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The evaluation of post-operative alignment in total knee replacement using a CT-based navigation system

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We compared the alignment of 39 total knee replacements implanted using the conventional alignment guide system with 37 implanted using a CT-based navigation system, performed by a single surgeon. The knees were evaluated using full-length weight-bearing anteroposterior radiographs, lateral radiographs and CT scans.

The mean hip-knee-ankle angle, coronal femoral component angle and coronal tibial component angle were 181.8° (174.2° to 188.3°), 88.5° (84.0° to 91.8°) and 89.7° (86.3° to 95.1°), respectively for the conventional group and 180.8° (178.2° to 185.1°), 89.3° (85.8° to 92.0°) and 89.9° (88.0° to 93.0°), respectively for the navigated group.

The mean sagittal femoral component angle was 85.5° (80.6° to 92.8°) for the conventional group and 89.6° (85.5° to 94.0°) for the navigated group.

The mean rotational femoral and tibial component angles were -0.7° (-8.8° to 9.8°) and -3.3° (-16.8° to 5.8°) for the conventional group and -0.6° (-3.5° to 3.0°) and 0.3° (-5.3° to 7.7°) for the navigated group.

The ideal angles of all alignments in the navigated group were obtained at significantly higher rates than in the conventional group. Our results demonstrated significant improvements in component positioning with a CT-based navigation system, especially with respect to rotational alignment.

Total knee replacement (TKR) has become one of the most successful procedures in orthopaedics with survival rates greater than 90% after 15 years.[1,2] The success of this procedure depends on many factors, including the pre-operative condition of the patient, the design and materials of the components and surgical techniques.[1-16] It is important to position the femoral and tibial components accurately and to balance the soft tissues. Malpositioning of the component can lead to failures due to aseptic loosening, instability, polyethylene wear and dislocation of the patella.[1-14]

Various surgical techniques and systems of instrumentation have been devised to obtain optimal post-operative alignment of the components. In the coronal plane it is recommended that the femoral and tibial components be positioned with less than 3° of error,[3,4] but such placement can only be achieved in 70% to 80% of patients using intra- or extramedullary alignment guides.[5,6] The point of entry of the intramedullary alignment guide is critical as it can change both the coronal and the sagittal alignment.[7] For rotational alignment of the femoral component, use of the Whiteside line and the transepicondylar axis is recommended to avoid problems with the patella.[8,9] However, the transepicondylar axis can be identified visually within 3° in only 75% of arthritic knees[17] and there may be errors in its identification when using a mini-invasive approach.[18] We cannot expect a high degree of accuracy using conventional techniques for rotational alignment by palpating anatomical landmarks.[17,19,20]

In order to improve post-operative alignment, navigation systems have been developed for TKR. Many clinical and experimental studies of these systems have shown that the accuracy of implanted components can be improved in spite of the increase in costs and operating time.[21-31] This may not, however, improve the outcome in the short-term.[32] Image-free navigation systems estimate the centre of the joint kinematically and digitise the anatomical landmarks. CT-based navigation systems allow three-dimensional pre-operative planning from the CT data and surface-matching registration. With both systems, over 90% of the operated knees achieved alignment of the mechanical axis of the leg within 3° of neutral,[21-26] but opinions differ as to the accuracy of image-free systems in

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Table I. The pre-operative demographic data for the conventional and the navigated groups

	Conventional group (39 knees)	Navigated group (37 knees)
Mean age in yrs (range)	76.9 (68 to 85)	75.4 (61 to 87)
Gender		
Male	8	8
Female	31	29
Diagnosis		
Osteoarthritis	36	35
Rheumatoid arthritis	3	2
Pre-operative KSS[*] (range)	54.8 (21 to 76)	54.4 (10 to 73)
Maximum extension (°) (range)	-5.5 (-30 to 0)	-11.9 (-40 to 0)
Maximum flexion (°) (range)	119.4 (80 to 150)	118.6 (85 to 145)
Pre-operative FTA[†] (°) (range)	183.8 (160.2 to 194.4)	181.6 (161.0 to 194.0)
Mean follow-up time in yrs (range)	2.3 (0.5 to 4.7)	1.8 (0.5 to 4.4)

[*] KSS, Knee society score

[†] FTA, femorotibial angle

obtaining rotational alignment.[22,24,27,28,33] Stockl et al[28] used the post-operative CT scan method and concluded that the image-free navigation systems achieved significantly better rotational alignment of the femoral component than did the conventional group. However, their range of alignment was relatively large (-7° to +4°). Siston et al[33] found that an image-free navigation system was no more accurate than four traditional techniques in establishing appropriate femoral rotation in ten cadaver specimens. Little information has been published on the rotational alignment of CT-based navigation systems. Registration in a CT-based navigation system uses surface matching of the large aspects of bones, whereas the image-free systems are required to specify anatomical landmarks accurately. We hypothesised that a CT-based system would improve both rotational and coronal alignment. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the accuracy of a CT-based navigation system for TKR in the coronal and rotational planes compared with the use of conventional alignment guides, when employed by a single surgeon.

Patients and Methods

Of a total of 137 primary TKRs performed in 119 patients by a single surgeon (SM) between January 2002 and January 2006, 81 knees in 68 patients had the Nexgen legacy posterior stabilised prosthesis (Zimmer, Warsaw, Indiana). A conventional alignment guide system and a CT-based navigation system were used in alternate patients. A study of these patients was approved by the Institutional Review Board, and they were informed of the risk of radiation exposure required. Of the 68 patients, informed consent was obtained from 63 (76 knees). A conventional alignment guide system was used in 39 knees in 32 patients (the 'conventional' group), and in 37 knees in 31 patients a CT-based navigation system was used (the 'navigated' group). After operation all patients in both groups were evaluated using full-length weight-bearing anteroposterior and lateral radiographs. All patients in the conventional group and 28 knees in 23 patients in the navigated group were assessed using CT scans. The Knee Society scoring system[34] was used to evaluate the pre-operative status of the knee one week before the surgery. The demographic data for both groups are presented in Table I; there was little difference between the two groups except for the angle of maximum extension.

Pre-operative planning procedures and surgical technique

The conventional group. Full-length weight-bearing anteroposterior radiographs were taken with the patella positioned at the centre of the femoral condyles. In the lateral films care was taken to ensure that the posterior condyles of the femur were not misaligned.

A standard medial parapatellar incision and approach was used. For the distal femur, the intramedullary alignment guide was inserted slightly medial to the midpoint of the femoral condyles. This entry point was determined as the position where the intramedullary line of the femoral canal exits the femoral condyles on the full-length anteroposterior radiographs. The distal femoral cutting block was then attached to the alignment guide and adjusted to the anatomical valgus angle of the femur (mean 5.9°, 3.0° to 9.0°). After cutting the distal femur, the cutting block was set to 3° of external rotation from the posterior condylar line. The appropriate cuts were then made.

The extramedullary alignment guide was used for cutting the proximal tibia and was set at a level approximately 10 mm distal to the lateral articular surface of the tibia. The sagittal alignment of the tibia was set parallel to the mechanical axis, and the posterior slope of the tibial component fixed in relation to the lateral tibial plateau.[35] The rotational alignment of the tibial component was adjusted to the anteroposterior axis between the centre of the cut

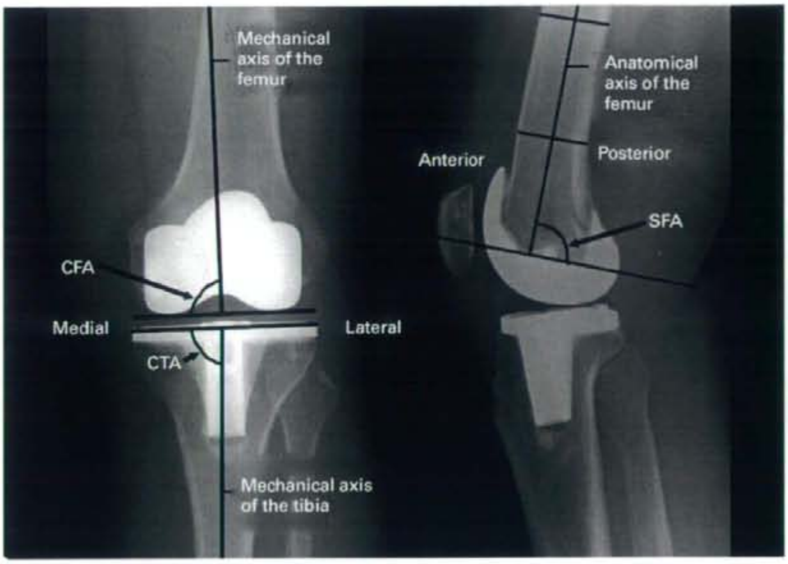

Fig. 1

Evaluation of the coronal and sagittal alignment of the components. The coronal femoral component angle (CFA) is the medial angle between the mechanical axis of the femur and the horizontal axis of the two prosthetic condyles. The coronal tibial component angle (CTA) is the medial angle between the mechanical axis of the tibia and the horizontal axis of the tibial tray. The sagittal femoral component angle (SFA) is the posterior angle between the anatomical axis of the femur and a tangent to the distal part of the femoral component.

surface and the border of the medial third of the tibial tuberosity.[36,37] This axis was chosen to avoid rotational mismatch of the femoral and tibial components, and to achieve better patellar tracking.[10] The patella was resurfaced in all patients. All the femoral, tibial and patellar components were fixed with cement.

The navigated group. We used a CT-based navigation system (Vector Vision Knee 1.5. Brain LAB Inc., Heimstetten, Germany). For the initial CT scans, a 100 mm section of the femoral head, a 200 mm section whose midpoint was the knee joint and a 100 mm section of the distal tibia were scanned with a slice thickness of 2 mm. The scanning time was approximately 10 seconds and the calculated radiation dose for the procedure was 3.7 mSV. The cost was approximately US$ 120 to 130. From these data, we defined the centre of the femoral head and the centre of the ankle joint after adjusting for the bone threshold and the window level and width. The bone threshold value was between 100 HU and 150 HU according to the patient's CT data; the extra artefact was deleted and the bone surface identified as clearly as possible. The femur, tibia and patella were then separated from each other at four points, namely the intercondylar eminence, the lateral tibial plateau, the medial tibial plateau, and the centre of the patella.

The anatomical axis of the femur was defined as the straight line between the centre of the intramedullary canal of the proximal and distal parts of the femur in both the coronal and sagittal planes. The mechanical axis of the femur was taken as the straight line between the centre of the head of the femur and the centre of the distal condyles. The coronal alignment of the femoral component was planned to be perpendicular to the mechanical axis of the femur and the sagittal alignment to be perpendicular to the anatomical axis of the distal femur in order to avoid notching of the femur due to the anterior bowing (mean 3.0°; 1.0° to 6.0°, in flexion to the mechanical axis). The rotational alignment was adjusted to the surgical epicondylar axis, which is a line connecting the sulcus of the medial epicondyle and the most prominent point of the lateral epicondyle of the femur.[8,9] After aligning the femoral component to the axis the size of the femoral component was adjusted as close as possible to the posterior condyles. The mechanical axis of the tibia was defined by a straight line between the centre of the cut of the proximal tibia and the centre of the ankle joint.[38] The planned coronal alignment of the tibial component was perpendicular to this axis. The planned sagittal alignment of the tibial component was parallel to the lateral tibial slope (mean 6.8°; 5.0° to 8.0°, to the mechanical axis).[35] The rotational alignment was adjusted to a line from the medial third of the tubercle at the level of the patellar tendon attachment to the centre of the cut surface of the tibia. The tibial component was positioned

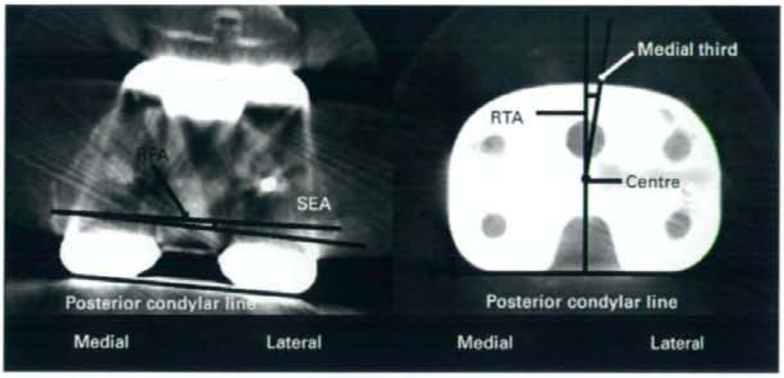

Fig. 2

Evaluation of the rotational alignment of the components. The rotational femoral component angle (RFA) is the angle between the surgical epicondylar axis (SEA) and the posterior condylar line of the femoral component. The rotational tibial component angle (RTA) is the angle between a line connecting the centre of the tibial component with the medial third of the tibial tubercle and the line perpendicular to the posterior condylar line of the tibial component.

Table II. Intra- and inter-observer reliability (κ values)

	Conventional group (39 knees)	Navigated group (37 knees)
Intra-observer reliability	0.94	0.95
Intra-observer reliability (observer A)	0.96	0.97
Intra-observer reliability (observer B)	0.96	0.97

10 mm distal from the highest point of the tibial plateau and a size was chosen so that the component would not overhang the medial border of the tibia. The pre-operative planning time was approximately 15 to 20 minutes.

At operation, the same medial parapatellar approach was used as in the conventional group. The reference clamp was fixed to the distal femur or the proximal tibia with one or two pins. Registration using surface matching of the bones was done with a pointer to match the corresponding three-dimensional CT images on the screen. A minimum of eight to a maximum of 20 points were registered until an accuracy of 1.9 mm or better was achieved. Using the cutting block adapter, the femoral and tibial blocks were positioned to match the plane of cut that had been determined before operation and was shown on the navigation system. After resection, all the planes were checked by the verification tool of the navigation system. The patella was resurfaced in all patients. All the femoral, tibial, and patellar components were fixed with cement.

Evaluation of post-operative alignment. The knees were assessed using the knee and functional score of the Knee Society scoring system six months after operation. Student's *t*-test was used to identify statistically significant differences ($p < 0.05$).

The alignment in the coronal plane was measured on the anteroposterior whole-leg radiograph (Fig. 1). The mechanical axis of the leg was defined as the hip-knee-ankle angle, which is the angle between the line connecting the centre of the hip with that of the knee, the mechanical axis of the femur, and the line connecting the centre of the knee with that of the ankle joint, which is the mechanical axis of the tibia. The ideal hip-knee-ankle angle was defined as within 3° of 180°. The coronal femoral component angle was measured as the medial angle between the mechanical axis of the femur and the horizontal axis of the two prosthetic condyles. The coronal tibial component angle was measured as the medial angle between the mechanical axis of the tibia and the horizontal axis of the tibial tray. Ideally, both these angles measured within 2° of 90°.

Alignment in the sagittal plane was measured on lateral radiographs (Fig. 1). The sagittal femoral component angle was defined as the posterior angle between the anatomical axis of the distal one-third of the femur and a tangent to the distal part of the femoral component. The tangent was

Table III. The differences of absolute value from the target angle (°)

	Target angle	Conventional group	Navigated group
Hip-knee-ankle angle (°; range)	180	2.7 (0 to 8.3)	1.4 (0 to 5.1)
Coronal femoral component angle (°; range)	90	2.2 (1 to 6.0)	1.3 (0 to 4.2)
Coronal tibial component angle (°; range)	90	1.5 (0.2 to 5.1)	1.1 (0 to 3.0)
Sagittal femoral component angle (°; range)	90	4.7 (0.7 to 9.4)	1.5 (0 to 4.6)
Rotational femoral component angle (°; range)	0	2.7 (0.1 to 9.8)	1.6 (0.4 to 3.5)
Rotational tibial component angle (°; range)	0	4.8 (0 to 16.8)	2.5 (0 to 7.7)

treated to be parallel to the bone-implant interface of the distal part of the femoral component. The ideal angle lay within 3° of 90°.

Rotational alignment was measured on the CT scan (Fig. 2). A 200 mm section whose midpoint was the knee joint only was scanned with a slice thickness of 2 mm. The rotational femoral component angle was defined as the angle between the surgical epicondylar axis and the posterior condylar line of the femoral component. The rotational tibial component angle was defined as the angle between a line connecting the centre of the tibial component and the medial third of the tibial tubercle and a line perpendicular to the posterior condylar line of the tibial component. The ideal femoral component and rotational tibial angles are defined as within 3° of the target angle (0°).[17,27]

Statistical analysis. A Mann-Whitney U test was used to determine statistically significant differences ($p < 0.05$) in absolute value from the target angles between the two systems using these parameters. Fisher's exact probability test was used to compare the quality of implantation, measured against the ideal position, between the two systems with these parameters ($p < 0.05$). In addition, we evaluated a correlation between error in rotational alignment and the functional score for both groups using Spearman's correlation coefficient by rank test ($p < 0.05$). All measurements were done by two observers (HM and YA). The blinded data did not include the patient information and were numbered randomly. The mean values of three measurements using a digital X-ray measuring system (X-caliper; Eisenlohr Technologies Inc., Davis, California) were measured. The chance-corrected κ-coefficient was calculated to determine intra- and inter-observer agreement, with κ values interpreted according to the recommendations of Landis and Koch.[39] Intra- and interobserver reliability were almost perfect ($p < 0.001$ in each case, Table II).

Results

The mean post-operative Knee Society score was 94.9 (62 to 100) for the conventional and 95.0 (70 to 100) for the navigated group. The mean post-operative functional score was 78.1 (5 to 100) for the conventional group and 78.2 (30 to 100) for the navigated group. No significant difference was detected in these values for the two groups. No patients had a flexion contracture of more than 20° or a flexion angle of less than 90° at six months after surgery.

For coronal alignment, the mean hip-knee-ankle angle was 181.8° (174.2° to 188.3°) for the conventional and 180.8° (178.2° to 185.1°) for the navigated group. The mean coronal femoral component angle was 88.5° (84.0° to 91.8°) for the conventional and 89.3° (85.8° to 92.0°) for the navigated group. The mean coronal tibial component angle was 89.7° (86.3° to 95.1°) for the conventional and 89.9° (88.0° to 93.0°) for the navigated group. The differences in absolute value from the target angle are shown in Table III. There were significant differences in the absolute values from the target angle in tests for the hip-knee-ankle angle ($p < 0.01$) and the coronal femoral component angle ($p = 0.02$), but no significant difference in the coronal tibial component angle ($p = 0.24$) between the two groups. Ideal hip-knee-ankle, coronal femoral component, and coronal tibial component angles were obtained in 71.8% (28 of 39 knees), 71.8% (28 of 39 knees), and 76.9% (30 of 39 knees) of operations for the conventional group, and 91.9% (34 of 37 knees), 91.9% (34 of 37 knees), and 94.6% (35 of 37 knees) of operations for the navigated group ($p < 0.05$, $p < 0.05$, $p < 0.05$), respectively.

For sagittal alignment, the mean sagittal femoral component angle was 85.5° (80.6° to 92.8°) for the conventional and 89.6° (85.4° to 94.0°) for the navigated group. There was a significant difference in the absolute values from the target angle of the sagittal femoral component angle ($p < 0.0001$) between the two groups. Ideal sagittal femoral component angles were obtained in 43.6% (17 of 39 knees) in the conventional group and 89.2% (33 of 37 knees) in the navigated group ($p < 0.01$).

For rotational alignment, the mean rotational femoral component angle was -0.7° (-8.8° to 9.8°) for the conventional and -0.6° (-3.5° to 3.0°) for the navigated group. The mean rotational tibial component angle was -3.3° (-16.8° to 5.8°) for the conventional and 0.3° (-5.3° to 7.7°) for the navigated group. There was a significant difference in the absolute values from the target angle of the rotational femoral component ($p = 0.04$) and rotational tibial component angles ($p = 0.03$) between the two groups. Ideal rotational femoral component and rotational tibial component angles were obtained in 66.7% (26 of 39 knees) and 46.2% (18 of 39 knees) in the conventional group and 89.3% (25 of 28 knees) and 78.6% (22 of 28 knees) in the navigated group ($p = 0.04$ and 0.01), respectively. There was no significant correlation between errors in rotational alignment and the functional score for both the femoral and the tibial components.

Discussion

Total knee replacement has become a very successful procedure owing to improvements in prostheses and in surgical techniques. However, malpositioning of the components may occur when the conventional method is used.[1-14] Long-leg standing radiographs are commonly used for pre-operative planning, but they can be affected by the position of the limb and the direction of scanning because they are two-dimensional images. Other possible causes of error include bowing of the bones, severe deformities and obesity.

Navigation systems for TKR have been developed to reduce these errors. This study compared post-operative alignment achieved using CT-based navigation with that using the conventional system. For coronal alignment, the positioning of components was improved by the navigation system, with results similar to those of Nizard et al[25] and Perlick et al.[26] The CT-based system ensures the accuracy of positioning the components in the coronal plane.

The sagittal alignment of the components was improved by the navigation system. Poorer results with the conventional method seem to relate to the use of the intramedullary guide whose alignment is affected by its point of entry and direction. Mihalko et al[7] found differences in alignment in the sagittal plane using three different entry points for the intramedullary guide. Their trials on seven cadaver limbs varied between 2.2° of extension and 3.8° of flexion relative to the mechanical axis. With the image-free navigation system, many authors have concluded that this method is useful for cutting the distal femur perpendicular to the mechanical axis of the femur.[28] However, this method may increase the risk of notching the anterior cortex of the distal femur and require manual adjustment of the position of the cutting guide to avoid this. We chose the anatomical axis of the distal femur as the planned sagittal alignment of the femoral component to avoid notching. Post-operative sagittal alignment was also measured using the distal anatomical axis as a reference line to minimise the effect of sagittal bowing of the femur.

Few studies have yet demonstrated any advantages of the CT-based navigation system with respect to rotational alignment. In our series, 89.3% of the femoral components were implanted within 3° of the ideal rotational alignment and the range (-3.5° to 3.0°) was relatively small. Using the image-free system, it is uncertain whether digitising the bony landmarks is precise, and the accuracy of the rotational alignment is still uncertain.[22,24,27,28,33] Many authors[17,19,20] have reported variability in the identification of the transepicondylar axis. Yau et[19] found that the maximum combined error was 8.2°, with 5.3° at the medial femoral epicondyle and 2.9° at the lateral in the transepicondylar axis. These results suggest that surgeons are not able to rely completely on the accuracy of the image-free navigation system. Image-free systems are more widely used than the CT-based system, probably because of the need for pre-operative CT scans and the planning time.

Although this study has shown that the CT-based navigation system significantly improved the accuracy of the rotational alignment of the tibial component, the variation from the ideal angle of tibial alignment was larger than that of the femoral alignment, as others have noted.[22,24,27] One reason for this is the difficulty in determining the medial third of the tibial tubercle at the same point as was defined pre-operatively. Even so, 78.6% of the tibial components in the navigated group were implanted within 3° of the ideal rotational alignment, as has been found using an image-free navigation system.[22]

It is difficult to determine the ideal tibial rotational alignment because the method of defining the anteroposterior axis of the tibia is variable.[36,37] We used the line connecting the centre of the tibia and the medial third of the tibial tubercle as the reference axis to avoid the rotational mismatch between the femoral and tibial components[36,37] and to achieve better patellar tracking.[10]

Determining the indicator of 'outliers' is another difficult issue in tibial rotational alignment. Rotator restraint produced by the tibiofemoral linkage of the posterior stabilised design should be considered. However, the Nexgen legacy posterior stabilised prosthesis (Zimmer) has 12° of freedom of internal and external rotation in full extension. In this study, within 3° was chosen for the ideal range in order to be able to compare the accuracy with other navigation systems.[27]

Some reports[21,29] comparing the accuracy of the CT-based navigation system to that of the image-free navigation system show no differences in the accuracy of the post-operative alignment using the radiographs. Image-free navigation systems are widely used for computer-assisted surgery. Jenny et al[23] reported that 92.3% (217 of 235 knees) of operations had a coronal mechanical femorotibial angle within a range of ± 3° using the OrthoPilot system (Aesculap, Tuttlingen, Germany), compared with 72.3% (170 of 235 knees) with conventional methods. Tingart et al[30] reported that 94.8% (474 of 500 knees) of operations had a varus/valgus alignment within a range of ± 3° of 180° (the target angle of the mechanical axis) using the VectorVision CT-free Knee (BrainLAB, Munich, Germany; CI System Orthopedics, Munich, Germany), compared with 74.4% (372 of 500 knees) with conventional methods. The main disadvantage of the CT-based navigation system is that it requires pre-operative preparation with additional costs and exposure to radiation. However, our results show that the CT-based system has advantages over the image-free system, in particular in determining femoral rotation.

The current study has some limitations. The number of patients is relatively small. The post-operative alignment was evaluated by radiographs and/or CT images. This is a two-dimensional evaluation and is affected by the positioning of the limb and the direction of scanning, despite the fact that pre-operative planning and intra-operative procedures are performed in three dimensions. Cobb et al[40] reported the accuracy of unicompartmental knee replacement three-dimensionally from the pre-operative and post-operative CT images. It is important to evaluate the post-operative alignment three-dimensionally. However, our post-operative CT was performed only around the knee joint, in order to minimise the dose of radiation, and whole-leg alignment was evaluated by this method. The sagittal alignment of the tibial component was not evaluated as it was adjusted to the lateral anatomical tibial slope.

This study evaluated the accuracy of a CT-based navigation system using post-operative radiographs and CT scans. Our results demonstrate significant improvements in positioning of the components with the CT-based system, especially with respect to rotational alignment.

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Evaluation of impingement of the anterior tibial post during gait in a posteriorly-stabilised total knee replacement

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Mechanical failure because of wear or fracture of the polyethylene tibial post in posteriorly-stabilised total knee replacements has been extensively described. In this study of 12 patients with a clinically and radiologically successful NexGen LPS posteriorly-stabilised prosthesis impingement of the anterior tibial post was evaluated in vivo in three dimensions during gait using radiologically-based image-matching techniques.

Impingement was observed in all images of the patients during the stance phase, although the NexGen LPS was designed to accommodate 14° of hyperextension of the component before impingement occurred. Impingement arises as a result of posterior translation of the femur during the stance phase. Further attention must therefore be given to the configuration of the anterior portion of the femoral component and the polyethylene post when designing posteriorly-stabilised total knee replacements.

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Kinematic analysis of many designs of total knee replacement (TKR) with subjects performing various functional activities is now available.[1-8] Most of these fluoroscopic studies have focused on the movement of the femoral component relative to the tibial tray. There is very little information about the relative movement between the femoral component and the polyethylene tibial insert, especially regarding impingement of the anterior post. Patients with a TKR may extend their knees during gait,[9] with contact of the anterior tibial post.[10]

Flexion of the femoral component and/or the posterior tibial slope allow impingement of the femoral cam on the anterior aspect of the tibial post.[9-13] However, in many cases with severe wear or fracture of the tibial post, no specific malposition or malalignment of either the femoral or the tibial components could be identified.[13-15] Without relative hyperextension of the implant, posterior translation of the femur relative to the tibia could result in impingement against the anterior post. The position of the femur relative to the tibia near full extension is determined by the surface geometry of the articular components, the cam-post mechanism, and the quadriceps force under weight-bearing conditions.[16] The tibial post may function as a substitute for the anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) by providing anterior stability of the knee in low degrees of flexion.

The main purpose of this study was to determine whether the intercondylar notch of the femoral component impinges on the anterior aspect of the tibial post during gait with a posteriorly-stabilised TKR using high-resolution dynamic flat-panel detector images. The secondary purpose was to observe whether there was a correlation between the sagittal alignment of knee prostheses and the impingement on the anterior post under dynamic weight-bearing conditions.

Patients and Methods

A total of 12 patients who had a good outcome following TKR were included in the study following informed consent and approval from the institutional review board. There were two men and ten women with a mean age of 73 years (67 to 86). Their mean height was 149 cm (137 to 157) and their mean weight was 62 kg (45 to 71). The mean pre-operative extension of the knee was -10° (-25° to 0°) and the mean pre-operative flexion was 110° (25° to 130°). The pre-operative diagnosis was osteoarthritis in seven knees and rheumatoid arthritis in five. All the patients received a posteriorly-stabilised TKR (NexGen LPS, Zimmer Inc., Warsaw, Indiana). According to the manufacturer, this implant is designed to avoid impingement of the anterior post in up to 14° of hyperextension without anteroposterior movement of the femoral component. The spine-cam mechanism is designed to work for knee flexion

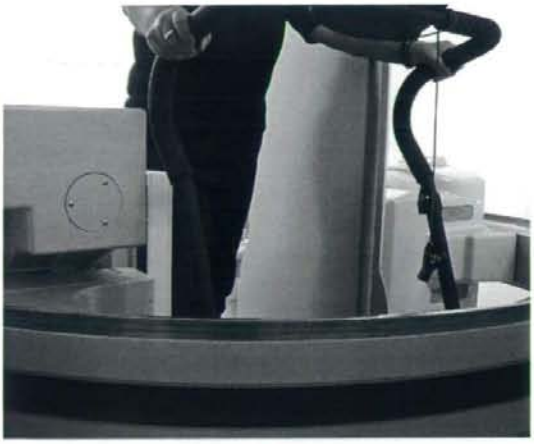

Fig. 1a

Fig. 1b

Gait was analysed a) on a treadmill at 0.8 m/s while b) movement of the knee was observed using a large flat-panel radiological image detector.

angles above 75°, providing stability in the sagittal plane and also allowing for posterior rollback in flexion to substitute for the posterior cruciate ligament.

The mean follow-up was for 19 months (4 to 49), the mean post-operative extension was -3° (-10° to 0°) and the mean post-operative flexion was 117° (55° to 135°). The mean knee score based on the Knee Society clinical rating system[17] was 95 (82 to 100) and the functional score was 77 (35 to 100).

Surgical technique. All the operations were performed by the senior author (HM). The components were aligned to allow the mechanical axis to pass through the centre of the prosthetic knee. On the sagittal plane, the femoral bone cut was planned to be perpendicular to the anatomical axis and care was taken to avoid notching the anterior cortex. An 8 mm intramedullary femoral cutting guide was passed into the entry point on the femur, which was pre-determined by anteroposterior and lateral radiographs. The tibial bone cut on the sagittal plane was planned to be parallel to the lateral anatomical tibial slope. The rotational alignment was adjusted to the epicondylar axis and the tibial tuberosity. Soft tissue balancing was performed to achieve varus and valgus stability in both extension and flexion.

Kinematic analysis. Continuous sagittal radiological images of gait on a treadmill at 0.8 m/s were obtained for each patient using a flat-panel detector (Hitachi, Clavis, Tokyo, Japan). This produced 3 frames per second with an image area of 397 mm (H) × 298 mm (V), and 0.20 mm × 0.20 mm/pixel resolution (Fig. 1). The higher contrast resolution of the radiological images provided the basis for an even greater improvement in accuracy.[18,19] The flat-panel detector was useful in capturing dynamic activities because of its broader outlook than fluoroscopy. Three images of single-leg stance and three of the swing phase were captured from different gait cycles and analysed using an image-matching technique.[20] A total of 72 images were used for the analysis: 36 for each of the swing and stance phase.

The angles of flexion and axial rotation of the components were measured using the image-matching method.[20] The positive or negative values of flexion were defined as flexion or extension of the femoral relative to the tibial component. The positive or negative values of rotation were defined as the internal or external rotation of the femoral relative to the tibial component. Impingement of the anterior post was determined by the intersection of the 3D computer-aided design (CAD) model surfaces of the femoral component and the tibial polyethylene insert. This was obtained by using the CAD program (SolidWorks 2001Plus SP3.0, SolidWorks Corporation, Concord, Massachusetts) (Fig. 2). The minimum distance between the femoral trochlea and the anterior aspect of the tibial post was also measured in the mid-sagittal plane of the tibial insert (Fig. 3). The positive or negative value of the minimum distance was defined as the anterior or posterior position of the femoral trochlea relative to the anterior aspect of the tibial post. The skeletal flexion angle between the axes of the femoral and tibial shafts was measured on the sagittal radiological images using an angle scale. A radiological assessment of the flexion angle of the femoral component and the posterior tibial tilt angle on the lateral view was performed according to the Knee Society roentgenographic evaluation.[21] Post-operative limb alignment in the coronal plane was measured by drawing a mechanical axis on each limb on a full-

Fig. 2a

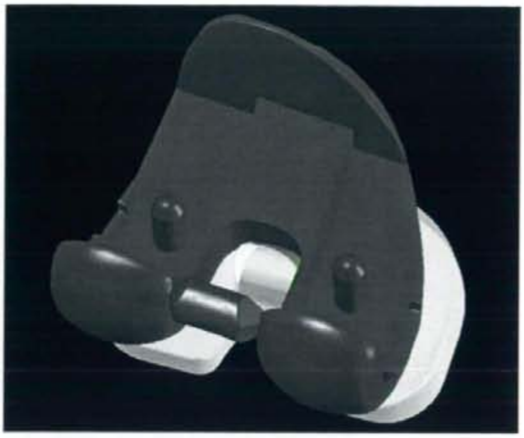

Fig. 2b

Examples of oblique upward views of the 3D computer-aided design models, determined using image-matching techniques. Based on the configuration of the articular surfaces of the femoral component and the polyethylene insert, it was possible to determine whether the femoral trochlea impinged on the anterior aspect of the tibial post in 3D in a) the swing and b) the stance phases of gait.

Fig. 3a

Fig. 3b

The minimum distances between the femoral trochlea and the anterior aspect of the tibial post at the a) the swing and b) the stance phases of gait were determined in the mid-sagittal plane of the tibial insert.

length standing radiograph. The weight-bearing ratio was calculated by measuring the distance from the medial edge of the proximal tibia to the point of intersection with the mechanical axis divided by the entire width of the proximal tibia.[22,23] A percentage was calculated by multiplying this ratio by 100%. Statistical analysis was performed using a data analysis system (Stat View 5.0, Abacus Concepts Inc., Berkeley, California). The two-factor factorial analysis of variance (ANOVA) and *post hoc* tests (Bonferroni/Dunn) were used to determine the statistical significance at the 95% confidence interval level of the compared results ($p < 0.05$).

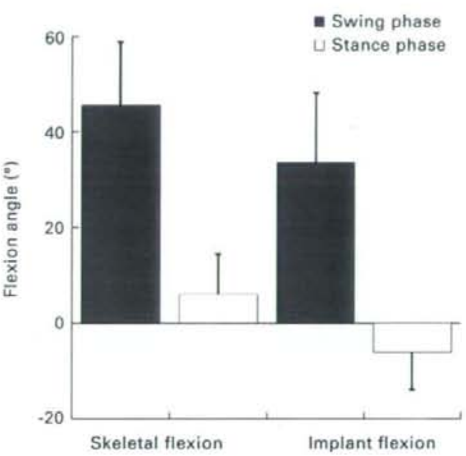

Fig. 4

Bar chart showing the average angles of skeletal and implant flexion at the swing and stance phases of gait.

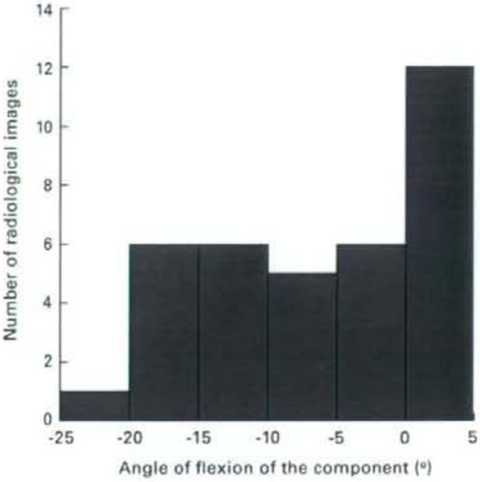

Fig. 5

The distribution of the angle of flexion of the component at the stance phase of gait.

Results

The angles of skeletal flexion and of flexion of the components at the swing/stance phase are shown in Figure 4. At the stance phase, 12 of 36 images represented the flexed position (≤ 3.5°), and seven represented hyperextension of more than 15° (Fig. 5). The mean rotation angle at the swing/stance phase was -6.6° (SD 3.5)/-1.0° (SD 3.0). There was a significant difference in the angles of skeletal flexion ($p < 0.0001$), component flexion ($p < 0.0001$) and axial rotation ($p < 0.0001$) between the stance and swing phases.

Impingement of the anterior post was observed in all the 36 radiological images in 12 knees at the stance phase (Fig. 6). In at the swing phase, all images showed no contact in the anterior or posterior aspects of the tibial post. The mean amount of the minimum distance at the swing/stance phase was 13.4 mm (SD 6.0)/-0.9 mm (SD 0.8) and this was statistically significant ($p < 0.0001$).

The mean post-operative alignment of the femoral component on the lateral radiograph was 5.6° (SD 2.7) of flexion relative to the distal half of the axis of the femoral shaft. The mean post-operative alignment of the tibial component on the lateral radiograph was 5.9° (SD 2.9) of posterior tilt relative to the proximal half of the axis of the tibial shaft. The mean value of the sagittal alignment of the femoral and tibial components was 11.6° (SD 4.6). The mean post-operative weight-bearing ratio was 52% (SD 10).

Discussion

This study examined impingement of the anterior tibial post of a posteriorly-stabilised TKR during gait using a high-resolution flat-panel radiological detector. All the patients had a successful NexGen posteriorly-stabilised TKR and showed impingement of the anterior tibial post during the stance phase of gait. There was no hyperextension and/or instability on clinical examination in any of the knees. There was no evidence of component malpositioning on radiological analysis of the knees. In the stance phase, the mean skeletal alignment showed low flexion, but the average component alignment was approximately 6° of hyperextension. Even in low component flexion (≤ 3.5°), the intercondylar notch of the femoral component impinged on the anterior aspect of the tibial post. During gait, none of the knees flexed into the range of post-cam engagement > 75° flexion in NexGen LPS.

We have demonstrated *in vivo* 3D, impingement of the anterior post during gait in this study. Hyperextension of alignment of the component during the stance phase has been previously described using single-plane fluoroscopy. Banks et al[9] showed that 41% of knees demonstrated hyperextension during gait, and that the hyperextension of alignment of the component averaged 6°. They noted that the 5° anterior bow and the 5° posterior slope led to approximately 10° of relative hyperextension of the

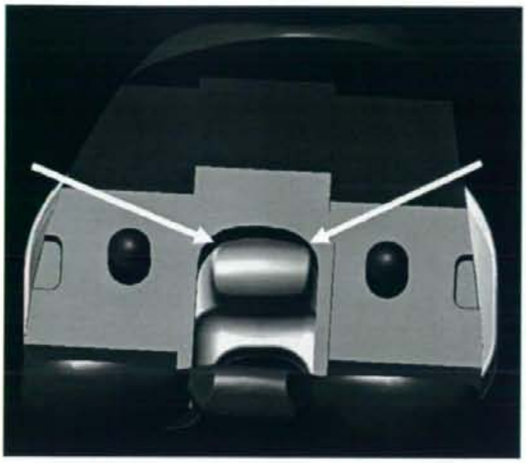

Fig. 6a

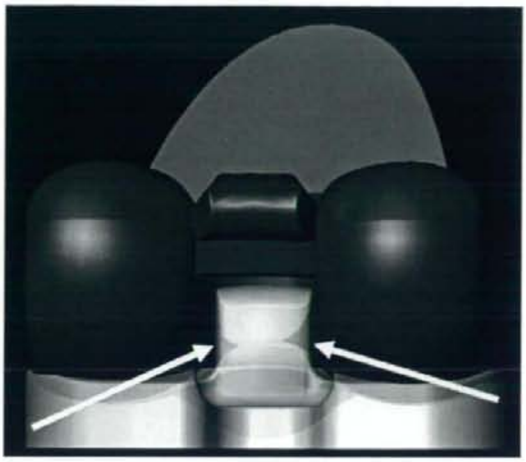

Fig. 6b

Examples of a) top and b) rear views of a patient with a posteriorly stabilised prosthesis experiencing impingement of the anterior post during the stance phase of gait. Viewing from the top, the relatively flat configuration in the anterior aspect of the tibial post compared with the femoral trochlea is seen. White arrows represent the intersections of the 3D model surfaces of the femoral component and the tibial polyethylene insert, which were located on the medial and lateral anterior corners of the tibial post.

component when the knee was in full extension. This is consistent with the findings in our study, which showed that the components were in an average of 12° of hyperextension relative to the sagittal mechanical axis of the knee, because the femoral components were in approximately 6° of flexion and the tibial components had approximately 6° of posterior slope.

Previous studies have indicated that the prevention of impingement of the anterior post depends on the technique of implantation.[12,15] A flexed femoral component with an inclined tibial component can lead to impingement of the anterior portion of the femoral component on to the tibial post. Although the NexGen LPS was designed to allow for 14° of relative hyperextension of the component without impingement, we found that impingement occurs even without flexion of the femoral component and a posterior tibial slope. The posterior translation of the femur can lead to impingement without hyperextension. Previous studies of posterior cruciate-retaining TKRs using dynamic fluoroscopic analysis revealed that the absence of the ACL caused posterior femoral contact during extension.[1-3] During gait, the anteriorly directed shear force on the tibia is normally resisted by the ACL. In the posteriorly stabilised TKR, engagement of the anterior portion of the femoral component on to the tibial post provides a functional substitute for the ACL, resulting in limitation of posterior displacement of the femur relative to the tibia. Stiehl et al[5] observed that patients having a posterior cruciate-retaining TKR experienced posterior contact positions of both condyles, compared with patients having an anterior and posterior cruciate-retaining TKR. Komistek et al[6] noted that anterior contact in an anterior cruciate-retaining TKR can be attributed to the presence of the ACL, which resists the anterior tibial shear forces during gait.

In the NexGen LPS, the relatively flat shape of the anterior aspect of the post caused impingement to be located on the medial and the lateral anterior corners of the post. This can lead to excessive stress and wear because of edge loading. This phenomenon has also been seen in previous retrieval studies. Mikulak et al[14] observed that all the 12 retrieved components in their study had evidence of damage to the anterolateral and anteromedial aspects of the post. Haas[24] has also noted impingement at the corners of the tibial post in the NexGen LPS. The configuration of the intercondylar notch of the femoral component and the anterior aspect of the tibial post should be designed to provide a larger contact area and prevent edge loading. This may cause chronic wear and fracture of the post, giving a concern as to the long-term prognosis of TKR. The anteroposterior force does not significantly increase during the gait cycle, but repetitive anterior impingement can lead to wear or fracture of the polyethylene post. Recent modifications to provide a larger area of contact have mainly focused on the post-cam mechanism.[20,25,26] Li et al[27] demonstrated that the contact forces in the tibial post increased dramatically as the knee hyperextended, and that the contact force was minimal at 30° of flexion. Surgeons should therefore avoid excessive flexion of the femoral component and posterior slope of the proximal tibial resection.

There are some limitations to this study. Firstly, it did not provide full kinematic analysis of the entire range of movement. It was therefore not possible to observe in which degrees of flexion the intercondylar notch of the femoral component impinged on the anterior aspect of the tibial post. Secondly, the study was limited by the small number of patients. As a result, we could not conclusively state that the cam-post in the NexGen LPS always engaged anteriorly during gait. However, the study did reveal that anterior impingement of the tibial post was a repeatable phenomenon. Finally, the results presented here were obtained using a single type of implant. Further investigations with comparisons of different designs are required.

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Three-Dimensional Knee Joint Kinematics during Golf Swing and Stationary Cycling after Total Knee Arthroplasty

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ABSTRACT: The expectation of returning to sports activities after total knee arthroplasty (TKA) has become more important to patients than ever. To our knowledge, no studies have been published evaluating the three-dimensional knee joint kinematics during sports activity after TKA. Continuous X-ray images of the golf swing and stationary cycling were taken using a large flat panel detector for four and eight post-arthroplasty knees, respectively. The implant flexion and axial rotation angles were determined using a radiographic-based, image-matching technique. Both the golf swing from the set-up position to the top of the backswing, and the stationary cycling from the top position of the crank to the bottom position of the crank, produced progressive axial rotational motions ($p = 0.73$). However, the golf swing from the top of the backswing to the end of the follow-through produced significantly larger magnitudes of rotational motions in comparison to stationary cycling ($p < 0.01$). Excessive internal–external rotations generated from the top of the backswing to the end of the follow-through could contribute to accelerated polyethylene wear. However, gradual rotational movements were consistently demonstrated during the stationary cycling. Therefore, stationary cycling is recommended rather than playing golf for patients following a TKA who wish to remain physically active. © 2008 Orthopaedic Research Society. Published by Wiley Periodicals, Inc. J Orthop Res 26:1556–1561, 2008

Keywords: golf swing; stationary cycling; total knee arthroplasty; image-matching technique

Total knee arthroplasty (TKA) provides excellent pain relief, correction of deformity, and improved function.[1–3] The improvement in pain and function allows some patients to participate in sports activities. The goals and expectations of patients undergoing TKA tend to vary greatly, depending on lifestyle. However, the expectations of returning to sports have become more important to patients than ever before.[4,5] In addition, physical fitness and exercise are associated with improved muscle strength and coordination,[6,7] increased flexibility,[6,8] weight reduction,[9,10] lowering of systemic blood pressure, and prevention of cardiac problems.[10,11] Furthermore, regular exercise has positive effects on total joint arthroplasty, such as an improved bone quality and implant fixation.[12–14] However, orthopedic surgeons have concerns about the risk for aseptic loosening due to polyethylene wear and debris.[15,16] Thus, most studies recommend participation in low-impact sports such as swimming, regular walking, cycling, bowling, sailing, scuba diving, and golf.[4,14,17,18] High-impact sports, such as running, football, baseball, basketball, hockey, handball, karate, soccer, and racquetball, are not recommended after total joint arthroplasty. The risks of prosthetic wear, dislocation, and periprosthetic fracture may increase with high-impact sports. However, the recommendations in the literature are mainly based upon the subjective opinions of surgeons. Little scientific evidence exists supporting such recommendations.

Golf is a popular recreational sport played more frequently among seniors in whom TKAs are usually performed.[4] A previous study reported that 39% of patients undergoing TKA considered golf important and 18% played golf.[5] Patients have considerable interest, but also have concerns about the risks and benefits of playing golf after joint replacement. Members of the Knee Society usually do not discourage their TKA patients from playing golf.[19] However, significant rotational torque around the knee occurs at very high speeds during the golf swing.[20] Despite the fact that golf is considered a low-impact sport, concerns exist about whether a golf swing can be performed in a safe manner after TKA. Stationary cycling is another low-impact sport. The knee moment induced during cycling is small compared to that induced during other exercises, or normal activities such as walking and stair climbing.[21] Therefore, the stationary bike has been widely used in rehabilitation after knee joint surgery and in various dysfunctions of the lower limb.[22] A previous study reported that many patients (51% of those studied) regularly participated in stationary cycling.[5] In comparison to activities that placed greater loads on the extremities or demanded increased knee flexion, few patients (15%) reported that their TKA caused moderate to severe difficulty when performing stationary cycling.

Our purpose was to clarify in vivo kinematics during golf swing and stationary cycling after TKA using radiographic-based, image-matching techniques. Previous in vivo fluoroscopic studies focused on kinematic information during daily activities such as normal gait,[23,24] stair climbing,[25] deep knee bend,[23–25] and kneeling.[26] To our knowledge, no study has been published evaluating 3-D knee joint kinematics during sports activity after TKA.

METHODS

The study group consisted of eight patients with 12 primary TKAs with a minimum follow-up of 6 months and no other joint arthroplasties. All subjects provided written consent for this

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institutional review board-approved study. The subjects were still playing golf or stationary cycling and were analyzed either during golf swinging or stationary cycling under radiographic surveillance using a flat panel detector (Hitachi, Clavis, Tokyo, Japan: 3 frames per second, image area size 397 (H) × 298 (V) mm, and 0.20 × 0.20 mm/pixel resolution). Two designs were used: a cruciate-retaining TKA (Foundation, Encore Medical, Austin, TX) and a posterior-stabilized TKA (Nexgen LPS Flex, Zimmer, Warsaw, IN). The articulating surface geometry of the polyethylene insert is designed to allow ±9° internal–external rotation in the cruciate-retaining TKA and ±12° in the posterior-stabilized TKA.

During golf swing, four knees in four subjects were analyzed, one woman and three men, averaging 73 ± 8 years (range, 63–81). The preoperative diagnoses were osteoarthritis in all knees. One knee received a cruciate-retaining TKA, the others a posterior-stabilized TKA. The average age at the time of TKA was 71 ± 8 years (range, 61–80), and the average follow-up was 22 ± 3 months (range, 17–25). The postoperative knee extension/flexion angle was $0 \pm 0°$ (range, 0 to 0)/$125 \pm 27°$ (range, 115–130). The knee score/function score was 97 ± 5 (range, 90–100)/85 ± 13 (range, 70–100) based on the Knee Society Clinical Rating System. All the subjects were right-handed recreational golfers. Three trail knees (the right knee in the right-handed golfer) and one lead knee (the left knee in the right-handed golfer) were analyzed; the subjects wore soft-spike golf shoes. The subjects stood in their normal golf stance with the arthroplasty knee on a flat panel detector (Fig. 1A). Subjects were allowed to adjust their stance until they felt comfortable and to warm up sufficiently before data collection. Five X-ray images from the set-up position to the end of the follow-through (set-up, early backswing, late backswing, top of the backswing, and end of the follow-through) were analyzed using image-matching techniques.

During stationary cycling, eight knees in six subjects were analyzed. These eight knees included seven women and one man, averaging 68 ± 10 years (range, 56–84). Three knees received a cruciate-retaining TKA, and five knees received a posterior-stabilized TKA. The preoperative diagnoses were osteoarthritis in all knees. The age at TKA was 66 ± 10 years (range, 55–82), and the follow-up after surgery was 20 ± 6 months (range, 10–27). The postoperative knee extension/flexion angle was $-6 \pm 10°$ (range, −25 to 0)/$121 \pm 11°$ (range, 105–135). The knee score/function score was 92 ± 6 (range, 80–99)/91 ± 10 (range, 70–100) based on the Knee Society Clinical Rating System. The subjects were not cycling experts, only riding occasionally prior to surgery. The subjects pedaled a stationary bike (AF6500, ALINCO Inc, Osaka, Japan) at rates of 20 rpm, a work rate of 35 Watts (Fig. 1B). All subjects were allowed to adjust the saddle height and to warm up before data

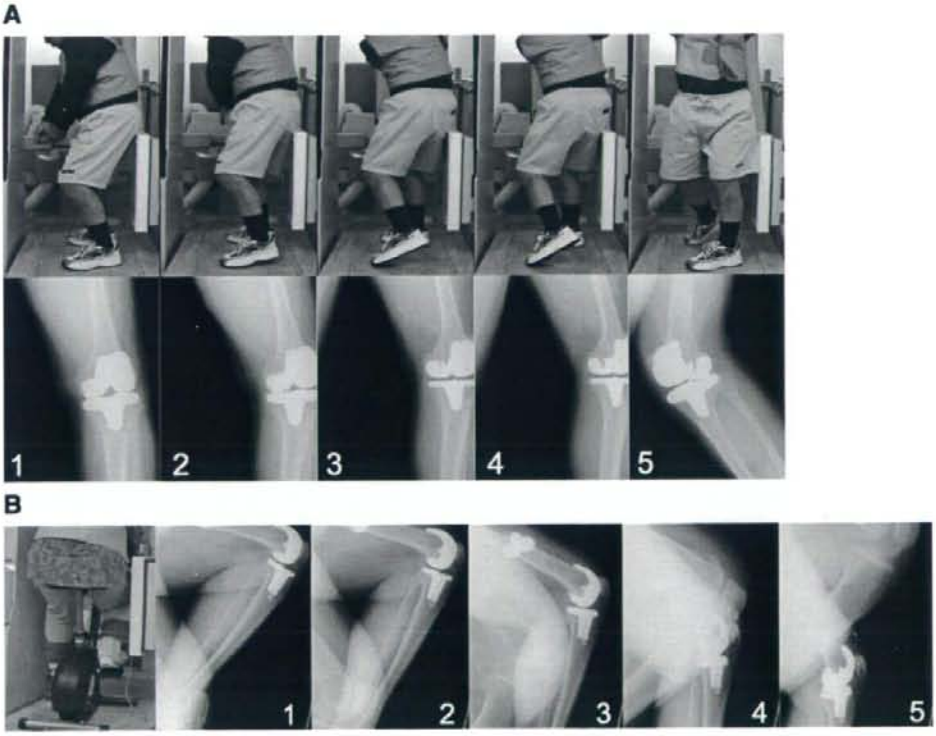

Figure 1. (A) A right-handed subject performed a golf swing (upper stand) while their knee motion was observed using a large flat-panel X-ray image detector. The X-ray images (lower stand) showed the trail (right) knee being studied. Five X-ray images, analyzed using radiographic-based, image-matching techniques were: (1) set-up, (2) early backswing, (3) late backswing, (4) top of the backswing, and (5) end of the follow-through. (B) Each subject performed cycling on a stationary bike at 20 rpm (left) while their knee motion was observed using a large flat-panel X-ray image detector. Continuous X-ray images, taken at 3 frames per second, show the right knee from the top position of the crank to the bottom position being studied: (1) top position, (2) 25% phase, (3) 50% phase, (4) 75% phase, and (5) bottom position.

collection. The subjects maintained the pedaling rate by observing a digital display. The stationary bike was set 10° obliquely to a flat panel detector to prevent obscure images from the contralateral leg. Five X-ray images from the top position of the crank to the bottom position (top position, 25% phase, 50% phase, 75% phase, and bottom position) were analyzed using image-matching techniques.

A model silhouette was matched with the actual object silhouette by translating and rotating the 3-D model to minimize the number of unmatched pixels between both silhouettes. After the 3-D poses of the femoral and tibial components were estimated, the six degrees-of-freedom of the femoral component relative to the tibial component were determined by transforming the coordinate systems into one common system. The root-mean-square errors for this process at the femoral component were 0.29 mm for in-plane translation, 0.37 mm for out-of-plane translation, and 0.27° for rotation; at the tibial component, they were 0.23 mm for in-plane translation, 0.30 mm for out-of-plane translation, and 0.25° for rotation.[26] The implant flexion and axial rotation angles were determined during both golf swing and stationary cycling. The positive or negative value of implant flexion was defined as flexion or extension of the femoral component relative to the tibial component. The positive or negative value of implant rotation was defined as the internal or external rotation of the femoral component relative to the tibial component.

Values were expressed as the mean ± standard deviation. Mann–Whitney's U test was used to analyze the absolute value of the rotational motion in comparing the golf swing (from the set-up position to the top of the backswing and from the top of the backswing to the end of the follow-through) with stationary cycling. Probability values <0.05 were considered significant.

RESULTS

Golf Swing

The subject undergoing TKA in the lead knee had the following implant flexion angles: 10.6° at the set-up; 17.9° at the early backswing; 22.6° at the late backswing; 29.6° at the top of the backswing; and 8.4° at the end of the follow-through (Fig. 2A). The femur gradually flexed with the backswing and rapidly extended from the top of the backswing to the end of the follow-through. The implant rotation angles were 6.3° at the set-up, 7.4° at the early backswing, 8.1° at the late backswing, 13.0° at the top of the backswing, and 2.7° at the end of the follow-through (Fig. 2B). The femur exhibited progressive internal rotation with the backswing. More than 10° of the implant external rotation was recognized from the top of the backswing to the end of the follow-through.

Subjects undergoing TKA in the trail knee had the following implant flexion angles: 17.1 ± 20.4° (range, 4.3–40.6°) at the set-up position; 19.3 ± 20.3° (range, 6.7–42.8°) at the early backswing; 12.9 ± 8.6° (range, 9.1–22.8°) at the late backswing; 14.3 ± 8.1° (range, 9.8–23.6°) at the top of the backswing; and 29.9 ± 11.5° (range, 18.2–41.1°) at the end of the follow-through (Fig. 2A). The swing from the top of the backswing to the end of the follow-through produced the trail knee flexion. The implant rotation angles were −9.8 ± 7.7° (range, −4.2 to −18.5°) at the set-up, −12.5 ± 7.6° (range, −6.6 to −21.0°) at the early backswing, −13.9 ± 6.6° (range, −8.9 to −21.4°) at the late backswing, −16.0 ± 6.7° (range, −12.1 to −23.7°) at the top of the backswing, and 5.5 ± 4.9° (range, 0.1–9.7°) at the end of the follow-through (Fig. 2B). The femur exhibited progressive external rotation with the backswing (Fig. 3). More than 20° of the implant internal rotation was recognized from the top of the backswing to the end of the follow-through.

Stationary Cycling

The implant flexion angles were 100.0 ± 9.1° (range, 81.9–108.5°) at the top position of the crank, 91.8 ± 9.7° (range, 77.5–107.5°) at 25% phase, 74.2 ± 14.9° (range, 53.9–100.3°) at 50% phase, 51.7 ± 8.7° (range, 40.8–67.7°) at 75% phase, and 37.7 ± 9.6° (range, 17.3–46.7°) at the bottom position of the crank (Fig. 4A). The implant axial rotation angles were −8.1 ± 4.5° (range, −12.9 to 1.1°) at the top position, −6.6 ± 4.5° (range, −13.0 to 1.5°) at 25% phase, −5.2 ± 5.8° (range, −14.0 to 4.7°) at 50% phase, −3.4 ± 5.2° (range, −9.7 to 6.1°) at 75% phase, and

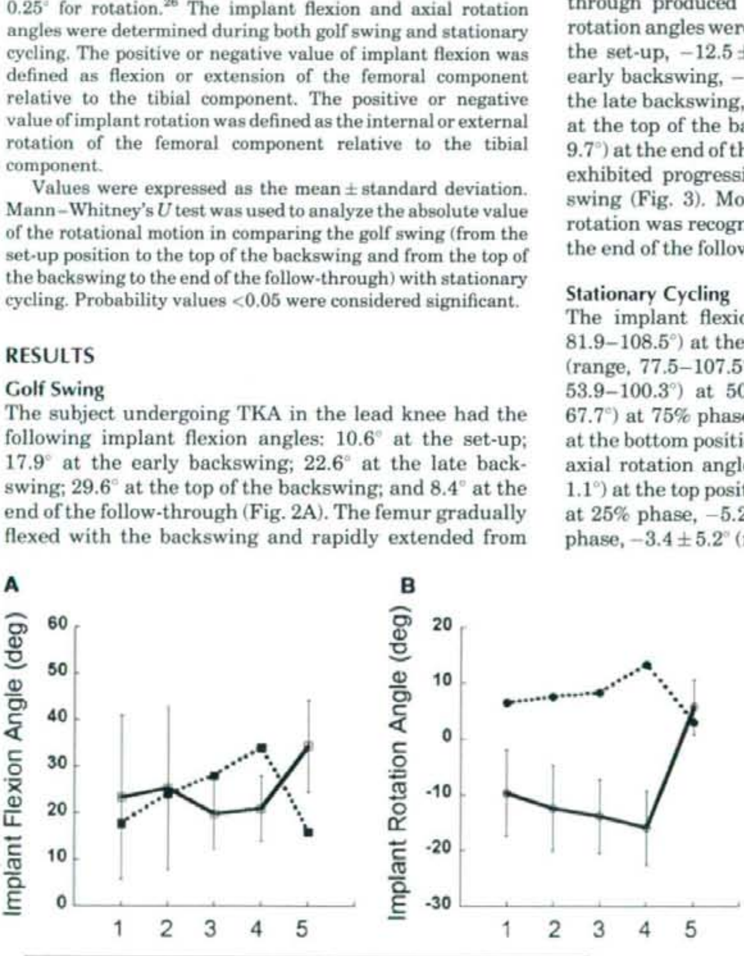

Figure 2. In vivo implant flexion (A) and rotational (B) angles for the golf swing: (1) set-up, (2) early backswing, (3) late backswing, (4) top of the backswing, and (5) end of the follow-through. The dotted line represents the lead (left) knee; the solid line represents the trail (right) knee. The positive or negative flexion value was defined as flexion or extension of the femoral component relative to the tibial component (A). The positive or negative rotation value was defined as internal or external rotation of the femoral component relative to the tibial component (B).

Figure 3. Examples of top views for a right-handed subject with a cruciate-retaining TKA in the trail (right) knee show axial rotation of the femoral component relative to the tibial component during the golf swing: (1) set-up, (2) early backswing, (3) late backswing, (4) top of the backswing, and (5) end of the follow-through. External rotation (overall about 8°) is gradually demonstrated from set-up (1) to the top of the backswing (4). More than 20° of internal rotation is rapidly demonstrated from the top of the backswing (4) to the end of the follow-through (5).

$-1.3 \pm 3.8°$ (range, -7.0 to $4.9°$) at the bottom position (Fig. 4B). The femur exhibited a normal rotational pattern with knee extension in all eight knees (Fig. 5).

The absolute value of the rotational motion from the top of the backswing to the end of the follow-through ($18.7 \pm 6.0°$; range, 10.3–$23.8°$) was significantly larger than during the stationary cycling from the top position to the bottom position ($6.7 \pm 2.6°$; range, 3.0–$9.5°$) ($p < 0.01$). No significant differences were found in the absolute values of the rotational motion between the backswing ($6.3 \pm 1.3°$ range, 5.2–$7.9°$) and the stationary cycling ($6.7 \pm 2.6°$ range, 3.0–$9.5°$) ($p = 0.73$).

DISCUSSION

Axial femorotibial rotation during flexion has been seen in previous in vivo kinematic analyses.[23–25] Stiehl et al. reported an average of 4.7° rotation in a flat on flat total condylar knee arthroplasty during deep knee bend.[23] In addition, Dennis et al. reported axial rotations in multiple TKA designs of 2.8° during deep knee bend.[24] We examined in vivo kinematics of TKA during golf swing and stationary cycling; the golf swing is a quite different from knee flexion–extension activities (e.g., stationary cycling, deep knee bend,[23–25] and step-up.[25]). The backswing produced progressive axial rotation, whereas the golf swing from the top of the backswing to the end of the follow-through rapidly produced high magnitudes of axial rotations (18.7° on average). In contrast, stationary cycling produced significantly less overall rotation than the golf swing from the top of the backswing to the end of the follow-through. During cycling, the axial rotations were 6.7° from the top of the crank to the bottom of the crank.

Excessive internal–external rotations lead to contact locations at the extreme edges of the tibial polyethylene surface.[27,28] Edge loading can cause chronic wear and fracture of the insert. Therefore, the high rotations when playing golf may be a concern with regard to long-term prognosis. Mallon and Callaghan reported that 16% of golfers with TKAs have a mild ache in the knee while playing and 35% have a mild ache after playing.[19] Furthermore, radiographic loosening among golfers with TKA was common in their study, occurring in 54% of all knees studied and 79% of cemented prostheses. The majority of members of the Knee Society suggested the use of a golf cart while playing, consistent with our opinion. Our findings suggest that golfers with a painful TKA should be encouraged to make half or three-quarter swings while also reducing the amount of golf that they play. The use of soft-spike golf shoes is also recommended to reduce the rotational torques on knee.[29,30]

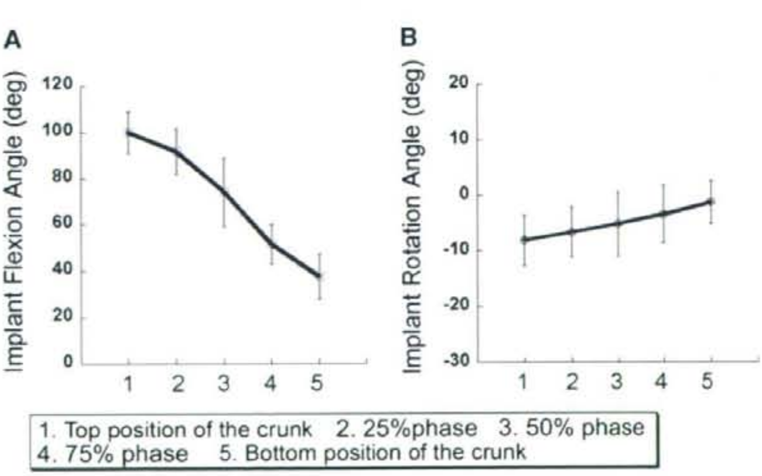

Figure 4. In vivo implant flexion (A) and rotational (B) angles from the top position of the crank to the bottom position of the crank: (1) top position, (2) 25% phase, (3) 50% phase, (4) 75% phase, and (5) bottom position. The positive or negative value of implant flexion was defined as flexion or extension of the femoral component relative to the tibial component (A). The positive or negative value of implant rotation was defined as the internal or external rotation of the femoral component relative to the tibial component (B).

Figure 5. Sequence of top views (3 frames per second) are shown for a subject with a left cruciate-retaining TKA, experiencing gradually internal rotation (overall about 9°) during stationary cycling: (1) top position of the crank, (2) 25% phase, (3) 50% phase, (4) 75% phase, and (5) bottom position of the crank.

The rotational motions from the top of the backswing to the end of the follow-through were greater in the trail knees than in the lead knee. However, the rotational torques and peak force are much greater on the lead knee.[20,31] The trail knee has its peak force at the end of the backswing when the club is moving slowly.[19,31] However, the lead knee has its peak force near impact and follow-through when most of the weight transfers to the lead knee.[31] The golf swing can produce a more stressful condition relative to the lead knee than the trail knee. Mallon et al. reported that right-handed golfers with left TKAs had significantly more pain while playing and after playing.[19] In our study, the lead knee demonstrated more than 10° of external rotation from the top of the backswing to the end of the follow-through.

During stationary cycling, axial rotation was within the ranges that the articulating surface geometries of the polyethylene inserts are designed to allow. The femur exhibited progressive internal rotation relative to the tibia with knee extension. Furthermore, riding a bicycle allows the individual to protect the knee from high impact forces. Ericson et al. used a knee model to predict tibiofemoral load of 1.2 times body weight during cycling in a normal subject.[32] D'Lima et al. measured in vivo knee forces of near one times body weight during stationary cycling after TKA.[33] To increase muscular strength and endurance with little risk for injuries, stationary cycling is a good recreational endurance exercise. Ericson et al. demonstrated the high magnitude of vastus medialis and lateralis activity during cycling.[34] Therefore, stationary cycling is generally recommended for patients with TKA who wish to remain physically active. Riding a bicycle is a popular activity for recreation and transportation. The stationary bike prevents injuries from falls.

During stationary cycling, the implant flexion angle was 100° in the maximally flexed position. McLeod et al. also described that about 100° of flexion is needed before a complete crank cycle can be performed.[22] Naturally, the femur exhibited progressive extension with pedaling from the top to the bottom of the crank. Each knee possessed characteristic patterns of knee flexion and rotation during golf swing, differences that can be explained by the skill level in golf. On the contrary, each knee possessed similar results of flexion and rotation during cycling. Stationary cycling is not a technically demanding sports activity even for inexperienced patients.

The number of patients who expect to return to sports for enjoyment and fitness after a TKA is increasing. Those patients who played sports preoperatively are especially motivated to return to sports activity.[4] Patients should not be unnecessarily discouraged from participating in low-impact sports in which they had participated preoperatively. However, patients should be instructed regarding sport-specific risks, namely, excessive rotational motions around the knee during a golf swing. Return to play after surgery should be avoided until the quadriceps and hamstring muscles have sufficiently recovered their preoperative strength. The overall frequency of the activity may also be important. The number of swings over a few hours of playing golf are less than the number of motion cycles generated during a few minutes of cycling. Furthermore, regular clinical and radiographic follow-up examinations of the TKA are required to diagnose and respond to any complications in a timely manner.

Our study has two drawbacks. First, we were certainly limited by the small number of patients in the golf swing analysis. Further investigations with comparisons between the lead and trail knees and between implant types are needed. However, our study revealed the kinematics of knee torsional activity that before had not received attention. Second, we were unable to collect data during the downswing because the flat panel detector provided only 3 frames per second; fluoroscopy is now commercially available with 30 frames per second that will capture the appropriate positions during highly dynamic activities. However, the flat panel detector was useful in capturing the dynamic activities because it has a greater field of view than fluoroscopy.

In summary, we demonstrated that unusual ranges of rotational motions occur at very high speeds during golf swing in comparison to stationary cycling. Our results suggest that edge loading induced by excessive internal–external rotation may be a concern with regard to the long-term prognosis following TKA. For stationary cycling, the femur exhibited progressive internal rotation relative to the tibia with knee extension within usual ranges of internal–external rotation. Generally, stationary cycling should thus be recommended to patients with TKA who wish to remain physically active.

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