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"Thrusts at the resonant frequency create more spinal motion with less force."
Keller & Colloca, J Biomechanics, 2007
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"EMG and nerve responses are related to thrust speed and frequency."
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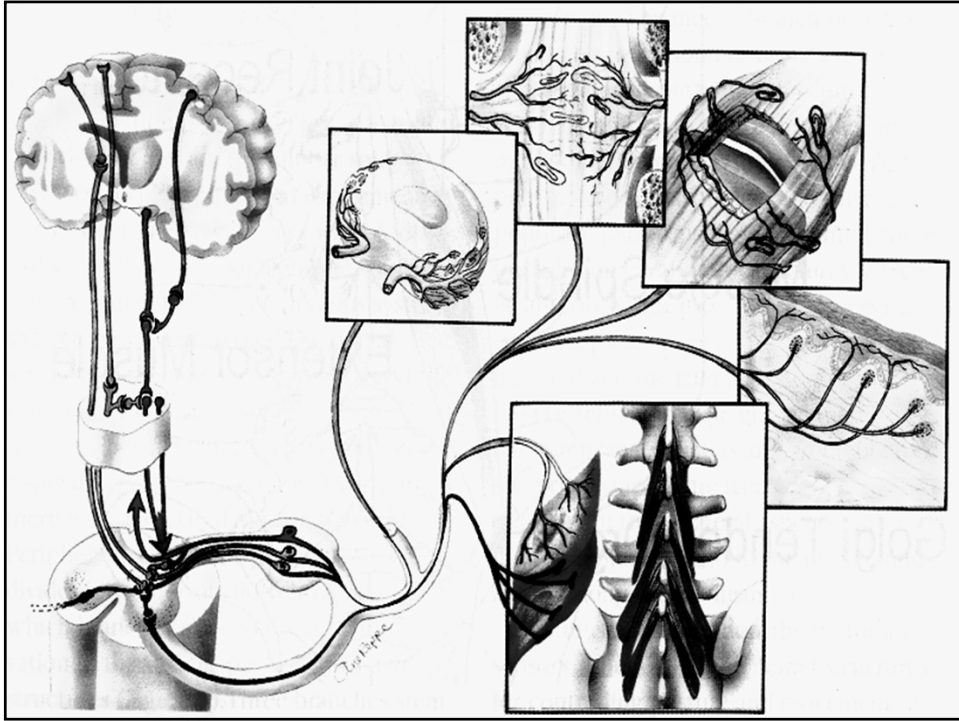
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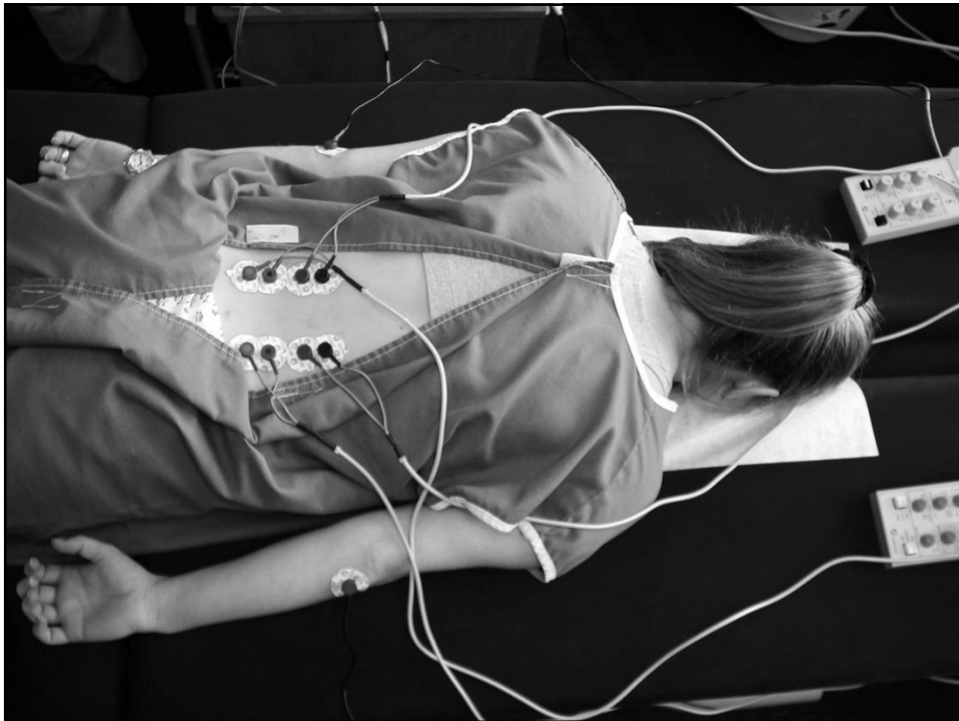
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SPINE Volume 26, Number 10, pp 1117-1124
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Electromyographic Reflex Responses to Mechanical Force, Manually Assisted Spinal Manipulative Therapy

Christopher J. Colloca, DC,* and Tony S. Keller, PhD†

Study Design. Surface electromyographic reflex responses associated with mechanical force, manually assisted (MFMA) spinal manipulative therapy were analyzed in this prospective clinical investigation of 20 consecutive patients with low back pain.

Objectives. To characterize and determine the magnitude of electromyographic reflex responses in human paraspinal muscles during high loading rate mechanical force, manually assisted spinal manipulative therapy of the thoracolumbar spine and sacroiliac joints.

Summary of Background Data. Spinal manipulative therapy has been investigated for its effectiveness in the treatment of patients with low back pain, but its physiologic mechanisms are not well understood. Noteworthy is the fact that spinal manipulative therapy has been demonstrated to produce consistent reflex responses in the back musculature; however, no study has examined the extent of reflex responses in patients with low back pain.

Methods. Twenty patients (10 male and 10 female, mean age 43.0 years) underwent standard physical examination on presentation to an outpatient chiropractic clinic. After repeated isometric trunk extension strength tests, short duration (~5 msec), localized posterolateral manipulative thrusts were delivered to the sacroiliac joints, and L5, L4, L2, T12, and T8 spinous processes and transverse processes. Surface, linear-enveloped electromyographic (sEMG) recordings were obtained from electrodes located bilaterally over the L5 and L3 erector spinae musculature. Force-time and sEMG time histories were recorded simultaneously to quantify the association between spinal manipulative therapy mechanical and electromyographic response. A total of 1600 sEMG recordings were analyzed from 20 spinal manipulative therapy treatments, and comparisons were made between segmental level, segmental contact point (spinous vs. transverse processes), and magnitude of the reflex response (peak-peak [p-p] ratio and relative mean sEMG). Positive sEMG responses were defined as >2.5 p-p baseline sEMG output (>3.5% relative mean sEMG output). SEMG threshold was further assessed for correlation of patient self-reported pain and disability.

Results. Consistent, but relatively localized, reflex responses occurred in response to the localized, brief duration MFMA thrusts delivered to the thoracolumbar spine and SI joints. The time to peak tension (sEMG magnitude) ranged from 50 to 200 msec, and the reflex response times ranged from 2 to 4 msec, the latter consistent with intraspinal conduction times. Overall, the 20 treatments produced systematic and significantly different L5 and L3 sEMG responses, particularly for thrusts delivered to the lumbosacral spine. Thrusts applied over the transverse processes produced more positive sEMG responses (25.4%) in comparison with thrusts applied over the spinous processes (20.6%). Left side thrusts and right side thrusts over the transverse processes elicited positive contralateral L5 and L3 sEMG responses. When the data were examined across both treatment level and electrode site (L5 or L3, L or R), 96% of patients showed positive sEMG response to MFMA thrusts. Patients with frequent to constant low back pain symptoms tended to have a more marked sEMG response in comparison with patients with occasional to intermittent low back pain.

Conclusions. This is the first study demonstrating neuromuscular reflex response associated with MFMA spinal manipulative therapy in patients with low back pain. Noteworthy was the finding that such mechanical stimulation of both the paraspinal musculature (transverse processes) and spinous processes produced consistent, generally localized sEMG responses. Identification of neuromuscular characteristics, together with a comprehensive assessment of patient clinical status, may provide for clarification of the significance of spinal manipulative therapy in eliciting putative conservative therapeutic benefits in patients with pain of musculoskeletal origin. [Key words: biomechanics, electromyography, low back pain, manipulation-chiropractic, reflex responses, spine-thoracolumbar] Spine 2001;26:1117-1124

Spinal manipulative therapy (SMT) is a commonly used conservative treatment shown effective in studies of low back pain (LBP) treatment.^{1,19,21,22} Although beneficial effects of SMT have been observed, considerable controversy exists regarding the precise nature of its therapeutic effects. Anecdotal evidence suggests that neuromuscular reflex responses may have a role in positive benefits derived from SMT, but little work has been done to date investigating physiologic responses.¹¹

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**BIOMECHANICAL AND NEUROPHYSIOLOGICAL RESPONSES
TO SPINAL MANIPULATION IN PATIENTS WITH LUMBAR
RADICULOPATHY**

Christopher J. Colloca, DC,^a Tony S. Keller, PhD,^b and Robert Gunzburg, MD, PhD^c

ABSTRACT

Objective: The purpose of this study was to quantify in vivo vertebral motions and neurophysiological responses during spinal manipulation.

Methods: Nine patients undergoing lumbar decompression surgery participated in this study. Spinal manipulative thrusts (SMTs) (~5 ms; 30 N [Sham], 88 N, 117 N, and 150 N [max]) were administered to lumbar spine facet joints (FJs) and spinous processes (SPs) adjacent to an intraosseous pin with an attached triaxial accelerometer and bipolar electrodes cradled around the S1 spinal nerve roots. Peak baseline amplitude compound action potential (CAP) response and peak-peak amplitude axial (AX), posterior-anterior (PA), and medial-lateral (ML) acceleration time and displacement time responses were computed for each SMT. Within-subject statistical analyses of the effects of contact point and force magnitude on vertebral displacements and CAP responses were performed.

Results: SMTs (≥ 88 N) resulted in significantly greater peak-to-peak ML, PA, and AX vertebral displacements compared with sham thrusts ($P < .002$). SMTs delivered to the FJs resulted in approximately 3-fold greater ML motions compared with SPs ($P < .001$). SMTs over the SPs resulted in significantly greater AX displacements compared with SMTs applied to the FJs ($P < .05$). Seventy-five percent of SMTs resulted in positive CAP responses with a mean latency of 12.0 ms. Collectively, the magnitude of the CAP responses was significantly greater for max setting SMTs compared with sham ($P < .01$).

Conclusions: Impulsive SMTs in human subjects were found to stimulate spinal nerve root responses that were temporally related to the onset of vertebral motion. Further work, including examination of the frequency and force duration dependency of SMT, is necessary to elucidate the clinical relevance of enhanced or absent CAP responses in patients. (*J Manipulative Physiol Ther* 2004;27:1-15)

Key Indexing Terms: Chiropractic Manipulation; Vertebral Motion; Neurophysiology

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**NEUROMECHANICAL CHARACTERIZATION OF IN VIVO
LUMBAR SPINAL MANIPULATION. PART I. VERTEBRAL
MOTION**

Tony S. Keller, PhD,^a Christopher J. Colloca, DC,^b and Robert Gunzburg, MD, PhD^c

ABSTRACT

Objective: To quantify in vivo spinal motions and coupling patterns occurring in human subjects in response to mechanical force, manually assisted, short-lever spinal manipulative thrusts (SMTs) applied to varying vertebral contact points and utilizing various excursion (force) settings.

Methods: Triaxial accelerometers were attached to intraosseous pins rigidly fixed to the L1, L3, or L4 lumbar spinous process of 4 patients (2 male, 2 female) undergoing lumbar decompressive surgery. Lumbar spine acceleration responses were recorded during the application of 14 externally applied posteroanterior (PA) impulsive SMTs (4 force settings and 3 contact points) in each of the 4 subjects. Displacement time responses in the PA, axial (AX), and medial-lateral (ML) axes were obtained, as were intervertebral (L3-4) motion responses in 1 subject. Statistical analysis of the effects of facet joint (FJ) contact point and force magnitude on peak-to-peak displacements was performed. Motion coupling between the 3 coordinate axes of the vertebrae was examined using a least squares linear regression.

Results: SMT forces ranged from 30 N (lowest setting) to 150 N (maximum setting). Peak-to-peak ML, PA, and AX vertebral displacements increased significantly with increasing applied force. For thrusts delivered over the FJs, pronounced coupling was observed between all axes (AX-ML, AX-PA, PA-ML) (linear regression, $R^2 = 0.35-0.52$, $P < .001$), whereas only the AX and PA axes showed a significant degree of coupling for thrusts delivered to the spinous processes (SPs) (linear regression, $R^2 = 0.82$, $P < .001$). The ML and PA motion responses were significantly ($P < .05$) greater than the AX response for all SMT force settings. PA vertebral displacements decreased significantly ($P < .05$) when the FJ contact point was caudal to the pin compared with FJ contact cranial to the pin. FJ contact at the level of the pin produced significantly greater ML vertebral displacements in comparison with contact above and below the pin. SMTs over the spinous processes produced significantly ($P < .05$) greater PA and AX displacements in comparison with ML displacements. The combined ML, PA, and AX peak-to-peak displacements for the 4 force settings and 2 contact points ranged from 0.15 to 0.66 mm, 0.15 to 0.81 mm, and 0.07 to 0.45 mm, respectively. Intervertebral motions were of similar amplitude as the vertebral motions.

Conclusions: In vivo kinematic measurements of the lumbar spine during the application of SMTs over the FJs and SPs corroborate previous spinous process measurements in human subjects. Our findings demonstrate that PA, ML, and AX spinal motions are coupled and dependent on applied force and contact point. (*J Manipulative Physiol Ther* 2003;26:567-78)

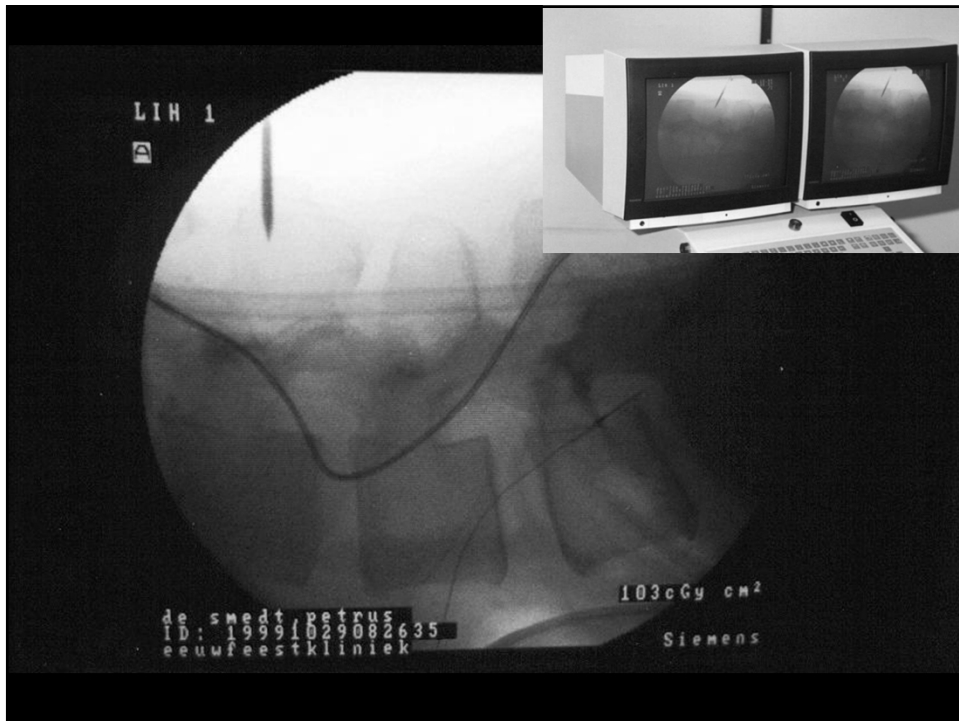
Key Indexing Terms: Acceleration; Biomechanics; Chiropractic; Kinematics; Lumbar Spine; Manipulation

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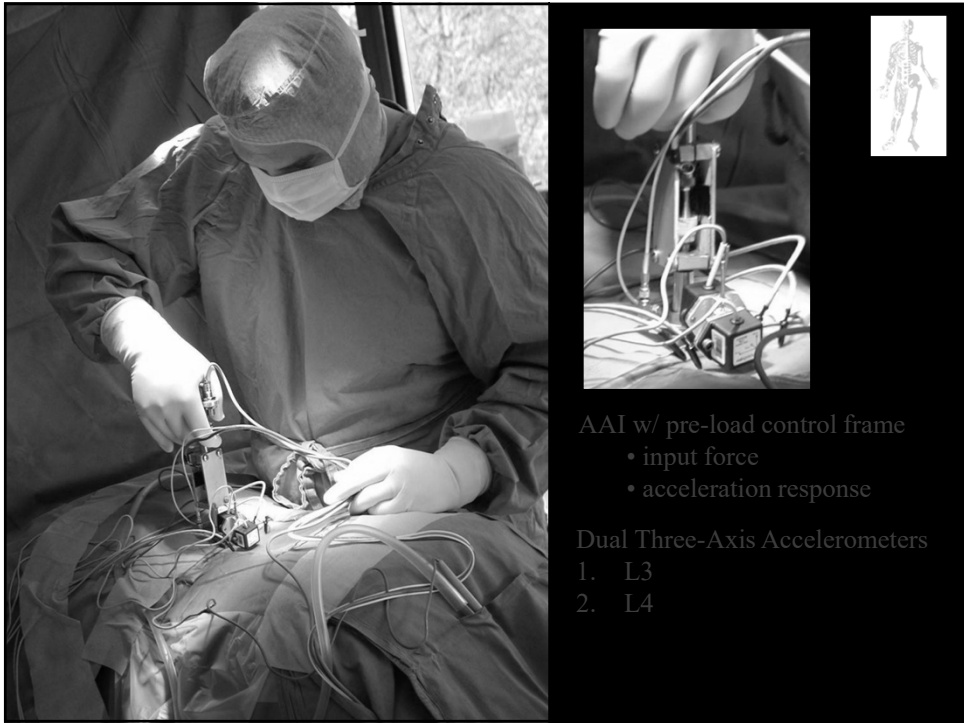
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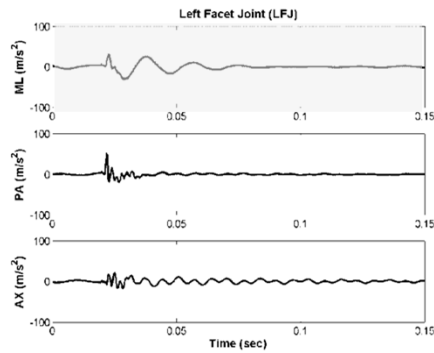
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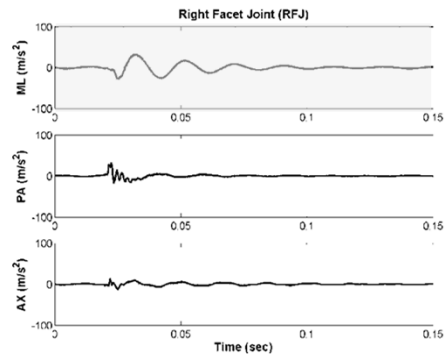
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In Vivo Human Trials Tri-axial Accelerometer Measurements

Application to Left Facet



Application to Right Facet



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Clinical Biomechanics 17 (2002) 185–196

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Force-deformation response of the lumbar spine: a sagittal plane model of posteroanterior manipulation and mobilization

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Received 9 January 2001; accepted 10 January 2001

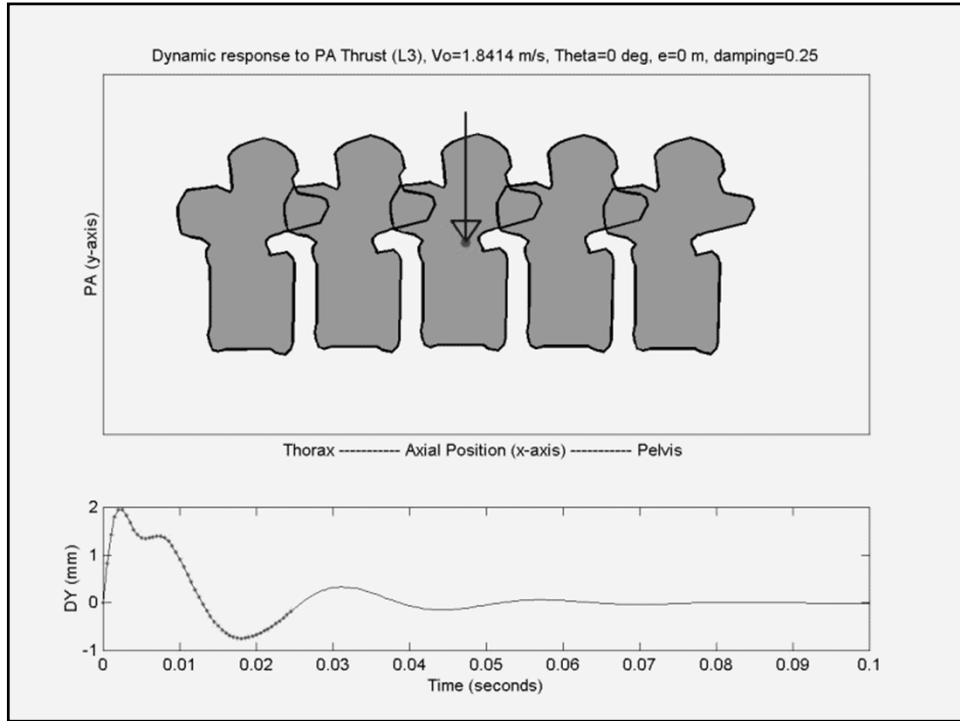
Relevance

This study assists clinicians to understand the biomechanics of posteroanterior forces applied to the lumbar spine of prone-lying subjects. Of particular clinical relevance is the finding that greater spinal mobility is possible by targeting specific load-time histories. © 2002 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

Keywords: Biomechanics; Dynamic simulation; Lumbar spine; Manipulation; Model; Natural frequency; Rigid body; Spine; Vibration

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Chiropractic & Osteopathy



Research

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Increased multiaxial lumbar motion responses during multiple-impulse mechanical force manually assisted spinal manipulation

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Published: 06 April 2006

Received: 01 November 2005

Chiropractic & Osteopathy 2006, 14:6 doi:10.1186/1746-1340-14-6

Accepted: 06 April 2006

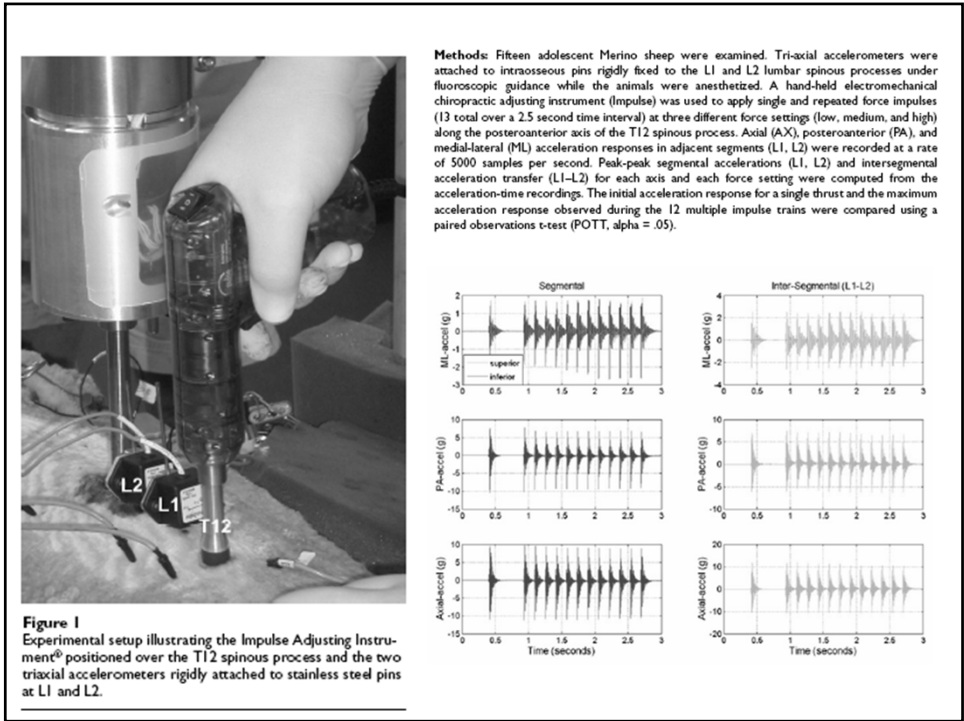
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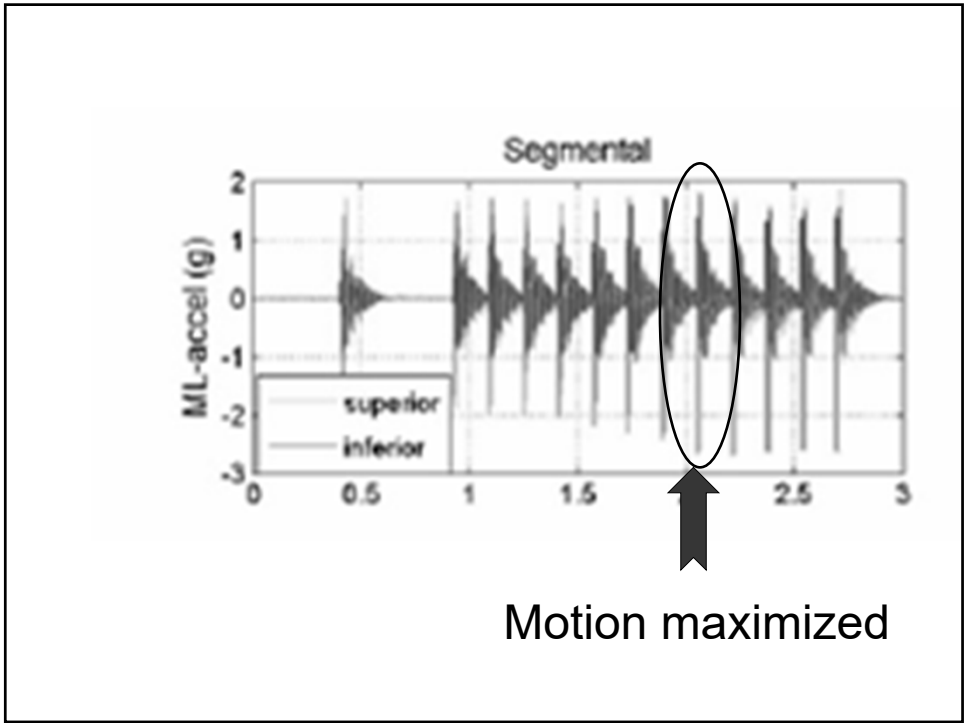
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Validation of a Noninvasive Dynamic Spinal Stiffness Assessment Methodology in an Animal Model of Intervertebral Disc Degeneration

Christopher J. Colloca, DC,* Tony S. Keller, PhD,† Robert J. Moore, PhD,‡
Deed E. Harrison, DC,§ and Robert Gunzburg, MD, PhD¶



Study Design. An experimental *in vivo* ovine model of intervertebral disc degeneration was used to quantify the dynamic motion response of the lumbar spine.

Objective. The purpose of this study was to: (1) compare invasively measured lumbar vertebral bone acceleration responses to noninvasive displacement responses, and (2) determine the effects of a single level degenerative intervertebral disc lesion on these responses.

Summary of Background Data. Biomechanical techniques have been established to quantify vertebral motion responses, yet their invasiveness limits their use in a clinical setting.

Methods. Twenty-five Merino sheep were examined; 15 with surgically induced disc degeneration at L1-L2 and 10 controls. Triaxial accelerometers were rigidly fixed to the L1 and L2 spinous processes and dorsoventral (DV) mechanical excitation (20–80 N, 100 milliseconds) was applied to L3 using a spinal dynamometer. Peak force and displacement and peak-peak acceleration responses were computed for each trial and a least squares regression analysis assessed the correlation between L3 displacement and adjacent (L2) segment acceleration responses. An analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was performed to test the homogeneity of slopes derived from the regression analysis and to assess the mean differences.

Results. A significant, positive, linear correlation was found between the DV displacement of L3 and the DV acceleration measured at L2 for both normal ($R^2 = 0.482$, $P < 0.001$) and degenerated disc groups ($R^2 = 0.831$, $P < 0.001$). The L3 DV displacement was significantly lower (ANCOVA, $P < 0.001$) for the degenerated group (mean: 10.39 mm) in comparison to the normal group (mean: 9.07 mm). Mean peak-peak L2-L1 DV acceleration transfer was also significantly reduced from 12.40 ms^{-2} to 5.50 ms^{-2} in the degenerated animal group (ANCOVA, $P < 0.001$).

Conclusion. The findings indicate that noninvasive displacement measurements of the prone-lying animal can be used to estimate the segmental and intersegmental motions in both normal and pathologic spines.

Key words: biomechanics, disc degeneration, lumbar spine, stiffness. *Spine* 2009;34:1900-1905

Knowledge of spine segment, or functional spinal unit (FSU), motion patterns (kinematics), and forces (kinetics) is of importance in understanding the response of the spine to externally applied loads. Such biomechanical analyses of the spine play an important role in providing objective data to better understand the biomechanical variables involved in spinal disorders and musculoskeletal pain. In principle, a dysfunctional or unstable FSU may exhibit increased displacement or decreased stiffness, compared to adjacent segments.¹ Conversely, lower lumbar vertebrae²⁻³ or segments with degenerated discs^{4,5} display increased stiffness. Consequently, the displacement of the FSU and the resistance of spinal tissues to applied forces during assessments or manual treatments may be potentially very useful in spinal diagnosis and for establishing effective treatment protocols.

Physicians, clinicians, and therapists assess the motion of the human spine in an attempt to assess the functional status of underlying anatomy during physical examination of patients with musculoskeletal pain. Clinicians have used mobilization/palpation procedures to manually apply posterior/anterior (PA) forces over various spinal segments to assess the perceived tissue resistance and pain provocation.

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