

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Andrew Moore for his continuous support of my Ph.D study, for his patience, advice, encouragement, and immense knowledge. His guidance helped me in all the time of research and writing of this thesis.

Especially I would like to thank Dr. Tao Wu. As my colleague and husband, he offered great help in my experiments and supported me during my writing.

Many thanks are due to Dr. Jesus Valera for his assistance in the lab. Thanks also go to Stephen Gaffney and Yvonne Huddart for their help.

Last but not least, many thanks go to my parents and my parents-in-law for their continued support and encouragement. In particular, the understanding from my little sons Tony and Harry is appreciated.