Supercontinuum Generation in a Highly Nonlinear Chalcogenide/ MgF_2 Hybrid Photonic Crystal Fiber

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ABSTRACT— **In this paper, we report the numerical analysis of a photonic crystal fiber (PCF) for generating an efficient supercontinuum medium. For our computational studies, the core of the proposed structure is made up of As_2Se_3 and the cladding structure consists of an inner ring of holes made up As_2Se_3 and four outer rings of air holes in MgF_2. The proposed structure provides excellent nonlinear coefficient and dispersion optimization. For the analysis, finite difference frequency domain (FDFD) method is employed. Because of the high nonlinear refractive index of the chalcogenide glass and high difference between the refractive index of the core and the cladding, a small effective mode area of 0.68 μm^2 is obtained. The nonlinear coefficient is 14.98 $W^{-1}m^{-1}$ at the wavelength of 1.8 µm. Dispersion is almost flat from 1.6 µm up to 2.8 µm. The supercontinuum spectrum calculated ranges from 1 µm to 6 µm. The presented structure is appropriate for medical imaging, optical coherence tomography and optical communications.**

KEYWORDS: Supercontinuum generation (SCG), chalcogenide glass, nonlinear effects, photonic crystal fiber, dispersion.

I. INTRODUCTION

The generation of supercontinuum spectrum has been focused by researchers in recent years due to its wide range of applications in various areas [1-9]. These applications include the use of this spectrum in medical imaging, tomography, metrology, sensors and optical communications [10-12]. PCFs are widely used nowadays due to their flexibility in controlling various optical parameters such as dispersion and nonlinear response [13, 14]. Other advantage of this type of fiber is that a short length of it is required to produce supercontinuum spectrum [15]. One of the important points about PCFs is the controlling of zero dispersion wavelengths (ZDWs). As a result, according to their zero-dispersion wavelength properties, PCFs can be classified into fibers with all normal dispersion and having no ZDW, with single ZDW or with two or more ZDWs [16, 17]. In PCFs with no ZDW, the generation of supercontinuum spectrum is due to self-phase modulation which results in symmetrical broadening of the spectrum on either side of the injected pulse. Although in this case, the produced spectrum is flat but its width is relatively small. In the case of PCFs with single ZDW, the input pulse is injected in the anomalous dispersion region, and the soliton dynamics become important in the generation of supercontinuum spectrum [15, 16].

In PCFs with two zero dispersion wavelengths, the generated output spectrum is much wider than the previously mentioned ones. In this type of PCF, two dispersed waves are produced due to self-phase modulation (SPM) and soliton self-frequency shift process [18, 19]. It should be noted that in this type of PCF, the spectrum has less stability compared to the very first case but its width is much larger. To produce a very flat and broad supercontinuum, a PCF is needed that has both high nonlinear coefficient and flat dispersion profile [20]. In order to increase nonlinear coefficient, either a material with high nonlinear coefficient should be used or effective area should be acceptably small [21, 22].

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Many papers have been published on photonic crystal fibers with high nonlinear coefficient. For example, PCFs with different air holes sizes [23], PCFs with small pitch and large air holes sizes [24], structures with equal air holes [25], structures with hybrid cladding [26]. However, these fibers have nonlinear coefficient lower than 80 W^{-1} km^{-1} at the wavelength of 1.55 μm. Using materials with high nonlinear coefficient for the core, one can improve nonlinearity, but however in this case, the dispersion profile is not flat. As a result, designing of PCF with high nonlinear coefficient and flat dispersion is a challenge [27]. In this paper, a PCF with chalcogenide core and the cladding structure consists of an inner ring of holes made up As_2Se_3 and four outer rings of air holes in MgF_2 is proposed. In this case, because of the high nonlinear refractive index of the chalcogenide glass and also high difference between the refractive index of the core and the cladding, a small effective mode area can be obtained.

This paper is formed as follows. In Section 2, problem formulation is described. Section 3 focuses on the geometry of the proposed PCF. In Section 4, simulation results obtained are presented and discussed and finally the conclusions are presented in Section 5.

II. PROBLEM FORMULATION

In this paper, dispersion, effective area of the propagating mode, nonlinear coefficient and SCG are fully analyzed and simulated. In this section, the above parameters are discussed and analyzed mathematically.

A. *Numerical Model*

For numerical simulations of the electromagnetic waves, two dimensional finite difference frequency domains (2D-FDFD) are used [28]. Using perfectly matched layer (PML) conditions, Maxwell's equations are expressed as follows [29-31]:

$$\nabla \times \mathbf{H} = jk_0 s \varepsilon_r \mathbf{E}$$
$$\nabla \times \mathbf{E} = -jk_0 s \mu_r \mathbf{H} \quad (1)$$

where k_0, **E**, **H,** ε_r, and μ_r are the free space wave number, electric and magnetic field, the relative permeability and permittivity constants, respectively. The parameter *s* is the propagation matrix, which is defined as follows [32]:

$$\begin{bmatrix} \frac{s_y}{s_x} & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & \frac{s_x}{s_y} & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & s_x s_y \end{bmatrix} \quad (2)$$

In the above equation, S_x and S_y parameters are obtained by Eq. (3) [30, 32]:

$$s_x = 1 - \frac{\sigma_x}{j\varpi\varepsilon_0}, \text{ and } s_y = 1 - \frac{\sigma_y}{j\varpi\varepsilon_0} \quad (3)$$

where σ represents the conductivity of the waveguide and ε_0 is permeability of free space. Finally by using the methods used in [29-32], one can obtain the following equations.

$$\begin{bmatrix} Q_{xx} & Q_{xy} \\ Q_{yx} & Q_{yy} \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} H_x \\ H_y \end{bmatrix} = \beta^2 \begin{bmatrix} H_x \\ H_y \end{bmatrix} \quad (4)$$

and

$$\begin{bmatrix} P_{xx} & P_{xy} \\ P_{yx} & P_{yy} \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} E_x \\ E_y \end{bmatrix} = \beta^2 \begin{bmatrix} E_x \\ E_y \end{bmatrix} \quad (5)$$

where β is the propagation constant, P and Q are real sparse matrices [34, 35]. For designing the hybrid, PCF proposed in this paper, the following procedure is performed. In the first step, important fiber parameters such as the number of rings, the shape and the size of the holes, the distance between the adjacent holes (Λ) and the materials used, are properly selected. Then for an acceptable accuracy, the mesh size is determined. Then by calculating the propagation constant (β) for the propagating mode, the effective refractive index, n_{eff}, can be obtained through Eq. (6).

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Finally, the optical parameters of the proposed PCF and SCG are computed [35].

$$n_{FSM} < n_{eff} = \frac{\beta}{k_0} < n_{co} \tag{6}$$

where n_{eff} is effective refractive index, n_{co} is the refractive index of the core, and n_{FSM} is the average refractive index of the clad. Based on calculation of n_{eff}, dispersion can be computed by Eq. (7) [36, 37].

$$D(Y) = -\frac{\lambda}{c}\frac{d^2 n_{eff}}{d\lambda^2} \tag{7}$$

In this equation, λ is the central wavelength of injected pulse and c is the speed of light in free space.

B. *SCG Equations*

To investigate SCG, numerical solution of general nonlinear Schrödinger equation (GNLSE) with the split-step Fourier method is used. Simplified form of this equation is as follows [36]:

$$\frac{\partial A}{\partial z} = \left(\hat{D} + \hat{N}\right)A \tag{8}$$

where $\hat{D}$ and $\hat{N}$ represent the linear and nonlinear parts of GNLSE, respectively. These parameters are defined as follows:

$$D = -\frac{\alpha(\omega)}{2} + \sum_{n\rangle 2}\beta_n \frac{i^{n+1}}{n!}\frac{\partial^n}{\partial t^n} \tag{9}$$

and

$$N = i\gamma\left(1 + \frac{i}{\omega_0}\frac{\partial}{\partial t}\right) \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} R(T')\left|A(Z, T-T')\right|^2 dT' \tag{10}$$

In Eq. (9), α is the total fiber loss that is negligible due to a very small length of PCF, R(T) is the response function including the Raman and Kerr nonlinearities. β_n represents the nth order dispersion parameter obtained by the following equations[36, 37].

$$\beta_m = \left(\frac{d^m \beta}{d\omega^m}\right)_{\omega=\omega_0} \quad \text{(m=0, 1, 2, …)} \tag{11}$$

and

$$D(\lambda) = -\frac{2\pi c}{\lambda^2}\beta_2 \tag{12}$$

In Eq. (10), γ is the nonlinear coefficient obtained from the Eq. (13).

$$\gamma = \frac{\omega_0 n_2(\omega_0)}{cA_{eff}} \tag{13}$$

where n_2 is the nonlinear coefficient and ω_0 is the central frequency and A_{eff} is the effective area which is obtained as follows [36, 37]:

$$A_{eff} = \frac{\left(\iint_s |E_t|^2 dxdy\right)^2}{\iint_s |E_t|^4 dxdy} \tag{14}$$

III. GEOMETRY OF THE PROPOSED PCF

Nowadays with the improvement of the fabrication technology, many complex structures, such as chalcogenide-tellurite composite structures and chalcogenide/silica hybrid structures have been reported in order to achieve the desired dispersion and nonlinear characteristics [38-40]. PCFs with silica core have low nonlinear coefficient. With regard to Eq. (13), to increase nonlinear coefficient, material with higher nonlinear coefficient should be used or the effective mode area should be reduced, or both cases can be used. Here a PCF with chalcogenide/ MgF_2 Hybrid structure is used. As the refractive index of chalcogenide glass is much higher than that of MgF_2 glass, hence a large difference between the core and the cladding refractive indexes is achieved. As a result, the effective mode area of the proposed structure decreases and its nonlinear coefficient increases.

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The linear refractive index dependent on the wavelength of As_2Se_3 and MgF_2 is obtained by the following equation:

$$n^2(\lambda) = 1 + \sum_{i=1}^{m} \frac{A_i \lambda^2}{\lambda^2 - \lambda_i^2} \quad (15)$$

where λ indicates the wavelength in micrometers. The following table shows values of indices A_1, A_2, A_3, λ_1, λ_2 and λ_3 for As_2Se_3 and MgF_2 [41-42].

Table 1 Sellmeier fitting coefficients.

Material	As_2Se_3		MgF_2	
	A_i	λ_i (μm)	A_i	λ_i (μm)
i=1	0.24164	0.24164	0.48755708	0.04338400
i=2	0.347441	19	0.39875031	0.09461442
i=3	1.308575	0.48328	2.31203530	23.7936040

Figure1 shows the proposed structure. To create a flat dispersion based on Eq. (7), the first inner ring is selected to be made up of chalcogenide glass with smaller hole diameter than that of other holes in the cladding structure. In Fig. 1, d_c, d_1, d, and Λ are the core diameter, chalcogenide inner ring hole diameter, cladding air holes diameter, and the distance between the adjacent air holes (pitch) respectively.

IV. Simulation Results

To achieve an optimum structure, dispersion profile is calculated for different core and hole sizes. Figure 2 illustrates the dispersion profile for various core sizes. When the core diameter is larger than 1.08 μm, dispersion in the anomalous dispersion region becomes very high. A reduction in the core diameter decreases the dispersion, and when the core diameter is lower than 0.9 μm, dispersion becomes negative. By further decrease in the core diameter, high negative dispersion is achieved. However, the dispersion profile becomes desirable when the core diameter is 0.99 μm.

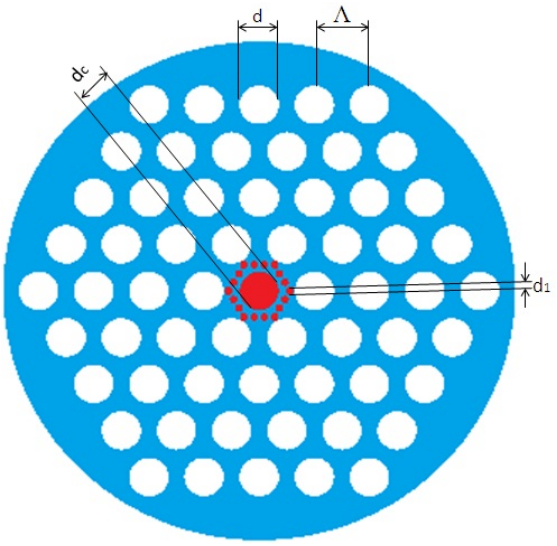


Fig. 1. The structure of the proposed PCF with As_2S_3 core and the cladding structure consists of an inner ring of holes made up As_2S_3 and four outer rings of air holes in MgF_2.

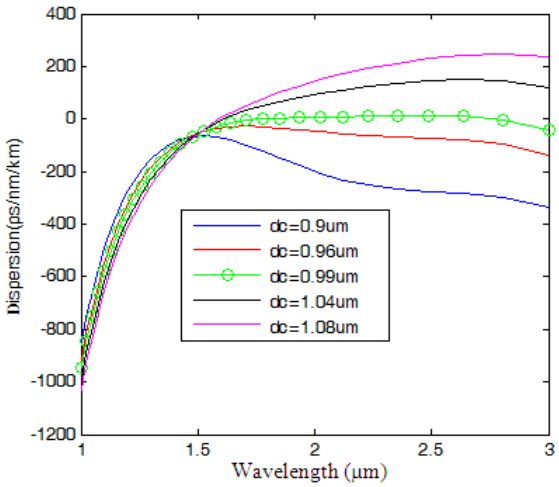


Fig. 2: Effect of the core diameter on dispersion profile.

To create a flat dispersion profile, a chalcogenide ring of holes is introduced immediately around the core. The effect of this set of holes is shown in Fig. 3. In the case of the absence of this ring of chalcogenide holes or even when the diameter of these holes are small, anomalous dispersion increases and the profile is not flat. When d_1 is larger than 0.24 μm, the slope of dispersion at shorter wavelengths and in the normal dispersion region decreases and the slope of dispersion at

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the longer wavelengths in the anomalous dispersion region increases.

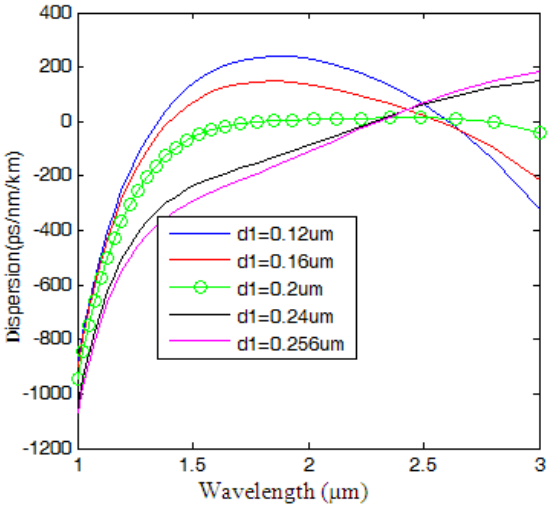


Fig. 3. Effect of Chalcogenide holes diameter on dispersion profile.

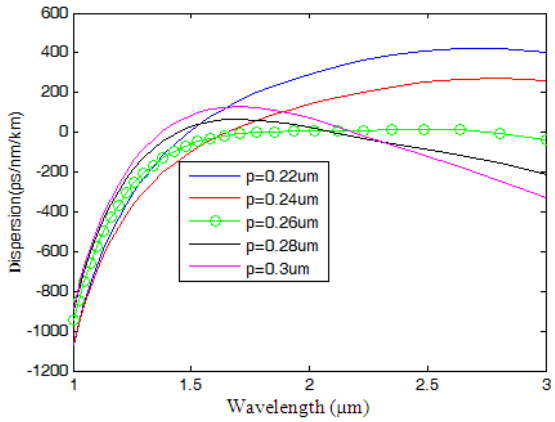
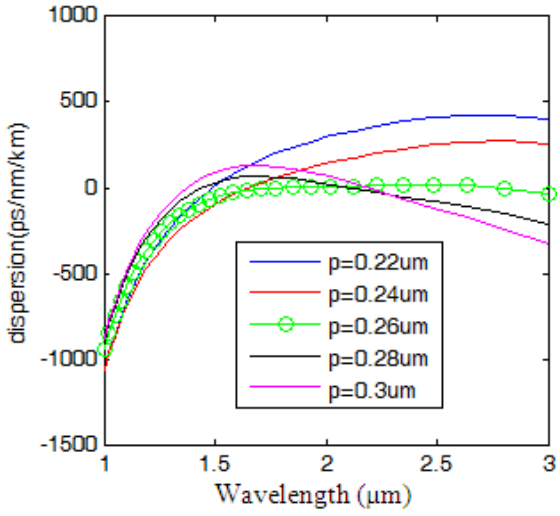
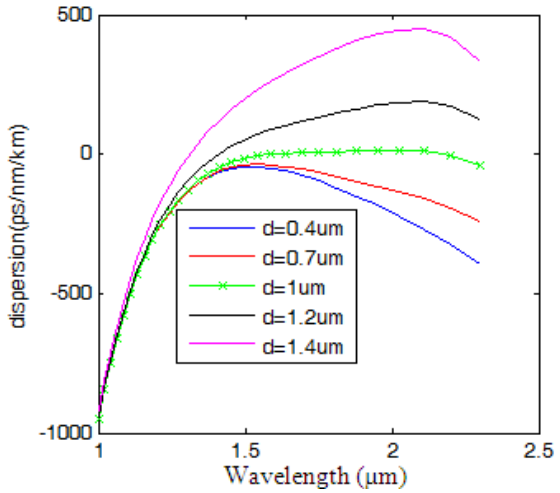


Fig. 4. Effect of Chalcogenide holes, Λ on dispersion profile.

Figure 4 illustrates the effect of variation of Λ of the chalcogenide holes. Reduction of Λ increases the distance between two adjacent ZDWs and increases dispersion in the anomalous dispersion region. Further increase of Λ also increases the normal dispersion and increases the slope of the dispersion. Another important factor affecting the dispersion is the Λ of the cladding air holes. Figure 5 shows the impact of changes in *d* and its Λ on the dispersion profile.



(a)



(b)

Fig. 5: The effect of changes (a) distance between air holes, Λ and (b) the diameter of the air holes, d on dispersion profile.

In Fig. 5 (a), by reducing Λ, the distance between the two ZDWs increases, and by increasing Λ, the distance between them decreases but in this case the slope of the dispersion increases. In Fig. 5 (b), by increasing d, dispersion in the anomalous dispersion region is increased, but when d is small, the dispersion moves toward normal dispersion region but the slope of the dispersion increases. However, this is not appropriate for supercontinuum generation. Finally, based on the above results, the core diameter is selected to be d_c=0.99 μm, the Λ for the chalcogenide holes is chosen to be equal to 0.26μm, the chalcogenide holes

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diameter is taken to be d_1=0.2 μm, the Λ for the air holes is chosen to be equal to 0.26μm.

With these chosen values, the resulting dispersion profile has 2 ZDWs, one at approximately 1.75 μm and the other at about 2.8 μm.

The effective mode area at the wavelength of 1.8 μm is A_{eff}=0.68μm^2. As a result, the nonlinear coefficient in proposed PCF is obtained as γ=14.98 W^{-1}m^{-1} with regard to nonlinear refractive index of As_2S_3 which is n_2=2.92×10^{-18}. Figure 6 shows the calculated spectrum evolution in 10 cm propagation length of the proposed PCF. In this case, the input pulse duration is 50fs at the fundamental quasi-TE mode where its power is 200w at the central wavelength of 1.8 μm. It is seen that after about 2 cm, spectrum reaches to relative stability and it is quite stable for 8 cm. Different orders of β are given in Table 2.

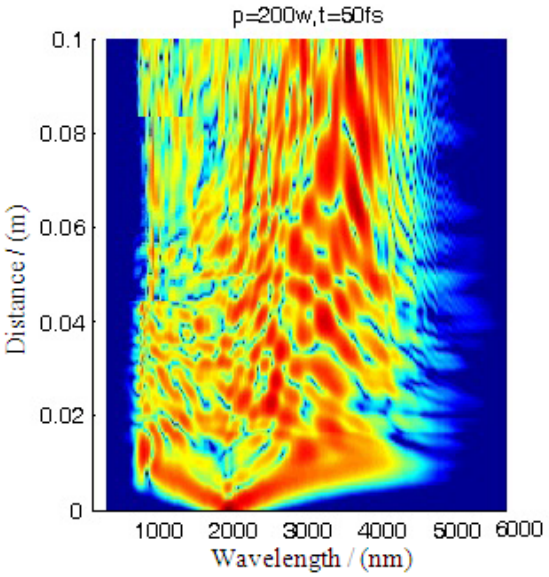


Fig.6: Evolution of the spectral distribution of optical pulses in the proposed PCF with a length of 10 cm.

In Fig. 7, the supercontinuum spectrum obtained by an input pulse width of 32 ps, power of 200 W and fiber length of 10 cm is illustrated.

Figure 8 shows the output supercontinuum spectrum for pumping with the same input pulse but this time with duration of 50 fs.

Figure 9 illustrates the supercontinuum spectrum for the same input pulse but this time with a power of 200 W.

Table 2. The β_n parameters of the proposed PCF at the wavelength of 1.8 μm

β_n	Values [ps^n/km]
β_2	-3.7
β_3	0.15
β_4	0.0012
β_5	1.09×10^{-5}
β_6	-1.35×10^{-7}
β_7	-1.085×10^{-10}
β_8	1.94×10^{-11}
β_9	-1.518×10^{-12}
β_{10}	-7.18×10^{-14}

The generated supercontinuums shown in the figures above have approximate coherence property over the entire bandwidth of 1–6 μm.

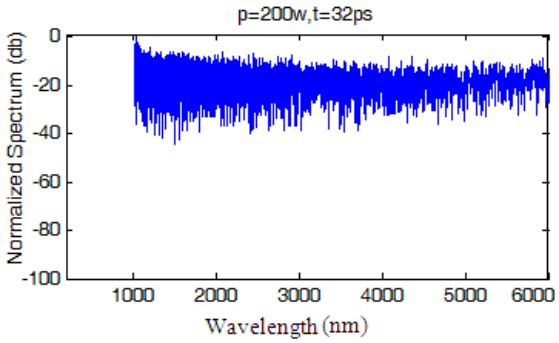


Fig. 7. Supercontinuum spectrum with an input power of 200 W and pulse duration of 32 ps.

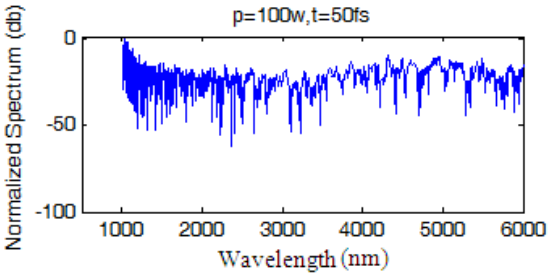


Fig. 8. supercontinuum spectrum with an input power of 100 W and a pulse width of 50 fs.

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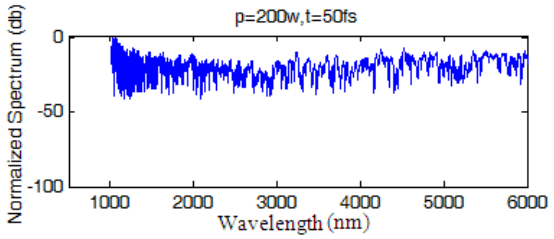


Fig. 9. Supercontinuum spectrum with an input power of 200 W and a pulse width 50 fs.

V. CONCLUSION

In this paper, the propagation constant and the effective mode area in the proposed PCF are first calculated and then dispersion and supercontinuum spectrum are computed. The proposed structure is made up of As_2S_3 and the cladding structure consists of an inner ring of holes made up As_2S_3 and four outer rings of air holes in MgF_2. Because of the high nonlinear refractive index of the chalcogenide glass and also high difference between the refractive index of the core and the cladding, a small effective mode area of 0.68 μm^2 and nonlinear coefficient γ=14.98 W^{-1} m^{-1} are obtained. Dispersion is almost flat from 1.6 μm up to 2.8 μm. The supercontinuum spectrum calculated ranges from 1 μm to 6 μm. This structure is appropriate for medical imaging, optical coherence tomography and optical telecommunications.

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