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Journal of Biomechanics

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Short communication

A regression-based 3-D shoulder rhythm

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:
Accepted 18 January 2014

Keywords:
Humerus
Clavicle
Scapula
Kinematics
ISB recommendations

ABSTRACT

In biomechanical modeling of the shoulder, it is important to know the orientation of each bone in the shoulder girdle when estimating the loads on each musculoskeletal element. However, because of the soft tissue overlying the bones, it is difficult to accurately derive the orientation of the clavicle and scapula using surface markers during dynamic movement. The purpose of this study is to develop two regression models which predict the orientation of the clavicle and the scapula. The first regression model uses humerus orientation and individual factors such as age, gender, and anthropometry data as the predictors. The second regression model includes only the humerus orientation as the predictor. Thirty-eight participants performed 118 static postures covering the volume of the right hand reach. The orientation of the thorax, clavicle, scapula and humerus were measured with a motion tracking system. Regression analysis was performed on the Euler angles decomposed from the orientation of each bone from 26 randomly selected participants. The regression models were then validated with the remaining 12 participants. The results indicate that for the first model, the r^2 of the predicted orientation of the clavicle and the scapula ranged between 0.31 and 0.65, and the RMSE obtained from the validation dataset ranged from 6.92° to 10.39°. For the second model, the r^2 ranged between 0.19 and 0.57, and the RMSE obtained from the validation dataset ranged from 6.62° and 11.13°. The derived regression-based shoulder rhythm could be useful in future biomechanical modeling of the shoulder.

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1. Introduction

The shoulder girdle includes three bones: the clavicle, the scapula, and the humerus. It has been observed that during movement the orientations of these shoulder bones are not completely independent (Hogfors et al., 1991; Inman et al., 1944). For example, when the arm is elevated in the sagittal plane, the clavicle elevates and the scapula rotates laterally (de Groot and Brand, 2001; Grewal and Dickerson, 2013; Hogfors et al., 1991). This pattern of movement of the bones comprising the shoulder girdle is called the shoulder rhythm.

During shoulder biomechanical modeling, it is important to know the orientation of each bone in the shoulder girdle when calculating the structural loads on each musculoskeletal element. The orientation of the clavicle and the scapula, however, can be difficult to determine with accuracy using non-invasive surface marker-based motion tracking methods, because of the soft tissue overlying the bones (Brochard et al., 2011; Karduna et al., 2001; Prinold et al., 2011; van Andel et al., 2009). Some previous studies (de Groot and Brand, 2001; Grewal and Dickerson, 2013; Hogfors et al., 1991), attempted to

investigate regression-based shoulder rhythms in which the orientation of the clavicle and the scapula were predicted by the orientation of the humerus. Such shoulder rhythms were later used in shoulder biomechanical modeling (Dickerson et al., 2007; Holzbaaur et al., 2005; Karlsson and Peterson, 1992).

However, the shoulder rhythms derived in these previous studies utilized a limited envelope of arm postures. In Hogfors et al. (1991), arm elevation angle was only evaluated within a range from approximately 60° to 110°. In the de Groot and Brand (2001) study, 23 different arm postures in four planes of elevation and six elevation angles were tested, but axial rotation of the humerus was not included. Extrapolating shoulder rhythms to an untested range may result in poor prediction of the orientation of the clavicle and scapula. In a very recent study, Grewal and Dickerson (2013) measured 39 static postures with three arm elevation planes, five elevation angles, and three humerus axial rotation angles. The sampling interval for each rotation was approximately 45°, which likely does not provide sufficient resolution to detect the nonlinear property of shoulder rhythm, if it exists.

The purpose of this study was to describe a 3-D shoulder rhythm using a larger envelope of arm postures and higher angular resolution than currently available in the literature. For each participant, 118 arm postures were examined with a 30° interval in each rotation axis. Two types of regression models were

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elbow joint center (mid-point of EL and EM) and ACR during the reference posture. The thoracoclavicular joint angle, the thoracoscapular joint angle, and the thoracohumeral joint angle of each arm posture were then decomposed using the Euler angle sequence recommended by the ISB (Wu et al., 2005) (Table 3). For the thoracohumeral joint angle, the second option of the ISB recommendation, using the forearm orientation to estimate axial rotation, was adopted. It should be noted since the clavicle and thorax share one common axis (vertical axis of the thorax), only two angles can be derived for the thoracoclavicular joint.

2.5. Regression analysis

The data of 26 participants (13 females and 13 males, age: 33.4 (11.6), height: 1.73 (0.10) m, weight: 71.5 (14.1) kg) were randomly selected to build the regression models. Two types of regression model were built. The first one included three thoracohumeral angles and individual factors including age, gender, and anthropometry data as the predictors. The second regression model included only the three thoracohumeral angles as the predictors. For each regression model, a two-step regression procedure similar to those performed in previous studies (de Groot and Brand, 2001; Grewal and Dickerson, 2013) was used to create the regression equation. In the first step, gender and frame-defined thoracohumeral angles were treated as nominal variables while age and anthropometry data were treated as continuous variables. A linear regression model was used to assess the influence of the independent variables. In the second step, the significant variables from the first step were treated as continuous variables to build the regression equation by stepwise regression. If the frame-defined thoracohumeral angles were found to be significant in the first step, the measured thoracohumeral angles, their quadratic terms, and the interaction terms would also be evaluated in the second step (Grewal and Dickerson, 2013). All the predictors were centered to reduce multicollinearity (Aiken et al., 1991). For the stepwise regression, the *p*-value required for a term to be entered in the model was 0.05, and the *p*-value for a term to be retained in the model was 0.10. The coefficient of determination (*r*²) and the root-mean-square error (RMSE) were calculated to evaluate the predictability of the model.

2.6. Model validation

The dataset of the remaining twelve participants (6 females and 6 males, age: 30.1 (8.6), height: 1.69 (0.08) m, weight: 73.2 (21.8) kg) were used to validate the regression models. The *r*² and RMSE was used to quantify the quality of the regression models.

Table 3

The ISB-recommended Euler angle decomposition and their interpretation for clavicle, scapula, and humerus orientation with respect to the thorax. Parentheses indicate that axial rotation of clavicle cannot be derived in the current study since the clavicle and the thorax share a common vertical axis.

Joint	Euler decomposition order	Rotation description
Thoracoclavicular	Y	Retraction/protraction (γ_c)
	X	Elevation/depression (β_c)
	(Z)	(Axial rotation)
Thoracoscapular	Y	Retraction/protraction (γ_s)
	X	Lateral/medial rotation (β_s)
	Z	Anterior/posterior tilt (α_s)
Thoracohumeral	Y	Plane of elevation (γ_{TH1})
	X	Elevation (β_{TH})
	Y	Axial rotation (γ_{TH2})

Table 4

The regression equation of shoulder rhythm with individual factors.

Y	c1	c2	c3	c4	c5	c6	c7	c8	c9	c10	c11	c12	c13	c14	c15	Const.
γ_s	0.160	-0.013	0.041	-0.0013	-0.0015	-0.0002	-0.0022	-0.0006	0.0003	1.565	0.100	-	0.033	-0.026	-0.211	37.89
β_s	-0.076	0.332	-0.027	-0.0006	-0.0015	-	-0.0006	-0.0017	-0.0003	-2.651	-0.220	-	0.062	-0.099	0.143	-22.35
α_s	0.054	-0.037	-0.010	0.0002	0.0003	0.0002	-	0.0006	0.0008	2.432	-0.085	-	0.029	-0.064	-0.073	-7.50
γ_c	0.068	0.199	0.011	-0.0017	-0.0026	-0.0004	-0.0017	-0.0018	-	/	/	0.029	-0.080	-	-0.248	-17.42
β_c	-0.024	0.201	-0.033	-	-	0.0003	-0.0006	-0.0003	0.0006	-1.222	-0.233	-0.068	0.066	0.127	-0.048	-21.04

The equations are in the form $Y=c_1(\gamma_{TH1}-46.97)+c_2(\beta_{TH}+66.46)+c_3(\gamma_{TH2}+37.64)+c_4(\gamma_{TH1}-46.97)^2+c_5(\beta_{TH}+66.46)^2+c_6(\gamma_{TH2}+37.64)^2+c_7(\gamma_{TH1}-46.97)(\beta_{TH}+66.46)+c_8(\gamma_{TH1}-46.97)(\gamma_{TH2}+37.64)+c_9(\beta_{TH}+66.46)(\gamma_{TH2}+37.64)+c_{10} \text{ gender}+c_{11}(\text{age}-33.31)+c_{12}(L_b-218.9)+c_{13}(L_c-157.8)+c_{14}(L_s-182.1)+c_{15}(L_{ua}-259.2)+\text{Const.}$ Gender is -1 for female and 1 for male. *L_b*, *L_c*, *L_s*, and *L_{ua}* are the length of body, clavicle, scapula, and upper arm, respectively, with a unit of millimeter. “/” indicates the term was eliminated in the first step of regression analysis, while a “-;” indicates the term was eliminated in the second step by the stepwise regression.

3. Results

For the first model, including the individual factors, the first step of the regression analysis indicated that all the predictors contributed to all the thoracoclavicular and thoracoscapular joint angles, except for gender and age, which did not contribute to protraction/retraction of thoracoclavicular joint (Table 4). The second step further eliminated the thorax length as a predictor for all three thoracoscapular joints. The medial/lateral rotation of the thoracoscapular joints had the greatest *r*² value of 0.65 and the anterior/posterior tilt of the thoracoscapular joints had the least *r*² value of 0.31 (Fig. 1). The RMSE of the model ranged between 4.63° and 8.27°. For the validation dataset, the *r*² value ranged between 0.10 and 0.68, while the RMSE ranged from 6.92° and 10.39°.

For the second model, based only on the three thoracohumeral angles and excluding the individual factors, the first step of the regression analysis indicated that all predictors (linear and quadratic terms of the thoracohumeral joint angles) contributed to all the thoracoclavicular and thoracoscapular joint angles (Table 5). The medial/lateral rotation of the thoracoscapular joints had the greatest *r*² value of 0.57 and the anterior/posterior tilt of the thoracoscapular joints had the least *r*² value of 0.19 (Fig. 2). For the validation dataset, the *r*² value ranged between 0.10 and 0.68. The RMSE of the model ranged between 5.03° and 9.45°, while the RMSE obtained from the validation dataset ranged from 6.62° and 11.13°.

4. Discussion

The goal of this study was to build regression models, with and without individual factors, to predict the orientation of the clavicle and scapula based on the orientation of the humerus. The results can be integrated into existing shoulder biomechanical models used for calculating structural loads. In general, the findings in the current study are consistent with the literature (de Groot and Brand, 2001; Grewal and Dickerson, 2013; Hogfors et al., 1991). For example, the positive correlation between the elevation of the thoracohumeral joint and the retraction of the thoracoclavicular joint was observed in previous studies as well as in the current study. The model performances, as indicated by *r*², varied among difference joints. While the models can best explain the variance of medial/lateral rotation of the thoracoscapular joint, the explanatory ability for other joints is relatively limited. The value of the RMSE also suggests that error exists between measured and predicted joint angles.

There were also some differences between the current and previous studies. The RMSEs of the current models were in the similar range as measured in de Groot and Brand (2001), but greater than those in Grewal and Dickerson (2013), in general. The *r*² in the current study was also smaller than those in Grewal and Dickerson (2013). In addition, it was found that individual factors

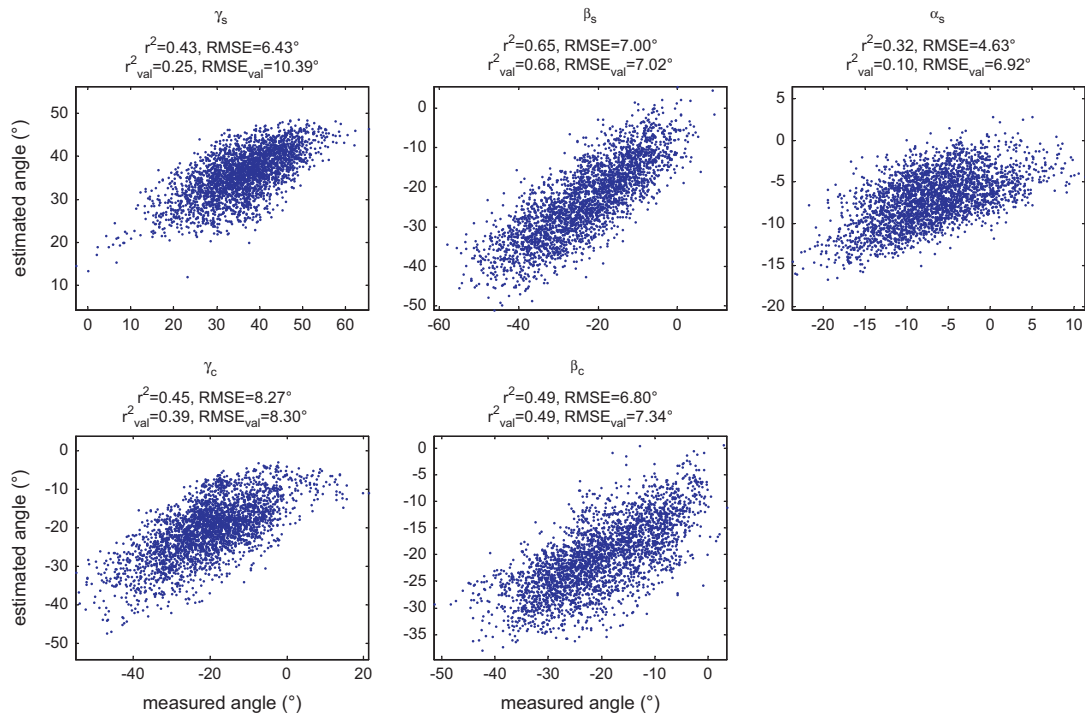


Fig. 1. Correlation between the measured and the predicted thoracoclavicular and thoracoscapular joint angles, with individual factors as inputs.

Table 5

The regression equation of shoulder rhythm without individual factors.

Y	c_1'	c_2'	c_3'	c_4'	c_5'	c_6'	c_7'	c_8'	c_9'	Const.
γ_s	0.163	–	0.039	–0.0016	–0.0018	–0.0003	–0.0023	–0.0009	0.0003	38.35
β_s	–0.065	0.322	–0.024	–	–0.0009	–	–	–0.0014	–	–23.20
α_s	0.060	–0.039	–0.011	–	–	0.0002	–	0.0005	0.0008	–7.11
γ_c	0.059	0.207	0.013	–0.0017	–0.0025	–0.0005	–0.0020	–0.0020	–	–17.42
β_c	–0.025	0.204	–0.031	–	–	0.0002	–0.0007	–0.0003	0.0007	–21.04

The equations are in the form $Y = c_1' (\gamma_{TH1} - 46.97) + c_2' (\beta_{TH} + 66.46) + c_3' (\gamma_{TH2} + 37.64) + c_4' (\gamma_{TH1} - 46.97)^2 + c_5' (\beta_{TH} + 66.46)^2 + c_6' (\gamma_{TH2} + 37.64)^2 + c_7' (\gamma_{TH1} - 46.97)(\beta_{TH} + 66.46) + c_8' (\gamma_{TH1} - 46.97)(\gamma_{TH2} + 37.64) + c_9' (\beta_{TH} + 66.46)(\gamma_{TH2} + 37.64) + \text{Const.}$ “–” indicates the term is eliminated by the stepwise regression.

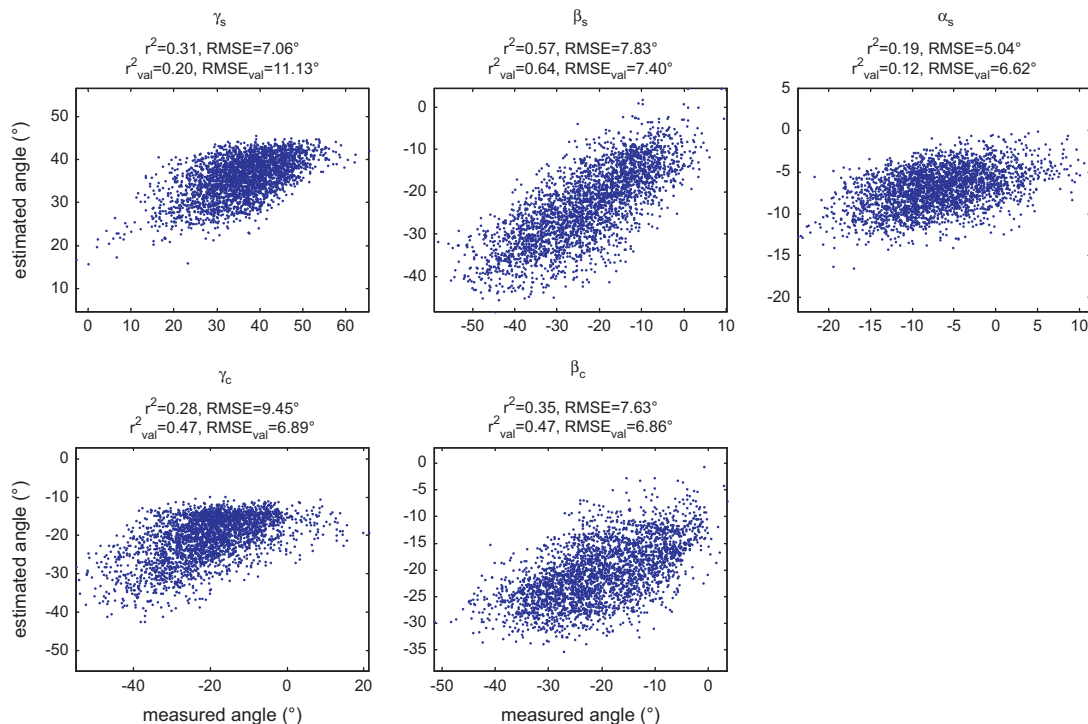


Fig. 2. Correlation between the measured and the predicted thoracoclavicular and thoracoscapular joint angles, without individual factors as inputs.

such as age, gender, and anthropometry data were significant predictors for most of the thoracoclavicular and thoracoscapular joint angles in the current study. Gender differences in thoracic anthropometry might account for some of the observed variance. The disproportionately smaller rib cages, and greater rib inclination angles in women than men (Bellemare et al., 2003) could affect scapular motion patterns. One could also speculate that the significant changes in scapular motion observed with age might be attributable to morphologic changes, such as increasing kyphosis (Gayzik et al., 2008). This finding conflicts with those of previous studies. In de Groot and Brand (2001), it was found that gender and anthropometry data were not significant predictors. In Grewal and Dickerson (2013), age, height, and weight were also excluded in the regression model due to lack of predictive power. One possible reason for those inconsistencies is likely due to participant selection. In the current study, the participants were recruited from the local community and had great diversity in terms of age and weight, while the participants in those previous studies were mainly young adults. Such great diversity may contribute to less model predictability and enlarge the effect of the individual factors.

There are limitations to the ability to generalize the results that need to be addressed. First, all the tested planes of elevation of the thoracohumeral joint were equal or greater than zero. The predictability of the current model for the postures with negative planes of elevation, such as those involved in pitching or throwing, remains unclear. Second, the effect of force exertion on shoulder rhythm was not examined. Results of a previous study (de Groot and Brand, 2001) indicated that abduction in the plane of elevation can alter the tilt and rotation angle of the scapula. In general, the current models can be used to describe the shoulder rhythms when the upper arm is in a positive elevation plane without substantial external load, such as those during office work or light-duty assembly tasks. However, caution needs to be taken when extrapolating the current model to untested thoracohumeral joint angles and/or force conditions.

Conflict of interest statement

All authors declare that there is no proprietary, financial, professional or other personal interest of any nature or kind in any product, service or company that could be construed as influencing the position presented in this manuscript.

Acknowledgments

The authors are also grateful to Dr. Chien-chi Chang and Dr. William Horrey for many useful comments and suggestions and Jacob Banks, Niall O'Brien, and Amanda Rivard for assistance in data collection.

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