Electrospun Polymer Fiber Lasers for Applications in Vapor Sensing - DTU Orbit (09/11/2017)

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A sensing approach based on laser emissionfrom polymer fiber networks is presented. Poly(methyl methacrylate) (PMMA) fibers doped with a laser dye are fabricated by electrospinning. They form random loop resonators, which show laser emission upon optical pumping. The shift of the spectral position of the narrow lasing modes upon uptake of alcohol vapors (model vapors are methanol and ethanol) serves as sensor signal. Thus, the high sensitivity related to the spectral line shifts of cavity-based transducers can be combined with the fiber's large surface to volume ratio. The resulting optical sensors feature excellent sensing performance due to the large overlap (more than 80%) of light field and transducer. The shift of the laser modes results from the swelling of the polymer when exposed to solvent vapors. Due to distinctly different diffusion coefficients in polymers, the uptake dynamics reflected in the transient shift of the lasing peaks can be used to discriminate ethanol and methanol vapor in mixtures of them. The sensing mechanism is expected to be applicable to other solvent vapors that cause polymer swelling.

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Authors: Krämmer, S. (Ekstern), Laye, F. (Ekstern), Friedrich, F. (Ekstern), Vannahme, C. (Intern), Smith, C. (Intern), Mendes, A. C. L. (Intern), Chronakis, I. S. (Intern), Lahann, J. (Ekstern), Kristensen, A. (Intern), Kalt, H. (Ekstern)
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