

Volatolomics in healthcare and its advanced detection technology

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ABSTRACT

Various diseases increasingly challenge the health status and life quality of human beings. Volatolome emitted from patients has been considered as a potential family of markers, volatolomics, for diagnosis/screening. There are two fundamental issues of volatolomics in healthcare. On one hand, the solid relationship between the volatolome and specific diseases needs to be clarified and verified. On the other hand, effective methods should be explored for the precise detection of volatolome. Several comprehensive review articles had been published in this field. However, a timely and systematical summary and elaboration is still desired. In this review article, the research methodology of volatolomics in healthcare is critically considered and given out, at first. Then, the sets of volatolome according to specific diseases through different body sources and the analytical instruments for their identifications are systematically summarized. Thirdly, the advanced electronic nose and photonic nose technologies for volatile organic compounds (VOCs) detection are well introduced. The existed obstacles and future perspectives are deeply thought and discussed. This article could give a good guidance to researchers in this interdisciplinary field, not only understanding the cutting-edge detection technologies for doctors (medicinal background), but also making reference to clarify the choice of aimed VOCs during the sensor research for chemists, materials scientists, electronics engineers, etc.

KEYWORDS

volatolomics, electronic nose, disease diagnosis, sensor, artificial olfaction, volatile organic compounds

1 Introduction

Healthcare is the permanent motif for human beings, which is now greatly challenged by cancers, cardiovascular diseases, infectious diseases, etc. [1]. For example, it has been estimated that there will be ca. 1.918 million diagnosed new cases and ca. 0.609 million deaths of cancer in USA, 2022 (Fig. 1) [2]. If those malignant tumors could be effectively diagnosed at an early stage [3], through screening of high-risk groups, timely treatment of malignant tumors can significantly stop the tumor fast-growing, lower the ratio of recurrence, and reduce the risk of patient mortality [4]. Besides cancers, other diseases, such as tuberculosis [5], COVID-19 [6], etc., also have a strong desire to achieve fast, early, and accurate diagnosis to not only suppress the spread of diseases but also to guide the early treatment after infections.



A precise and early diagnosis is the starting point of all clinical activities [7]. Clinical auxiliary diagnosis includes laboratory examination and special examination [8]. Laboratory

examinations such as physical, chemical, and biological methods are used to detect the patient's blood, body fluids, secretions, excretions, or diseased tissue to determine etiological, pathological, or functional data [9]. Through special examinations such as X-ray, electrocardiogram, electroencephalogram, ultrasound, endoscopy and computed tomography, the location and shape of the lesions are determined [10]. Due to methodological constraints, auxiliary diagnosis has limitations [8], such as low sensitivity or specificity, invasive examination, long time, etc. Pathological diagnosis also relies on accurate sampling and high professionalism [11]. Therefore, it is necessary to develop convenient, efficient, and accurate diagnostic methods. In recent years, a lot of new diagnostic methods have emerged. Among them, volatolomics is one of the more valuable ones that may be used as a new development direction of future diagnostics [12–14], which is the non-invasive detection of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) emitted from patients.

VOCs are organic chemicals that have a high vapor pressure at

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Estimated new cases

			Males	Females			
Prostate	268,490	27%			Breast	287,850	31%
Lung & bronchus	117,910	12%			Lung & bronchus	118,830	13%
Colon & rectum	80,690	8%			Colon & rectum	70,340	8%
Urinary bladder	61,700	6%			Uterine corpus	65,950	7%
Melanoma of the skin	57,180	6%			Melanoma of the skin	42,600	5%
Kidney & renal pelvis	50,290	5%			Non-Hodgkin lymphoma	36,350	4%
Non-Hodgkin lymphoma	44,120	4%			Thyroid	31,940	3%
Oral cavity & pharynx	38,700	4%			Pancreas	29,240	3%
Leukemia	35,810	4%			Kidney & renal pelvis	28,710	3%
Pancreas	32,970	3%			Leukemia	24,840	3%
All sites	983,160	100%	All sites	934,870	100%		

Estimated deaths



			Males	Females			
Lung & bronchus	68,820	21%			Lung & bronchus	61,360	21%
Prostate	34,500	11%			Breast	43,250	15%
Colon & rectum	28,400	9%			Colon & rectum	24,180	8%
Pancreas	25,970	8%			Pancreas	23,860	8%
Liver & intrahepatic bile duct	20,420	6%			Ovary	12,810	4%
Leukemia	14,020	4%			Uterine corpus	12,550	4%
Esophagus	13,250	4%			Liver & intrahepatic bile duct	10,100	4%
Urinary bladder	12,120	4%			Leukemia	9,980	3%
Non-Hodgkin lymphoma	11,700	4%			Non-Hodgkin lymphoma	8,550	3%
Brain & other nervous system	10,710	3%			Brain & other nervous system	7,570	3%
All sites	322,090	100%	All sites	287,270	100%		

Figure 1 Ten leading cancer types for the estimated new cancer cases and deaths by sex, USA, 2022. Estimates are rounded to the nearest 10 and exclude basal cell and squamous cell skin cancers and *in-situ* carcinoma except urinary bladder. Ranking is based on modeled projections and may differ from the most recent observed data. Reproduced with permission from Ref. [2]. © Siegel, R. L. et al. 2022.

room temperature, i.e., low boiling points roughly in the range of 50 to 250 °C [15–17]. Most VOCs have unique odors [12, 18, 19]. There is a consensus between eastern and western traditional diagnosis of methodologies that smelling the breath from the upper respiratory tract is an effective way for clarifying health conditions both in Hippocrates's Book of Prognostic written in 400 B.C. [20] and Bian Que's book of "The Yellow Emperor's Canon of 81 Difficult Issues" written in ca. 200 B.C. [21]. The nature of these diseases related special smells is caused by different VOCs, which is demonstrated by the nobel prize laureate that Linus Pauling's pioneer work on the breath analysis in 1971 using gas-liquid partition chromatography [22]. In the past 50 years, thousands of volatile biomarkers, i.e., VOCs, associated with various diseases or lesions, have been identified and classified from multi-body sources (Fig. 2) [23]. It boosts the development of this new era, volatolomics, such as human exhalation [18], skin emanations [24], urine headspace [25], blood [26], and feces [27], towards good-efficient, high-accuracy non-invasive, and painless disease diagnosis/screening.

Before the volatolomics diagnosis could be accepted as a new clinical golden standard, two major concerns should be well answered. One is what the solid relationship, between the specific set of volatolome and the aimed disease is, viz., what the volatolomics (bio-/chemical markers) of a special disease is. The other one is how the volatolome can be accurately and specifically detected and recognized in the real environment fulfilled with confounding factors. According to these two concerns, what is the philosophy of research methodology to answer these questions in

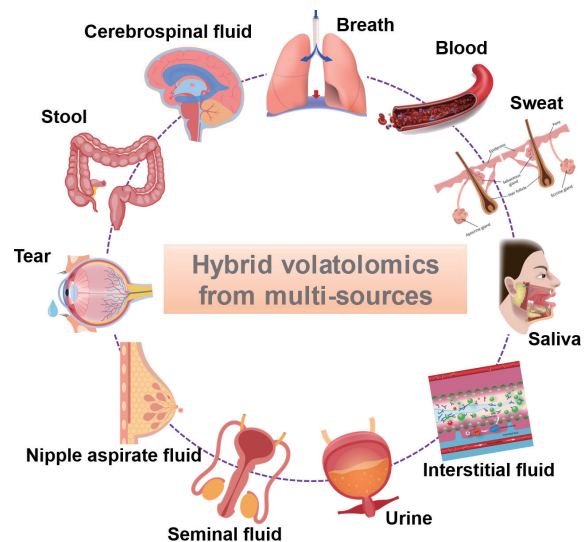


Figure 2 The scheme of hybrid volatolomics and the multiple VOCs sources.

such an interdisciplinary research field? Some critical review articles had been published [28–32], in which these concerns were partly considered. However, a systematical summary and elaboration is still necessary. In this review article, the research methodology of volatolomics in healthcare is critically thought and given out. Then, the sets of volatolome according to specific diseases through different body sources, and the analytical instruments for their identifications are systematically

summarized. Thirdly, the advanced electronic nose (E-nose) and photonic nose (P-nose) technologies for VOCs detection are well introduced. The existed obstacles and future perspectives are deeply thought and discussed. This article could give a good guidance to researchers in this interdisciplinary field, not only understanding the cutting-edge detection technologies for doctors (medicinal background), but also referring to clarify the choice of aimed VOCs during the sensor research for chemists, materials scientists, electronics engineers, etc.

2 The research methodology of volatolomics in healthcare

The emitted volatolome are complicated mixtures with confounding factors, e.g., food, smoking, alcohol drinking, environmental pollutions, etc., no matter which sources of the human body they come from. Therefore, to ensure the successful application in healthcare, a universal methodology is required to make all research results comparable. A brief introduction is depicted as a flow chart in Fig. 3.

First, volatolomics, the accurate bio-/chemical markers associated with the specific diseases, needs to be identified by analytical instrumental approaches, such as gas chromatography-mass spectrometry (GC-MS) [33–36], gas chromatography time-of-flight mass spectrometry (GC-ToF-MS) [37–39], etc., which is the building block of this new era. In addition, it is worth mentioning that the analytical instrumental approaches are still the most accurate way to analyze volatolome mixtures, although they are expensive, time-assuming, and high skill threshold. Nowadays, with the development of data mining technology, e.g., association analysis, clusters analysis, classification, and regression [40], accurate results can be obtained efficiently, facing big and complicated clinical data when all of them use the same sampling method.

Second, the sensing technology, E-nose [41] and P-nose [42], including sensitive materials, fabrications, recognition algorithm, etc., need to be developed according to the identified volatolome markers. In detail, the interaction between the volatolome and sensitive materials, needs to be well designed and verified according to different conditions. For example, in the disposable application such as P-nose, one-lock one-key strategy is widely used [28]. The sensor devices of fabrication process also need to be well considered. For example, the uniformity, scalability, and reproducibility of fabrication technology should be considered at the starting stage of research to narrow the big gap between laboratory and industry. The recognition algorithm is an effective tool to analyze data. The core includes feature's extraction and analysis (cluster, separation, etc.) [43]. Good research on recognition algorithms not only can enhance the performance of

E-nose and P-nose, but also can help the researchers to understand the sensing mechanism through the extracted features. In one word, the development of sensing technology is based on the volatolomics, and then, verified by the volatolomics.

Third, the developed sensors need to be validated by strict clinical trials with confounding factors. In this stage, the recognition algorithm is further trained by the real samples from the patients. The larger number of the tested patients, the more precise algorithm is, which is the precondition of the success in the blind test. After that, volatolomics might be considered as a candidate of golden standard of diagnostics. Till that, the volatolomics can start to apply the admission from food and drug administration (FDA), and might be authorized in the future.

3 The volatolomics of specific diseases from different body sources

3.1 The volatile organic compounds in breath and their associated diseases

Human breath is a gas exchange process mainly for inhaling O_2 and exhaling CO_2 . Accompanying this process, large amounts of volatile metabolites are produced in some normal and abnormal metabolic biochemical pathways. Currently, various kinds of VOCs have been found in breath samples, thus, making it the most examined VOC source. The main pathways for adding VOCs to breath include but are not limited as:

- From the viewpoint of thermodynamics, there is a VOCs equilibrium distribution between “fat–blood–breath”. The concentrations of VOCs in each part follow the fat–blood (λ_{fb}) and blood–air (λ_{ba}) equilibrium partition coefficients. Most cancer related VOCs are transported from different body sources to breathe in this way (Path ①) [44–58].
- The cell/tissue lesion in the mouth, on the inner surface of the alimentary canal and stomach, i.e., their headspace connects the respiratory tract, can directly emit VOCs to the breath (Path ②) [33, 45, 59–71].
- Infections caused odorous metabolites in the surrounded micro-environment, e.g., oral interstitial, helicobacter pylori, lung tuberculosis infections, etc., can directly emit VOCs to the breath (Path ③) [72–78].

Most diseases related VOCs, as shown in Fig. 4, and summarized in Table 1, are emitted along one or combined paths. The percentage's sum of alkane and alkene are higher in Alzheimer, lung cancer, breast cancer, colorectal cancer, Parkinson, head-and-neck cancer, and renal disease patients' breath, than those in others. This means such VOCs transport mainly, but not limited, along the Path ①, viz., “fat–blood–breath” routine. The percentage's sum of aldehyde, ketone, nitrile, amine, ester, alcohol, acid, i.e., polar VOCs, are higher in the gastrointestinal disease, gastric cancer, pulmonary arterial, and asthma patients' breath, than those in others. These diseases can directly emit their metabolites into the breath, i.e., they are mainly, but not limited, along the Path ②. The halitosis, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), and tuberculosis are mainly along Path ③ and other combined paths.

3.2 Volatile organic compounds in blood and their associated diseases

Blood circulates in the whole body, exchange, and transport substance in most bio-chemical process, reflect the real-time nutritional, metabolic, and immune status. Theoretically, blood volatolomics could reveal full information of all diseases in the human body. The blood-related VOCs metabolic processes can be classified into two categories as follow:

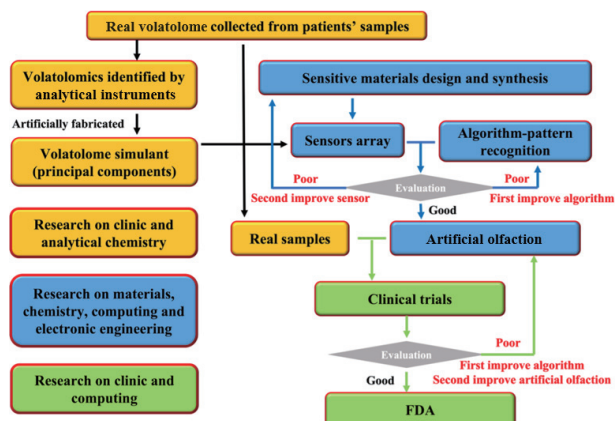


Figure 3 The research methodology of volatolomics in healthcare.

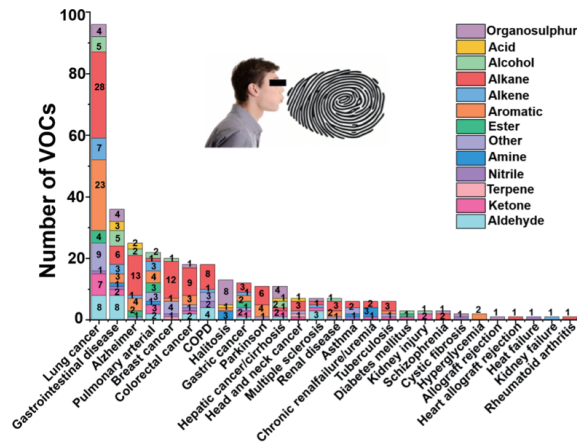


Figure 4 The summary of the number of VOCs' kinds in the breath of different patients (data from Table 1).

- Damage to the cells by reactive oxygen species through direct oxidative stress processes generates a major source of VOCs that partially exchange into blood (Path ①) [32].

Table 1 The summary of disease-related VOCs in breath

Disease	Chemi-cals	VOCs	References		
Allograft rejection	Organosulphur	Carbonyl sulfide	[96]		
		Acid	2,2-Dimethyl-propanoic acid	[97]	
			Oxalic acid	[97]	
			2,6-Octadien-1-ol	[97]	
		Alcohol	2-Butyl-1-octanol	[97]	
			1-Chloro-nonadecane	[97]	
			1-Methylpropyl-cyclooctane	[97]	
			2,3,5-Trimethylhexane	[97]	
			2,3-Dimethyl-heptane	[97]	
		Alzheimer	Alkane	2,5,6-Trimethyl-octane	[97]
				2,6,10-Trimethyl-dodecane	[97]
				2,6,10,14-Tetramethyl-hexadecane	[97]
				3,7-Dimethyl-decane	[97]
				3-Ethyl-2,2-dimethyl-pentane	[97]
				4-Methyl-octane	[97]
5-Ethyl-2-methyl-octane	[97]				
Dodecane	[97]				
Heptane,2,2,4,6,6- pentamethyl-	[97]				
Alkene	2,4-Dimethyl-1-heptene			[97]	
	1-Methylethyl-benzene	[97]			
	Butylated hydroxytoluene	[97]			
	Propyl benzene	[97]			
	Styrene	[97]			
Ester	2-Ethylhexyl tetradecyl ester	[97]			
	1,1'-Oxybis-octane (octyl ether)	[97]			
Other	3,7-Dimethyl-propanoate	[97]			
	Ethane	[98]			
Asthma	Alkane	Pentane	[99]		
		Ammonia	[100]		
	Nitrile	NO	[101–103]		
	Other	8-Isoprostane	[104]		
		Hydrogen peroxide	[105]		

- Exogenous VOCs, e.g., food, air pollution, and smoking, cause indirect oxidative stress. Those VOCs leak into the cytoplasm, then, attach to organs or organelles. The subsequent peroxidative damage to proteins, PUFAs and DNA produce VOCs that partially exchange into blood (Path ②) [30, 79].

Till now, many studies only examined the VOC profiles through *in-vitro* cell experiments that are greatly different from the real conditions surrounding tissue and blood vessels. The aforementioned thermodynamics model about VOCs equilibrium distribution between “fat–blood” decides the VOCs input by the fat–blood coefficient (λ_{fb}). The exchange processes of VOCs from blood to breath, urine, feces, and other things dominate the output. Therefore, the input and output of the blood VOCs decide the compositions and concentrations. However, in fact, the studies of volatolomics are not well concerned compared with the studies on biomarkers in blood. Very few researches show the VOCs in liver cancer, lung cancer, and hepatic cancer patients' blood as shown in Fig 5 and summarized in Table 2. The less kinds of VOCs than that in breath and urine seem lost large amounts of information. The possible reasons might be:

(Continued)

Disease	Chemicals	VOCs	References	
Breast cancer	Alcohol	2-Hexyl-1-octanol	[53]	
		2,3,4-Trimethyldecane	[49]	
		3,3-Dimethyl pentane	[49]	
		5-(2-Methylpropyl) nonane	[49]	
		Dodecane, 4-methyl	[51]	
		Nonadecane, 3-methyl	[51]	
	Alkane	Nonane	[51]	
		Octane, 2-methyl	[51]	
		Pentadecane, 6-methyl	[51]	
		Propane, 2-methyl	[51]	
		Tridecane	[53]	
		Tridecane, 5-methyl	[51]	
		Undecane, 3-methyl	[51]	
	Aromatic	Benzene, 1,2,4,5-tetramethyl-	[53]	
		Nitrile	2-Amino-5-isopropyl-8-methyl-1-azulenecarbonitrile	[49]
			2,5-Cyclohexadiene-1,4-dione,2,6-bis(1,1-dimethylethyl)-	[53]
	Other	6-Ethyl-3-octyl ester 2- trifluoromethyl benzoic acid	[49]	
		Cyclopropane, ethylidene	[53]	
	Terpene		(+)-Longifolene	[53]
D-limonene		[53]		
Chronic renal failure/uremia	Alkane	2,2,6-Trimethyl-octane	[106]	
		2,4-Dimethyl heptane	[106]	
	Amine	Ammonia	[107]	
		Dimethyl amine	[107]	
		Trimethyl amine	[107]	
	Ketone	2-Butanone	[106]	
		Decanal	[108]	
	Aldehyde	Nonanal	[108]	
		2-Methylbutane	[108]	
		2-Methyl-pentane	[108]	
		3-Methylpentane	[108]	
		4-Methyl-octane	[108]	
		Alkane	Cyclohexane	[108]
Methylcyclohexane			[108]	
Colorectal cancer	Alkane	1-Iodononane	[49]	
		Methyl-cyclopentane	[108]	
		1,2-Pentadiene	[108]	
	Aromatic	1,1'-(1-Butenylidene) bis benzene	[49]	
		1,3-Dimethylbenzene (m-xylene)	[108]	
		P-xylene	[108]	
	Ketone	4-Methyl-2-pentanone	[108]	
		Nitrile	2-Amino-5-isopropyl-8-methyl-1-azulenecarbonitrile	[49]
	Organosulphur		(1,1-Dimethylethyl) thio acetic acid	[49]
	Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease	Aldehyde	Other	4-(4-propylcyclohexyl)-,4'-cyano (7)-4-ylester benzoic acid
Heptanal			[75]	
Hexanal			[75]	
Malondialdehyde			[75]	
Nonanal			[75]	

(Continued)

Disease	Chemi-cals	VOCs	References	
Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease		2,6-Dimethyl-heptane	[76]	
		4,7-Dimethyl-undecane	[76]	
		4-Methyl-octane	[76]	
		Ethane	[77]	
		Hexadecane	[76]	
		Octadecane	[76]	
		Undecane	[76]	
		2,4,6-Trimethyl-decane	[76]	
		Alkene	Isoprene	[76]
		Nitrile	Benzonitrile	[76]
			NO	[109]
		Other	3,7-Dimethyl 1,3,6-octatriene	[76]
			Hydrogen peroxide	[110]
Terpineol	[76]			
Cystic fibrosis	Nitrile	NO	[111, 112]	
	Organosulphur	Carbonyl sulfide	[113]	
Diabetes mellitus	Alcohol	Ethanol	[114]	
	Ester	Methyl nitrate	[115]	
	Ketone	Acetone	[114]	
	Aldehyde	Furfural	[45]	
Gastric Cancer	Alkane	4,5-Dimethyl-nonane	[45]	
		4-Methyl-octane	[63]	
		Hexadecane	[63]	
	Alkene	Isoprene	[45]	
		1,2,3-Trimethyl-benzene	[45]	
	Aromatic	A-methyl-styrene	[63]	
		2-Pentyl acetate	[45]	
	Ester	2-Butoxy-ethanol	[45]	
		2-Butanone	[63]	
	Ketone	6-Methyl-5-hepten-2-one	[45]	
		Other	Acrylnitril	[63]
	Acid	Acetic acid	[64]	
		Hexanoic acid	[64]	
		Pentanoic acid	[64]	
	Gastrointestinal disease		1-Pentanol	[64]
1-Propanol			[64]	
Alcohol			Butanol	[64]
Ethanol			[65]	
Methanol			[64]	
Butanal			[64]	
Decanal			[64]	
Heptanal			[64]	
Aldehyde			Hexanal	[64]
			Nonanal	[64]
			Octanal	[64]
			Pentanal	[64]
	Propanal	[64]		
Gastrointestinal disease	Alkane	3-Methyl-hexane	[65]	
		5-Ethyl-2-methyl-octane	[65]	
		Dodecane	[65]	
		Ethane	[116]	

(Continued)

Disease	Chemicals	VOCs	References	
Gastrointestinal disease	Alkane	Pentane	[116, 117]	
		Propane	[116]	
		2,4-Dimethyl-1-heptene	[65]	
	Alkene	Isoprene	[64]	
		Tetrachloroethylene	[65]	
	Amine	Ammonia	[64]	
		Ethyl phenol	[64]	
	Aromatic	Phenol	[64]	
		Phenol, 4-methyl	[64]	
	Ketone	2-Butanone	[65]	
		Acetone	[64]	
	Nitrile	Hydrogen cyanide	[64]	
		Carbon disulfide	[64]	
	Organosulphur	Dimethyl disulphide	[64]	
		Dimethyl sulphide	[64]	
		Hydrogen sulfide	[64]	
	Acid	Butyric acid	[73]	
Ammonia		[73]		
Amine	Dimethyl amine	[73]		
	Trimethyl amine	[73]		
Aromatic	Skatole	[73]		
	Allyl mercaptan	[73]		
Halitosis	Organosulphur	Allyl methyl sulfide	[73]	
		Carbon disulfide	[73]	
	Organosulphur	Dimethyl sulphide	[73]	
		Ethyl-propyl-sulfide	[73]	
		Hydrogen sulfide	[74]	
		Methyl mercaptan	[74]	
		Propyl-mercaptan	[73]	
		Acid	2,2-Dimethyl-propanoic acid	[48]
	Head and neck cancer	Alkane	2,2-Dimethyl-decane	[48]
			2,4-Dimethyl heptane	[48]
Ketone		4,6-Dimethyl-dodecane	[48]	
		5-Methyl-3-hexanone	[48]	
		Other	2,2,3-Erimethyl-, exobicyclo-2.2.1-heptane	[48]
Heart allograft rejection	Terpene	Limonene	[48]	
	Alkane	Breath alkanes	[118]	
Heat failure	Nitrile	NO	[66]	
		Acid	Propanoic acid	[67]
	Alcohol	1-Hexadecanol	[67]	
		Isopropyl alcohol	[67]	
		Aldehyde	Acetaldehyde	[68, 69]
Hepatic cancer/cirrhosis	Alkane	Octane	[67]	
		2-Pentanone	[33]	
	Ketone	Acetone	[33]	
		Carbonyl sulfide	[68, 69]	
		Dimethyl sulphide	[68, 69]	
		Methyl mercaptan	[68, 69]	
	Organosulphur	Volatile sulphur containing compounds	[33, 119–121]	

(Continued)

Disease	Chemicals	VOCs	References
Hyperglycemia	Aromatic	Ethylbenzene	[122]
		P-xylene	[122]
Kidney failure	Alkene	Isoprene	[123]
	Alcohol	Ethanol	[124]
Kidney injury	Ketone	2-Pentanone	[124]
		Acetone	[124]
		4-Penten-2-ol	[50]
	Alcohol	Ethanol	[125–127]
		Methanol	[125]
		A, α -4-trimethyl-3-cyclohexene-1-methanol	[50]
		P-menth-1-en-8-ol (alpha-terpineol)	[50]
		Butanal	[128, 129]
		Formaldehyde	[55, 130]
		Heptanal	[57, 128, 131, 132]
		Hexanal	[57, 127, 128, 131, 132]
		Nonanal	[55, 128]
		Octanal	[55, 132]
		Pentanal	[128]
		Propanal	[128]
		1,1,2-Trichloro-1,2,2-trifluoro- ethane	[50]
		1-Methyl-2-pentyl-cyclopropane	[131]
2,3,4-Trimethylhexane	[49]		
2,4-Dimethyl heptane	[131]		
2-Methylheptane	[131]		
2-Methylhexane	[125]		
2-Methyl-pentane	[54]		
3,3-Dimethyl pentane	[49]		
3-Methyl-hexane	[125]		
3-Methyl-nonane	[131]		
3-Methyl-octane	[54, 131]		
3-Methyltridecane	[125]		
4-Methyl-octane	[125]		
Lung cancer	Alkane	Hexane	[125]
		2-Methylbutane	[129]
		Butane	[38, 125, 133]
		Cyclohexane	[38, 127, 131, 134]
		Decane	[54, 131]
		Decane, 4-methyl	[135]
		Dodecane	[49]
		Heptane	[54, 57, 133]
		Heptane,2,2,4,6,6-pentamethyl-	[131]
		Methyl-cyclopentane	[131, 136]
		Methyl-cyclopropane	[61]
		Octane	[57, 126]
		Pentane	[54, 57, 133]
Trichlorofluoro-methane	[131]		
Undecane	[131, 137, 138]		
Alkene	1,3-Butadiene,2-methyl- isoprene	[131]	

(Continued)

Disease	Chemicals	VOCs	References	
Lung cancer	Alkene	1,5,9-Trimethyl-1,5,9-cyclododecatriene	[135]	
		1-Heptene	[54, 131, 133]	
		1-Hexene	[61]	
		2,3-Hexadiene	[50]	
		5,5-Dimethyl-1,3-hexadiene	[50]	
		Isoprene	[54, 57, 125, 127, 137]	
		1,1-(1,2-Cyclobutanediyl) bis-, cis-benzene	[50]	
		1,1'-(1-Butenylidene) bis benzene	[49]	
		1,2,3,4-Tetrahydro-9-propyl- anthracene	[50]	
		1,2,4,5-3,3,6,6-Tetraphenyl- tetroxane	[50]	
		1,2,4-Trimethyl benzene	[54, 131]	
		1,4-Dimethylbenzene (p-xylene)	[131]	
		10,11-Dihydro-5H-dibenzo-(B,F)-azepin	[135]	
		1-Methyl-4-(1-methylethyl)-benzene(p-cymene)	[49]	
		1-Oxybis-benzene	[135]	
		2,2-Diethyl-1,1-biphenyl	[135]	
		2,3-Dihydro-1,1,3-trimethyl-3-phenyl-1-H-indene	[135]	
		Aromatic	2,5-Dimethyl furan	[135]
	2-Ethyl-9,10-anthracenediol		[50]	
	Aniline		[136]	
	Benzene		[38, 54, 57, 125, 137, 138]	
	Benzophenone		[50]	
	Diethylbenzene-1,2-dicarboxylate		[135]	
	Ethyl-4-ethoxybenzoate		[135]	
	Ethylbenzene		[125]	
	o-Toluidine		[130, 136]	
	Propyl benzene		[57, 131, 138]	
	Styrene		[38, 54, 131, 138]	
	Toluene		[49, 54]	
	Ester		2,2,4-Trimethyl-pentan-1,3-dioldiisobutyrate	[135]
			Propanoic acid, 2,2,4-trimethyl-3-carboxyisopropyl, isobutylester	[50]
		2-Methyl-, 1-(1,1-diamethylethyl)-2-methyl-1,3-propanediyl ester	[50, 135]	
		2-Methoxy-2-methyl-propane	[50]	
		2,4-Dimethyl-3-pentanone	[135]	
		2,5-Dimethyl-2,4-hexanedione	[135]	
		2-Butanone	[137]	
		Ketone	2-Methyl-3-hexanone	[50]
			3-Hydroxy-2-butanone	[58, 137, 139]
			Acetone	[38, 57, 127, 137]
	Nitrile	A-isomethyl ionone	[50]	
		Acetonitrile	[129]	
	Organosulphur	1-(Methylthio)-(E)-1-propene	[50]	
1,1-[1-(Ethylthio)propylidene] bisbenzene		[50]		
Carbon disulfide		[125]		
Dimethyl sulphide		[125]		
Other	2,2,4-Trimethyl-1,3-pentanediol diisobutyrate	[50]		
	2,2,7,7-Tramethyltricyclo-6.2.1.0(1,6)-undec-4-en-3-one	[50]		

(Continued)

Disease	Chemicals	VOCs	References	
Lung cancer	Other	2,5-2,6-Bis(1,1-dimethylethyl)-cyclohexadiene-1,4-dione	[135]	
		2,6-Bis(1,1-dimethylethyl)-4-ethylidene-2,5-cyclohexadiene-1-one	[50]	
		5-(Ethoxycarbonyl) bicyclo [3.2.2] nonane-1-carboxylic acid	[50]	
		5-Isopropenyl-2-methyl-7-oxabicyclo [4.1.0] heptan-2-ol	[50]	
		7,7-Trimethyl-(1S)-bicyclo [2.2.1] heptan-2-one	[50]	
		Camphor	[50]	
		2,5-Dimethylfuran	[125]	
		Decanal	[140]	
		Hexanal	[141]	
		Nonanal	[140]	
Multiple sclerosis	Alkane	5-Methyl-undecane	[141]	
		Heptadecane	[140]	
	Alkene	Acetophenone	[140]	
		Sulfur dioxide	[140]	
	Ketone	Hexadecane	[142]	
		2,3,5-Trimethylhexane	[142]	
	Organosulphur	Alkane	2,3,6,7-Tetramethyl-octane	[142]
			2,3-Dimethyl-heptane	[142]
			3,7-Dimethyl-decane	[142]
			5-Ethyl-2-methyl-octane	[142]
Parkinson	Aromatic	1-Methyl-3-(1-methylethyl)-benzene (m-cymene)	[142]	
		Butylated hydroxytoluene	[142]	
		Ethylbenzene	[142]	
		Styrene	[142]	
		Decamethyl-cyclopentasiloxane	[142]	
	Other	2,2-Dimethyl-decane	[49]	
		p-Xylene	[49]	
		Toluene	[49]	
		2-Amino-5-isopropyl-8-methyl-1-azulenecarbonitrile	[49]	
		Ethanol	[70]	
Prostate Cancer	Alcohol	Isopropyl alcohol	[70]	
		Acetaldehyde	[70]	
	Aldehyde	Benzaldehyde	[70]	
		Pentane	[70]	
	Alkane	1-Decene	[70]	
		1-Octene	[70]	
	Alkene	2-Nonene	[70]	
		Ammonia	[70]	
	Pulmonary Arterial	Amine	1-Methyl-4-(1-methylethyl)-benzene(p-Cymene)	[71]
			Aniline	[71]
Aromatic		Benzenamine, n-ethyl-	[71]	
		Benzothiazole	[71]	
Ester		Propanoic acid, 2-methyl-, 3-hydroxy-2,4,4-trimethylpentyl ester	[71]	
		Propanoic acid, 2-methyl-, 3-hydroxyhexyl ester	[71]	
Ketone		Tetrahydro-2, 2, 4, 4-tetramethyl furan	[71]	
		2,2-Dihydroxy-1-phenyl-ethanone	[71]	
			4-Methyl-2-pentanone	[71]

(Continued)

Disease	Chemi-cals	VOCs	References
Pulmonary Arterial	Ketone	P-menthone	[71]
		1,6-Dioxacyclododecane-7,12-dione	[71]
	Other	7-Methyl-3-(1-methylethyl)-benzene(m-cymene)	[71]
		2-Menthene	[71]
		Alcohol	Isopropyl alcohol
Renal disease	Alcohol	2,4-Dimethyl heptane	[143]
		Alkane	Isononane
	Aromatic	Nonane	[143]
		Ethylbenzene	[143]
		Styrene	[143]
Rheumatoid arthritis	Other	Methylene chloride	[143]
	Alkane	Pentane	[144]
	Alkane	Ethane	[145]
Alkane		Pentane	[145]
	Tuberculosis	Organosulphur	Carbon disulfide
Methylcyclododecane			[72]
Alkane		2,2,4,6,6-Pentamethyl-heptane	[72]
		1,4-Dimethyl-cyclohexane	[72]
		Aromatic	1-Methyl-4-(1-methylethyl)-benzene
Other	Ketone	3-Heptanone	[72]
	Other	1-Methyl-naphthalene	[72]

- Fast solidification of blood makes hard sampling and examinations, although the study towards the blood VOCs is very important to understand the VOCs's generation and transport mechanism in the human body.

- The blood is not stable for storage due to the existence of erythrocyte, leucocyte, enzyme, bacterial, etc. These “dirties” can consume and/or emit VOCs in the blood, which makes the blood VOCs analysis complicated.

- Relatively low concentration of VOCs exists in the blood without any preconcentrating process compared with VOCs in urine, which makes concentrations of VOCs, sometimes, lower than the limit of detection of spectrometry instruments.

Therefore, the single volatolomics associated with blood in diagnostics still needs to be further studied.

3.3 The volatile organic compounds in excreta and their associated diseases

Human VOCs are present in a variety of excreta, especially urine and feces. There are two main advantages for VOCs in excreta. First, the VOCs can be directly released to the air along the intestine and urethra. Second, the excreta can be a good media for capturing and taking VOCs out of the body. The main pathways for emitting VOCs to excreta include but not limited as:

- The similar emission path as Path ① is mentioned in Section 3.1. The cancer-related VOCs are transported from different body sources to the intestine and urethra according to the “fat–blood–air” and “fat–blood–water” equilibrium distribution [80].

- The cell/tissue lesion on the inner surface of the intestine and urethra, i.e., their headspaces connect the environment, can directly emit VOCs to the air or water (Path ②) [81–85].

- Infections caused odorous metabolites in the surrounded micro-environment, e.g., urinary tract inflammation, enteritis, etc.,

can directly emit VOCs to the intestine and urethra, captured by the excreta (Path ③) [86, 87].

- The disease caused disorder of symbiotic bacteria (mainly in feces), e.g., *Escherichia coli*, can interfere with the bio-chemical reaction of food decomposition and absorption, which changes the compositions and concentrations of the VOCs (Path ④) [88–92].

- The VOCs emitted by tumor cells and/or lesions on the digestive tract or the organs nearby the digestive tract can be mixed with food and finally excreted in the feces along with the digestive process (Path ⑤) [93–95].

The VOCs in urine and feces contain abundant physiological information in volatolomics as shown in Fig. 6, and summarized in Tables 3 and 4. VOCs, mostly polar molecules such as acid, alcohol, ketone, and aldehyde, in urine, are directly linked to infectious diseases, cancers, and particular disorders. No alkane has been found in the urine, which is decided by the poor solubility of non-polar molecules in it. In the feces, ester, alcohol, ketone, and acid are mostly found. Interestingly, the volatolomes of the same disease in breath, urine, and feces are totally different, which means the distribution and emission path of VOCs are greatly different in different body sources.

Urine and feces volatolomics as the promising diagnostic option can be summarized as follow aspects:

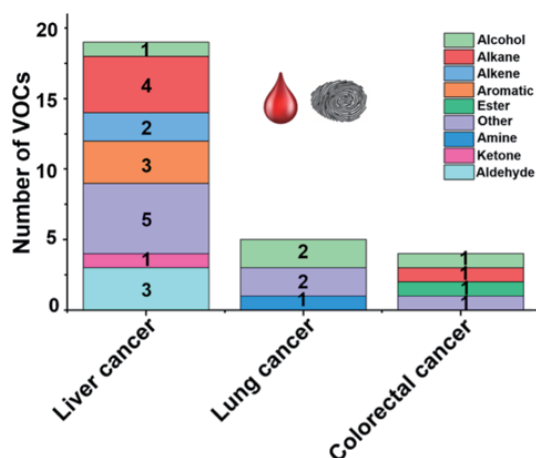
- Urine samples are easier to be sampled and stored than invasively collected blood and non-invasively collected breath. Furthermore, when stored under the right conditions, urinary VOC samples are stable for long periods.

- Higher concentration of VOCs is obtained by the “pre-concentration” process in the kidney and semi-solid extraction process in the digestive tract. In other words, the key “VOCs signature” is “recognized and amplified” with increasing signal-to-noise ratios.

- Urine is much less affected by diet or the other commensal of bacteria in the gut than feces or breath.

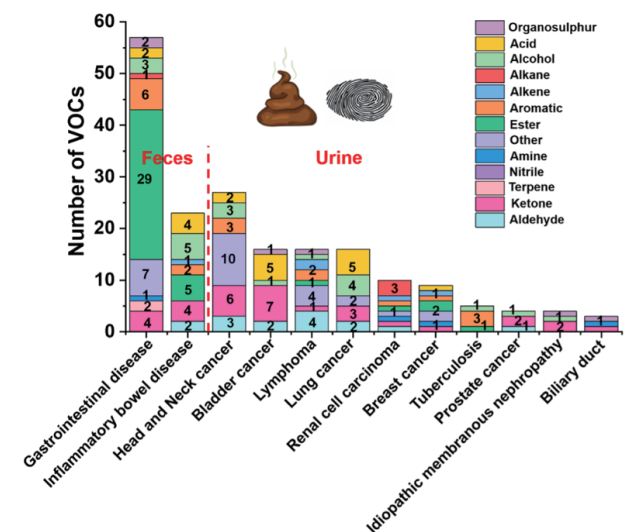
Table 2 The summary of disease-related VOCs in blood

Disease	Chemicals	VOC	References
Liver cancer	Aldehyde	Hexanal	[47]
		Heptanal	[47]
		Nonanal	[47]
	Ketone	6-Methyl-2-heptanone	[47]
		Methoxyphenyl oxime	[47]
		6,7-Dodecanedione	[47]
	Other	2-Pentylfuran	[47]
		2,4-Bis(1,1-dimethylethyl) phenol	[47]
		α -Pinene	[47]
	Aromatic	p-Xylene	[47]
		1-Ethyl-2-methylbenzene	[47]
		1,4-Dichlorobenzene	[47]
	Alkene	Limonene	[47]
		2,3-Dimethylcyclopentene	[47]
	Alkane	Heptane	[47]
Octane		[47]	
Nonane		[47]	
Alcohol	Decane	[47]	
	1-Octen-3-ol	[47]	
	Ethylaniline	[146]	
Lung cancer	Other	Caprolactam	[146]
		Tetramethylurea	[146]
	Alcohol	Dimethylphenylcarbinol	[146]
		Isolongifolene-5-ol	[146]
		Penyl methylcarbamate	[147]
Colorectal cancer	Alkane	1,1,4,4-Tetramethyl-2,5-dimethylene-cyclohexane	[147]
	Alcohol	Ethylhexanol	[147]
	Other	6-t-Butyl-2,2,9,9-tetramethyl-3,5-decadien-7-yne	[147]

**Figure 5** The summary of the number of VOCs' kinds in the blood of different patients (data from Table 2).

3.4 The volatile organic compounds on skin and their associated diseases

Skin is one of the largest organs for the human beings. The skin has a layered structure to perform as a barrier and achieve the matter exchange between body and air. Therefore, VOCs from the skin originate from four major sources:

**Figure 6** The summary of the number of VOCs' kinds in the cerata of different patients (data from Tables 3 and 4).

- The gland secretion, which is related to the matter exchange process (Path ①) [184].
- The skin diseased related VOCs directly are emitted to air, and absorbed on the skin (Path ②) [185–189].

Table 3 The summary of the disease-related VOCs in feces

Disease	Chemicals	VOCs	References
Gastrointestinal disease	Acid	Acetic acid	[93]
		Pentanoic acid, 4-methyl	[93]
		1-Propanol, 2-methyl	[93]
	Alcohol	2-Butanol	[93]
		Methanol	[93]
	Aldehyde	Heptanal	[93]
		Pentanal	[93]
		Propanal	[93]
	Alkane	Undecane	[93]
	Amine	Ammonia	[148]
		1-Methyl-2-(1-methylethyl)-benzene (o-cymene)	[93]
	Aromatic	1-Methyl-3-(1-methylethyl)-benzene (m-cymene)	[93]
		Ethylbenzene	[93]
		Indole	[149]
		Phenol	[148]
		Phenol, 4-methyl	[93]
		Acetic acid, pentyl ester	[93]
		Benzoic acid, 2-hydroxy-, methyl ester	[93]
		Butanoic acid, 2-methyl-, propyl ester	[93]
		Butanoic acid, 2-methylbutyl ester	[93]
		Butanoic acid, 2-methylpropyl ester	[93]
		Butanoic acid, 3-methyl-, butyl ester	[93]
		Butanoic acid, 3-methyl-, methyl ester	[93]
		Butanoic acid, 3-methyl-, propyl ester	[93]
		Butanoic acid, 3-methyl-methyl ester	[93]
		Butanoic acid, butyl ester	[93]
		Butanoic acid, ethyl ester	[93]
		Butanoic acid, methyl ester	[93]
		Butanoic acid, propyl ester	[93]
		Cyclohexanecarboxylic acid, butyl ester	[93]
		Ester	Cyclohexanecarboxylic acid, ethyl ester
	Cyclohexanecarboxylic acid, methyl ester		[93]
	Cyclohexanecarboxylic acid, propyl ester		[93]
	Ethanoic acid, 3-methyl-1-butyl ester		[93]
	Ethanoic acid, ethyl ester		[93]
	Hexanoic acid, methyl ester		[93]
	Pentanoic acid, 4-methyl-, pentyl ester		[93]
	Pentanoic acid, butyl ester		[93]
	Pentanoic acid, methyl ester		[93]
	Propanoic acid, 2-methyl-, methyl ester		[93]
	Propanoic acid, 2-methylpropyl ester		[93]
	Propanoic acid, 3-methyl-1-butyl ester		[93]
Propanoic acid, butyl ester	[93]		
Propanoic acid, methyl ester	[93]		
Propanoic acid, propyl ester	[93]		
2-Heptanone, 6-methyl	[93]		
Ketone	2-Piperidinone		[93]
	5-Methyl-2-(1-methylethyl)-cyclohexanone		[93]

(Continued)

Disease	Chemicals	VOCs	References	
Gastrointestinal disease	Ketone	6-Methyl-5-hepten-2-one	[93]	
		Organosulphur	S-methyl 3-methylbutanethioate	[93]
	Thiopivalic acid		[93]	
	1-Butanol, 3-methyl-, propanoate		[93]	
	Other	4-Methyl-1-indole	[93]	
		5-Methyl-2-(1-methylethyl)- cyclohexanol	[93]	
		A'-Phellandrene	[93]	
		Copaene	[93]	
		Methoxy-phenyl-oxime	[93]	
		A'-Pinene	[93]	
		Terpene	γ -Terpinene	[93]
		Aldehyde	Benzaldehyde	[94]
			Nonanal	[94]
		Ketone	2-Piperidinone	[94]
	6-Methyl-2-heptanone Methanethiol		[94]	
6-Methyl-2-heptanone	[94]			
2-Piperidinone	[94]			
2-Methyl-propyl ester	[94]			
3-Methyl-1-butyl ester	[94]			
Ester	2-Methyl-propyl ester		[94]	
	Propanoic acid propyl ester		[94]	
	Ethanoic acid ethyl ester		[94]	
Inflammatory bowel disease	Aromatic		3-Methyl-phenol	[94]
		1-nitro-heptane	[94]	
	Alkene	Decane	[94]	
		Heptanal	[94]	
		1-Octen-3-ol	[94]	
	Alcohol	Isopropyl alcohol	[94]	
		2-Butanol	[94]	
		3,7-Dimethyl-1,6-octadiene 3-ol	[94]	
		Butanoic acid	[94]	
		Acid	Ethanoic acid	[94]
	Heptanoic acid		[94]	

• The metabolites of skin microbiota that is barred out of the body but stayed on the skin surface (Path ③) [190–193].

• The exogenous VOCs, e.g., food, air pollution, and smoking, which are absorbed on the skin surface (Path ④) [194].

Ecrrine excretion (sweat), similar to urine, usually contains 98% water, with the rest being various organic and inorganic compounds (sodium chloride, lactate, and urea), which is mainly transferred by osmosis. Extracellular fluid is the origin of ecrrine secretion, and thus reflects blood plasma chemistry. However, the skin VOCs caused by ecrrine excretion are very different from the urinary VOCs as shown in Fig. 7 and summarized in Table 5. For example, the alkanes, rare to be found in urine, can be detected in melanoma skin samples. The profiles of tuberculosis volatolome are identified from clinical samples. There is also a difference between breath and skin volatolome. Very interesting, for aging people, the 2-nonenal is clearly confirmed as the chemical markers comparing the volatolome emitted by people elder and younger than 40 years old [183]. According to the bacteria infection, acids

are very frequently found in the volatolome, which may be related to fat oxidation and other pathways.

More than 500 VOCs have been identified from human skin extracts, however, the identifications of volatile markers towards specific diseases in/on the skin are still challenged due to more confounding factors on body odor, such as food, environment, and body clean, which requires a more advanced algorithm to assist the analysis of spectrometry results. The latest efforts on diagnosis towards tuberculosis through detecting the skin VOCs by E-nose had been achieved in India and southern Africa [24], which might be an effective demonstration for developing new wearables and skin electronics, based on the skin volatolome, in the future.

4 The detection of volatile organic compounds by E-nose and P-nose

The individual sensor device is the basic functional element, and

Table 4 The summary of disease-related VOCs in urine

Diseases	Chemicals	VOCs	References	
Head and Neck	Aldehyde	Heptanal	[81]	
		Hexanal	[81]	
		Nonanal	[81]	
		3,4-Dehydro-b-ionone	[81]	
		3,4-Dimethyl-2, 5-furanedione	[81]	
		Ketone	3-Heptanone	[81]
			3-Methyl-2-heptanone	[81]
			4-Methyl-2-heptanone	[81]
			Acetone	[81]
			2-Methyl-5-(methylthio) furan	[81]
			2-Methylthiophene	[81]
		Other	Dimethyl disulfide	[81]
			Dimethyl trisulfide	[81]
	Ethylbenzene		[81]	
	m-Cresol		[81]	
	Phenol		[81]	
	Tetrahydro-2,2-dimethyl-5-(1-methyl 1-propenyl) furan		[81]	
	Tetrahydro-2,2,5,5-tetramethylfuran		[81]	
	Thiophene		[81]	
	4-Tert-butylphenol		[81]	
	Aromatic		Benzene	[81]
			Ethylbenzene	[81]
		Styrene	[81]	
	Alkene	2-Methylbutanal	[81]	
		Alcohol	Linalool	[81]
	α -Terpineol		[81]	
	2-Methyl-butyric acid		[81]	
Biliary Duct	Acid	Ethanoic acid	[81]	
		2-Propanol	[150]	
	Ketone	Trimethyl amine	[150]	
		Organosulphur	Carbon disulfide	[150]
	Aldehyde	Hexanal	[82]	
		Benzaldehyde	[82]	
		2-Pentanone	[82]	
		2,3-Butanedione	[82]	
		4-Heptanone	[82]	
		Ketone	Butyrophenone	[82]
2-Butanone			[82]	
Bladder Cancer		Organosulphur	Piperitone	[82]
	Thujone		[82]	
	2-Propanol		[82]	
	Alcohol	Acetic acid	[82]	
		cis-3-hexanoic acid	[82]	
		Acid	Trans-3-hexanoic acid	[82]
			Benzoic acid	[82]
		3-Hydroxyanthranilic acid	[82]	
		Organosulphur	Dimethyl disulphide	[82]
			Lymphoma	Aldehyde

(Continued)

Diseases	Chemicals	VOCs	References
Lymphoma	Aldehyde	2-Methyl-3-phenyl-2-propenal	[151]
		Heptanal	[151]
		Anisole	[151]
	Ketone	3-Heptanone	[151]
		2-Methoxythiophene	[151]
	Other	1,2-Dihydro-1,1,6-trimethyl-naphthalene	[151]
		1,4,5-Trimethyl-naphthalene	[151]
	Ester	2,7-Dimethyl-quinoline	[151]
		4-Methyl-phenol	[151]
	Aromatic	1,2,4-Trimethylbenzene	[151]
		p-Cymene	[151]
	Alkene	γ -Terpinene	[151]
		Bornylene	[151]
	Alcohol	1-Octanol	[151]
	Organosulphur	Dimethyl disulphide	[151]
	Aldehyde	Hexanal	[83]
		Heptanal	[83]
		2-Pentanone	[84]
	Ketone	Cyclohexanone	[84]
Isophorone		[84]	
Tetrahydrofuran		[84]	
Other	2-Methylpyrazine	[84]	
	2-Chloroethanol	[84]	
Lung cancer	Alcohol	2-Ethyl-1-hexanol	[84]
		2-Phenyl-2-propanol	[84]
		2,6-Diisopropylphenol	[84]
	Acid	Hippuric acid	[85]
		Pipecolic acid	[85]
		Phenylalanine	[85]
		3-Hexaprenyl-4-hydroxy-5-Methoxybenzoic acid	[85]
	Aldehyde	Taurine	[85]
	Ketone	Decanal	[152]
	Amine	1,6-Dioxacyclododecane-7,12-Dione	[152]
Other	Aniline	[152]	
Renal cell carcinoma	Ester	Phenol	[152]
		1-Bromo-1-(3-methyl-1-pentenylidene)-2,2,3,3-tetramethyl-cyclopropane	[152]
	Aromatic	2,5-Cyclohexadiene-1,4-dione,2,6-bis(1,1-dimethylethyl)	[152]
	Alkene	Isolongifolene-5-ol	[152]
		3-ethyl-3-methylheptane	[152]
	Alkane	Tetradecane	[152]
		2,6,10,14-Tetramethyl-pentadecane	[152]
	Ketone	3-Heptanone	[153]
	Amine	Urea	[154]
		Phenol	[153]
Breast Cancer	Other	2-Methoxythiophene	[153]
		Homovanillate	[154]
	Ester	4-Hydroxyphenylacetate	[154]
Aromatic	1,2,4-Trimethylbenzene	[154]	

(Continued)

Diseases	Chemicals	VOCs	References
Breast Cancer	Alkene	4-Carene	[154]
	Acid	5-Hydroxyindoleacetate	[153]
	Ester	Isopropyl acetate	[86]
	Alcohol	3-Pentanol	[86]
Tuberculosis		1-Methyl-4-(1-methylethyl)- benzene (p-cymene)	[86]
	Aromatic	2,6-Dimethylstyrene	[86]
		O-xylene	[86]
	Aldehyde	Pentanal	[155]
Prostate Cancer	Ketone	3-Octanone	[155]
		2-Octanone	[155]
	Alcohol	2,6-Dimethyl-7-octen-2-ol	[155]
	Ketone	2-Pentanone	[156]
Idiopathic membranous nephropathy	Ketone	4-Heptanone	[156]
	Alcohol	2,4-Dimethyl-pentanal	[156]
	Organosulphur	Thiourea	[156]

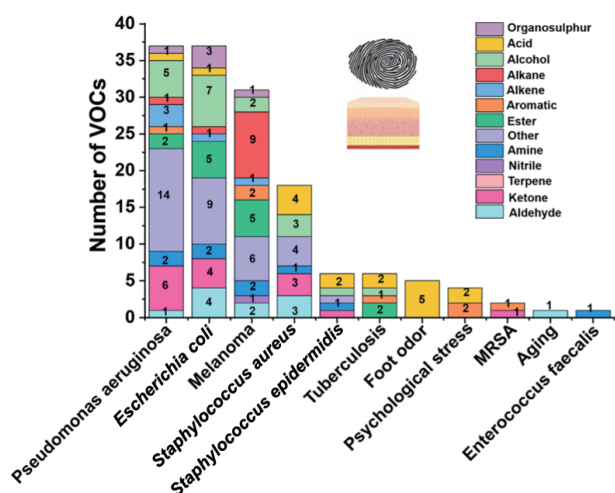


Figure 7 The summary of the number of VOCs' kinds from the skin of different patients (data from Table 5).

thus determines the overall performances of artificial olfaction as a whole (Fig. 8). The basic gas sensors for breath analysis are classified into three categories according to the transducer (i.e., mass, electrical and optical) and are discussed below with selected examples (Fig. 8). Most of the E-noses are constructed by the same type of gas sensors with distinct performances (homo gas sensor arrays or homo-transducer arrays). Recently, E-nose consists of different types of sensors that have been developed (hybrid gas sensor arrays or multi-transducer arrays) [195, 196], which can reduce correlations between the responses of different sensor types, and thus improve the power of data analysis [197–199].

The quartz crystal microbalance (QCM) [200, 201] and surface acoustic wave (SAW) [202, 203] sensors are two common types of mass transduced gas sensor arrays applied in breath analysis. As for optical transduced gas sensors, colorimeter [204, 205] and nondispersive infrared (NDIR, for CO₂ monitoring) [206] types are used. Different from optical or mass transduced sensors, electrically-transduced gas sensors normally required semiconductive/conductive ability or other sensitive electrical properties of the active materials (e.g., capacitance (C), inductance (L), resistance (R), and work function (ϕ)) [207, 208]. Various electrically-transduced gas sensors including chemiresistors [41],

field-effect transistors (FETs) [209], chemical diodes [207, 210], chemicapacitors [211], and electrochemical sensors [197, 212] are excellent candidates for the construction of E-nose [43, 213].

For mass-transduced E-nose for the detection of VOCs, a typical example is the use of SAW sensor arrays, in which a biomimetic olfactory receptor-based biosensor with better performances was reported by improving the immobilization efficiency of molecular detectors for breath analysis (Fig. 9) [202]. The specific olfactory receptors (ODR-10) were used to functionalize the sensitive area of the SAW chip with a self-assembled monolayers (SAMs) of 16-mercaptohexadecanoic acid (MHDA). The responses to the various VOCs were recorded by monitoring the mass loading affected the resonance frequency shifts of SAW. The functionalized SAW showed the ultrasensitive detection (LOD = 1.2 × 10⁻¹¹ mM) with high selectivity compared to butanone and 2,3-pentanedione [202].

Chemiresistors are the extensively studied types of electrically-transduced gas sensors for E-nose. For example, gold nanoparticle (GNP) based E-noses was reported in the successful diagnosis of lung cancer using breath samples from real patients (Fig. 10(a)) [41]. Firstly, the sensors were selected and trained by simulated vapors of healthy and cancerous breath according to GC-MS results (Fig. 10(b)). Then the selected sensor arrays were exposed to the breath of normal healthy and cancerous patients. Principal component analysis (PCA), a commonly used statistical procedure to reduce a set of possibly correlated variables into a set of values of linearly uncorrelated variables via an orthogonal transformation [43, 213–215], was employed in the post-treatment of the sensing results. The complete separation of the output PCA results indicated that such sensor arrays could discriminate between the different smells of healthy people and patients with lung cancer (Fig. 10(c)). Representative works of E-nose based on other chemiresistive materials such as chemically modified carbon nanotubes (CNTs) [216, 217], metal oxides [43, 218], surface-modified Si nanowires [219], and polymer-carbon hybrids [220, 221] were also successfully applied to disease diagnosis with high accuracy. In addition, the newly emerging sensing materials such as crystalline porous materials (e.g., metal-organic framework/porous coordination polymers [222–226], black phosphorus [227–230], covalent-organic frameworks (COFs) [231, 232], and Mxenes [233–235]) and their hybrid materials/thin films [236, 237] based chemiresistors with low temperature

Table 5 The summary of disease-related VOCs in skin

Disease	Chemicals	VOC	References
Tuberculosis	Ester	Hexyl butyrate	[24]
	Aromatic	Toluene	[24]
	Alkane	Ethyl-cyclopropane	[24]
	Alcohol	2-Ethyl-1-hexanol	[24]
	Acid	Acetic acid	[24]
		Octanoic acid	[24]
		1-Eicosanol	[157]
	Alcohol	1-Hexadecanol	[157, 158]
		Decanal	[157]
	Aldehyde	Nonanal	[157, 158]
		1-Iodo nonane	[157]
		2,4-Dimethyl heptane	[157]
		4,7-Dimethyl-undecane	[157]
		Cyclohexane, ethyl	[157]
	Alkane	Decane	[157, 158]
		Decane, 4-methyl	[157, 158]
		Dodecane	[157, 158]
	Pentane, 2,3,4-trimethyl	[157]	
	Undecane	[157, 158]	
Melanoma	Alkene	1-Hexadecene	[157]
	Amine	Formamide	[157]
		Adenosine, 5'-amino-5'-deoxy	[157]
	Aromatic	1,3,5-Trimethyl-benzene	[157]
		Bis(2-ethylhexyl) phthalate	[157]
		1,2-Benzenedicarboxylic acid, diisooctyl ester	[157]
		Isopropyl palmitate	[157]
	Ester	Phthalic acid, isobutyl 4-octyl ester	[157]
		2-Butoxy-ethanol	[157]
		Ethylene oxide	[157]
	Nitrile	2-Isopropylamino-4-methylbenzotrile	[157]
	Organosulphur	N-morpholinomethyl-isopropyl-sulfide	[157]
		1,3-Cyclopentadiene, 5-(1-methylethylidene)-	[157]
		2-Ethoxyethyl acrylate	[157]
	Other	2-Ethylhexyl trans-4-methoxycinnamate	[157]
		Benzaldehyde, 4-methoxy	[157]
		Dichlorodifluoromethane	[157]
	Spiro[bicyclo[2.2.1]hept-5-ene-2,1'-cyclopropane]	[157]	
Pseudomonas aeruginosa	Aldehyde	Acetaldehyde	[159]
		2-Butanone	[160]
		2-Aminoacetophenone	[161]
		2-Nonanone	[162]
	Ketone	2-Heptanone	[160]
		2-Propanone	[163]
		Acetone	[159]
		Azane	[163]
	Amine	Ammonia	[159]
	Other	Dimethyl sulfide	[161]
	Hydrogen cyanide	[164]	

(Continued)

Disease	Chemicals	VOC	References
<i>Pseudomonas aeruginosa</i>	Other	Methyl thiolacetate	[164]
		2; 3-Dimethyl-5-isopentylpyrazine	[165]
		2-Methyl-3-(2-propenyl)-pyrazine	[165]
		3-Methyl-1 H-pyrrole	[165]
		6-Tridecane	[165]
		Dimethyl trisulphide	[166]
		2-Methylbutyl 2-methylbutyrate	[167]
		Amyl isovalerate	[167]
		2-Methoxy-5-methylthiophene	[167]
		2-Methylbutyl isobutyrate	[167]
		3-(Ethylthio)-propanal	[167]
		Dimethyl pyrazine	[161]
		Methyl thiocyanate	[165]
		Thiocyanic acid methyl ester	[168]
	Aromatic	Acetophenone	[169]
	Alkene	Isoprene	[160]
		1-Undecene	[160]
	Alkane	2-Pentene	[160]
		Dodecane	[163]
	Alcohol	Ethanol	[159]
		2-Butanol	[168]
		2-Pentanol	[168]
		2-Ethylhexan-1-ol	[163]
	Acid	Methyl mercaptan	[170]
		Acetic acid	[159]
	Organosulphur	Dimethyl disulphide	[161]
		Acetaldehyde	[159]
Aldehyde	Benzaldehyde	[171]	
	Butanal	[162]	
	Formaldehyde	[172]	
	Acetone	[159]	
Ketone	2-Nonanone	[171]	
	Heptan-2-one	[173]	
	Nonan-2-one	[173]	
Amine	Pentafluoropropionamide	[174]	
	Ammonia	[175]	
<i>E. coli</i>	Other	Indole	[160]
		Dimethyl sulfide	[159]
		2,5-Dimethylpyrazine	[171]
		2,5-Dimethyltetrahydrofuran	[171]
		6-Methyl-5-hepten-2-one	[176]
	Ester	Carbon disulphide	[177]
		Dimethyl disulfide	[177]
		Carbon dioxide	[174]
		Dimethylether	[174]
		Ethyl acetate	[176]
Ester	3-Methyl furan	[176]	
	Methyl butanoate	[177]	

(Continued)

Disease	Chemicals	VOC	References	
<i>E. coli</i>	Ester	Methyl propanoate	[177]	
		N-propylacetate	[160]	
	Alkene	Isoprene	[160]	
	Alkane	Methyl cyclohexane	[174]	
		Ethanol	[159]	
	AlcoholAcid	Propanol	[160]	
		2-Methylbutanol	[178]	
		3-Methylbutanol	[178]	
		Decan-1-ol	[163]	
		Octan-1-ol	[163]	
		Methyl mercaptan	[172]	
		Acetic acid	[159, 160]	
		Hydrogen sulfide	[172]	
		Organosulphur	Dimethyl trisulfide	[177]
			Carbon disulfide	[162]
Acetaldehyde	[159]			
Aldehyde	3-Methylbutanal	[167]		
	2-Methylpropanal	[167]		
Ketone	Acetone	[160]		
	3-Hydroxy-2-butanone	[161]		
	2-Tridecenone	[178]		
Amine	Ammonia	[159]		
	Dimethyl sulfide	[159]		
Staphylococcus aureus	Other	Dimethyl trisulfide	[160]	
		1,1,2,2-Tetrachloroethane	[160]	
	Alcohol	Dimethyl disulfide	[160]	
		Ethanol	[159]	
		1-Hydroxy-2-propanone	[161]	
		Butanol	[179]	
		Acetic acid	[167]	
		Isovaleric acid	[161]	
		2-Methylbutyric acid	[161]	
		Isobutyric acid	[161]	
Enterococcus faecalis	Amine	Ammonia	[172]	
	Ketone	Acetone	[172]	
	Amine	Ammonia	[172]	
Staphylococcus epidermidis	Other	2-Methylbutanal	[180]	
	Alcohol	3-Methyl-1-butanol	[180]	
		3-Methylbutanoic acid	[180]	
	Acid	2-Methylbutanoic acid	[180]	
methicillin resistant staphylococcus aureus (MRSA)	Ketone	2-Heptanone	[160]	
	Aromatic	1,4-Dichlorobenzene	[160]	
		Benzoic acid	[181]	
	Acid	N-decanoic acid	[181]	
Psychological stress	Aromatic	Xylene isomer	[181]	
		3-Carene	[181]	
	Foot odor	Acetic acid	[182]	
Acid		Isovaleric acid	[182]	

(Continued)

Disease	Chemicals	VOC	References
		Propionic acid	[182]
Foot odor	Acid	Isobutyric acid	[182]
		Butyric acid	[182]
Aging	Aldehyde	2-Nonenal	[183]

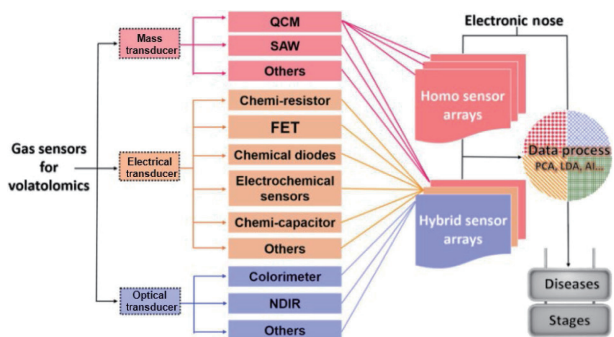


Figure 8 The category of gas sensors for volatolomics and the corresponding artificial olfaction.

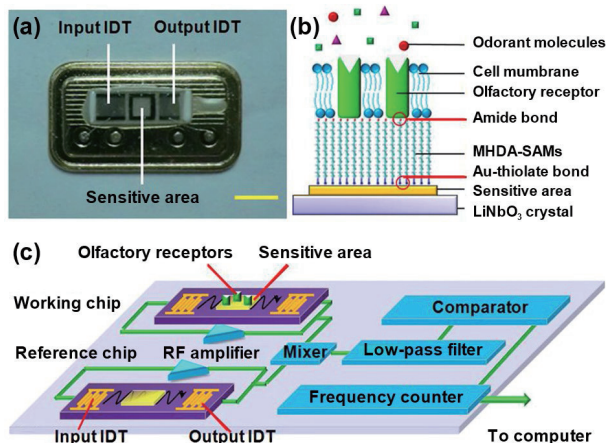


Figure 9 (a) Photograph of the real SAW sensor (scale bar is 50 mm). (b) Scheme of functional immobilization of olfactory receptors on the sensitive area of SAW chips. (c) Schematics of the SAW measurement system. Reproduced with permission from Ref. [202], © Elsevier B.V. 2011.

sensitivity and high selectivity can also be applied in E-nose in the near future.

In most cases of E-nose, studies have concentrated on a single array technology and single transduction technology, such as electric, mass, and optic. Most e-noses use cross-interactive sensor arrays that react to the VOCs on the sensitive materials' surface attaching with adsorption, desorption and/or reversible reaction, etc. Then the specific responses between the VOCs and sensors array are recorded and transformed into readable digital values which can achieve the recognition and detection based on statistical models or machine algorithm [238–242]. For the hybrid gas sensor arrays (multi-transducer arrays), different transduced techniques are used to lower correlations between the responses of the different sensor types, that greatly improve the accuracy of data analysis and pattern recognition [197, 243]. Therefore, a hybrid gas sensor array endowed with carefully selected sensing materials (receptor) and multivariable transducers is highly promising for the high-performance recognition of breath VOCs [196, 198, 244–246]. By using the same sensing materials (receptor) while distinct transducer, QCM, and chemiresistive platforms were used to investigate the selectivity of one pristine and three surface-modified single-walled carbon nanotubes

(SWCNTs) to VOCs (Fig.11(a)) [199]. As for the electrically-transduced sensor, the VOC molecules take longer to intercalate between the junctions of 2 nanotubes, thus delaying the increase in resistance (Fig. 11(b)). The signal responses of SWCNT-coated QCMs and chemiresistors to butanol and butyl acetate are shown in Figs. 11(c) and 11(d) [199].

The two cases showed the QCMs reached equilibrium faster than the chemiresistors did. Such additional mechanism involved in changes of resistance resulted in that, even with the same active materials, the response time, linearity, and relative sensitivities were all different between QCM and chemiresistor arrays. The diverse response patterns on two different sensor array transducers enable the formation of a highly selective hybrid gas sensor array.

The colorimetric sensor array, a kind of P-nose, represents a facile and visible optical-transduced detecting approach, the color patterns of which change upon exposure to VOCs [247]. The typical system of colorimetric sensing is shown in Fig. 12(a). The core parts include chamber, digital cameras, light source, gas inject controller, pump, and some sensors, which has great potential to further minimize accompanying with the development of the electronics industry [248]. Such systems, normally, achieve breath diagnosis with higher accuracy and specificity, due to the probes loaded on the sensing materials using one-lock one key strategy. Changjun Hou et al., have finished a series of works on lung cancer diagnosis-based colorimetric sensing technology [19, 248–251]. Figure 12(b) shows that the colors of the sensing matrix are changed after exposure to the breath of a lung cancer patient, in which the differences can be further magnified by the advanced algorithm. In addition, the sensor array also showed good anti-humidity properties, which avoids the common problem of humidity interference in practical applications. The main limitation of such colorimetric sensor arrays is its irreversibility.

5 Conclusions and future perspectives

In summary, the research methodology of volatolomics in healthcare is critically considered and given out, at first. Then, to our best knowledge, the sets of volatolome according to specific diseases through different body sources are systematically summarized. Thirdly, the advanced E-nose and P-nose technologies for VOCs detection are introduced. This review paper well answers the question of how to connect the clinic, volatolomics, and sensing technology together.

However, if the diagnosis based on the volatolomics would be accepted as one of the standard diagnostics methods/techniques of specific diseases, the relationship between the volatolomics (bio-/chemical markers) and special disease needs to be further clarified. Several aspects can be considered.

- The VOCs sampling and releasing method should establish a standard of operations (SOP) for ensuring the uniformity and accuracy of VOCs samples.
- Novel absorbent materials with well-tailored pore structures need to be well applied, among which crystalline porous materials might be good candidates to be studied. Till now, the widely used absorbers in volatolomics are Tanex and carbon black which lack

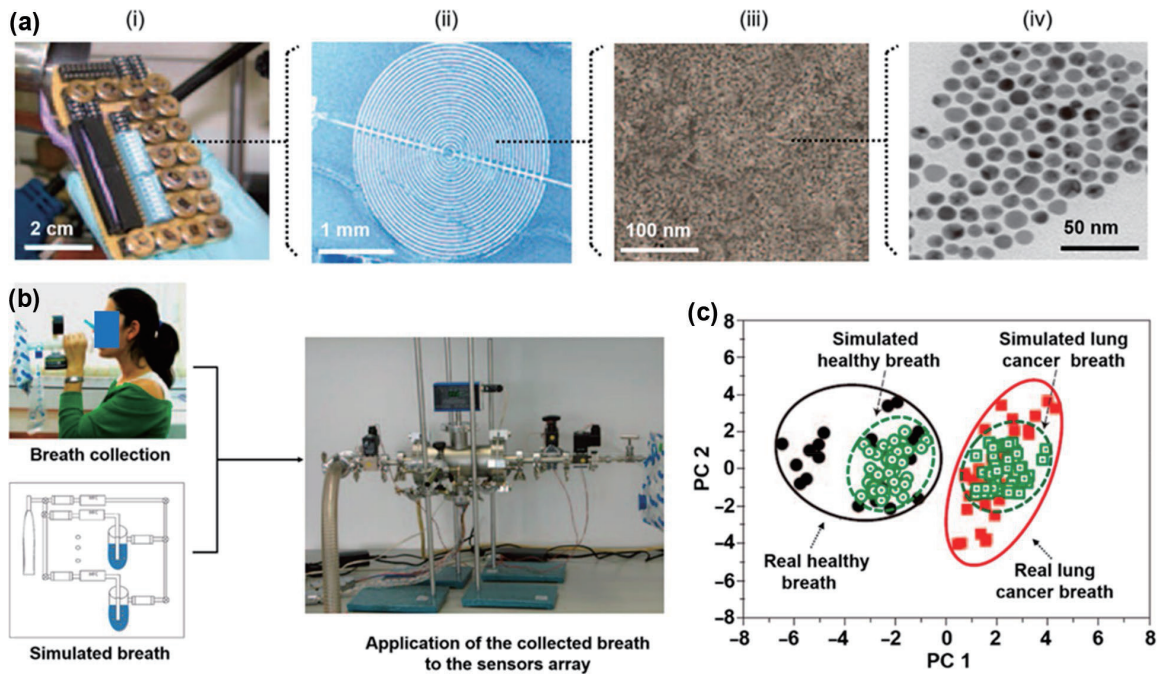


Figure 10 Chemiresistor arrays-based E-nose. (a) Photograph (i), microscopy image (ii), SEM image (iii), and TEM image (iv) of the GNP-based sensors. (b) Photo of the sensing process. (c) PCA result of healthy people and lung cancer patients. Reproduced with permission from Ref. [41], © Macmillan Publishers Limited 2009.

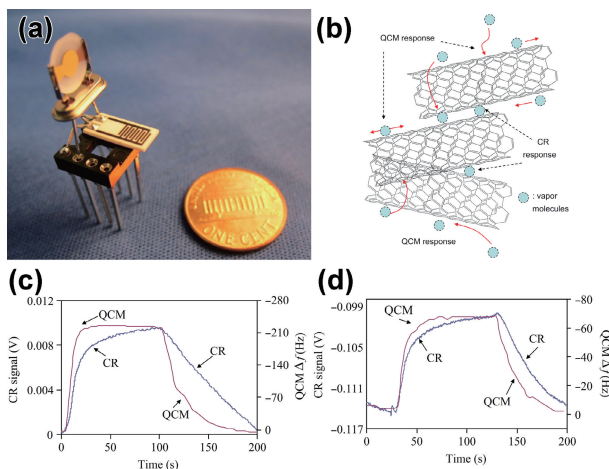


Figure 11 (a) Photograph of the sensor combination of QCM and chemiresistor based on chemically functionalized SWCNTs. (b) Scheme for the response mechanism of pristine SWCNT-coated QCMs and chemiresistors. (c) The response signals of SWCNT-coated QCMs and chemiresistors to 3,000 ppm butanol. (d) The response signals of SWCNT-coated QCMs and chemiresistors to 3,000 ppm butyl acetate. Reproduced with permission from Ref. [199], © Elsevier B.V. 2014.

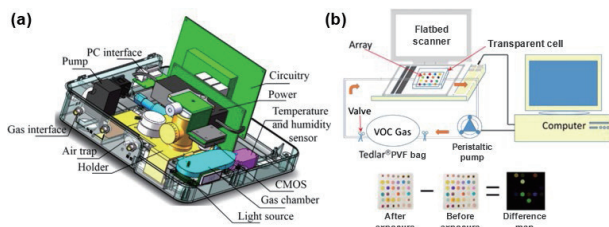


Figure 12 The typical colorimetric sensing array setup and results. (a) The structure scheme of a colorimetric sensing system. Reprinted with permission from Ref. [248], © Elsevier B.V. 2017. (b) The scheme of the colorimetric VOCs sensing experiments and their representative results. Reprinted with permission from Ref. [19], © Springer-Verlag GmbH Germany, part of Springer Nature 2018.

the ability of selective absorption. For off-line volatolomics diagnosis, absorbers, resisting humidity, CO_2 , and O_2 , can relief the interference towards sensors.

- Advanced algorithms should be used in identifying the principal components of confounding VOCs results via effective signal processing.

- Most advanced instruments in analytical chemistry, such as multi-dimensional GC-MS, need to be used to more precisely establish the database of volatolomics.

From the viewpoint of sensing technology, two directions along both “one-lock one-key” and “interactive semi-selective” sensors array are important and promising, even might integrate as a hybrid sensing system. Several common aspects can be considered.

- To establish the relationship between the sensing mechanism and sensing features extracted from sensing signals for more efficiently designing sensitive materials. Predictably is that the *operando* technology (the *Latin gerund*, which means working or operating) will be explosively built and utilized to *in-situ* study the hybrid sensing mechanisms under real working conditions.

- To introduce additional effects (e.g., gas separation and crystal softness) and devices (e.g., FETs) into the sensing technology for enhancing the ability to extract more effective features from sensing signals.

- To develop minimized system to precisely measure the sensing signals with low power consumption.

- To utilize advanced algorithms and ANN for promoting the ability of data mining and processing with higher precision and faster speed.

After solving the aforementioned issues, the disease diagnosis/screening through volatolomics could have greatly proceeded.

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