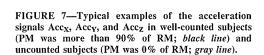
well-counted subject, and the gray line represents an uncounted subject. When the amplitude of the acceleration was small, as with the gray line, the pedometer could not count the steps, which suggests that a counting method that relies on a threshold of acceleration in the vertical direction is not suitable for this population. The relationship between the counting error and the physical activity in the vertical direction also suggests the difficulty in counting based on movement in the vertical direction.

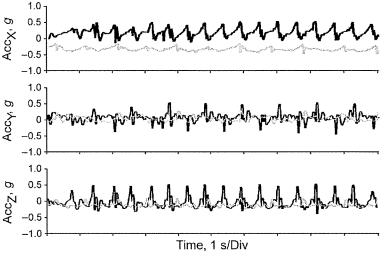
To improve the accuracy of the pedometer, we attempted to estimate the number of steps using the cadence obtained from the acceleration signals in the three directions. The estimation results of our FFT method were accurate in the elderly who walked slowly, with or without gait disorders, and with or without using a cane: the average error of FM was $-0.7 \pm 7.9\%$ of the RM. By using FFT, we were able to obtain the cadence from the small amplitude of the acceleration as shown in Figure 7; thus, our FFT method was able to estimate the number of steps in the subjects whose steps were not counted by the pedometer. Moreover, our FFT method estimated the number of steps regardless of the presence of a gait disorder. Generally, these populations are not conducive to a counting method based on the threshold of vertical movement. Furthermore, our method is amenable to the attachment of the device. A previous study reported that the accuracy of pedometers, especially mechanical ones, is affected by pedometer tilt (7). Our FFT method will not limit the placement of the device or device position on the waist belt because it is based on composite acceleration signals in the three directions. Thus, our FFT method might be effective in estimating, with high accuracy, the number of steps in overweight and obese adults or elderly patients with kyphosis.

Nevertheless, the number of steps was under-and overestimated by our FFT method. Only one subject's error of FM was poorer than that of PM. The number of steps of this subject was underestimated by 14.3% of RM by our FFT method, whereas it was undercounted by 12.5% of RM by the pedometer. The error of FM in this subject occurred during the turning arc; the cadences of the 4-s windows in the three directions were not in synchrony, and the physical activities in the three directions were large compared with other subjects. However, nine subjects showed errors of FM that were larger than 10% of RM. The amplitudes of the errors of FM were smaller than those of the pedometers individually except in one subject, whose error of FM exceeded 20% of the RM; however, it was better than the results of the pedometer. The subject's number of steps was undercounted by 60% of RM by the pedometer. Therefore, we suggest that our FFT method will be able to provide the number of steps accurately even in elderly subjects with slow walking velocities, gait disorders, and cane use during walking.

A 4-s window length was used for calculation of cadence in this study because none of the subjects took more than 4-s for a single step. Using a 4-s window length meant that there was a 4-s delay at each measurement period. In the present study, the time period at the end of the measurement, which was not a complete 4-s length, was cut off. Consequently, there is a possibility that this cutoff time period caused some estimation error. The 4-s window length was considered suitable for our subjects, but the window length must be chosen carefully based on the characteristics of the subjects. Another point that should be considered is the handling of the turning arc. The amplitudes of the acceleration signals during the turning arc differed from those of walking segment; thus, there was a tendency for the determined cadence at each window to be low when the 4-s window included both the walking and turning periods. However, a high-frequency acceleration signal that did not originate from the walking movement sometimes appeared at the turning period. These problems must be resolved for a more accurate estimation.

In this study, we attempted to estimate the number of steps during the walking and turning segments. As mentioned above, the results of this study showed that our FFT method is suitable for people who must undergo gait training. Maintaining patient motivation is important for reaching rehabilitation goals and regaining QOL. Our method will assist with efforts to maintain patient motivation





because the use of the pedometer will increase the motivation of the patient (4). Consequently, our FFT method is useful for promoting the continuation of gait training, which can help patients improve their muscle strength, avoid falls, and regain the ability to perform ADL. In addition, our method will reduce the workload of the therapist. For the application to clinical situations or daily life, price and ease of use are important factors. A digital signal processor (DSP) or simple low-power CPU is needed to calculate a FFT; however, a pedometer with a DSP could be made that would not be prohibitively expensive (approximately \$200) and that would be as easy to use as current pedometers. In the future, improved device and time-frequency analysis may be available for application under free-living conditions (3,11,25); this is required for increasing and promoting daily physical activity, although we must point out the changes in speed inside the house.

In summary, we assessed the accuracy of a pedometer in elderly subjects with regard to walking speed, the presence

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of a gait disorder, and the use of a cane. We also estimated the number of steps using the cadence obtained from the composite power spectrums of triaxial acceleration signals using a FFT algorithm and compared this with the number of steps visually counted by a therapist. The pedometer was inaccurate in our subject population, whereas our FFT method was reasonably accurate at estimating the number of steps. The number of steps estimated by our FFT method was significantly correlated with the actual number of steps, and the average value of the estimation error was $-0.7 \pm$ 7.9%. Our FFT method needs improvement because estimation errors of more than 10% existed. We suggest that our method is adequate and suitable for estimating the number of steps during walking in elderly people with slow walking speeds, with or without gait disorders, and with or without the use of a cane.

This work was supported in part by grant-in-aid for Young Scientists (B) No.17700441 from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), Japan.

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Low-cost, email-based system for self blood pressure monitoring at home

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Summary

We have developed a low-cost monitoring system, which allows subjects to send blood pressure (BP) data obtained at home to health-care professionals by email. The system consists of a wrist BP monitor and a personal computer (PC) with an Internet connection. The wrist BP monitor includes an advanced positioning sensor to verify that the wrist is placed properly at heart level. Subjects at home can self-measure their BP every day, automatically transfer the BP data to their PC each week, and then send a comma-separated values (CSV) file to their health-care professional by email. In a feasibility study, 10 subjects used the system for a mean period of 207 days (SD 149). The mean percent achievement of measurement in the 10 subjects was 84% (SD 12). There was a seasonal variation in systolic and diastolic BP, which was inversely correlated with temperature. Eight of the 10 subjects evaluated the system favourably. The results of the present study demonstrate the feasibility of our email-based system for self-monitoring of blood pressure. Its low cost means that it may have widespread application in future home telecare studies.

Introduction

Self blood pressure monitoring (SBPM) at home is important for patients with hypertension in order to teach them about their chronic blood pressure (BP) condition and to allow a more efficient assessment of the patient's response to antihypertensive medication. SBPM also removes the pressor effect of the office, eliminates observer errors and enhances patient compliance, potentially reducing costs and providing objective confirmation of readings taken by patients or elderly people. In addition, previous studies have demonstrated that SBPM has a stronger predictive power for target organ damage, morbidity and mortality than that of conventional office BP measurements.2

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Electronic, oscillometric BP monitors, which are compact and easy to use (even for elderly people) have been developed for SBPM.³⁻⁵ These monitors use the upper arm,3 wrist4 or finger5 as the measurement location. However, it has been noted that finger measurement is not suitable for accurate BP monitoring.6,7 In addition, wrist cuffs are more comfortable than upper arm cuffs for repeated BP measurement.8,9 The accuracy of wrist measurements depends on proper positioning of the wrist at heart level. Because of the uncertainty of the wrist level during measurements, some professionals are reluctant to recommend wrist BP monitors. 9,10 To overcome this problem, wrist BP monitors with a positioning sensor have been developed recently and are now commercially available.9,11 These may be valuable for SBPM.

We have developed a low-cost email-based system, which allows patients and elderly people to send BP data obtained at home to health-care professionals such as a general practitioner at regular intervals, and to receive advice from them on a regular basis. The continuous dialogue between the health-care

professional and the patient may lead to more successful management by the professional and increased adherence by the patient. Thus, the aim of the present study was to assess the feasibility of a low-cost, email-based system for SBPM. In addition, long-term SBPM data obtained using this system were analysed taking into consideration a seasonal temperature change.

Methods

Ten elderly volunteers, including four married couples, were enrolled. All subjects received an explanation of the purpose of the study and provided written informed consent. Ethics permission was not required. The subjects started BP measurement on 15 August 2002. After completion of their participation in the study, they provided their assessment of the SBPM system by interview.

The wrist cuff oscillometric BP monitor (HEM-637IT, Omron, Tokyo, Japan) consisted of a microprocessor, an electric pump, a pressure sensor, an LCD screen and a wrist cuff. It also included an advanced positioning sensor (APS) and a universal serial bus (USB) interface. The APS served to verify that the wrist was placed properly at heart level, and the USB interface served to transfer BP data from the internal memory of the BP monitor to the subject's personal computer (PC). A BP monitor was given to each subject, and the subjects were instructed in its proper use. The subjects placed the wrist cuff around the left wrist, after which the APS guided the wrist to the proper placement at heart level by means of an arrowhead, which appeared on the LCD screen. When the wrist is held at heart level, cuff inflation starts automatically, and the systolic and diastolic BP readings are displayed on the LCD screen

together with the date and time. The BP monitor automatically stores these data in its internal memory, which has a recording capacity of 90 measurements. ¹²

All subjects, including those without prior experience of SBPM, learned to use the BP monitor properly after 10 min of training. After completion of training, the subjects measured their BP twice a day (just after waking in the morning and just before going to bed at night), and were asked to continue measurement as long as possible, at least for 30 consecutive days. The BP readings with the date and time were transferred weekly from the internal memory to the PC by a software program (BI-LINK version 1.0.0, Omron) and stored as a comma-separated values (CSV) file. The file was sent by email each month to one of the authors. In each married couple, at least one partner was familiar with email, and the data for both partners were sent together. The other two subjects, who had no experience with email, were helped by their children to send the data.

The procedure is summarized in Figure 1.

Analysis

Each CSV file received was converted to a spreadsheet (Excel, Microsoft), and the morning and evening systolic and diastolic BP data were plotted separately as a function of the time of day. The hourly regional outdoor temperature in the district where the subject lived was obtained from the meteorological data reference Website of the Japan Meteorological Agency, ¹³ and the regional outdoor temperature at the time closest to that of BP measurement was also plotted with the BP data.

The BP and temperature data were fitted with smooth curves, using a weighted curve fitting method¹⁴ (KaleidaGraph version 3.51, Synergy Software, Reading,

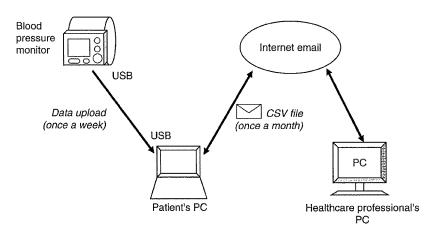


Figure 1 Low-cost email-based system for SBPM

PA, USA). The smoothing coefficient in the weighted curve fit method was 33% of the data range. The correlation between BP and outdoor temperature data was calculated from the fitted curves.

Results

Monitoring period and percent achievement of measurement

The monitoring period ranged from 35 to 502 days, with a mean period of 207 days (SD 149) days (Table 1). The mean numbers of morning and evening measurements were 181 (SD 142) and 179 (SD 144), respectively. Monitoring was incomplete in most subjects: only Subject 10 recorded two measurements per day throughout the monitoring period. Figure 2 shows the relationship between the percent achievement of measurements (ratio of the total number of measurements carried out to twice the number of days in the monitoring period) and the monitoring period. The regression line indicates that subjects who were monitored for long periods had a high percent achievement of measurements. The mean percent achievement of measurement in all 10 subjects was 84% (SD 12). In hypertensive subjects (n=3), the mean percent achievement was 93% (SD 7), and in the normotensive subjects (n=7), it was 81% (SD 13). The difference between the hypertensive and normotensive subjects was significant (t-test, P < 0.01).

Evaluation by subject

All 10 subjects were interviewed after the study. The three subjects whose percent achievement of measurement was less than 80% were asked about the reason for their low percentages. Subject 3 did not trust the BP monitor because her BP readings fluctuated more than she expected. Subject 9 was not interested in the BP measurements, and did not measure his BP

every day. In addition, he was in the habit of waking up late, and sometimes missed his BP measurement time in the morning. In the case of Subject 4, the battery in her BP monitor was low from the beginning of the 208th day, and she did not obtain a replacement for 24 days. Finally, our interviews showed that eight of our 10 subjects (all except Subjects 3 and 9) approved of the proposed SBPM using the wrist monitor with the APS. They also mentioned that the weekly transfer of BP data from the internal memory of the monitor to their PCs and the monthly email of the BP data to one of the authors were not stressful, and gave a favourable evaluation of the utility of the proposed SBPM system.

Physiological data

Figure 3 shows an example of BP in the morning and outdoor temperature in Subject 5. The seasonal variation in systolic and diastolic BP was inversely correlated with temperature. The correlation coefficients were -0.95 for systolic BP and -0.96 for

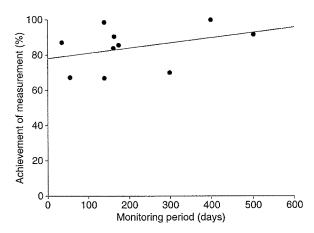


Figure 2 Relationship between percent achievement of measurement and the monitoring period in 10 subjects. The solid line is the regression line

Table 1 Personal details, monitoring period and number of blood pressure measurements for each subject

Subject Ag			Sex Location (city, prefecture)	Hypertension		Number of measurements		
	Age (years)	Sex			Monitoring period (days)	Morning	Night	Total
1	60	М	Obu, Aichi		35	30	31	61
2	60	F	Ube, Yamaguchi		161	138	132	270
3	62	F	Seki, Gifu		139	97	89	186
4	63	F	Kyoto, Kyoto		299	227	192	419
5	65	M	Suzuka, Mie	Yes	502	453	468	921
6	66	M	Ube, Yamaguchi		163	141	154	295
7 .	67	M	Seki, Gifu		139	135	139	274
8	68	F	Obu, Aichi	Yes	174	156	142	298
9	69	М	Kyoto, Kyoto		55	31	43	74
10	72	F	Niigata, Niigata	Yes	399	399	399	798

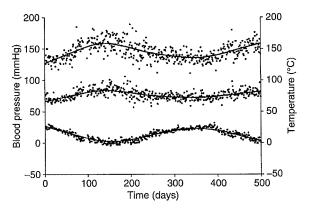


Figure 3 An example of the seasonal BP variation in Subject 5. There is an inverse correlation between BP and outdoor temperature. The upper, middle and lower points with their best-fit lines indicate the systolic BP, diastolic BP and outdoor temperature, respectively. Abscissa, time in days from the beginning of measurement (15 August 2002)

diastolic BP. In the other seven subjects whose monitoring periods were longer than 130 days, BP variations with an inverse correlation to seasonal temperature variations were also observed. The mean correlation coefficients in these eight subjects were -0.70 (SD 0.36) for systolic BP and -0.79 (SD 0.25) for diastolic BP.

Discussion

In the present study, the mean percent achievement of measurement in the 10 subjects was 84%. Eight of the 10 subjects evaluated the system favourably. The results demonstrate that the email-based SBPM system is easy to use and is acceptable to elderly people, especially to those with hypertension who require long-term monitoring of their BP.

Telecare, telenursing and telemonitoring systems using the Internet, ISDN lines and the telephone network have been developed to monitor and manage the health condition of patients with hypertension or chronic disease. Cost is an important factor in patients' perceptions of such systems. Aris *et al.*¹⁵ developed an Internet-based blood pressure monitoring system. However, special hardware was required to link the output of the BP monitoring device (automatic sphygmomanometer) with a PC. Unlike this system, the monitor used in the present study could transmit BP readings automatically via the built-in USB interface. In addition, our system used email to send the monthly reports of BP data. The cost of email is relatively low, involving only the cost of the provider.

Therefore, the present system can be implemented at a low cost.

The accuracy of self BP measurements using wrist monitors has been discussed in previous studies.^{9,11} One cause of inaccurate BP measurements in wrist monitoring is the possibility of incorrect wrist level positioning during measurement. The wrist monitor used in the present study includes a positioning system that guides the wrist to the heart level. Recently, Yarows⁹ demonstrated that the present wrist monitor with the APS measured BP more accurately than the same model with the APS turned off. Nolly *et al.*¹¹ also evaluated the accuracy of the wrist monitor with the positioning sensor in comparison with the standard mercury sphygmomanometer, and found excellent agreement between them.

The physiological BP data obtained in the present study showed seasonal variation with an inverse correlation to seasonal outdoor temperature variation. The relationship between BP and seasonal temperature variation has been examined in many studies, and it has been confirmed that BP has seasonal variations with an inverse correlation to seasonal temperature variation. ^{16,17} Therefore, the seasonal BP variation seen in the present study may be taken as a reflection of the accuracy of BP measurements using our monitoring system.

The results of the present study demonstrate the feasibility of our email-based system for SBPM. It can be incorporated easily into the homes of patients or elderly people. It may have widespread application in future home telecare studies.

Acknowledgements: This work was supported in part by a Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research from the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science to KN (17510121).

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Proposal of Wireless Behavioral Monitoring System with Electric Field Sensor

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Abstract— This paper describes a wireless behavioral monitoring system equipped with an omnidirectional electric field sensor. The system can be installed by individuals in their residences. It is composed of a sensor circuit, wireless data transmitter, and receiver that is connected to a personal computer for data storage. The sensor circuit has been designed to obtain information on the usage of domestic appliances by measuring the electric field around them. It is assumed that the usage statistics provide information on a type of indoor behavior of the subject. Since the system employs a device that transmits the obtained data through weak radio waves, the sensor unit, which is composed of the sensor circuit and wireless data transmitter, can be used by simply attaching it to an appliance. Simple evaluation tests confirm the practicability of the system.

I. INTRODUCTION

Recently, ubiquitous networks have been applied to various fields, and a wireless sensor network technology has been introduced for home healthcare as a biomedical monitoring system [1]. The wireless biomedical monitoring system is an epoch-making system because it enables the collection of physiological data of individuals. On the other hand, a recent study has revealed that the physical and mental conditions of elderly people are reflected in their behavior; the pattern changes when they are unhealthy. Therefore, a domestic behavioral monitoring system can also enable the detection of a disease in its early stages [2], [3]. In addition, the recorded data may be used by a medical doctor to make a diagnosis and suggest treatment. The data may also be useful for self-health care and counseling in medical institutions.

Thus far, many behavioral monitoring systems have been developed (e.g., [3] and [4]). However, in the case of a sudden illness or an emergency, it is difficult to immediately install

Manuscript received April 3, 2006. This study was partly supported by a Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research (16700429) from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) of Japan and Grants-in-Aid from the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, the National Institute for Longevity Sciences, and Chiba University.

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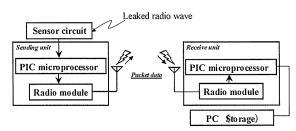


Fig. 1. Schematic diagram of the system.





Fig. 2. Sensor circuit,

Fig. 3. Processor board (transmitter/receiver unit).

most of the conventional systems in residences. This is because wiring is required to connect many physical sensors, such as drawer sensors and movement sensors, with a computer that records their status. Moreover, engineering expertise is required for precise positioning of the sensors during installation. The design of both the monitoring system and the sensor must be improved in order to facilitate easy installation and disassembly.

In this study, a wireless behavioral monitoring system and a sensor for it are developed. The system can be installed by individuals in their residences.

II. APPARATUS

A. System Structure

The system is composed of a sensor, data transmitter with a radio frequency (RF) module, and receiver. The data transmitter and receiver are composed of a PIC microprocessor and a low-power radio module. Fig. 1 shows the block diagram of the system, and Figs. 2 and 3 show prototypes of the sensor circuit board and data transmitter/receiver circuit board, respectively. The sensor circuit is equipped with an electric field sensor for monitoring

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the usage of domestic appliances. The microprocessor samples the analog output of the sensor. The obtained data are then transmitted to a receiver unit through the radio module. The PIC microprocessor in the wireless data receiver transmits the received data, which are the sampled outputs of the sensor, to a personal computer through an RS232C communication port. The personal computer records the sensor output as behavioral data.

B. Sensor Circuit for Television Set [5]

Most of the modern domestic appliances are based on electromagnetic phenomena. Therefore, the observation of electromagnetic waves may be useful for monitoring the usage of domestic appliances. In this study, we focus on monitoring the usage of a conventional television set.

A moving picture can be transmitted or displayed on the television in different formats. Table 1 shows the number of scanning lines, frame rate, and horizontal scanning frequency of each format. Although the number of scanning lines and frame rate of each format are different, the horizontal scanning frequency is almost the same (approximately 15.7 kHz). Moreover, scanning in a conventional television set that comprises a cathode ray tube (CRT) is achieved by driving an electromagnet near the electron gun in the CRT. Therefore, by monitoring the frequency of electromagnetic (radio) waves, information on the usage of the television set can be obtained.

Fig. 4 shows the circuit diagram of the television sensor developed in this study. After the extraction of the 15.7-kHz component in the resonator, the "signal" is amplified and rectified. Fig. 5 shows the arrangement of the prototype sensor unit on the television set.

C. Processor Unit

A wireless data transmitter and the receiver are composed of the PIC microprocessor and a low-power radio data communication module. Table 2 lists the specifications of the unit. The PIC microprocessor samples the analog output of the sensor circuit at a sampling resolution of 8 bits. It can also distinguish between the on and off states of the television set by evaluating the voltage level of the sensor output. The digitized value is then converted into a 16-bit data packet by Manchester coding and transmitted to the receiver unit through the radio module. A flag synchronization method is employed for radio communication. Fig. 6 shows the packet configuration for the radio communication. Two types of packets are used: negotiation and data packets. The negotiation packet is composed of the flag and status bits; it is used to determine the status of each unit. The data packet is composed of the packet number and data bits in addition to the negotiation packet.

Fig. 7 shows the flow chart of the communication process. It is based on the handshake protocol. First, the data transmitter (sender unit) transmits a negotiation packet to the receiver in order to determine the status of the receiver unit.

TABLE I VERTICAL RESOLUTION AND HORIZONTAL SCANNING FREQUENCY OF DIFFERENT TELEVISION FORMATS

Format Scanning lin		Frame rate (Hz)	Horizontal scanning
	(frame, field)	(frame, field)	frequency (kHz)
NTSC	525, 262.5	30,60	15,750
PAL	625, 312.5	25, 50	15.625
SECAM	625, 312.5	25, 50	15.625

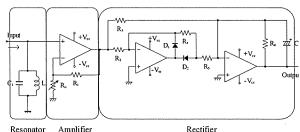


Fig. 4. Circuit diagram of television sensor.

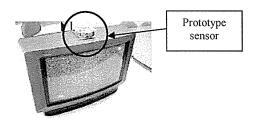


Fig. 5. Arrangement of television sensor.

TABLE II SPECIFICATIONS OF RF UNIT

Item	Specification		
microprocessor	PIC16F876 (Microchip Technology Inc.)		
processor clock	3.58 MHz		
radio module	CDC-TR02B (Design Circuit Inc.)		
radio frequency	315 MHz		
radio antenna	RH3 (120-900 MHz, Diamond)		
modulation	amplitude shift keying		
	(Manchester coding)		
transfer rate	115.2 kbps		
unit weight	~250 g		
size $(H \times W \times D)$	100 × 65 × 35 mm (antenna excluded)		

FLAG	STATUS				
16bit	16bit				
(a) Negotiation Packet					

FLAG	STATUS	Packet Number	Data
16bit	16bit	16bit	16bit

(b) Data Packet

Fig. 6. Packet configuration.

When the receiver responds with an ACK signal, the transmitter unit transmits a data packet. This packet is retransmitted until a DataAck packet is received. The process including the sampling of the sensor output is repeated at intervals of 1 s.

The receiver unit is connected to a personal computer via the RS232C interface. The unit transmits the received data to the computer that stores it for further evaluation.

III. EXPERIMENTS

A. Practicability of Sensor Unit

To confirm the behavior of the proposed sensor circuit, we observed the obtained raw signal (leaked radio waves from the television set) and the processed output (resonance, amplification, and rectification). These signals were recorded using a Tektronix TDS210. The A/D converter in the PIC microprocessor was not used in this experiment. The applicability of the television sensor was then evaluated by a simple television on/off test.

B. Evaluation of Low-power Radio Data Communication

The reliability of a wireless communication system is less than that of a wired system. Therefore, we performed a simple evaluation test for data transmission. Null data packets (Fig. 6(b)) were transmitted 1000 times from the sender unit. The receiver evaluated the authenticity of the packet in order to estimate the packet error rate. The handshake protocol was not used in this experiment. In order to determine the efficiency and wireless communication range, the evaluation was carried out 5 times for each distance between the sender and the receiver unit.

C. Data Comparison Test

A data comparison test was performed for verifying the function of the system developed in this study. The stored data (in the personal computer) was compared with the raw sensor output. In this experiment, the sensor unit was attached to the television set. The raw sensor output was measured with the digital oscilloscope (TDS210). The television set was switched on and off arbitrarily. The sensor output was also sampled and transmitted to the personal computer. The sampling resolution of the microprocessor was 8 bits and the sampling frequency was 1 Hz.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Fig. 8 shows the result obtained when the television set was switched off. Fig. 8(a) shows the signal received by the antenna of the sensor circuit. The very small component of the power-line frequency of commercial electric power systems can be observed in any part of the residence; however, the gain of the amplifier is not high. Therefore, this type of "noise" is ignored, and the filtered output is almost 0 V (Fig. 8(b)).

Fig. 9 shows the signals at each point of the sensor circuit

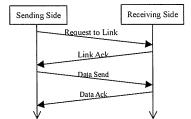


Fig. 7. Flow chart of data communication process.

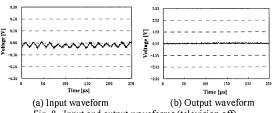


Fig. 8. Input and output waveforms (television off).

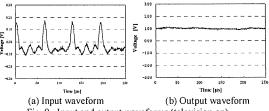


Fig. 9. Input and output waveforms (television on).

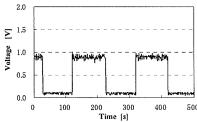


Fig. 10. Television on/off test.

when the television set is switched on. Fig. 9(a) shows the leaked radio waves that are received. The signal mainly comprises pulses of 15.7 kHz. Fig. 9(b) shows the filtered output. When the television set is switched on, the sensor output is almost 1 V.

Fig. 10 shows the result of the television on/off test. Based on this result, we can estimate the duration of the usage of the television set. Thus, the sensor unit is suitable for practical

Fig. 11 shows a screen shot of the data storage software developed in this study. This software has been developed using Microsoft Visual Basic 6.0. The received data are displayed on the screen along with the time of reception and recorded on the hard disk.

Fig. 12 shows the packet error rate. It is very small (\sim 0.5%) even when the distance is 600 cm. This distance is appropriate for Japanese residences; however, the communication range should be investigated in order to evaluate the performance.

Fig. 13 compares the sensor output with the received RF data. Fig. 13(a) and (b) shows the raw sensor output recorded by the oscilloscope and the stored data, respectively. We have confirmed that the waveforms are almost the same. The PIC microprocessor connected to the sensor circuit samples the raw output with a resolution of 8 bits and a reference voltage of 5 V; the voltage resolution becomes approximately 0.02 V. Since the proposed sensor circuit outputs almost 1 V when an appliance is in use, this voltage resolution is rather appropriate for sampling the output.

In this study, the sampling frequency of the sensor output is set to 1 Hz. However, since we have not introduced time management systems in the unit, the actual sampling time may vary. This problem should be solved in the future.

V. CONCLUSION

In this study, we proposed a wireless behavioral monitoring system equipped with an electric field sensor. A simple evaluation test revealed the practicability of the system. This system can be easily installed in residences by individuals since it does not require any engineering expertise. Moreover, it can be used in existing residences without requiring any reconstruction or new appliances with monitoring functions.

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Fig. 11. Application developed for windows.

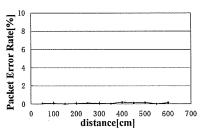


Fig. 12. Packet error rate of data communication.

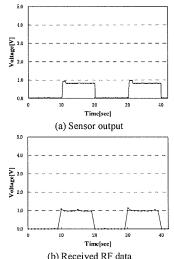


Fig. 13. Comparison between sensor output and received RF data.

高齢者の歩容に対応した歩数計の開発 ーカウントアルゴリズムの検討ー

Development of a novel pedometer for elderly

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Abstract In this study, we attempted to develop a step-estimation algorithms to improve the accuracy of the accelerometer-type pedometer for elderly people. The waist acceleration signal during walking was recorded from 116 eldery subjects. After three bandpass filters (0.5-10.Hz, 1.0-1.5Hz, 1.5-2.0Hz) were applied to the acceleration, a step-cycle related signal was selected from the outputs of those filters. To estimate the number of steps by the step-cycle signal, optimal threshold level of the signal was determined by using 42 elderly data set. As a result of algorithm verification by 74 elderly data set, 62 subjects (83.7%) could be estimated with less than 10% error.

1. はじめに

生活習慣病の予防や健康増進の1つとして歩行が推奨されている。その量的な評価には、歩数計の利用が一般的であり、MEMS 技術の向上とともに多軸の感度をもつ加速度センサを内蔵した歩数計(以下、加速度歩数計)が市販されている。しかし、このような歩数計で、筋力が低下した高齢者や片麻痺などの運動障害をもつ高齢者の歩数をカウントすると、正しい値が得られないことがしばしば見受けられる。

この問題に対して、われわれは得られた加速度を一定期間ごとにフーリエ変換しパワーが最大となる周波数からその区間の歩数を推定する歩数カウントアルゴリズムを提案し、49名中40名の高齢者に対して誤差10%で歩数をカウントすることが可能であった[1]. しかしながら、常時フーリエ変換を行うことは、歩数計の電池を著しく消耗するため、その実装は容易ではないという問題点が挙げられた.

一般に、加速度歩数計では加速度閾値(以下、閾値)を用いて歩数を算出している。そこで、本研究では先行研究の経験をもとに、簡単なフィルタと閾値処理のみで高齢者に対応しうる歩数カウントアルゴリズムを提案し、その検証を行った。

2. 歩数カウントアルゴリズム

本研究では、加速度信号からフィルタリングと閾値のみで 歩数をカウントする以下の 2 つのアルゴリズムを設計した. なお、本アルゴリズムは、測定終了後にオフラインで適用し た.また、対象とする加速度の感度方向は上下方向のみとし、 上方向を正とした.

2.1 アルゴリズム A

先行研究の結果から、1歩周期に対応する加速度信号の周波数はおよそ 0.3~3Hz の範囲に含まれる[1]. そこで、歩数カウントアルゴリズム A は、周波数帯域が 0.3~3Hz のバターワース型バンドパスフィルタで加速度信号をフィルタリングし、関値未満から関値以上となる点を 1 歩としてカウントするものとした. なお、関値については後述する実験によって決定した.

2.2 アルゴリズム B

歩数カウントアルゴリズム B は、先行研究のフーリエ変換を用いる手法を簡略化したものである。周波数帯域が異なる3つのバターワース型バンドパスフィルタを設計し、それらを通過した出力のうち最大のものを1歩周期に対応する加速度信号として選択する。この選択された信号が、関値未満から関値以上となる点を1歩としてカウントした。なお、それぞれのバンドパスフィルタの周波数帯域は、0.5~1.0Hz、1.0~1.5Hz、1.5~2.0Hz とし、出力の比較にはそれぞれの信号を全波整流しカットオフ周波数0.1Hzのバターワース型ローパスフィルタを通したものを利用した。

3. 実験方法

提案した歩数カウントアルゴリズムに必要な閾値の設定ならびにその検証のために以下の実験を行った. なお,本研究は,当該倫理委員会の承認を得た後,被験者に実験の説明し書面にて同意を得て行った.

3.1 測定装置

歩行中に身体に生じる加速度を測定するために、3 軸ピエゾ抵抗型加速度センサ(曙ブレーキ)とマルチテレメータシステム(WEB-5000、日本光電)からなる測定システムを構築した。なお、サンプリング周波数は 128Hz とした。また、比較対象として市販の加速度歩数計(HJ-720IT、オムロンヘルスケア、以下歩数計)を使用した。

3.2 歩行・歩数の測定方法

被験者は、伸縮性のあるベルトを用いて加速度センサを腰背部中央に装着し、歩数計も同ベルトに取り付けた.歩行は、屋内廊下直線 10m 程度を個人に適した速度で往復するものとした. なお、靴等の履物や歩行補助具の指定は特に行わなかった. 被験者の安全の確保と歩数の真値(実歩数)を把握するために、理学療法士が被験者の後方を付いて歩き、目視にて歩数をカウントした.

3.3 閾値の設定に関する実験

被験者は, 転倒予防教室に来場している受講者で脳梗塞を 発症したものや骨折経験者, 下肢機能障害をもつものを含む 高齢者 42 名 (年齢 82.2 ± 8.4 歳, 身長 146.7 ± 8.5 cm, 体重 49.5 ±9.8kg) とした. また, 本実験では加速度歩数計のカウント精度の閾値による変化を検証するために, 市販されている加速度歩数計の他に市販のものに対して閾値を 1/2 にしたもの(感度 2 倍) と 1/4 にしたもの(感度 4 倍) にしたものを同時に装着した.

3.4 アルゴリズムの検証に関する実験

提案したアルゴリズムと設定した閾値を検証するために, 上記の実験と同様,転倒予防教室に来場している高齢者 74 名(年齢 82.7±8.6歳,身長 148.1±7.6cm,体重 52.3±7.8kg) を対象に測定を行った.

3.5 評価方法

提案した歩数カウントアルゴリズムならびに加速度歩数計の評価は、誤差= (カウント数ー実歩数) /実歩数×100を用いて行った. なお、誤差 10%未満をカウント精度の1つの目安とした.

4. 結果

4.1 閾値の設定に関する結果

市販の歩数計で誤差が 10%未満であった被験者は 42 名中6 名 (14.3%) のみであった。また、市販の歩数計の閾値を1/2、1/4 に設定した歩数計では、それぞれ 10 名 (23.8%)、15 名 (35.7%) となり、誤差 10%未満で検出できる被験者数が増加した。

一方、測定した腰背部加速度信号を対象に歩数カウントアルゴリズム A の関値を $-0.06\sim0.09$ g まで0.01 刻みで変更した結果、0.04g に設定した際に誤差10%未満で検出できる被験者数が最も多くなり、38 名(90.5%) に達した. また、歩数カウントアルゴリズム B の関値は、フィルタ後の加速度信号の振幅が小さいため0.01g に設定した. なお、この設定で誤差10%未満で検出できる被験者数は37名(88.1%)であった。

4.2 アルゴリズムの検証に関する結果

アルゴリズムの検証実験に参加した被験者 74名に対して、市販の歩数計で誤差が 10%未満であったものは 7 名 (9%) であった。一方、歩数カウントアルゴリズム A と B の閾値をそれぞれ 0.04g と 0.01g に設定し歩数のカウントを行った結果、誤差が 10%未満であったものはそれぞれ 56 名 (75.6%)、62 名 (83.7%) であった.実歩数とカウントした歩数の関係を Fig.1 に示す.

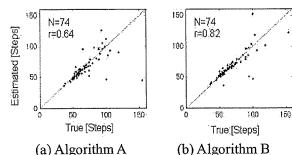


Fig. 1 Relationship between true number of steps and estimated one

5. 考察

今回の実験結果では、市販されている通常の加速度歩数計では高齢者、特に下肢機能障害をもつ方の歩数をカウントすることは困難であることが示唆された。また、その閾値を下

げることで誤差 10%未満の高齢者が増加することから, 高齢者の場合, 歩行中の加速度振幅が非常に小さいことが歩数カウントを困難にさせる大きな要因であると考えられる.

そこで、市販の歩数計と単純には比較できないが、加速度センサを腰背部中央に装着しアルゴリズム A を用いた際の最適な関値を検討した。その結果、上記の条件では関値は0.04gが適当であると考えられた。今回の実験では、関値を0.05g以上の値にすると1歩中の加速度ピークが関値を越えず過少なカウントになり、逆に関値をあまり小さくすると1歩中に関値を越えるピークが複数となり過多なカウントになった。また、負の関値、つまり下方向加速度に対しても関値の検討を行ったが、上方向加速度に比べて良好な結果は得られなかった。

一方,歩数カウントアルゴリズム B では,アルゴリズム A に比べて小さい関値 0.01g を用いても,あまり過多なカウントにはならなかった.これは,関値処理をする信号が,事前のバンドパスフィルタで,ほぼ単一の周波数のみをもつ信号になっているからであると考える.これにより 1 歩中の加速度ピークはほぼ 1 つとなり,関値を小さく設定しても歩行中であればさほど問題にならないと考える.しかしながら,片麻痺者の中には健側と患側の運動に著しい非対称性がみられ,健側と患側の運動をあわせて 1 周期とみなせる加速度信号が観測された.このような場合,アルゴリズム B では対応できず実歩数の 50%程度にカウントしていた.

2つの歩数カウントアルゴリズムAとBを閾値設定の実験に参加した被験者以外の被験者群に適用し検証した結果、それぞれ75.6%、83.7%の高齢者で誤差が10%未満になり、両者とも市販の歩数計に比べてその精度が大きく改善された.2つのアルゴリズムを比較すると、アルゴリズムが複雑になるものの、アルゴリズムBの方が高精度であった.その差は、前述のように1歩中の閾値を越える加速度ピークを1つにフィルタリングできるからであると考える。また、今回はオフラインでアルゴリズムの検討を行ったものの、両者とも簡単な電子回路で置き換えることが可能であり、先行研究のフーリエ変換を用いたアルゴリズムに比べて実装が容易であると考える。

今回の実験では、歩行のみを動作対象とし、センサの装着 部位は腰背部に固定した、今後は、様々な動作を含む日常生 活において正確な歩数がカウント可能であるかの検証と、腰 背部以外に装着した際の対応を検討していく必要がある.

6. まとめ

本研究では、筋機能の低下や下肢運動障害をもつ高齢者の 歩容に対応した 2 つの歩数カウントアルゴリズムを提案し、 検証を行った. 今回の実験では、加速度センサを被験者の腰 背部に装着する理想的な測定条件ではあるものの、両アルゴ リズムとも多くの高齢者に対して誤差 10%未満で歩数をカ ウントすることが可能であった.

謝辞

本研究の一部は、文部科学省科学研究費 若手研究(B) 17700441 ならびにオムロンヘルスケア株式会社 受託研究費によった.

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電界強度計による 電化製品稼働状況モニタリングシステム

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Abstract: Recently, it has been shown that behavioral information is effective in maintaining and improving the quality of life. Many behavioral monitoring systems have been developed thus far. However, most systems consist of many types of physical sensors that require precise positioning; further, wiring is required to connect these sensors to a computer that stores the sensor status. Therefore, most of these systems are installed when a house is being newly built or reconstructed. For the elderly who live alone, sometimes such systems are required to be installed in their houses in case of sudden illnesses or emergencies. Therefore, such systems should be easy to install and remove. This study describes a wireless behavioral monitoring system that can be easily installed in ordinary houses. In this study, we focused on the usage statistics of home appliances as detection devices. The sensor unit developed in this study employs an electromagnetic field sensor and a wireless data communication module. This sensor detects whether a home appliance is in use and transmits the obtained data via the radio module. The usage detection of home appliances is performed by measuring the electromagnetic field that can be observed in the area near the appliance. Simple evaluation tests revealed the applicability of the system.

Keywords: behavioral monitoring, wireless, home appliance, electromagnetic field sensor.

1. はじめに

近年の日本は世界的にも類を見ない速度で高齢化が進んでいる[1]. 高齢者は病気にかかりやすいうえにその治療も長引くとされ、健康保険など医療費支出のさらなる増加が予測されることから、予防医学分野の研究開発が急務となっている.

在宅における行動モニタリングは、生活リズム等の 日常生活の形態を定量的かつ継続的に記録できること から、在宅健康支援のためのツールとして今後の発展 が期待されている[2-9]. 特に高齢者の場合は決まった 時刻に調理をしたりテレビを鑑賞するなど比較的定常 的で、そのバターンは身体的および精神的な健康状態 によって変化すると考えられている[6,7]. これらを背 景に、様々な屋内行動モニタリングシステムが開発さ れてきた. しかし, それらのシステムで用いられてい るセンサの多くは精細な位置決めが必要であったり、 さらにデータ収集のためにセンサとコンピュータとを 接続するケーブルの敷設も必要であるため、その導入 には時間とコストがかかり、このようなシステムが実 際の家屋に導入された例はきわめて少ない、一方、高 齢者が一人で住むような状況で、急な疾患など何らか の緊急時の経過観察にも行動モニタリングシステムは 重要となると考えられる. このようなケースにも対応 できるためには、システムは既存家屋に容易に導入で きなければならない、また、快復時などシステムが不 要となったときにも、システムは容易に撤去できるべ きであると考えられる[8,9].

モニタリングシステムで用いられるセンサ回路を電池駆動とし、また測定データの転送にBluetoothやZigBeeなどといった無線データ伝送技術を用いることで、既存家屋にも短時間で導入できるようになると考えられる.無線システムは非常時にモニタリングシステムを一時的に導入するためにも重要である.

一方,家屋内の電化製品の使用状況を屋内行動情報とみなし、これを対象者の健康状態の推定に用いることが検討され、その有効性が示されつつある(例えば[6,7]).電化製品の使用状況を把握するためには、対象の電源ケーブルとコンセントの間に電流計を挿入する方法と、クランプメータを用いるものが提案されているが、いずれも電源ケーブルに触れる必要がある.

我々は、被験者自身の手で、既存家屋に必要なときに導入可能な行動モニタリングシステムの開発を目指し、無線式行動モニタリングシステムを開発した[10,11]. 本システムは、センサから得られたデータを記録用PCに無線送信するもので、信号線や電源線の配線工事が不要である.これにあわせ、対象の近傍にユニットを置くだけで使用可能な、電化製品の稼働状況を把握するセンサも開発した.本センサは近年の電化製品が電磁現象を多用していることに注目し、電界強度計を応用したものである.本論文では、実際に既存家屋に本システムを導入し、テレビや電子レンジ等の電化製品の稼働状況をモニタリングできるのか評価を行ったので、これを報告する.

2. 装置概要

2.1 無線式行動モニタリングシステム

本研究で開発したシステムは、1 台のデータ記録用 サーバPCと複数のセンサユニットで構成される.表 1 に本研究で開発したセンサユニットの仕様一覧を、図 1 にセンサユニットの基板写真と概要図を示す. セン サユニットはRS232C方式の通信ポートを備えており、 PCとの直接の通信が可能なほか、サーバPCの無線イン タフェースとしても使用できる. センサユニットは予 め定められた周波数でセンサ回路の出力電圧値をサン プリングし,得られたデータをサーバへ無線送信する. データの送信にはパケットを用いる. 本研究で用いた パケット構造を図2に示す、パケットの開始を示すス タートフラグ (フラグ同期) , どのセンサユニットか らのデータかを表すUnit ID, そのユニットの何番目の データパケットかを表すSequence number,そして送信 データとチェックサムで構成される. 送信するデータ 長は 4 byteであるが、スタートフラグを除く全てのブ ロックはパケット送信時にマンチェスター符号化され るため、実際には9 byteで1パケットが構成される. 送信ユニットはサーバから受領 (ACK) パケットが届 くまで一定回数の再送信を行う.

また、全てのセンサユニットには、他のセンサユニットとサーバとが直接無線通信できない場合のために、データリレーの機能を付与している。ここでは処理の簡単化のため、あるパケットを受信したときに過去にリレーしたことがないデータについては全てリレーを行うこととした。これにより、センサユニットとサーバとが直接通信可能な距離になくとも、あるセンサユニットとサーバならびに各センサユニット間の距離が直接通信可能な範囲内にあれば、データの取得が可能となる。

2.2 センサ回路

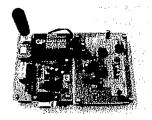
2.2.1 汎用センサ

家電製品の稼働状況を把握するために、本研究では電界強度計を応用したセンサを開発した。このセンサは、近年の家電製品が電磁現象を多用していることに注目したもので、特定の周波数成分の電界強度を計測する。まず家電製品ほとんど全てに対応するための汎用センサ回路を設計した。ここでは、一般的な電化製品の多くがコイルによる変圧器を内蔵していることに注目し、センサ回路の共振周波数を東日本地域の商用電源周波数である 50 Hzに設定した。

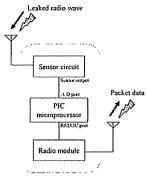
図3にセンサ回路の概要図を示す、家電製品の近傍で観測できる50Hzの成分を共振回路によって抽出し、増幅・整流させた後、ローパスフィルタ(LPF)を通過させる.このLPFによって、対象とする信号成分である50Hzが入力されている間、センサ回路はほぼ一定電圧を出力するようになる.

Table 1. Specification of the sensor unit.

ltem	Specification
Microprocessor	PIC16F876 (Microchip Technology Inc.)
Processor clock	10 MHz
Radio module	CDC-TR02B (Design Circuit, Inc.)
Radio frequency	315 MHz
Radio antenna	RH3 (120~900 MHz, Diamond)
Modulation	Amplitude Shift Keying
Transfer rate	115.2 kbps
Unit weight	~250 g (battery included)
Size (HWD)	150 × 100 × 40 mm (antenna excluded)



(a) Circuit board



(b) Schematic diagram

Fig. 1. Sensor unit.

Start flag (0xAA)	Unit ID	Sequence number	Data	Checksum
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Fig. 2. Packet structure. All segments except the start flag are Manchester-coded before the transmission.

対象となる電化製品が使用中かどうかを判別するためには、関値処理によるon / off判別が必要となるが、センサ回路の出力電圧は電界強度ならびにセンサ部と

対象との距離(設置位置)にも依存するため、センサ 回路側では閾値判別はせず、測定値をそのままサーバ へ転送することとした.

2.2.2 テレビ用センサ

汎用センサは商用電源周波数を観測するよう設計していた.これは多数の家電製品に対応するためであるが、家電製品が密に設置されたような、例えばテレビとビデオデッキが置かれたような場所では、そのどちらに反応しているのか判断が難しくなる可能性がある.しかしテレビを見るという行為は習慣性があり、また見る番組の多くが毎日あるいは毎週の決まった時刻に放送されるため、後の解析が比較的容易であると考えられる[7]ことから、テレビの使用状況を正確にモニタリングすることは重要であると考えられる.そこで本研究では、汎用センサと併せてテレビ用センサの開発も行った.

テレビに映し出される映像は複数の走査線で構成されており、この映像をあるフレームレートで切り替えることで動画を表示している。従来のアナログテレビジョン方式における走査線数NとフレームレートfVの値を表2に示す。従来のブラウン管を用いたテレビ受像器においては、走査線を表示するために、電子銃の近傍におかれた電磁石を水平走査周波数で駆動している。すなわち、テレビを使用中のときにこの電磁石が発生する微弱な電磁現象を観測することができるようになると考えられる。

水平走査周波数fHは走査線数NとフレームレートfVとの積で与えられる.表2に示されるように、NTSCやPALなどの各規格において走査線数等は異なっても、水平走査周波数は約15.7kHzでほぼ同じである.そこで、テレビ用センサ回路を設計するにあたっては、この15.7kHzを観測することとした.

3. 評価実験

まず本研究で開発したセンサユニットについて、その無線通信可能距離について評価を行った. ここではセンサユニットとサーバ間の距離を 500 mmずつ移動させながら、各地点でセンサユニットから 50 パケットを送信させ、その受信成功率を調べた.

また、センサ回路の動作を確認するため、汎用センサについて、センサ回路への入力信号(取得信号)、増幅ならびに整流処理中の波形、およびセンサ回路出力波形について、電化製品の電源が切られている場合と電源が入っている(使用中の)場合について観測を行った。本実験では波形の記録にディジタルオシロスコープ(TDS210、Tektronix社製)を用いた。続いて、センサの有効性を検討するため、汎用センサについては電化製品の1つとして電子レンジをとりあげ、また複数の電子レンジについて評価を行い、テレビ用センサについては大きさの異なる複数のブラウン管テレビについて評価を行った。

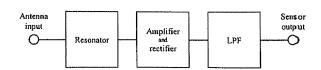


Fig. 3. Schematic diagram of the sensor circuit.

Table 2. Definitions of conventional color television formats.

Format	Scan. line N (lines/frame)	Frame rate f_V (Hz)	Horizontal scan. freq. f _H (kHz)
NTSC	525	29.97	15.734
PAL (M, 60)	625 (525)	25 (29.97)	15.625 (15.734)
SECAM	625	25	15.625

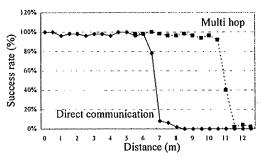


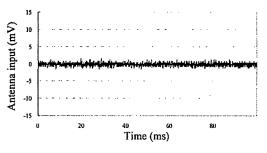
Fig. 4. Data communication range of the wireless system

最後に、本センサを実際に既存家屋に導入し、屋内行動モニタの適用可能性を評価する実験を行った。本実験には健常男性1名が参加した、被験者には予め口頭によるインフォームドコンセントを得た、本実験では4台のセンサを手渡し、それぞれテレビ、電子レンジ、炊飯器、そしてノートパソコンの近傍に設置するよう依頼した。具体的な設置場所として、テレビ用センサと電子レンジ用センサについてはそれぞれの機器の上側に、炊飯器についてはその後側、ノートパソコンについてはACアダプタ部分の近くに置くよう、説明を行った。

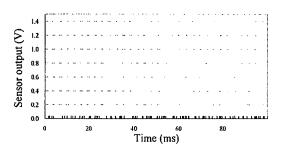
4. 実験結果

4.1 無線システムの通信可能距離

通信可能距離について評価した結果を図4に示す. 図中の実線は、センサユニットとサーバとの間にデータリレーを行う他のユニットが存在しなかった場合 (Direct communication) の結果を示している.この結果から、センサユニットの無線到達距離が約6mであることが確認できる.また、サーバから距離5mの位



(a) Received signal (appliances are off)



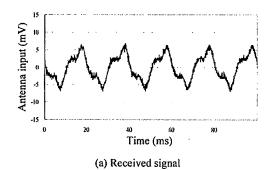
(b) Sensor output Fig. 5. Environmental noise and sensor output.

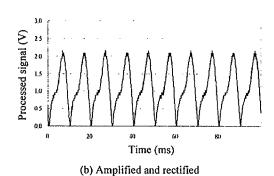
置にリレーとなるユニットを設置した場合の結果を図中の破線に示す(Multi hop).この結果,通信可能距離が延長できることが確認できる.

4.2 センサ回路の動作

本研究で制作したセンサ回路について動作を確認した結果を図5ならびに図6に示す.図5(a)は周囲に使用中の電化製品が存在しないときに取得された信号波形で、目立った成分は観測されていない.結果、センサ回路の出力電圧もほぼ0Vとなる(図5(b)).実際には、ごく僅かではあるが商用電源周波数である50Hzの成分が家屋内の至る所で観測される.しかし、本センサはそれほど増幅度を大きくしていないため、このような極微弱な成分には反応しない.

図6は、対象となる電化製品(ここでは電子レンジ)が使用中である場合の、汎用センサ回路の各部分での信号波形を示している、図6(a)は取得された波形であるが、主として商用電源周波数である50 Hzの成分で構成されていることが確認できる。この50 Hzの成分が共振回路によって抽出され、増幅・整流された結果を図6(b)に示す。その後、平滑化回路によって一定電圧値(この場合、約1.18 V)が得られることが確認されたも動作を確認した結果、本回路は電子レンジについても動作を確認した結果、本回路は電子レンジについても動作を確認した結果、本回路は電子レンジについても動作を確認した結果、本回路は電子レンジについても動作を確認した結果、本回路は電子レンジについても動作を確認した結果、本回路は電子レンジについても動作を確認した結果、本回路は電子レンジについても動作を確認した結果、本回路は電子レンジについても動作を確認された。同様に、テレビ用センサについてもメーカー・画面サイズの異なる4台の受像器について評価したところ、テレビが使用中のときに約0.9 V〜約1.0 Vが出力されることが確認された。





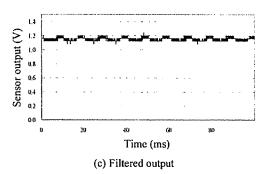


Fig. 6. Signal processing of a general-purpose sensor (microwave oven).

4.3 家電製品稼働モニタセンサの既存家屋での評価

本センサを実際に既存家屋に導入した結果を図 7 に示す. 本実験では 3 日間の連続運用評価を行った. 貸し出したセンサユニット 4 台のうち, 実際にデータが得られたのは 2 台(炊飯器, テレビ)のみであった. 図 7 は炊飯器およびテレビを対象としたセンサのデータを上下に 2 本並べて描いたもので, それぞれセンサ出力(データ)の最大値ならびに最小値によって正規化している.

5. 考察

本研究で開発したセンサユニットは無線通信のため に微弱無線モジュールを使用しており、その無線到達

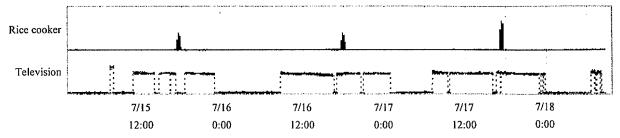


Fig. 7. Experimental result of installing the proposed system in an ordinary house.

距離は約6 mとなっていることが実験により確認された. この通信可能距離は,電波法の規制により送信出力が制限されているため,単独で延長させることは難しい.しかし日本の都市部での住宅事情を考慮すると,不用意に通信可能距離を伸ばすことはセキュリティ上の問題となる. ここで暗号化技術を導入することは有効であると考えられるが,はじめから電波すなわちデータを漏らさないことが最重要である. このようななか,マルチホップ通信技術はサーバと直接通信できないユニットも他のユニットを経由してデータが転送できる可能性があることから,非常に有用な技術であると考えられる.

電磁現象は、モーターや変圧器、リレースイッチな ど、家電製品を含め我々の生活の至る所で活用されて いる. さらに、電力を使用中あるいは供給中の電源線 の周囲にも電磁場が存在することが知られており,ク ランプメータはその電源線内の電流量の推定にこの現 象を利用している. 本研究で開発したセンサも, 抽出 する周波数が可変である(テレビ用センサでは 15.7 kHzの成分を観測するなど)ことを除けば、クランプ メータの一種として考えることができる. クランプメ ータに対する本研究で開発した汎用センサの優位点 は、汎用センサは対象となる電化製品のすぐそば(機 器のすぐ上や横など)に置くだけで使用可能であるの に対し、クランプメータは電源線に触れる必要があり、 これは高齢被験者自身の手でセンサを導入するときに は難点となることである(本研究の目的は、必要なと きに被験者自身の手で導入可能なモニタリングシステ ムの構築である).

2.2.1 節で述べたとおり,汎用センサの共振周波数は東日本地域の商用電源周波数である 50 Hzに合わせてある. そのため,コイルによる変圧器を内蔵する大半の電化製品に対して汎用センサは適用可能であると考えられる. 簡単な評価実験では,電子ポット,コーヒーメーカー,扇風機,加湿器,液晶モニタ(ACアダプタ部分),ノートバソコン(同ACアダプタ部分)にも適用可能であることが確認された. しかし,十分大きなセンサ出力が得られる範囲は非常に限られていた.センサ回路内にある増幅器の増幅度を上げることで,センサの出力電圧を上昇させ,これによって設置自由度をある程度向上させることができると考えられるが,これは家屋内に張り巡らされている電線からの「雑音」も増幅してしまう. この解決のためには,AGCの

ような技術を開発・導入することや、複数の増幅度で計測することも考えられるが、このような小さな検出エリアは他の電化製品からの混信を排除できるなど利点もあるため、今後慎重に取り組まなければならない問題の一つである。テレビ用センサなど特有の周波数成分に着目したセンサ回路では、その近傍に似たような周波数成分の発生源が無い限り増幅度を大きくすることができ、結果として設置自由度を上げることができる(センサとして使用できる設置可能範囲が広い).

図 6(a)は電子レンジから取得された波形であるが、主として 50 Hzの成分で構成されているものの、正弦波状ではなく、高調波が観測されている。この原因としては、電子レンジの内部回路で使われている半波倍電圧電源回路による歪みの影響が考えられる。今後、電子レンジ専用センサの開発も視野に入れ、この現象について検討を行う予定である。

本センサを実際に既存家屋に導入したとき、テレビと炊飯器以外の電化製品(電子レンジ、ノートパソコン)でセンサが機能しなかった原因ははっきりとしなかったが、考えられる要因としては、センサユニットの設置位置が不適切であった(電磁現象が十分観測可能な場所ではなかった)こと、あるいはセンサユニットの貸し出し時に事前に設定した増幅度が適切でなかった(低かった)ことが考えられる。しかしながら、本実験より、提案するセンサユニットが一般の人にも設置可能であること,また電化製品の使用状況をモニタリングできることが確認できた。

本研究の最終的な目標は、記録されたセンサデータと被験者の実際の活動との関係を明らかにし、また健康状態を推定することであるが、現在のところそこまでは至っていない、南部ら[8]は、一般家庭にテレビが広く普及していること、またテレビを見るという習慣がその放送時刻に依存していることに注目し、テレビを用状況から被験者の健康状態を推定する手法を提案した。この研究では、テレビを視聴する時間のランダム性が健康状態と何らかの関係があることを示唆していた。この事実の確認にはさらなる実証実験が必要であると考えられるが、本研究で開発した、電化製品の近傍に設置するだけで使用可能なセンサシステムは、この研究においても今後の評価実験を容易にするものとして有用であると考えられる.

近傍に設置された他の機器からの混信を避けるためと、混信が無ければ結果として増幅回路での増幅度を上げることができ、これによってセンサの設置自由度を向上させるためである。すなわち、センサ回路の共振周波数と増幅度を適切に設定することで、任意の電化製品に対応可能になると考えられる。

6. まとめ

本研究では、既存家屋に被験者自身の手で導入可能 な行動モニタリングシステムの構築を目指し、無線式 行動モニタリングシステムを開発した. 考案したシス テムでは電化製品に注目し、その使用状況を把握する ためのセンサとして電界強度計を応用することで、単 に置くだけで使用可能なセンサユニットを開発した. 測定データは無線によってサーバへ送信するため, デ ータ線等も必要とせず、既存家屋に容易に導入可能な システムであると考えられる. 実際に既存家屋に本研 究で開発したセンサを導入した結果、提案するセンサ ユニットが一般の人にも設置可能であること, また電 化製品の使用状況をモニタリングできることが確認さ れた. 本研究で開発した汎用センサは複数の電化製品 に対応できる反面、設置自由度がそれほど高くないこ とから,今後も引き続き,テレビ用センサのような専 用センサの開発等が必要である. また, 本システムの 有効性を評価するためには、今後、多数の臨床評価を 行うことも必要であると考えている.

謝辞

本研究を遂行するにあたり多大なる協力を頂いた赤羽根由智氏ならびに永野川晴久氏に感謝致します。なお、本研究の一部は文部科学省科学研究費補助金 若手研究B(16700429)および厚生労働科学研究費補助金(16-医療-30),長寿医療委託(15-公-4),平成16年度千葉大学戦略的基礎研究推進事業により行われたものであり、ここに記して感謝の意を表します。

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