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Kyoto University
Reliability and Validity of Gait Analysis by Android-Based Smartphone

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Abstract

Smartphones are very common devices in daily life that have a built-in tri-axial accelerometer. Similar to previously developed accelerometers, smartphones can be used to assess gait patterns. However, few gait analyses have been performed using smartphones, and their reliability and validity have not been evaluated yet. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the reliability and validity of a smartphone accelerometer. Thirty healthy young adults participated in this study. They walked 20 m at their preferred speeds, and their trunk accelerations were measured using a smartphone and a tri-axial accelerometer that was secured over the L3 spinous process. We developed a gait analysis application and installed it in the smartphone to measure the acceleration. After signal processing, we calculated the gait parameters of each measurement terminal: peak frequency (PF), root mean square (RMS), autocorrelation peak (AC), and coefficient of variance (CV) of the acceleration peak intervals. Remarkable consistency was observed in the test–retest reliability of all the gait parameter results obtained by the smartphone (p < 0.001). All the gait parameter results obtained by the smartphone showed statistically significant and considerable correlations with the same parameter results obtained by the tri-axial accelerometer (PF r = 0.99, RMS r = 0.89, AC r = 0.85, CV r = 0.82; p < 0.01). Our study indicates that the smartphone with gait analysis application used in this study has the capacity to quantify gait parameters with a degree of accuracy that is comparable to that of the tri-axial accelerometer.

Key words: smartphones, accelerometers, gait analysis, reliability, validity

Introduction

Walking is a natural form of movement, and most people walk every day to perform a variety of common tasks such as shopping and traveling. This most natural capability, however, is commonly influenced by major cerebral impairments,¹ severe musculoskeletal disorders,² and aging.³

The study of human movement, an area that has been actively researched for many years, has sought to identify and characterize gait patterns. For years, the quantitative analysis of gait patterns has been studied in gait laboratories that are equipped with many sophisticated measurement and analysis devices such as ground reaction force plates and three-dimensional kinematic motion analysis systems.⁴⁻⁵ However, the use of such facilities requires specialized personnel and laboratory environment. Moreover, most of the equipment is costly, and the data acquisition procedures are often cumbersome. In fact, for some time now, the use of facilities for gait analysis has been limited to field research and clinical settings.

More recently, wireless tri-axial accelerometers are being used widely for gait analysis because they are easy to use and inexpensive and they do not require a laboratory environment. Henriksen et al.⁶ found the reliability of trunk accelerometric gait analysis to be satisfactory, as it yielded high values for intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC) and low values for measurement error and coefficients of variation. By conducting a personal computer analysis of the raw acceleration data collected from a person’s gait, it is possible to quantify the variability, regularity, and rhythmic pattern of the person’s gait.⁷ Accelerometric gait analysis enables us to assess gait patterns from the perspective of gait stability, which is different from the previously used kinematic approach.

A current and quite recent trend has seen the deployment of accelerometers in off-the-shelf cellphone handsets such as smartphones, and studies of gait analysis and measurements of anticipatory postural adjustments have been attempted using a smartphone accelerometer.⁸⁻⁹ Lemoyne et al.⁹ performed gait analysis experiments using a smartphone that demonstrated the capacity to accurately quantify gait parameters with a sufficient level of consistency. Thus, smartphones may have the potential to assess gait patterns as competently as accelerometers. However, gait analysis using smartphones has not been explored widely, and its reliability and validity have not yet been evaluated. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to evaluate the reliability and validity of a smartphone accelerometer. In this study, gait parameters obtained by a
smartphone were compared with those obtained by a conventional accelerometer.

**Subjects and Methods**

**SUBJECTS**

Students at Kyoto University were recruited as subjects for this study. 17 men and 13 women volunteered, none of whom reported present or previous diseases or injuries associated with gait and/or balance impairments. Informed consent was obtained from all subjects prior to their participation, in accordance with the guidelines approved by the Kyoto University Graduate School of Medicine (approval number E1099) and the Declaration of Human Rights, Helsinki, 1975.

**TEST PROCEDURES**

The subjects were instructed to walk on a 25-m smooth, horizontal walkway, with a 2.5-m space at each end of the walkway for acceleration and deceleration. Thus, measurements were performed over a distance of 20 m. Subjects walked the length of this walkway three times at their preferred speeds, wearing shoes that did not influence their gait.

**APPARATUS**

We used two kinds of acceleration measurement terminals: One equipped with a smartphone (Xperia SO-01B, Android™ operating system version 2.1, 139 g, 119×60×13 mm, Sony Ericsson Co., Japan) and the other equipped with a tri-axial accelerometer (model WAA-006, 17 g, 38×39×10 mm, ATR-Promotions Co., Japan). The smartphone and the tri-axial accelerometer were taped together. With the method used by Moe-Nilssen and Helbostad, the terminals were secured over the L3 region, which is close to where the body’s center of mass is believed to be located during quiet standing. We developed a gait analysis application and installed it in the smartphone to measure the acceleration of the terminal. This application measured the acceleration data were converted by fast Fourier transformation. The PF detection procedure is shown in Figure 1. First, acceleration data were smoothed using a low-pass filter. Second, the PF candidate, was detected where the power spectrum at frequency was the highest peak in the frequency space to which the smoothed acceleration data were converted by fast Fourier transformation. Finally, PF was detected in the frequency space to which acceleration data were converted, where the power spectrum of PF had the highest peak around PF candidate.

**PROCEDURE FOR CALCULATION OF RMS**

The RMS of acceleration data was calculated as follows:

\[
RMS = \left( \frac{\int_{t_1}^{t_2} a(t)^2 dt}{t_2-t_1} \right)^{1/2}
\]

Here, let \( t_1 \) and \( t_2 \) denote the start time and the stop time of our gait analysis measurement.

**Fig. 1.** Peak frequency detection procedure. FFT, fast Fourier transform.
The autocorrelation function was calculated from the acceleration data. The criterion-related validity was determined by evaluating the correlation between the gait parameters obtained by the smartphone and the tri-axial accelerometer using Spearman’s correlation coefficient $r$. Data were recorded and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (Windows version 19.0). Statistical significance was considered at $p<0.01$.

**Results**

**SUBJECT CHARACTERISTICS**

The subjects were between 18 and 27 years old, with a mean age of $20.9 \pm 2.1$ years. The mean height and weight were $167.3 \pm 7.8$ cm and $60.4 \pm 7.7$ kg, respectively. The mean gait speed and cadence were $1.41 \pm 0.03$ m/s and $121.03 \pm 1.35$ steps/min, respectively.

**TEST–RETEST RELIABILITY**

Remarkable consistency was observed in the test–retest reliability of all the gait parameter results obtained by the smartphone ($p<0.001$): PF ICC$_{1,1} = 0.906$, 95% CI 0.83–0.95; RMS ICC$_{1,1} = 0.902$, 95% CI 0.82–0.95; AC ICC$_{1,1} = 0.752$, 95% CI 0.55–0.87; and CV ICC$_{1,1} = 0.777$, 95% CI 0.59–0.89.

**CRITERION-RELATED VALIDITY**

The acceleration waveforms of the smartphone and tri-axial accelerometer are shown in Figure 3. All gait parameter results obtained by the smartphone showed considerable and statistically significant correlations with those obtained by the tri-axial accelerometer ($p<0.01$) (Table 1).

**Discussion**

The results of this study indicate that the gait parameters obtained by the smartphone are reliable. Furthermore, the smartphone and the tri-axial accelerometer showed similar acceleration waveforms (Fig. 3). The parameters obtained by the smartphone were considerably correlated with those obtained by the tri-axial accelerometer. Thus, the smartphone with gait analysis application used in this study offers high test–retest reliability and has the capacity to quantify gait parameters as...
accurately as a tri-axial accelerometer. The gait parameters used in this study (PF, RMS, AC, and CV) can be used to assess gait patterns from different perspectives.\textsuperscript{10–14} The PF indicates the gait cycle. The RMS indicates the degree of gait instability; the higher the RMS, the lower is the degree of stability. The AC indicates the degree of gait balance; the higher AC, the greater is the degree of balance. The CV indicates the degree of gait variability. It is possible that accidental falls in elderly people could be predicted using these parameters.\textsuperscript{13,15} This indicates that smartphones have the potential to assess the risk of fall and can be used as a new tool for fall prevention in the future.

Smartphones offer several important advantages that are useful for a potential portable medical device.\textsuperscript{8,9} First, smartphones are now ubiquitous devices, and they are less expensive than the conventional accelerometers. Second, they can process and save large amounts of data and convey gait data via both wireless transmission and e-mail. This enables us to assess gait patterns from different perspectives.\textsuperscript{10–14} The PF indicates the gait cycle. The RMS indicates the degree of gait stability; the higher RMS, the lower is the degree of stability. The AC indicates the degree of gait balance; the higher AC, the greater is the degree of balance. The CV indicates the degree of gait variability. It is possible that accidental falls in elderly people could be predicted using these parameters.\textsuperscript{13,15} This indicates that smartphones have the potential to assess the risk of fall and can be used as a new tool for fall prevention in the future.

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disclosure of interest.

Table 1. Correlation Between All Gait Parameter Results Obtained by Smartphone and Tri-axial Accelerometer

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<tr>
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<th>SMARTPHONE</th>
<th>TRI-AXIAL ACCELEROMETER</th>
<th>SPEARMAN’S $r$</th>
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<tr>
<td>PF (Hz)</td>
<td>2.08 (1.82–2.21)</td>
<td>2.08 (1.82–2.21)</td>
<td>0.99*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMS (g)</td>
<td>10.86 (10.48–12.62)</td>
<td>11.23 (10.89–12.37)</td>
<td>0.89*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AC</td>
<td>0.81 (0.61–0.91)</td>
<td>0.87 (0.71–0.95)</td>
<td>0.82*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CV</td>
<td>0.092 (0.04–0.18)</td>
<td>0.064 (0.02–0.15)</td>
<td>0.85*</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Data are median (range) values.

* $p<0.01$ is statistically significant.

AC, autocorrelation peak; CV, coefficient of variance; PF, peak frequency; RMS, root mean square; Spearman’s $r$, Spearman’s correlation coefficient.

Acknowledgments

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Disclosure Statement

Tatsuaki Ito, Shinuyo Muto, and Tatsuya Ishihara are employees of NTT Cyber Solutions Laboratories. All the other authors have no conflict of interest.

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