Wii Balance Board
Center of Pressure Software

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October 26, 2011

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1. Abstract

The quality of life is greatly affected by individuals suffering from balance disorders. Balance disorders can result from conditions such as neurodegeneration, Parkinson's disease, multiple Sclerosis and more. However, rehabilitation measures can be taken to ease the difficulty of daily activities of suffering from a balance disorder.

Rehabilitation of balance disorders utilize the center of pressure data to determine if the individual is balanced. Current methods in measuring the center of pressure are extremely expensive and inconvenient. Examples include force plates and the BEEP board. However, the Wii Balance Board has the potential to become a cheap, easily accessible solution for rehabilitation. The goal of this design project is to construct an interface to a computer and the Wii Balance Board. The final design will include the Wii Balance Board connected to a computer via Matlab programming and Bluetooth technology. Visual and/or audio feedback will inform the individual if he/she is off-balanced. This will allow rehabilitation in a cheap and easy manner for individuals suffering from balance disorders.

2. Background

2.1 Balancing

Balancing the human body, in both static and dynamic environments, is achieved through collaboration between the body's visual, vestibular, and proprioceptive systems. The visual system is a component of the central nervous system that processes visual details and creates a sense of visual perception, in addition to carrying out non-image forming photoresponse functions [1]. Meanwhile, the vestibular system is a sensory system that acts as the leading contributor to the sense of balance and spacial orientation of the body. These physiological phenomena are a result of small fluid or jelly filled organs within the vestibular system; the semicircular canals which detect the direction and speed of rotation of the head, as well as the utricle and saccule which respond to linear acceleration of the body, as shown in Fig. 1. [2]. Finally, proprioception can be described as sense of relative position of different body parts and the strength of effort required to make a desired movement [4]. This sense can be broken down into two main categories: ~~;~~conscious proprioception, localized to the posterior column-medial lemniscus pathway in the cerebrum, and unconscious proprioception, localized to the dorsal spinocerebellar tract of the cerebellum [5].

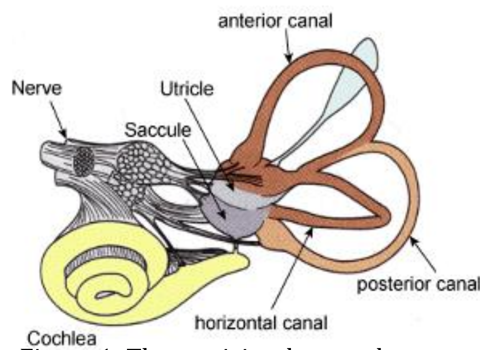

Figure 1: The semicircular canals (shown in brown), the utricle, and saccule of the Vestibule. [3]

2.2 Balance Disorders

Furthermore, it is the neurological processing and comparison between the afferent signals from all three of these unique systems that manifest in the correct balance and postural stability of the whole body. Much alike everything else belonging to the human body, disruption to any of these systems, or related central or peripheral nervous system constituents, can cause balance disorders that have very serious effects on the effected person's quality of life. Balance disorders can impair standing balance, increase the risk of falling, and significantly reduce aforementioned person's ability to perform simple day to day tasks like bathing, cooking, or getting dressed [6]. Further complications like vertigo, dizziness, confusion, disorientation, oscillopsia, nausea, blurred vision, lightheadedness, faintness, and/or fatigue commonly occur in patients affected by a balance disorder [2]. Furthermore, there are many potential causes for balance disorders; neurodegeneration related to age, Parkinson's disease, or multiple Sclerosis, neurotrama caused by stroke or traumatic brain injury, spinal cord injury, neurodevelopement disorders like spinocerebellar ataxia, neurostructural and circulatory problems, some autoimmune diseases, and even some infections. A recent survey provides an example of the startling prevalence and severity of this cause-effect relationship; 44% of patients who had suffered a stroke reported having limitations in most, if not all, activities of daily living which require the coordinated efforts of posture, head and limb control strategies [4].Taking into account that Stroke is the number one leading cause of disease burden[4], it becomes clear how comprehensive and widespread the effects, and even the causes, of balance disorders are in the world.

2.3 Diagnostic and Rehabilitative Stages of Balance Disorders

Related to biomedical engineering, there are various technologies proven efficacious in both the diagnostic and rehabilitative stages of coping with balance disorders. For example, only 10, 20 minute sessions of center of posture rehabilitation exercises on a Nintendo Wii Balance Board over a 4 week period produced an 11% mean improvement in Tinetti's Falls Efficacy Scale post-training compared to pre-training, reflecting greater confidence in the ability to perform functional tasks [7]. Similarly, most important factor in measuring the severity of a person's imbalance, using only commercially available methods, is a person's center of posture. For these purposes, the center of pressure is the resultant force on a force measuring device caused by the sum of a pressure field that causes no moment about that point i.e. the integrated vectorial pressure field. Upon analysis, this value can give detailed and quantifiable information about the user's postural stability and the associated sensory-motor behaviors. Many systems that measure center of pressure are available on the market today and the NeuroCom® Balance Manager - Dynamic Posturography System is often seen as an industry standard among these systems.

2.4 Limitations in Present Center of Pressure Measurement Systems

However, there are currently many limitations to today's center of posture measurement systems. They are extremely expensive – ranging from $75,000 to $115,000 according to the clients – and are often exclusively located in large scale rehabilitation and healthcare centers. Additionally, these diagnostic tools have such busy schedules that they are only available to small to medium size healthcare providers by physician referral. Summing all of these logistical problems up, these center of posture measurement devices are geographically, chronologically, and fiscally difficult to acquire and use, both as a healthcare provider and as a patient.

Additionally, these powerful and accurate systems do not provide real-time center of pressure information to the user. In any kind of postural stability and balance training, instantaneous real-time feedback is an invaluable therapeutic tool. This is because it allows patients to self-evaluate and make deliberate efforts to correct postural deficits in real time. In cases where neurotrama or balance disorders could be permanent, it is essential to allow these patients an opportunity to learn to reorient themselves strictly through external environmental feedback, independent of any vestibular or proprioceptive cues.

3. Motivation

It is proven through rigorous clinical testing that center of posture rehabilitation systems are immensely beneficial to patient's short and long-term level of functioning with regards to balance disorders. Conversely, the affordability, availability, and complexity of these tools very greatly reduce the ability of these systems to be accessible to the optimal number of people who could benefit from them. Moreover, the lack of continuous real-time feedback does not give patients the ability to learn from the systems audiovisual outputs to reorient themselves to upright standing, balanced positions – a task their brains cannot accomplish independently due to balancing disorders. It is the culmination of these negative properties of current postural rehabilitative technology that motivates us to design a more utilitarian, affordable, simple to use, and transportable neurorehabilitative device geared specifically towards balance disorder rehabilitation and also includes audiovisual feedback to the user. In conclusion, a device that challenges the user's ability to balance, illicits a physical response beginning at a static level, removes the limiting traits of current center of posture measurement systems, and could be made available for use at home at a patients convenience would revolutionize the field of balance disorder rehabilitation.

4. Current Methods

4.1 Force Plates

Patients with balance disorders currently have to travel to small to medium-sized healthcare facilities to have access to a diagnostic force plate system. These large and high-tech systems do not allow for instant feedback of center of position. Real-time feedback is essential for therapeutic progress and recovery. These systems cost between $4,000-$80,000 which is unattainable for the average patient [8].

4.2 *NeuroCom*

The NeuroCom provides assessment and rehabilitation of balance and posture stability through dynamic tests that resemble daily life situations. There are multiple products NeroCom offers to assess a variety of disabilities. It tests visual stimulus, translation and rotation of force plate, blindfolded vs. visual displays, squatting and standing on one leg, and combinations of the previous tests. They also supply games that force a patient to tilt there body back and forth to interact with the game. NeuroCom provides a

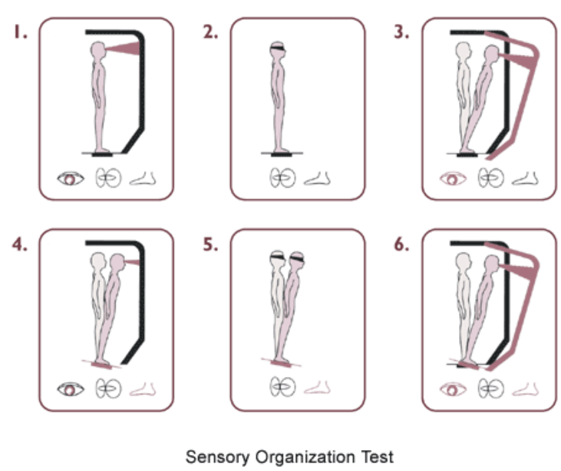

Figure 2: A description of the multiple tests that patients undergo while using the NeuroCom product. [9]

great variety of options for rehabilitation, but lacks the convenience of practicing in your own home. The cost of one of the products is unaffordable to an average user.

5. Problem Statement

Currently, there is no inexpensive and widely accessible device that can measure the center of pressure for balance and postural rehabilitation training. Our goal is to design a software interface that receives information from the Wii Balance Board which will incorporate immediate auditory and visual feedback via headphones and a television screen.

5.1 Product Design Specifications

Our client has given us some specific requirements that they want us to follow in designing a rehabilitation tool for people of gait and posture disabilities. Our product must fit a few physical and operational characteristics. The device must withstand daily wear and tear in multiple home envirnments while lasting for up to five years. It must be able to hold 150 kg of vertical pressure while weighing less than 18 kg. The device must have an accuracy that is nearly equivalent to a clinical grade force plate. Our design must also follow some production and miscellaneous requirements. Our team is responsible for production of one finished product costing under $600 total. The device must capture signals of 40 Hz and to be low pass filtered that has a cut-off frequency between 4-12 Hz. The input should also be adjustable to +/- 10% increments. Lastly, the final product must be not be copying any current patents and must be easy and enjoyable for use by the patient.

5.2 Design Alternatives

The design requires multiple components including an instrument to measure the center of pressure or balance, a feedback system, and, depending on the instrument, a computer to interpret and record feedback. The focus of the brainstorm was to generate possible instruments that would be affordable, accurate and portable. After selection of the device then the other design components can be considered. There were three viable methods considered: a laboratory grade force plate, a Nintendo Wii Balance Board, and the Rolyan© BEEP(Balance Enhancement Exercise Program) Board.

5.2.1 Laboratory Grade Force Plate

Force plates are used for biomechanical purposes to study gait, balance, and locomotion because they can determine the center of pressure of an object. Figure 3 displays that force plates measure shear force components (Fx and Fy), a vertical force component (Fz) and the three moments corresponding to the axes. From these inputs the center of pressure can be calculated. The measurements are done by four transducers, either strain gage or piezoelectric transducers, which as placed in the pedestals of the platform as seen in figure 4.

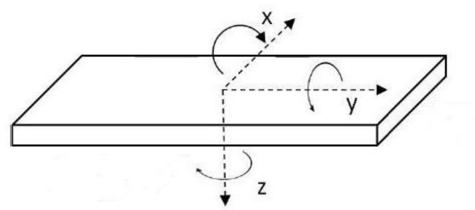

Figure 3: A force plate with the forces and moments it measures. [10]

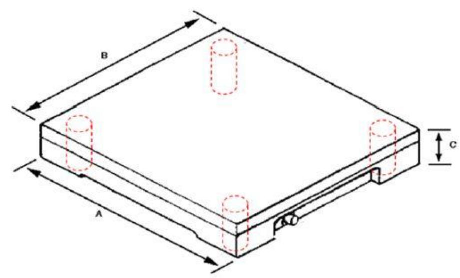

Figure 4: The dorsal side of a Wii Board displays the four legs each with a transducer. [12]

On average forces plates are 45 by 50 cm but can be purchased in variety of sizes. These plates may be portable or mounted models. When selecting a force plate for balance, to collect the best results a plate with the lowest capacity (meaning the highest sensitivity) should be used because the vertical force would not exceed body weight and the changes in the horizontal forces are small. This alternative would require an amplifier and computer with software to receive data. [11]

5.2.2 Nintendo Wii Balance Board

Nintendo released the Wii Balance Board in 2007 as an accessory to the Wii console. Now it is being used an instrumental tool in many research projects because of its affordability and accuracy. [12]The board operates similarly to a force plate by containing four transducers (strain gages) in each of the four cylindrical legs that can be seen in figure 5 that assess force

Figure 5: A force plate displayed where the four pedestals are with the transducers in them in. [10]

Figure 6: The Nintendo Wii Balance Board is shaped similar to a bathroom scale and is able to measure center of pressure. [12]

distribution and the resultant movements in COP.

The board is rectangular in shape as seen in figure 6 and weighs 3.5 kilograms. It is capable of supporting up to 150 kg and is powered by four AA batteries allowing for 60 hours of operation. The board communicates using Bluetooth technology and is able to send information back at 60 signals per second. This alternative would require a computer with a built in Bluetooth connection or the addition of a Dongle to receive the feedback as well as a software program to run calculations. [13]

5.2.3 Rolyan® BEEP(Balance Enhancement Exercise Program) Board

The BEEP Board was designed to be used at home for balance rehabilitation. It is designed as a first class lever where an unbalance weight distribution will cause the platform to tilt as seen in figure 7 An audible beep signals when weight shifts away from center. The board has a height of 6.35 cm and measures 40.64 x 63.5 cm. The board has a maximum 300-lb. weight capacity. With this alternative, no exact measure of the center of location can be determined. The user does receive physical response related to their balance unlike the force plates. Another drawback is that it is a primary step function feedback system. Minute changes in performance would not be detected with this data. [14]

Figure 7: The BEEP Board is design after a first class lever where any shift in weight would produce an audible signal. [13]

5.3 Design Matrix

The traditional method of a force plate was compared to a Nintendo Wii Balance Board and a Rolyan® BEEP Board. To evaluate these options the following categories were considered: price, accuracy, mobility, scientific literature, accessibility, and stability/ergonomics. The full evaluation of designs is seen in table 1.

	Weight of Category	Wii Board	Clinical Grade	Rolyan® BEEP Board
Price	0.25	10	1	9
Accuracy	0.2	8.5	10	1
Mobility	0.2	9	2	10
Scientific Literature	0.15	10	10	2
Accessibility	0.1	10	3.5	8
Stability/Ergonomics	0.1	8	9	7
Total Points Awarded	10	9.3	5.4	6.25

Table 1 : The three design alternatives were evaluated and given the ratings above.

Price has the highest significance because that is the main part of the design problem. Systems have been designed with forces plates (See NeuroCam) that meets the needs of the clients' rehabilitation desires, but the price is the key limiting factor. Force plates range in price from $4,000 to $80,000. [11] A force plate to adequately meet the design needs has a cost of $20,000, thus giving the clinical grade force the lowest possible score when considering the design matrix. The Wii Balance Board can be found at most retail stores for $99.99 which is only a fraction of the price of a force plate. Retailers sell the Wii Balance Board as a bundle package including the Wii Fit Game. [12] The BEEP Board costs $185.00. [14]

Accuracy was also an influential factor. The device must be able to give accurate data in order to determine if the user center of pressure is balanced. The force plate exceeds these requirements since it sets the standard for all center of pressure devices and was awarded full points for this category. According to Clark and Bryant's work on testing the validity and reliability of the Wii Balance Board the board had excellent center of pressure path length test-retest reliability within device when testing subjects on a series of single and doubled leg standing tests. [15] BEEP Board only indicates when the user's center of pressure is not balanced. It does this test well, but it is unable to give more in depth information.

Mobility needed to be taken heavily under consideration since the clients' future goals are to have the devices in participants' homes to allow for daily exercise. Force plates can either come in mounted or portable models. Wii Balance Boards were designed to be mobile and useable on most surfaces. It weighs 3.5 kg and comes with stabilizing covers to be place over the legs. [12] The BEEP Board was also designed to be portable and weighs 2.2 kg. [14]

Scientific literature influences the decision because of the time and resource limitation. The clients expressed interest in building off and modifying previously completed work. Both the force plate and the Wii Balance Board have had extensive amounts of research complied about the devices and are publicly available. Minimal scientific research has been done with the BEEP Board since it is a very basic form of feedback.

Accessibility describes how easily these devices can be available. The Wii Balance Board can be purchased at any retail store, therefore giving it the highest accessibility. Both the force plate and the BEEP Board must be purchased through distribution companies. Force plates also often are customized and made when order is placed which makes them less readily available.

Stability and ergonomics were coupled into the same criteria group. The device will be used by participants whom have balance impairments. It must be able to withstand the force from a human standing and stepping on to the board as well has swaying movements. The Wii Board and the force plate are flat and do not move which is less hazardous. The force plate is capable of handling a larger load than the Wii Board. The motion from the level in the BEEP Board makes it less stable than the stationary boards.

5.4 Final Design

The final design will utilize the Wii Balance Board to detect the center of pressure. An interface programmed by Matlab will connect the balance board to the computer and write the programs for feedback. Emphasis is placed on creation of a friendly interface for the users.

5.5 *Estimated Budget*

The materials needed for the design project include a computer, computer programming software and a Wii Balance Board. The computer and computer programming software are readily available for use. Since connection between the Wii Balance Board and computer need Bluetooth, a dongle (~$15) may be required for some computers. Therefore, the purchase of the Wii Balance Board ($99.99), and perhaps a dongle, are the only item that need to be ordered. The budget will remain around $100 as there are no more costs foreseen in the immediate future.

6. Future work

In the future, focus will be placed on creating the interface between the Wii Balance Board and the computer. Once the connection is made between the Wii Balance Board and the computer, progress will be made with programming the audio and/or visual feedback with MatLab. Ultimately, demonstration of the final design will show that it runs properly.

7. Conclusion

Balance disorders can severely affect the quality of life for some individuals. Currently, there are not any cheap, easily accessible rehabilitation methods for enhancing the quality of life for these individuals. By using the Wii Balance Board and a computer, an interface can be created to give real-time feedback to the individual to aid in the rehabilitation process. With this convenient trainer, progress in rehabilitation can be greater and faster compared to current methods.

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9. Appendix

9.1 Design Specifications

1. Physical and Operational Characteristics

a. *Performance requirements*: The device must be able to withstand normal wear and tear from daily use. The software and feedback must be easily understandable by its users.
b. *Safety*: The device must be able to withstand a person standing and shifting weight that has balance and gait disorders.
c. *Accuracy and Reliability*: Using intraclass correlation coefficients, the COP path length test-retest reliability within the device should be between 0.66-0.94 and when compared to laboratory grade force plate, the device should be between 0.77-0.89.
d. *Life in Service*: The device must run 20 minutes daily for the length of study which could last between three months to one year long.
e. *Shelf Life*: The device should be functional for at least five years of use. The Wii Balance Board requires four AA batteries to power 60 hours of use.
f. *Operating Environment*: The device will be operated in a variety of different household environments from bedrooms and family rooms, to garages and basements.
g. *Ergonomics*: The device must be able to withstand a maximum weight of 150 kg.
i. *Weight*: The device must be able to be moved by an average sized adult, so it needs to weigh less than 18 kg.
j. *Materials*: The system will include a Wii Balance Board or an external weight shift sensing device, Bluetooth capable computer and accessories, and a system for audio output.
k. *Aesthetics*, *Appearance, and Finish*: The audio output needs to produce non-irritable noises and the visual output needs to be easily understood in relation to their current position.

2. Production Characteristics

a. *Quantity*: The design team is only responsible for producing one product, but the client may use multiple balance systems to distribute to all of the research participants.
b. *Target Product Cost*: The entire system should cost a total of under $600.

3. Miscellaneous

b. *Customer*: The client wants a device that captures signals at 40 Hz and to be low pass filtered with a cut-off frequency of 4-12 Hz. Input gain should be adjustable to +/- 10% increments.
c. *Patient-related concerns*: The device must be easy and enjoyable to use for the patient.
d. *Competition*: The Wii Balance Board has already been used for physical rehabilitation with video game-like displays of feedback and auditory feedback via personal headphones. Currently there are no patents impeding our prospects of a unique design aligning to our client's wanting.
Virtual Wiihab from the article "Lean on Wii: Physical Rehabilitation With Virtual Reality and Wii Peripherals" by F. Anderson, M. Annett, and W. Bischof. As well as eBaViR from the article "Effectivness of a Wii balance board-based system (eBaViR) for balance rehabilitation: a pilot randomized clinical trial in patients with acquired brain injury" by J. Gil-Gomez