

# VANADIUM OXIDE NANOFIBERS BY ELECTROSPINNING

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**Abstract.** New vanadate fibers with nano to submicron diameter have been prepared by electrospinning technique using vanadium sol and poly(vinyl acetate) (PVAC) solutions followed by thermal treatment. The PVAC has successfully been applied as structure directing template for the synthesis of vanadium oxide fibers. The morphology of the fibers have been demonstrated by scanning electron microscopy (SEM) and atomic force microscopy (AFM) images. The crystallinity of the fiber was obtained by X-ray diffraction.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Nanostructured materials which are considered as intermediates between classical molecular scale and micro-sized entities, constitute a rapidly growing field of scientific interest and industrial applications. Chemical structures and systems within the size range from about 1 to 100 nm in one, two, or three dimensions are typical for such materials. They are attracting considerable attention, because they present new challenges for the chemist, they frequently exhibit novel properties, and some nano scale systems offer interesting device applications as a consequence of their size, properties and topology. Nanoparticles may be of quite different shapes such as spheroids, mushrooms [1], platelets, rods, or tubes; the form adopted plays a large role in determining the basic properties, for example, isotropic or anisotropic behavior and region dependent surface reactivity.

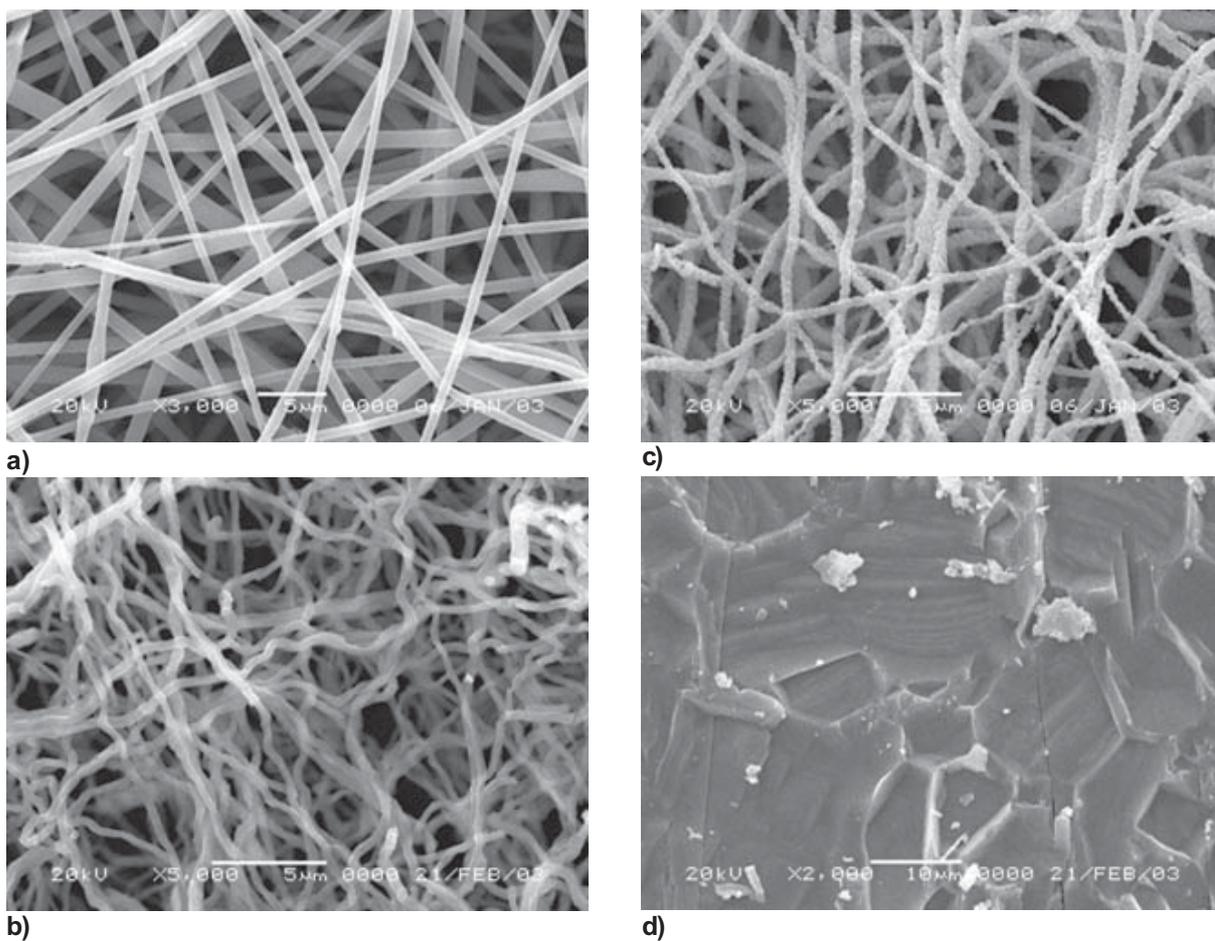
The tubular form has attracted a great deal of interest because they might turn out to become very useful in future nano device technology [2]. Another very interesting family are the nanoporous MCM-aluminosilicates [3,4] with continuous framework structures that have tunnel dimensions between 3 and 10 nm, extending the range of zeolite-

like materials. The synthesis of these meso-structured molecular sieves relies on surfactant micelles or liquid crystal arrays of micelles as structure directing agents for the assembly and subsequent polymerization of inorganic aluminosilicate precursors at the surfactant solution interface. The application of complementary electrostatic interactions between surfactant molecules and charged or polarized metal oxy precursors as the inorganic component has opening a way to new metastable modifications of metal oxides [5]. Quite recently it has been shown that hydrogen bonding [6] or real coordinative interactions [7-9] between the ligand liquid crystal template and the metal center offer new perspectives for the controlled synthesis of surfactant based periodic inorganic structures.

The vanadium-oxygen system is an interesting and complex subject for study, involving as many as 13 distinct phases, each identifiable by its lattice structure and spacings. A further complication is the substantial variability in stoichiometry occurring in some structures, most notably the Magneli phases based on rutile, with compositions of  $V_nO_{2n-1}$ , where  $n$  is an integer [10]. Semiconductor to metal transitions have been reported in at least eight vanadium oxygen compounds at temperatures ranging from -147 to 68 °C. These changes are associated with a

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**Fig. 1.** SEM images of the 50 wt% of  $V_2O_5$ /PVAC fibers: (a) as-synthesized material, (b) calcined at 400 °C (c) calcined at 500 °C; (d) calcined at 700 °C.

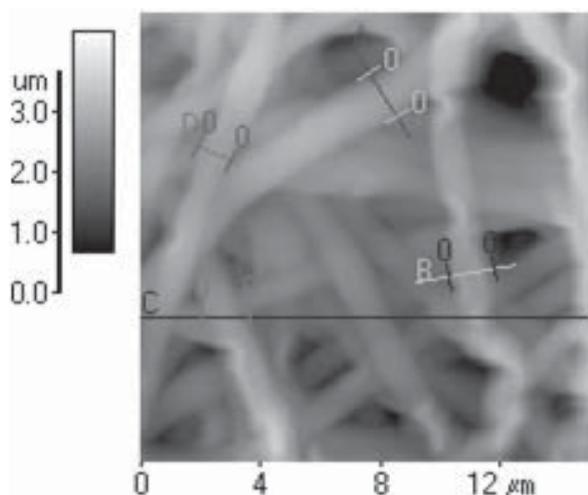
first order crystallographic transition affecting the electrical, magnetic and optical properties of the materials, permitting them to be used as switches.  $VO_2$  and  $V_2O_3$  exhibit the largest changes in properties and are therefore the most useful compositions, with  $VO_2$  receiving the most attention. This is perhaps because the transition temperature of  $VO_2$  is conveniently close to room temperature, at 68 °C, making it useful for a variety of applications [11-16]. Studies involving the transition of  $V_2O_3$  require measurements in the range of -121 °C, and a few properties have been reported through its transition [17-22].

In this work, we present a relatively simple method [23-25] to prepare  $V_2O_5$  nanofibers, which have good electrical transport properties [26,27] besides these are useful materials for the preparation of  $V_2O_3$  and  $VO_2$ .

## 2. EXPERIMENTAL

Sol-gel method was used to prepare the electrospinning solution, in which the starting material was commercial vanadium oxide isopropoxide,  $(VO(OC_3H_7)_3)$ , a clear liquid soluble in a variety of organic solvents. Briefly, 5 g of vanadium oxide isopropoxide was added to 5 g of dry ethanol to produce a clear pale yellow fluid. 0.24 g of distilled water was added into this with rapid agitation. The contents stirred continuously for 12 h. The exchange of isopropyl and ethyl groups was evident, as the pale yellow solution became green. Then, this vanadium sol solution was mixed with PVAC (1:3 by wt ratio) under stirring for 5 h to give the final electrospinning solution.

The electrospinning solution was delivered at a constant flow rate to a plastic capillary connected to a high-voltage power supply. Upon applying a high voltage (15 kV), a fluid jet was ejected from the cap-

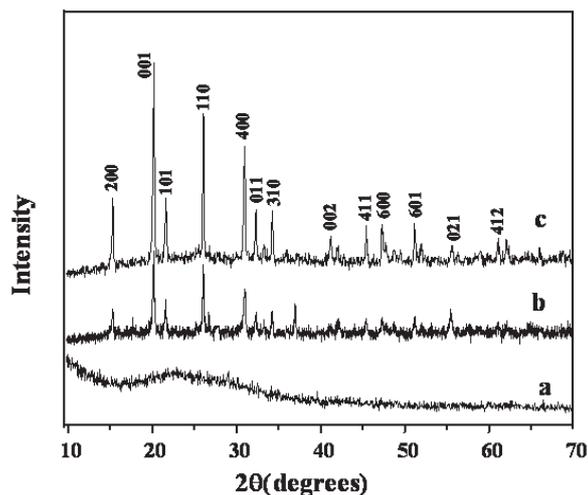


**Fig. 2.** AFM image of 50 wt%  $V_2O_5$ /PVAC composite fibers.

illary. As the jet accelerated towards a grounded collector, the solvent evaporated and a charged fiber was deposited on the collector in the form of a non-woven fabric. The fibers are collected and then calcined at different temperatures. Scanning electron microscopy (SEM) images of the products are collected with a JOEL GSM-5900 scanning electron microscope. Atomic force microscope (AFM) pictures are taken using XE-100 (PSIA Co.) instrument. X-ray diffraction (XRD) pattern of the fibers are obtained with Shimadzu Lab-X 600 X-ray diffractometer with Cu-K $\alpha$  irradiation. The infrared (IR) spectra are recorded in Bio-Rad Win FT-IR spectrophotometer at room temperature.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Fiber microstructure was determined by scanning electron microscopy and atomic force microscopies. Fig. 1 summarizes results of material prepared using 50 wt% of  $V_2O_5$  in as-synthesised and calcined form. The SEM images of as-synthesised fibers shows that the fibers have smooth, uniform surfaces and uniform diameter in the whole length. The fibers obtained after calcination at 400 °C exhibit spiral like structure. The diameters are reduced by about 40% due to the decomposition of the PVAC component. After calcination at 500 °C, any shrinkage is minimal, but the fibers can be seen to have rougher surfaces. It is thought that this is due to the complete decomposition of PVAC components. In this



**Fig. 3.** X-ray diffraction patterns of the 50 wt%  $V_2O_5$  fibers (a) as-synthesised material, PVAC-inorganic composite; (b) after calcined at 400 °C; (c) after calcined at 500 °C.

stage the fibers appear to consist of linked particles or crystallites. When the fibers subjected to calcination at 700 °C, the fiber structure is disappeared due to the melting of  $V_2O_5$  fibers at about 670 °C [28].

The surface topography of the fibers was also studied by atomic force microscopy (AFM). The surface morphological image obtained for as-synthesised form is shown in Fig. 2. The AFM data demonstrated that the fibers are homogeneous, smooth and uniform with regard to surface topography. The strip at the right hand side part of Fig. 2 indicates the Z-axis height from which it is possible to estimate the fiber roughness.

The fiber crystallinity was determined by X-ray diffraction. Figs. 3a, b and c shows the XRD spectra of  $V_2O_5$  fibers in the as-synthesised form, after calcination at 400 °C and 500 °C, respectively. XRD patterns of the as-synthesised fibers indicated that the structure is amorphous in nature. Following calcination at 400 °C well-defined features appear due to the crystallisation of vanadium pentoxide. XRD spectra of the fibers after calcination at 500 °C shows that the features become sharper and well defined although position does not alter significantly. This would suggest a higher degree of crystallinity and larger particle sizes. The data here is fitted to reveal the presence of  $V_2O_5$  phase (JCPDS 9-387) [28].

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

By using the electrospinning technique, through sol-gel process, PVAC/V<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub> composite fibers have been prepared. After calcination of the composite fibers, pure crystalline V<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub> nanofibers were obtained. The morphology of the fibers was determined by the calcination temperature. By controlling the parameters of the calcinations, one could also expect to be able to make V<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> and VO<sub>2</sub> nanofibers.

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