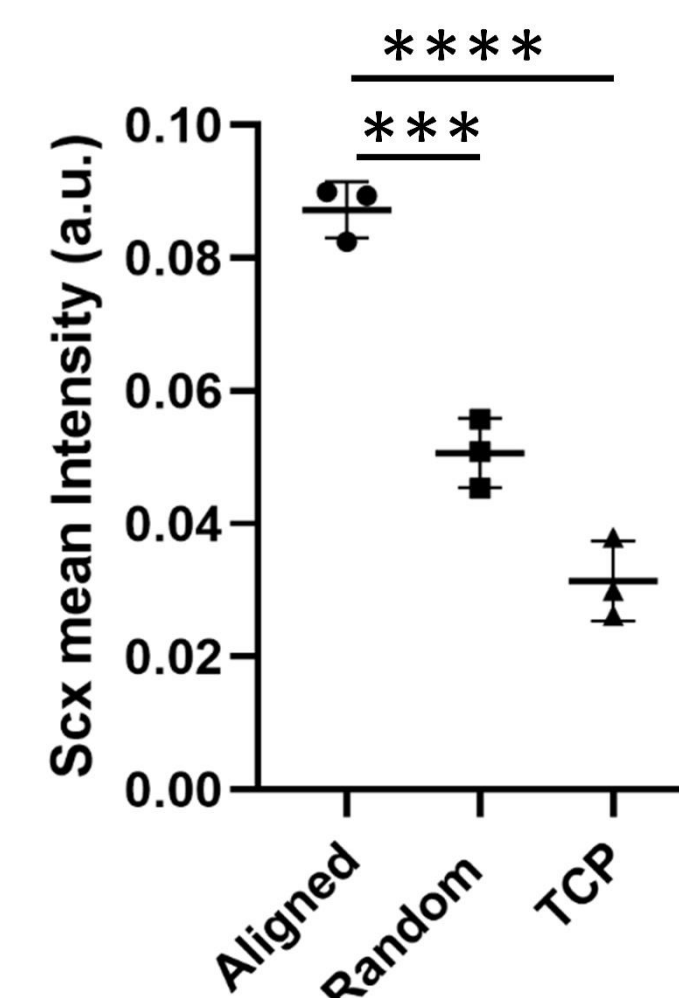
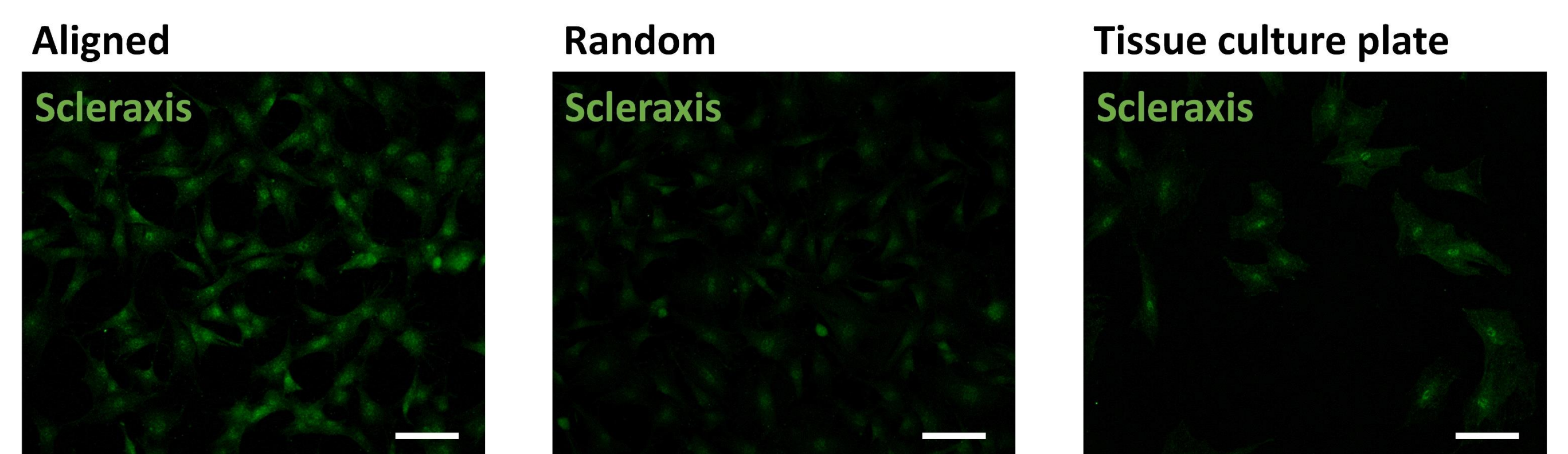
Higher alignment of collagen fibers upon polymerization was observed in the regions between the pillars than the non-pillars region.

### Cell morphology



Primary tenocytes cultured on aligned collagen micropattern showed elongated morphology.

### Tenogenic marker expression



Primary tenocytes cultured on aligned collagen micropattern showed significantly higher levels of scleraxis compared to randomly oriented fibers or not patterned regions.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## CONCLUSIONS

We established a microfluidic approach to pattern aligned and non-aligned collagen fibers on the same device for mimicking tendon regeneration, including adhesion, elongation and retention of tenogenic phenotype.