

Original Article

# Design and Implementation of 85dB CMRR, 4.2 MHz CMOS Instrumentation Amplifier for Bio-Electric Signals

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Received: 19 June 2023

Revised: 23 July 2023

Accepted: 15 August 2023

Published: 31 August 2023

**Abstract** - This paper presents the design and Implementation of a novel CMOS Instrumentation Amplifier using capacitive neutralization and feedback transconductance techniques for bioelectric signal enhancement. The proposed amplifier also implements indirect current feedback, operating at a 3-volt supply. With a compact footprint of 0.062mm<sup>2</sup> on the chip, the amplifier achieves an impressive bandwidth of 4.2MHz and 85 dB CMRR. Implemented using 0.25µm CMOS technology, the proposed Instrumentation Amplifier showcases notable characteristics.

**Keywords** - Bandwidth, Bioelectric signals, CMRR, ICMR, Indirect current feedback, Power consumption.

## 1. Introduction

Electrical signals produced by human beings are known as bioelectric signals. These signals are created by the electrical activity of cells that use electricity to interact with one another, such as neurons and muscle cells [1]. The flow of ions across the cell membrane in neurons produces bioelectric signals by generating an electrical potential difference between the interior and outside of the cell.

An action potential, a brief burst of electrical activity that travels down the length of the neuron, can be produced when a neuron receives a signal from another neuron [2]. This action potential can cause the release of neurotransmitters at the synapse, the location where the neuron connects with another neuron or a muscle cell. Depending on the signal type and the body's location being monitored, bioelectric signals can be measured using various methods [3]. The frequency ranges of such bioelectric signals vary from DC to a few hertz, and the amplitude of bioelectric signals varies from almost zero voltage to a few microvolts [4]. Bioelectric signals play an essential part in the operation of living organisms and are important in many fields of healthcare and biomedical research [5, 6]. Bioelectric signals are necessary for the body's healthy functioning, diagnosis, monitoring, and healthcare and biomedical research advances. They provide significant information about an organism's physiological status and contribute to developing novel medical technologies and therapies. The most popular methods for monitoring bioelectric signals are listed below:

### 1.1. Electroencephalography (EEG)

This method uses electrodes on the scalp to analyse the brain's electrical activity. EEG is used to identify neurological disorders, brain activity, and cognitive processes.

### 1.2. Electromyography (EMG)

This method uses electrodes implanted into or applied to the skin to measure the electrical activity of muscle cells. EMG is used to identify neuromuscular conditions, investigate muscle activity, and conduct biomechanics research.

### 1.3. Electrocardiography (ECG)

This method uses electrodes on the chest, arms, and legs to measure the heart's electrical activity. Cardiologists utilize ECG to identify cardiac problems, track heart health, and conduct research.

### 1.4. Electrooculography (EOG)

This method is used to gauge the electrical activity of the eye-moving muscles. In order to detect changes in electrical potential when the eyes move, the technique entails putting electrodes close to the eyes, often on the forehead and around the eyes.

### 1.5. Electroretinography (ERG)

A method for determining how electrically active the retina is in response to light stimulation is called Electroretinography (ERG). In order to detect changes in



electrical potential as light is given to the eye, the approach entails putting electrodes on the cornea and around the eye. The amplitude and frequency of such bioelectric signals are also quite low [5]. A summary of the characteristics of bioelectric signals is represented in Table 1. Bioelectric signals are time-varying voltage signals. These signals are recorded by mounting multiple electrodes on or into the human body. Mathematically, these signals are expressed as:

$$X(n) = f(n\Delta t) \quad (1)$$

Where  $\Delta t$  is the sampling interval of the signals and  $f(n\Delta t)$  is the signal's voltage at time  $\Delta t$ .

It is observed that the bioelectric signal acquisition system consists of Electrodes that detect bioelectric signals and an Instrumentation Amplifier (IA) that amplifies signals. This filter removes noise and Analog to Digital Converter (ADC), which converts the signal into a digital signal [21, 22]. Bioelectric signals picked up by electrodes are usually fragile; for faithful amplification with noise cancellation of such signals, an Instrumentation amplifier is

always a perfect choice for researchers. It has been observed that the interferences frequently accompany the bioelectric signals.

In many applications, monitoring a weak signal at high frequencies is desirable while still experiencing significant standard mode noise [27]. Such signal conditioning circuits must be compact, portable, and battery-operated in biomedical applications. This necessitates the need for an Instrument Amplifier (IA) with a smaller size, lower power consumption, higher Common Mode Rejection Ratio (CMRR), and extended frequency.

IA factors like CMRR, bandwidth, Input Common-Mode Range (ICMR), power dissipation, output voltage swing, and chip size significantly impact how well frontend systems perform [3]. Three op-amp topologies and current feedback are different topologies used to design IA [4-19]. This research focuses on methods for enhancing IA parameters like bandwidth, power, and size. This work aims to comprehend the indirect current feedback on IA's planning, implementation, optimization, and testing processes [23].

**Table 1. A summary of the characteristics of bioelectric signals**

Signal Type	ECG	EEG	EMG	EOG	ERG
Source of signal	Heart	Brain	Muscles	Eye movements	Retina
Amplitude	Microvolts	Microvolts	Millivolts	Millivolts	Microvolts
Frequency	0.05 -100Hz	0.5-100Hz	20-500Hz	0.1-10Hz	0.1-100Hz
Main waveform	P, QRS,T	Alpha, Beta, Theta, Delta	N/A	N/A	A, B, C,D waves
Purpose	Cardiac function	Study brain activity	Muscle activity	Eye movement tracking	Retinal function diagnosing
Application	Diagnosing heart conditions, detecting arrhythmias	Sleep analysis, Cognitive research	Assessing muscle function, detecting abnormalities	During sleep studies, ocular disorders	Retinal function disorders

Various sensors are used to detect bioelectric signals. The disadvantage of sensor output is that it is always less in amplitude, accompanied by common-mode solid noise. To amplify such weak signals with noise rejection capabilities, Instrumentation Amplifiers (IA) are always preferred by researchers.

Therefore, developing an IA that is compact, wide-band and uses little power is necessary. The crucial IA factors that influence how well frontend systems work are Power Consumption ( $\mu W$ ), Bandwidth (BW), Common Mode Rejection Ratio (CMRR), Input Common Mode Range (ICMR), and chip area. Three op-amps IA and current feedback IA are examples of different topologies utilized in IA design [1, 2]. For designing the IA, the three op-amp topology quickly gained popularity [2]. A creative

adaptation of the buffered subtractor circuit is the traditional 3-op amp IA circuit [16-20]. The output subtractor stage tends to cancel out common mode mistakes in the input stages if they occur concurrently because of the symmetry of this structure. This includes frequency-dependent mistakes like common-mode rejection. These characteristics make this setup well-liked.

Building 3-op amp instrumentation amplifiers can be done using a bipolar or a FET-based op-amp topology. Due to their shallow bias currents, FET input op-amps are typically well-suited for usage with sources with high impedance values ( $>10^6$ ). The topology IA with resistive feedback is the foundation of every research [31]. Additionally, they offer a higher slew rate for a given power level. It has been observed that the three op-amp

CMRR offset voltages are often lower and more significant for FET amplifiers [28, 30]. Compared to BJT amplifiers, FET amplifiers often have lower CMRR, higher offset voltage, and higher offset drift.

By reviewing the work done so far by the researchers, it is observed that Input Common Mode Rejection Ratio

(ICMR), Common Mode Rejection Ratio (CMRR), Bandwidth (BW), Power Consumption, Total input noise and area of the chip are essential parameters for the acquisition of bioelectric signals. Various methodologies are implemented to build a CMOS-based Instrumentation amplifier. These methodologies, along with applications, are tabularized in the table below.

**Table 2. Parameters, methodologies and applications of various bioelectric signal acquisitions**

Ref. No.	ICMR	Bandwidth	CMRR (dB)	Power Consumption	Input Referred Noise ( $\mu\text{v}$ )	Area ( $\text{mm}^2$ )	Methodology	Application
[1]	$\pm 4.5\text{ V}$	N/A	99	500 $\mu\text{w}$	1.4 $\mu\text{v}$	24	Current Feedback	ECG
[2]	$\pm 5\text{mV}$	200Hz	100	9 $\mu\text{w}$	6 $\mu\text{v}$	N/A	Current Balancing	ECG
[6]	1V	2KHz	N/A	1.55 $\mu\text{W}$	0.7 $\mu\text{v}$	N/A	Current Balancing	Bio Impedance
[7]	1V	1.1KHz	125	2.3 $\mu\text{W}$	2.18 $\mu\text{v}$	N/A	Chopper Stabilized	EEG
[8]	3.3 V	N/A	N/A	11.8mW	N/A	N/A	Current Feedback	EIT
[9]	N/A	2MHz	100	634 $\mu\text{W}$	15.7 $\mu\text{v}$	0.111	Current Feedback	Bio Spectroscopy
[11]	N/A	N/A	N/A	24 $\mu\text{W}$	35nv	2.8	Dual Path	Bio Impedance
[12]	0.5V	250Hz	90	1.3 $\mu\text{W}$	2.8 $\mu\text{v}$	N/A	Capacitive Coupled	Wireless Body Area Network
[13]	1.8V	N/A	100	N/A	0.78 $\mu\text{v}$	N/A	Fully Differential	ECG, EEG, EMG,EOG
[14]	1.6V	2MHz	90	9.9mW	16.4 $\mu\text{v}$	N/A	CFIA using Neutralization Capacitor	Bio Impedance Spectroscopy
[15]	3.3V	125Hz	125	132 $\mu\text{W}$	2.3 $\mu\text{v}$	N/A	Current Balanced	Wearable Physiological Monitoring
[17]	1 V	N/A	125	165 $\mu\text{W}$	3.192 $\mu\text{v}$	N/A	Folded Cascode	ECG
[18]	1V	256Hz	104	N/A	1.51 $\mu\text{v}$	N/A	Fully Differential Chopper Current Balancing	ECG,EEG, EMG, EOG
[19]	N/A	150Hz	83.24	672	2.01 $\mu\text{v}$	0.071	DDA-Based Fully-Differential	ECG
[20]	N/A	170Hz	120	840	0.0182 $\mu\text{v}$	0.0736	Current Feedback	ECG,EEG

A thorough literature analysis suggests that various alternative design methodologies can be used for CMOS IA. The performance of many biomedical measurement systems is constrained by the analogue frontend circuit employed for signal conditioning. A typical frontend circuit, the CMOS IA, has a high CMRR, a large bandwidth, and a manageable size for portability [26]. Researchers are looking into novel design strategies for CMOS IA that will reduce power consumption, boost CMRR and bandwidth, and reduce chip space. To evaluate the weaker biological signals accompanied by common mode noise, the CMRR and bandwidth can be improved in various methods. To enhance the CMRR, a modern feedback approach is employed.

It is observed that segregation and balancing techniques provide high CMRR. Two MOSFETs on the same branch carry different currents in direct current feedback; this results in nonlinearity and reduces the input common-mode voltage range. In indirect current feedback, nonlinearity is eliminated since MOSFETs on the input and output sides carry equal currents [24, 25]. Additionally, while at a higher cost in terms of power consumption, the ICMR voltage is enhanced.

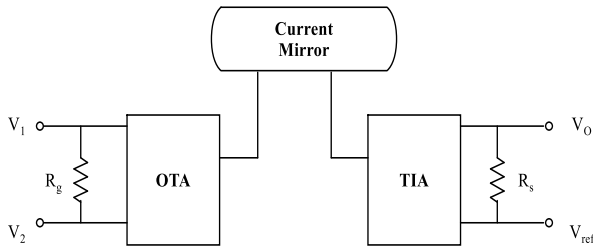


Fig. 1 Block diagram of current feedback instrumentation amplifier

According to the research done on CMOS IA, The CMRR, bandwidth, and power savings of Indirect Current Feedback (ICF) architecture with CMOS devices will be

significantly enhanced [24]. The essential functional block diagram representation is shown in Figure 1. It uses Input transconductance (V to I converter) and output as a transimpedance (I to V converter) amplifier. The same current is mirrored in this configuration’s input and output branches. As a result, using improved tactics previously advised to operate the MOSFET in the triode region, it has been determined to employ this strategy in this study to optimise the CMRR and bandwidth further.

2. Materials and Methods

The block diagram of the proposed IA using the current balancing, isolation, and indirect current feedback techniques is shown in Figure 2. The input stage amplifier of a differential transconductance functions as a buffer amplifier. Instead of using a resistor load, this transconductance amplifier is loaded by a current mirror source. This current mirror source has high local loop gain and high output impedance. Due to the reduced parasitic poles in the loop, stability with broad bandwidth operation is a benefit. A balanced differential amplifier with high gain serves as a sensing amplifier and makes up the second stage in a block diagram [30].

The first and second stages of the planned IA will reduce the majority of the common mode noise. To balance their drain currents, the output voltage of this stage will be provided to the trans-impedance amplifier, forcing the input and output voltages across the resistors that determine the gain of IA.

The first three stages determine the maximum gain of the IA. The next stage is the telescopic Cascode amplifier, which offers low gain [29]. Therefore, the diode-connected load can load this step. A second transconductance amplifier with a capacitor filter is introduced as feedback from the output to the cascade op-amp to remove the undesired low-frequency interference. This stage determines the 3 dB frequency of IA.

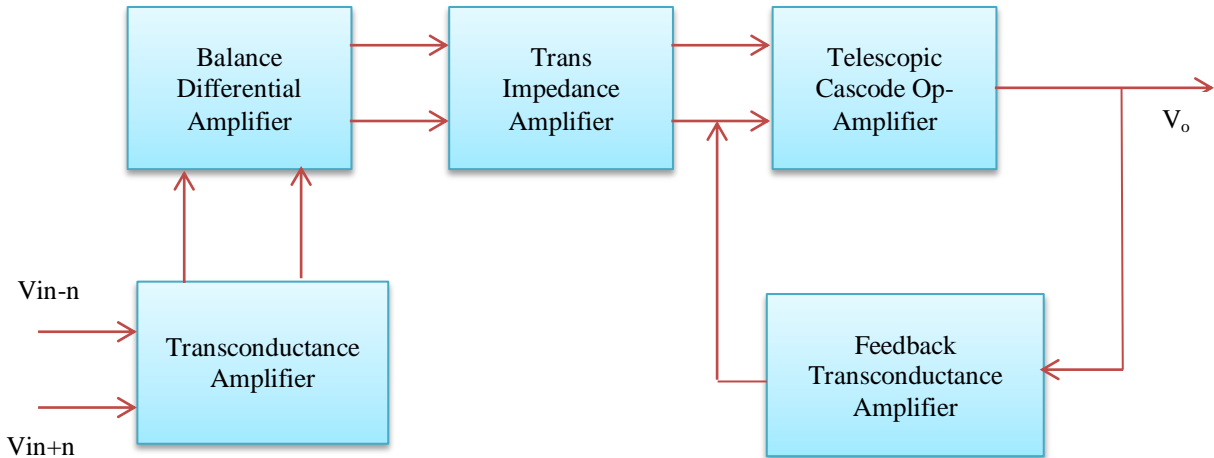


Fig. 2 Block diagram of proposed IA

### 3. Results and Discussion

The proposed Instrumentation Amplifier (IA) operates through a meticulous five-stage process, each undergoing individual simulation to achieve the desired outcomes. Once the optimal results are attained, the Comprehensive Instrumentation Amplifier is meticulously constructed by seamlessly integrating all stages. The operational requirements are met by implementing a 3 V power supply. The amplifier is subjected to an input signal with an amplitude of  $100\mu\text{V}$  while carrying a current of  $38\mu\text{A}$ , ensuring efficient energy utilization at a mere  $794\ \mu\text{W}$  power consumption. The IA boasts a bandwidth of 4.2 MHz to accommodate a broad frequency range. Significantly, the IA's performance is marked by an impressive Common-Mode Rejection Ratio (CMRR) of 80-90 dB, attesting to its exceptional capability to differentiate between desired signals and unwanted noise.

#### 3.1. Input Transconductance Amplifier Design

ECG, EEG and EMG signals are characterized by low amplitudes in the microvolt ( $\mu\text{V}$ ) range and low-frequency components. Due to their small amplitudes, the transistors used in the readout frontend circuits must operate in the

frequency domain where  $1/f$  noise is most prominent. PMOS transistor offers lower flicker noise, acting as an input transistor for IA. This type of noise, also known as pink noise, increases as the frequency decreases, posing a significant challenge for signal amplification and processing. The proposed circuit for CMOS IA's input stage is the Operational Transconductance Amplifier (OTA), which determines noise interference. Thermal noise trumps the above flicker as the bandwidth of IA approaches 4.2 Mega Hertz. As a result, the IA input-referred noise can be calculated as

$$\frac{V_{iN}^2}{\Delta f} = 4kTR_1 + 2 \left( 4kT \frac{2}{3} \frac{1}{g_{mi,2}} + 4kT \frac{2}{3} \frac{g_{md1,2}}{g_{mi,2}^2} \right) \quad (2)$$

T is the absolute temperature in degrees Kelvin, k is the Boltzmann constant, and f is the noise evaluation bandwidth in Hz. To limit the thermal noise addition, resistor  $R_1$  is chosen to be of low value. The PMOS transistors are used as input transistors to minimize  $1/f$  noise; using a Trans conductance amplifier at this stage can remove noise and enhance the bandwidth of the IA.

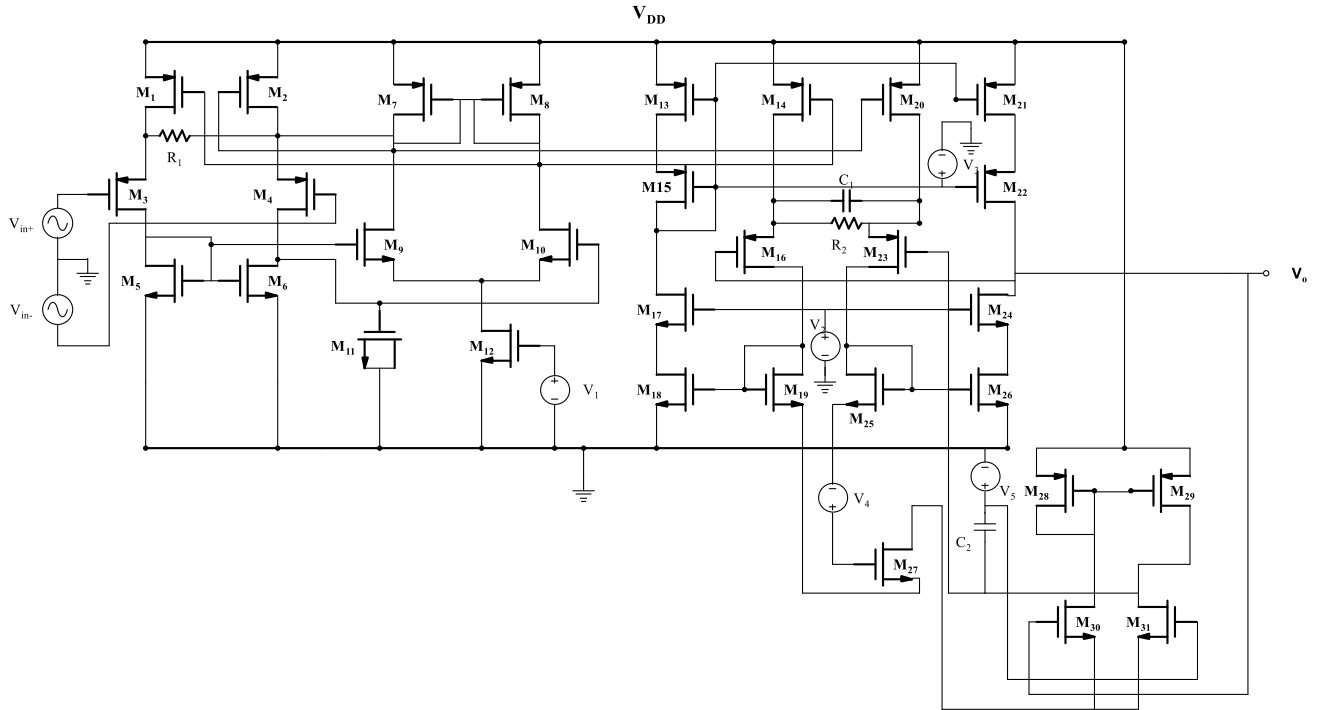


Fig. 3 Circuit diagram of the proposed instrumentation amplifier

The Operational Trans conductance amplifier of this stage offers high gain for the Instrumentation amplifier. In the transconductance stage, the input transistors M3 and M4 convert the differential input voltages,  $v_{in-}$  and  $v_{in+}$ , into current  $I_1$ . As the amplifier is designed to be balanced, the small signal current  $I_1$  passes through the resistor  $R_1$ . To

mirror this current, current mirrors  $M_{14}$  and  $M_{20}$  are employed in the trans-impedance stage, where the current  $I_2$  flows through resistor  $R_2$  and generates an output voltage. The dimensions of input MOSFETs are considered as 330:3  $\mu\text{m}$ . Source network dimensions are 200:2.5, and the drain network is considered as 12:5.

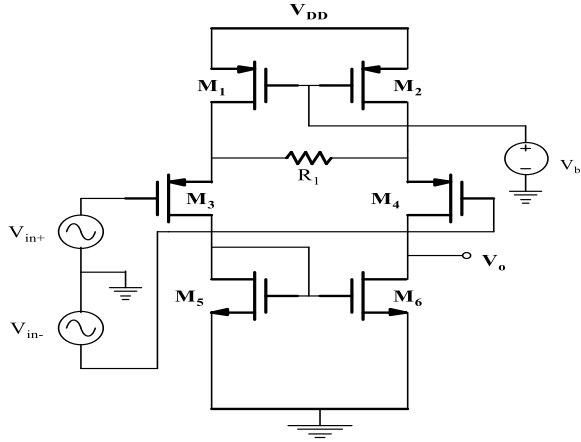


Fig. 4 Input transconductance amplifier

### 3.2. Differential Amplifier Design

A Differential amplifier with a balanced output circuit is implemented for this stage. When no signal is provided, the circuit is fully balanced and differential; thus, all currents are equal and  $v_{out} = 0$ ; for this stage, a connected differential amplifier is considered. Input MOSFETs of this stage are considered as 300:3. Dimension for the current mirror biasing network is considered as 100:2.5. Source network dimensions are taken as 200:5. A Neutralization capacitor using 17.8:5 dimensions is used in this stage for better bandwidth of the amplifier.

### 3.3. Operational Transimpedance Amplifier Design

For this stage, an Operational Trans impedance Amplifier is implemented, similar to the input stage A CMOS OTA and cascode single-ended differential amplifier make-up.

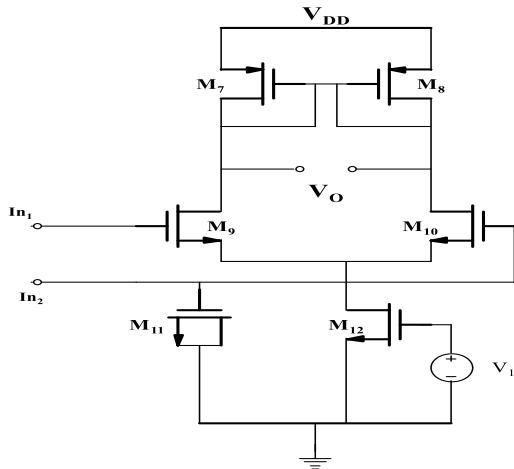


Fig. 5 Differential amplifier

For this equation we have considered  $(W/L)_9 = 2.5 (W/L)_7$ . The output stage, Dimensions of PMOS are 100:1, and of NMOS are 40:1.

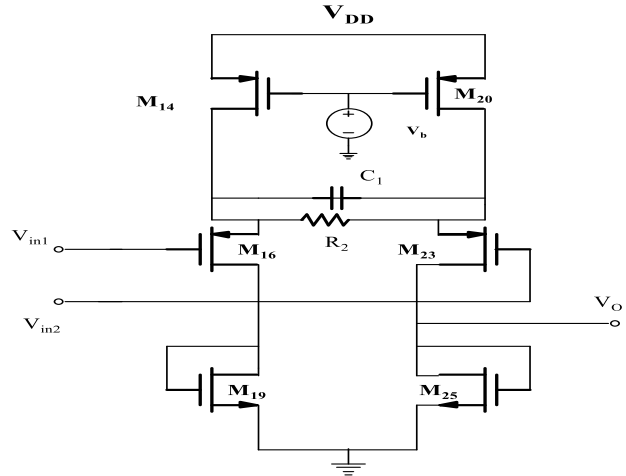


Fig. 6 Transimpedance amplifier

The resistors R2 and C2 decide the amplifier's high cutoff frequency.

### 3.4. Telescopic Cascode Operational Amplifier Design

The output voltage swing technique implements the telescopic cascode operational amplifier. For Implementation, PMOS are considered as 80:1 and NMOS are considered as 40:1

### 3.5. Output Transconductance Amplifier Design

This stage Transconductance amplifier is designed along with an order high pass filter to remove low-frequency connected to the human body to acquire bioelectric signals. Instead of using  $V_{ref}$ , this filter is incorporated into a feedback path created between the output terminal and one of the input terminals of the output OTA. According to the block diagram of the proposed IA, the high-pass filter is implemented by a straightforward operational transconductance amplifier with transconductance  $G_m$  and a capacitor  $C_2$ .

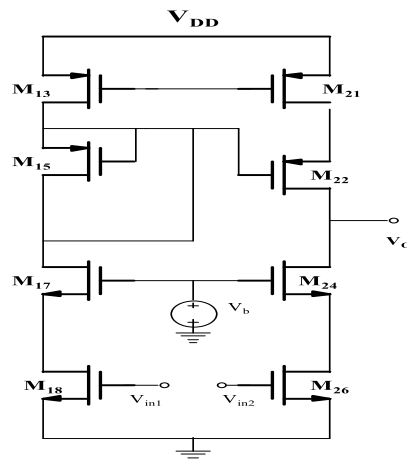
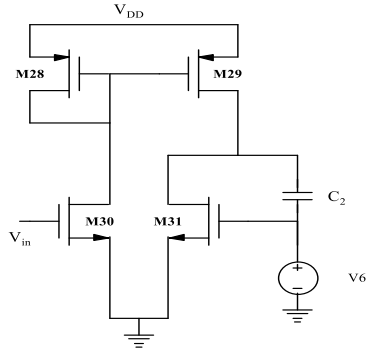


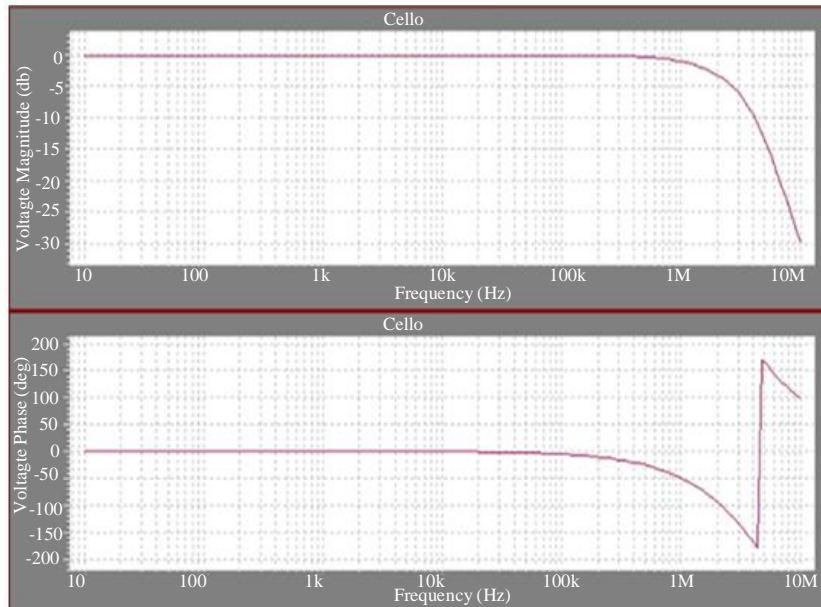
Fig. 7 Telescopic cascode amplifiers



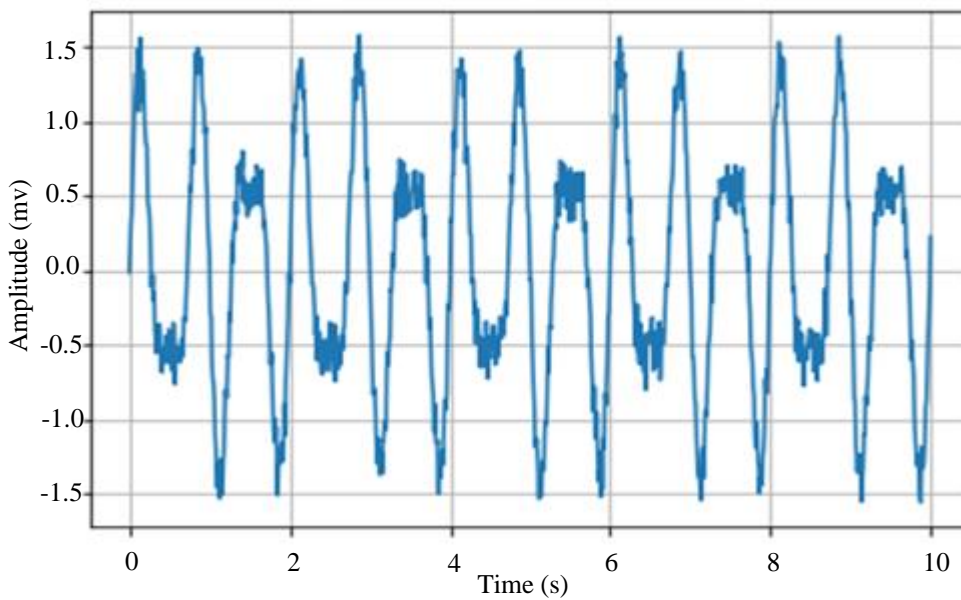
**Fig. 8 Feedback transconductance amplifier**

All the above stages are interconnected to build a complete Instrumentation amplifier. The frequency response of the proposed amplifier is observed. By running some of the devices in the triode region rather than saturation, the bandwidth of this stage can be enhanced by 4.2 MHz.

The other parameters measured are power dissipation of  $794\mu\text{W}$ , CMRR of 85 dB, chip area of  $0.062\text{ mm}^2$ , and input referred noise of  $36\ \mu\text{Vrms}$ . The CMRR is marginally reduced, the power dissipation is decreased, and the bandwidth is raised. The circuit is simulated for various bioelectric signals, and output is observed. Table 3 compares recently published work with newly proposed work.



**Fig. 9 Frequency response of instrumentation amplifier**



**Fig. 10 (a) Input ECG signal**

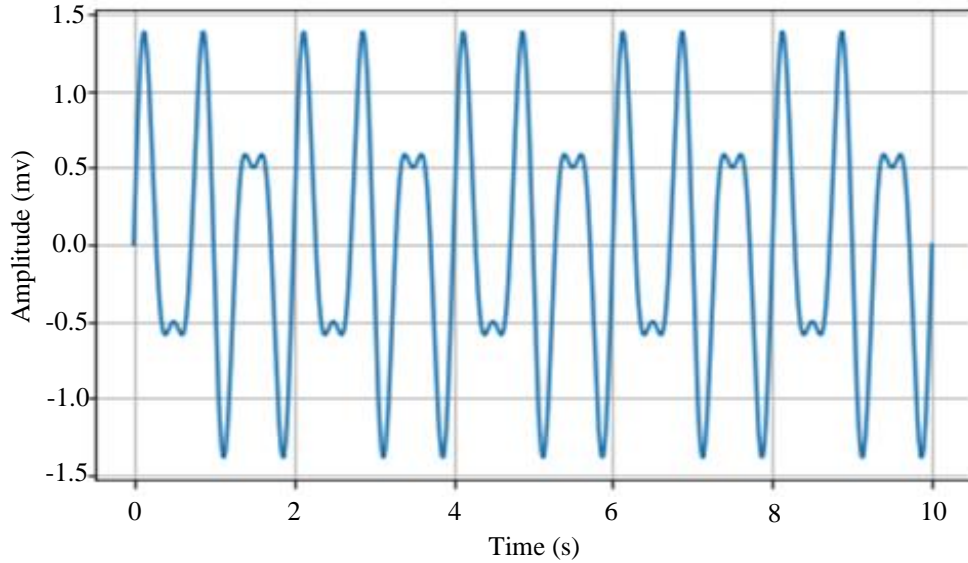


Fig. 10 (b) Output ECG signal

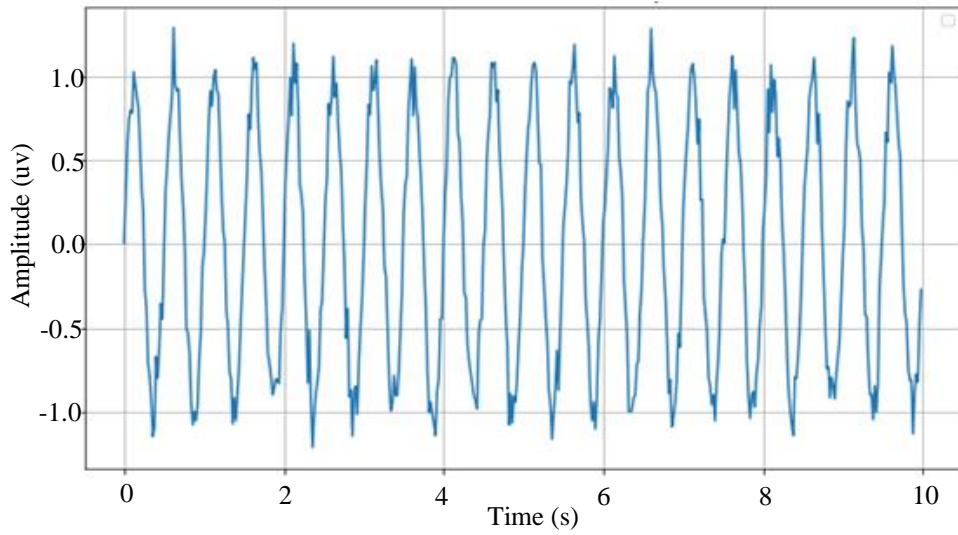


Fig. 11 (a) Input EEG signal

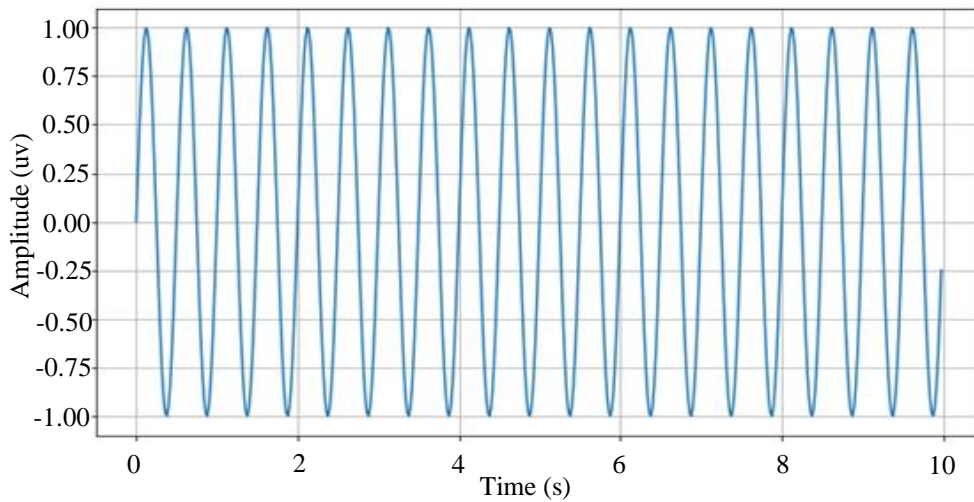


Fig. 11 (b) Output EEG signal



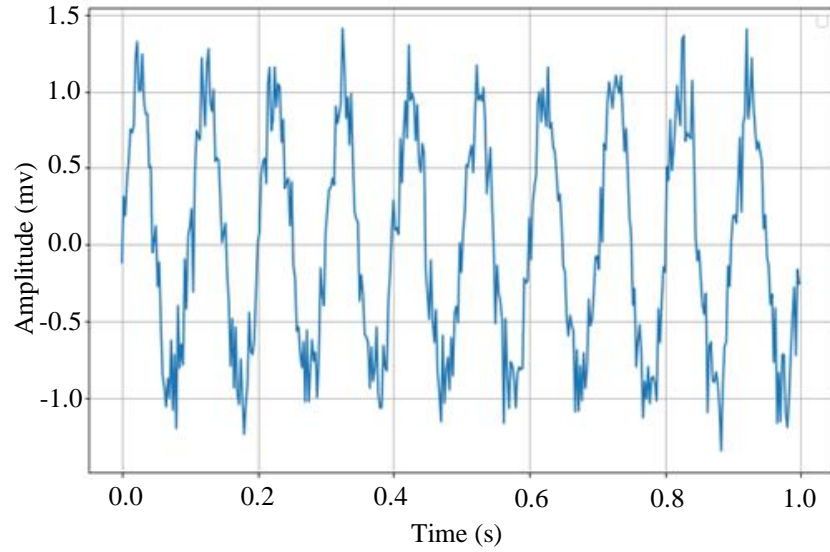


Fig. 12 (a) Input EMG signal

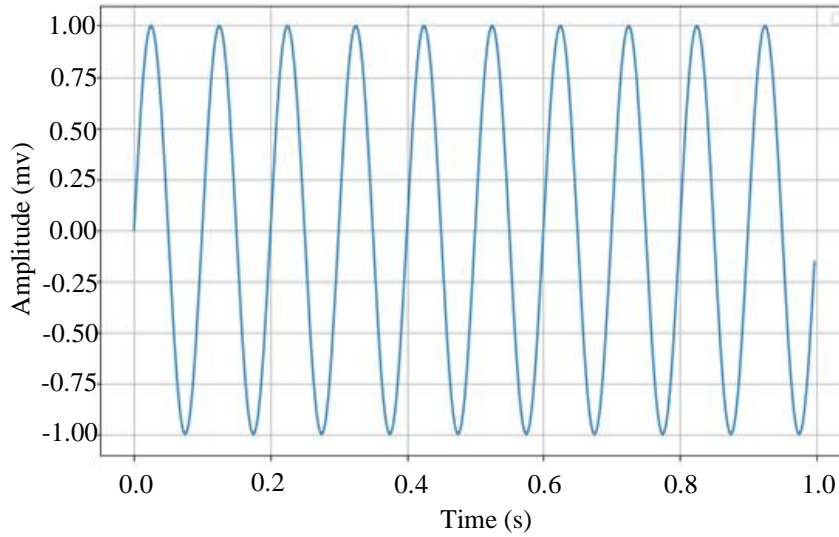


Fig. 12 (b) Output EMG signal

Table 3. The measured performance parameters of the instrumentation amplifier

Parameters	This Work	2019 [7]	2011 [14]	2021 [19]	2021 [20]	2023 [31]
Application	ECG/EEG/EMG	EEG	EIT	ECG	ECG/EEG	ECG
Technology ( $\mu\text{m}$ )	0.25	0.13	0.35	0.35	0.18	0.18
Active area ( $\text{mm}^2$ )	0.062	N/A	0.068	0.071	0.0736	0.0167
Voltage (V)	3	1	3	2	1.8	0.5
Power consumption ( $\mu\text{W}$ )	794	2.3	870	672	840	0.0313
Input referred noise ( $\mu\text{V}$ )	36	2.18	16	2.01	0.0182	17.9
Gain	50	N/A	50	N/A	N/A	37.1
CMRR (dB)	85	125	90	83.24	120	75
Bandwidth	4.2MHz	1.1KHz	2MHz	150Hz	170Hz	112Hz

#### 4. Conclusion

This study presents the Implementation of an Instrumentation Amplifier (IA) utilizing the indirect current feedback topology. A novel technique is employed to operate the MOSFET in cascode current mirror load within the telescopic cascode op-amp, positioned at the edge of the triode region. The performance of the IA for bioelectric signals is evaluated through simulation using the Cadence EDA tool. The system operates at a supply voltage of 3 volts to ensure low power consumption.

The MOSFET quiescent currents are carefully selected to achieve a power dissipation of 794  $\mu\text{W}$  while maintaining a bandwidth of 4.2 MHz. The results obtained from the simulations demonstrate the successful Implementation of

the Instrumentation Amplifier for amplifying bioelectric signals.

The chosen operating conditions, including the supply voltage and MOSFET quiescent currents, yield the desired power dissipation and bandwidth. In conclusion, this study successfully implements an Instrumentation amplifier for bioelectric signals using capacitive neutralization and feedback transconductance amplifier.

The IA's performance is evaluated through simulation, and it achieves the desired Common Mode Rejection Ratio and bandwidth requirements. This research contributes to developing efficient amplification solutions for medical applications involving bioelectric signals.

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