**Measurement of in-vivo Patella Kinematics Using Motion Analysis and Ultrasound (MAUS)**

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**Abstract**—This paper describes a motion analysis ultrasound system (MAUS) designed for the in-vivo study of the kinematics of patellofemoral joints (PFJ) in both normal and replaced knees. This system utilises non-ionising radiation to effectively acquire kinematic data during weight-bearing activities. Validation studies on a phantom established that the measurement accuracy of the system was 1.43 mm. A clinical validation trial is included.

I. INTRODUCTION

Total knee replacement (TKR) is the standard treatment for end-stage osteoarthritis when conservative measures have failed. Despite excellent reported survivorship, the patellofemoral joint is the leading site for complications. It is possible that this might be due to abnormal kinematics. Whilst there is a wealth of data regarding sagittal plane kinematics, previous attempts to study coronal plane patellofemoral kinematics have suffered from methodological drawbacks. Studies involving the use of fluoroscopy, CT and MRI have encountered difficulties with the patella being obscured by the components and/or metal artefact [16] [18].

This paper describes a novel technique for measuring coronal plane kinematics by combining Motion Analysis with Ultrasound (MAUS). We also present our two pre-clinical studies on ascertaining the accuracy of the measurement technique.

II. PREVIOUS WORK

The kinematics of PFJ have been studied both in-vitro and in-vivo. The former relies on the use of cadaveric or post-mortem specimens [1] [13] [19]. During such kinematic assessments of the knee joint, the experimental procedure usually aims to represent simplified physiological loading in order to simulate realistic positions of the femur, tibia and patella. This has traditionally been achieved via the application of load through the quadriceps tendons following intra-medullary fixation of the femur and the tibia to a rig [11] [14].

In-vivo measurements of everyday activities such as squatting, normal gait and stepping activity provide more relevant physiological data [17], as pain is most frequently experienced during these common weight-bearing routines. However, acquiring in-vivo motion data is often complicated by the practicality of imaging the knee anatomy. Planar radiographs and 3D tomography (CT, MRI) can produce detailed images of the knee joint but they impose a high degree of restriction on the range of weight-bearing activities feasible within the confined space. Furthermore, both x-ray and magnetic resonance devices are inappropriate for subjects with prosthetic knee joint. Radiation dosage from x-ray based imaging techniques is also a concern for many clinical practices. Nonetheless, these imaging modalities have been shown to be successful in measuring PFJ kinematics in native knees [9] [15].

The use of ultrasound for assessing anatomical PFJ abnormalities is well established [2] [10] [12]. The advantages of ultrasound are that it does not involve ionising radiation and can be used to image the knee joint in the presence of metallic prostheses. Previous attempts have been made to quantify coronal plane patella movements during flexion and extension using ultrasound; however these were compromised by measurement errors of up to 6.4 mm (2×SD) due to issues with securing the probe to the leg via bracing [6] [16]. The remainder of this article will focus on discussing the methodology of our ultrasound based motion analysis and its validation.

III. METHODS

A. Overview

A multiple camera motion capture system was used to capture images of reflective markers mounted on subjects lower limbs and an ultrasound probe. A spatial mapping between the ultrasound image and the motion capture system was established. Therefore, the ultrasound could be used to determine the locations of the patella and bony landmarks on tibial and femoral segments, during a squat exercise.

The MAUS technique can be geometrically described by a number of coordinate systems in which anatomical landmarks are measured (see Figure 1). Gait was measured in reference to the motion system; whereas the bony landmarks were measured in-vivo in the ultrasound image coordinate system. It is often more desirable to describe measurements in a common coordinate system referred to as the global coordinate system. Since both gait and the ultrasound probe were tracked in the VICON coordinate system, it was designated as the global coordinate frame. The ultimate aim of the system is to transform the ultrasound measurement into the global space, thus unify the gait data with the in-vivo landmark data.

B. Calibration and Tracking of Ultrasound Probe

Ultrasound probe calibration is a process in which the unknown transformation from the image space to the global
The accuracy of the measured kinematic data is influenced by the following factors:

1) Systemic accuracy of the motion capture system: The mean results across all sessions of data collection during was 0.28 mm (SD=0.05 mm). The samples were...
obtained from each sensor using a calibration wand with known geometric configuration (see Table I).

2) Algorithmic accuracy of the calibration process: The residual error was calculated based on the RMS distances between the computed fiducial markers and their actual positions in the global coordinate system (see Table II). From sixteen independent calibration trials, the overall error was 1.428 mm.

3) Observer measurement error: Two clinicians who were familiar with the operation of ultrasound scanner were recruited as two independent observers. Each observer repeated measurements of the position of 7 anatomical landmarks, in four different positions on four subjects (see Figure 5). Observers using the ultrasound system were able to produce more accurate and consistent kinematic measurements compared to methods based on clamps and skin-markers (see Figure 6).

**B. Pre-clinical Validation**

The main motivation of implementing this system was to examine the coronal plane PFJ kinematics of both native and replaced knees. The MAUS technique was validated on a cohort of 11 subjects including native and replaced knees. Each subject performed a squatting exercise during the data collection session. The kinematics were analysed at seven discrete flexion angles at full extension, 20, 30, 45, 60 and 90. Our initial observations confirmed the difference in kinematic pattern in native and replaced knees (see Figure 7).
This study has demonstrated the implementation and application of an ultrasound based motion analysis technique for in-vivo measuring the motion of the patella in relation to distal femur and proximal tibia. We specifically devised a calibration method using reflective fiducial markers to facilitate the integration with existing motion capture system. The system has enabled clinicians to study the kinematics of PFJ in patients with native and replaced knees. The 3D reconstruction of ultrasound-scanned landmarks is performed as an offline process. In our future work, this reconstruction algorithm can be systematically integrated with the VICON software system. The integration can lead to a further improvement in the temporal alignment of gait and ultrasound data.

**V. CONCLUSION**

Currently the reconstruction of ultrasound-scanned landmarks is performed as an offline process. In our future work, this reconstruction algorithm can be systematically integrated with the VICON software system. The integration can lead to a further improvement in the temporal alignment of gait and ultrasound data.

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**REFERENCES**


