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Human Research Program

Probabilistic Risk Assessment for Astronaut Post Flight Bone Fracture

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Overview

- Why the Bone Fracture Risk Module (BFxRM) was developed
- The probabilistic methods used for making fracture likelihood estimates
- Application of the BFxRM in estimating mission fracture risk
- BFxRM estimates of post-flight fracture risk
- Areas for future improvement and application of the BFxRM
Why the Bone Fracture Risk Module (BFxRM) was developed

• Historically, fracture probability calculations have been used for preventative treatment planning in specific clinical populations

• The DXA/T-score system has been used
  – To assess risk of fragility fractures
  – Typically applied to an elderly, female, postmenopausal, Caucasian population with a high prevalence of osteoporosis

• This reference population is not analogous to the astronaut corps
  – Those at high risk have T-scores \( \leq -2.5 \) (2.5 standard deviations less than the population mean)
  – Astronauts are young, healthy, physically fit, work in a unique environment and are engaged in unique activities
The BFxRM was developed for assessing fracture likelihood during missions

- Skeletal fracture is a concern for astronauts due to:
  - The loss of bone mineral density experienced
  - The unique loading states experienced

- The calculation of fracture likelihood was desired for:
  - In-flight activities (on space station and in new crew capsules)
  - During planetary activities (on Earth, Moon and Mars)

- Prediction capabilities were limited due to the lack of historical injuries

- The goals of the BFxRM were to:
  - Capture the state of knowledge and uncertainty of the likelihood of fracture
  - Incorporate mission related factors, environmental influences, and the best available clinical and biomedical knowledge in a probabilistic risk analysis
Probabilistic risk assessment (PRA) simulation models

- Include physical models, physiological data and probabilistic simulations
- Acts as integrator for the interacting contributing conditions
- Integration obtained with Monte Carlo simulations
The BFxRM for mission likelihood estimates

Monte Carlo Simulation

Probability and magnitude of loading event → Estimate relative skeletal strength → Est. fx probability by load to strength ratio → Most likely probability of fracture for event + uncertainty

Post-flight fracture risk

• Quantification of the increased likelihood of fracture during post-flight activities
  – Specific loading scenarios were modeled:
    • Elevated, unprotected falls
    • Impacts that included a translational velocity

• Informed injury criteria definition
  – Injury loading threshold for off-nominal Orion landings
  – Developed a deconditioning factor to help guide risk decisions
Post-flight fracture risk – Unprotected lateral fall

- **Loading conditions:**
  - Lateral falls from 0-1.5 m heights
  - Translational velocity 0-4 m/s
  - No protective action or equipment

- **BMD loss:**
  - LeBlanc BMD loss rate
  - Deconditioning during a 6 month flight

- **BMD recovery:**
  - Sibonga recovery rate
  - Estimates at 0 and 365 days post-flight

- **Mean fracture probability:**
  - 12% greater than preflight on day 0
  - 5% greater than preflight on day 365

- **Parameter uncertainty** drives the large variance in fracture probability estimates
Post-flight fracture risk – Off-nominal landing

• Estimated deconditioned vs. preflight bone strength

\[ FRI_{Pre} = \beta FRI_{Post} \]
\[ \beta = \frac{BS_{Post}}{BS_{Pre}} \]
\[ \Phi = \beta_M - 2\sigma_\beta \]
\[ \Phi \approx 0.80 \]

• Loading conditions:
  – Loading at the femoral neck
  – Similar to lateral fall loading
  – No protective equipment considered
  – Landing surface is land rather than water

• BMD loss:
  – LeBlanc BMD loss rate
  – Deconditioning during a 6 month flight
  – No recovery time
BFxRM results summary

- The BFxRM provides fracture risk estimates specifically for the astronaut population and for the activities they perform
  - Spaceflight mission scenarios (in-flight activities and EVAs)
  - Return and post-flight scenarios (off-nominal landings, post-flight activities)

- Astronaut fracture resistance after 6 months in space decreases to
  - A mean value of 12% less than pre-flight values at return, with a 5th percentile of 20% less
  - A mean value of 5% less than pre-flight values at one year after return for active lifestyle, off-nominal loading conditions

- The uncertainty associated with the fracture risk estimates can be significant

- The source of the uncertainty is due to significant uncertainty in the sensitive parameters
  - Using the change in BMD as the only factor that contributes to changes in bone strength during spaceflight
  - Using simplifying assumptions within the biomechanical loading calculations
Areas for future improvement and application of the BFxRM

• Improved representation of bone and fracture conditions
  – Use biomechanical information about real fracture events to improve the function that translates the load to ultimate strength ratio to fracture probability
  – Integrate FEM and other “bone quality parameters” to increase the fidelity of the bone strength estimate

• Perform additional validation and credibility testing

• Address the impacts of other space flight adaptations and countermeasure use
  – Considering micro-architecture in addition to BMD to predict ultimate strength
  – Bisphosphonates, diet and (ARED, AEC) exercise

• Influence mission planning and operational environment
  – Spacecraft, spacesuit and habitat designs
  – Operational processes and specific training
QUESTIONS?