A peer-reviewed version of this preprint was published in PeerJ on 2 November 2016.

View the peer-reviewed version (peerj.com/articles/2648), which is the preferred citable publication unless you specifically need to cite this preprint.

A public data set of human balance evaluations

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A public data set of human balance evaluations

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Abstract

The goal of this study was to create a public data set with results of qualitative and quantitative evaluations related to human balance. Subject’s balance was evaluated by posturography using a force platform and by the Mini Balance Evaluation Systems Tests. In the posturography test, we evaluated subjects during standing still for 60 s in four different conditions where vision and the standing surface were manipulated: on a rigid surface with eyes open; on a rigid surface with eyes closed; on an unstable surface with eyes open; on an unstable surface with eyes closed. Each condition was performed three times and the order of the conditions was randomized among subjects. In addition, the following tests were employed in order to better characterize each subject: Short Falls Efficacy Scale International; International Physical Activity Questionnaire Short Version; and Trail Making Test. The subjects were also interviewed to collect information about their socio-cultural, demographic, and health characteristics. The data set comprises signals from the force platform (raw data for the force, moments of forces, and centers of pressure) of 163 subjects plus one file with information about the subjects and balance conditions and the results of the other evaluations. All the data is available at PhysioNet (DOI: 10.13026/C2WW2W) and at Figshare (DOI: 10.6084/m9.figshare.3394432).
1 Introduction

Age-related disabilities and certain illnesses affect body balance in humans and can negatively influence their health and quality of life. There has been great effort by researchers and clinicians for a greater understanding of this problem and postural control in humans has been under intense scientific investigation over the past decades.

There is a large variety of tests to describe balance in humans (for a review see Duarte & Freitas 2010; Paillard & Noe 2015; Scoppa et al. 2013; Shumway-Cook & Woollacott 2001; Visser et al. 2008). The most common quantitative measurement to characterize body balance is the displacement of the center of pressure (COP); the point of application of the resultant vertical forces acting on the subject’s surface of support. COP displacement is typically measured with a force plate and presented as time-series of numerical data in the anterior-posterior (ap) and medio-lateral (ml) directions in relation to the subject's orientation. The technique concerned with the measurement of COP displacement in this context is commonly referred to as stabilography or posturography.

In stabilography, there is no consensus yet on the best techniques to analyze COP displacement in order to extract meaningful information about the subject’s balance condition. There are also numerous different protocols (which include the type of task the subject is submitted, instructions to the subject, duration of the task, type of instrument for using, etc.) for data collection, algorithms, and variables to process and characterize COP displacement (for a review see Duarte & Freitas 2010; Paillard & Noe 2015; Scoppa et al. 2013; Visser et al. 2008). Particularly on the plethora of algorithms and variables, part of the lack of consensus might be because different researchers work with small sets of COP displacement data when investigating balance. A related problem is that researchers propose and compare new methods of analysis based on different sets of data across centers.
The deployment of a public data set of human balance evaluations would allow the access of a normative reference for data comparison and testing analysis from different centers. In the human movement science field there are few publicly available data sets (for example, see Moore et al. 2015 and the references therein). However, none of the available data sets are about human balance. Hence, the purpose of the present study is the implementation of such a public data set of balance evaluations on young and elderly adults.

2 Methods

This study was designed to create a public repository of data related to human balance, employing quantitative and qualitative evaluations. The entire data collection for each subject was performed in a single session, which lasted between one and two hours. Each subject was assessed by the same experienced examiner (D.A.S.) in the Laboratory of Biomechanics and Motor Control at the Federal University of ABC, Brazil. Prior to the evaluations that generated this data set, we conducted pilot studies with five subjects for training with the equipment and experimental protocol. The data of these subjects are not included in this data set. This study was approved by the local ethics committee of the Federal University of ABC (#842529/2014).

2.1 Subjects

We evaluated 163 subjects (116 females and 47 males) who voluntarily participated in this study. The subjects were first interviewed to collect information about their socio-cultural, demographic, and health characteristics. Their ages varied from 18 to 85 years, body masses from 44.0 to 75.9 Kg, heights from 140.0 to 189.8 cm, and body-mass indexes (BMI) from 17.2 to 31.9 Kg/m². Of the 163 subjects, 16 of them were classified as having at least one severe disability or more (eight with hearing and vestibular deficits; two with visual deficits; three with
musculoskeletal deficits, one with visual and musculoskeletal deficits, one with hearing and
visual deficits, and one with intellectual disability). All this information for each subject are
presented in the public data set (see later on how to obtain it).

2.2 Stabilography

The stabilography evaluation was based on the most common practices used in research
laboratories and the clinical environment (for a review see Duarte & Freitas 2010; Paillard &

We evaluated the subjects’ balance during standing still with tasks lasting 60 s each in
four different conditions where vision and the standing surface were manipulated: on a rigid
surface with eyes open; on a rigid surface with eyes closed; on an unstable surface (a 6-cm foam
height block, Balance Pad, Airex, U.S.) with eyes open; on an unstable surface with eyes closed.
Each condition was performed three times and the order of the conditions was randomized
among subjects. In all conditions, the subjects were required to stand, barefoot and as still as
possible with their arms at their sides, and to look at a 5-cm round black target placed on the
subject’s eye-height on a wall 3-m ahead. For the trials where the eyes were kept closed, subjects
were first instructed to look at the target with eyes open, find a stable and comfortable posture
given the requirements, and close their eyes. A few seconds later, the data acquisition started.
For all trials, the subject’s feet were placed with an angle of 20 degrees between them and their
heels were kept 10-cm apart by requesting the subjects to stand on lines marked on the top of the
force platform (see Figure 1). The trials were acquired in an empty 4.5 x 2.8 m room with white
walls and adequate illumination (see Figure 1).
2.2.1 Protocol

We followed the following procedure for the stabilography:

1. The researcher explained to the subject about the data collection with the force plate. The subject was also informed that during the data collection, he or she would be monitored, there should not be any verbal communication during the trials, but he or she could interrupt the data collection if desired and that assistance would be given if necessary;
2. The researcher filled a form with the subject’s name and identification number, the force platform was zeroed and the subject was requested to stand on the force platform to record her or his weight;

3. The researcher gave instructions on how the subject should stand on the force platform according to the task (open or closed eyes, firm or form surface). The subject’s feet was positioned on the marks at the force platform (see Figure 1);

4. The researcher instructed the subject to maintain their arms along their body and to stand as still as possible;

5. During the trials with eyes open, the subjects were told to fixate their gaze at the round black target placed on the wall ahead at the eye level;

6. During the trials with eyes closed, the subjects were told to fixate their gaze at the target placed ahead, close their eyes when they felt ready and only open them when the researcher informed them of end of the trial;

7. The researcher started the data collection around 5 s later when the subject said he or she was ready;

8. At the end of the trial, the subject was assisted to step from the force platform and he or she could rest (and sit if desired) for about one minute before the next trial.

2.2.2 Data acquisition and processing

The force platform signals were collected employing a commercial force platform (40x60 cm, OPT400600-1000, AMTI, U.S.) and amplifier (Optima Signal Conditioner, AMTI, U.S.) at a sampling frequency of 100 Hz. The Optima force plate was factory-calibrated and presented an average COP accuracy of 0.02 cm. The fluctuation of the COP displacement (an indication of the
measurement precision) was estimated as the standard-deviation value of the COP data when a 30-kg static load was placed on the force plate for 30 s and was equal to 0.005 cm. The data acquisition was performed employing NetForce software (Version 3.5.3, AMTI, U.S.). The NetForce software outputs the calibrated forces and moments of forces (Fx, Fy, Fz, Mx, My, Mz) from the Optima platform to a file with a proprietary binary format. All subsequent steps, reading these binary files, data processing, analysis and visualization, and exporting data to text files, were implemented in Python language using the SciPy Stack (https://www.scipy.org/) and are available as Jupyter Notebooks (http://jupyter.org/) in a GitHub repository (https://github.com/demotu/datasets).

The force platform data were smoothed with a 10-Hz 4th order zero lag low-pass Butterworth filter and the center of pressure in the anterior–posterior (x-positive is anterior) and medio–lateral (y-positive is to the right) directions (see Figure 1) were calculated according to the standard formulas (also described in the force platform manual):

\[
COP_x = -\frac{M_y}{F_z}
\]

\[
COP_y = \frac{M_x}{F_z}
\]

Note that the force platform data are expressed as forces and moments of forces in the force platform co-ordinate system and they refer to the forces and moments of forces the subject is applying on the force platform. This is the inverse of the ground reaction forces, where the forces act on the subject (Newton's Third Law).
2.3 Mini Balance Evaluation Systems Tests

Each subject’s balance was also evaluated by the Mini Balance Evaluation Systems Tests (Mini-BESTest). The Mini-BESTest contains 14 items classified in four different domains of the human balance: Anticipatory Postural Adjustment; Reactive Postural Response; Sensorial Organization; and Gait Stability; its maximum score is 28 points and each item varies from 0 (abnormal performance) to 2 (normal performance) points (Franchignoni et al. 2010). The tasks in the Mini BESTest requiring the subjects’ gaze fixed at a target were performed with the target placed 3 m ahead.

2.4 Other evaluations

The following tests were also employed: Short Falls Efficacy Scale International (Short FES-I) (Kempen et al. 2008), International Physical Activity Questionnaire - Short Version (IPAQ-SV) (Craig et al. 2003), and Trail Making Test (TMT) (Reitan 1958). These evaluations were conducted with personal interviews performed in an empty 7.5 x 5.7 m room with adequate illumination. We followed the instructions of each evaluation test. For the IPAQ-SV, the last seven days prior to the interview were considered. For the TMT, we followed the orientations by (Bowie & Harvey 2006) to administer parts A and B with the following details: the letter “K” was excluded in the evaluation because it is less common to Brazilians and part B of the TMT was composed by 24 circles with numbers from “1” to “12” and letters from “A” to “M”.

3 Results

All the data is available at PhysioNet (DOI: 10.13026/C2WW2W) and at Figshare (DOI: 10.6084/m9.figshare.3394432). The data at PhysioNet (Goldberger et al. 2000) are stored in a binary format that can be read using for example, the WFDB software package or online using
the physiobank ATM software and are made available under the ODC Public Domain Dedication and License v1.0 (http://opendatacommons.org/licenses/pddl/1.0/). The data at Figshare are stored in ASCII (text) format that can be downloaded as a single compressed file and are made available under the CC-BY license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

The data set comprises files with the force platform data of 163 subjects plus one file named BDSinfo (in two different formats, .txt or .xlsx) with meta data about each file, subject and the evaluation results. The data files and the BDSinfo.txt file are in ASCII format with tab-separated columns. The files with the force platform data have the following columns: Time, Fx, Fy, Fz, Mx, My, Mz, COPx, COPy, and contain the force platform signals (see Methods). Each file has the following header: Time[s] Fx[N] Fy[N] Fz[N] Mx[Nm] My[Nm] Mz[Nm] COPx[cm] COPy[cm], followed by 6000 rows by 9 columns of data with 6-digit numeric precision (with the exception of the time column, which has a 3-digit numeric precision). These files are named as BDSxxxxx.txt, where BDS stands for the project's name, Balance Data Set, and xxxxx refers to the number of the trial; from 00001 to 01956. For each subject there are 12 trials and the numbers in the file names are grouped in sets of 12, e.g., the first subject has files from 00001 to 00012 and the last subject (the 163rd), from 01945 to 01956. A total of 26 files (trials) are missing for five subjects who were unable to complete the most challenging conditions.

The BDSinfo file contains meta data describing the conditions of the stabilography trials, the information from the anamnesis, and the results of the qualitative evaluations. Because a subject has 12 files for the force platform data, there are 12 rows for each subject in this file. In these 12 rows, the only column that has rows with different values is the column identifying the trial (the file name). The content of all the other columns are simply repeated over the 12 rows.
As result, the BDSdata file has the header plus 1930 rows and 64 columns. Here is the coding for the meta data (the first word identifies the name of the column in the header):

1. **Trial**: file name of the stabilography trial (BDSxxxxx, where xxxx varies from 00001 to 01956).
2. **Subject**: number of the subject (from 1 to 163).
3. **Vision**: visual condition (Open or Closed).
4. **Surface**: surface support condition (Firm or Foam).
5. **Age**: subject’s age in years.
6. **AgeGroup**: age group (Young: Age < 60; Old: Age ≥ 60).
7. **Gender**: gender (F or M).
8. **Height**: height in centimeters (measured with a calibrated stadiometer).
9. **Weight**: weight in kilograms (measured with a calibrated scale).
10. **BMI**: body mass index in kg/m².
11. **FootLen**: foot length in centimeters (average of the two feet, measured with a calibrated pakuimeter).
12. **Nationality**: country where the subject was born.
13. **SkinColor**: self-reported skin color.
14. **Ystudy**: years of regular study.
15. **Footwear**: most common type of footwear the subject wears daily.
16. **Illness**: whether the subject has any illness, as declared by themselves (Yes or No).
17. **Illness2**: type of illness of the subject (‘No’ if the subjects doesn’t have any illness).
18. **Nmedication**: total number of medications the subject takes per day, if any.
19. **Medication:** name of the medication(s) the subject takes (‘No’ if the subject doesn’t take any medication).

20. **Ortho-Prosthesis:** whether the subject wears any type of orthosis or prosthesis, as declared themselves (Yes or No).

21. **Ortho-Prosthesis2:** name of the orthosis or prosthesis the subject wears (‘No’ if the subject doesn’t take any orthosis or prosthesis).

22. **Disability:** whether the subject has any deficit, as declared by themselves (Yes or No).

23. **Disability2:** name of the disability of the subject (‘No’ if the subject doesn’t take any disability).

24. **Falls12m:** how many non-intentional falls the subject had in the last 12 months, as declared by themselves (from 0 to …).

25. **FES_1:** answer for the first question of the Short Falls Efficacy Scale International test (FES-I).

26. **FES_2:** answer for the second question of the FES-I.

27. **FES_3:** answer for the third question of the FES-I.

28. **FES_4:** answer for the fourth question of the FES-I.

29. **FES_5:** answer for the fifth question of the FES-I.

30. **FES_6:** answer for the sixth question of the FES-I.

31. **FES_7:** answer for the seventh question of the FES-I.

32. **FES_T:** answer for the total score question of the FES-I.

33. **FES_S:** answer for the scoring question of the FES-I, see http://www.profane.eu.org/fesi.html.
34. **IPAQ_1a**: answer for the 1a question of the International Physical Activity Questionnaire Short Version test (IPAQ).

35. **IPAQ_1b**: answer for the 1b question of the IPAQ.

36. **IPAQ_2a**: answer for the 2a question of the IPAQ.

37. **IPAQ_2b**: answer for the 2b question of the IPAQ.

38. **IPAQ_3a**: answer for the 3a question of the IPAQ.

39. **IPAQ_3b**: answer for the 3b question of the IPAQ.

40. **IPAQ_4a**: answer for the 4a question of the IPAQ.

41. **IPAQ_4b**: answer for the 4b question of the IPAQ.

42. **IPAQ_S**: score in the IPAQ (Low, Moderate, or High), see https://sites.google.com/site/theipaq/.

43. **TMT_timeA**: time in seconds taken to complete part A of the Trail Making Test (TMT). We didn’t measure times longer than 5 minutes (for these cases we report a time of 300 s).

44. **TMT_errorsA**: number of errors in part A of the TMT.

45. **TMT_timeB**: time in seconds taken to complete part B of the TMT. We did not measure times longer than 5 minutes (for these cases we report a time of 300 s).

46. **TMT_errorsB**: number of errors in part B of the TMT.

47. **Best_1**: score for the first task of the Mini Balance Evaluation Systems Test (Mini-BESTest).

48. **Best_2**: score for the second task of the Mini-BESTest.

49. **Best_3l**: score for the third task (left side) of the Mini-BESTest.

50. **Best_3r**: score for the third task (right side) of the Mini-BESTest.

51. **Best_4**: score for the fourth task of the Mini-BESTest.

52. **Best_5**: score for the fifth task of the Mini-BESTest.
53. **Best_6l**: score for the sixth task (left side) of the Mini-BESTest.

54. **Best_6r**: score for the sixth task (right side) of the Mini-BESTest.

55. **Best_7**: score for the seventh task of the Mini-BESTest.

56. **Best_8**: score for the eighth task of the Mini-BESTest.

57. **Best_9**: score for the ninth task of the Mini-BESTest.

58. **Best_10**: score for the tenth task of the Mini-BESTest.

59. **Best_11**: score for the eleventh task of the Mini-BESTest.

60. **Best_12**: score for the twelfth task of the Mini-BESTest.

61. **Best_13**: score for the thirteenth task of the Mini-BESTest.

62. **Best_14**: score for the fourteenth task of the Mini-BESTest.

63. **Best_T**: total score of the Mini-BESTest, see http://www.bestest.us/.

64. **Date**: date and time of the subject’s evaluation (yyyy-mm-dd hh:mm:ss.sss 24-hour local time format).

### 3.1 Data exploration

To exemplify how these data can be explored, shown in Figure 2 are histograms and scatter plots for the variables: age, body mass, height, and BMI, and in Figure 3 are similar plots for the variables: FES_T, Best_T, IPAQ_S, TMT_timeA, and TMT_timeB. A representative example of the force platform data is shown in Figure 4 and plots for the variables: COP area, COP velocity, and COP mean frequency for each subject and standing condition are shown in Figure 5 (see Duarte 2015; Duarte & Freitas 2010 for the algorithms to calculate these variables). The programming scripts to generate these figures, as well as other examples on how to work with these data, are available in a GitHub repository (https://github.com/demotu/datasets).
Figure 2. Histograms and scatter plots of the variables: age (years), body mass (Kg), height (m), and BMI (Kg/m$^2$) for each subject, color-coded by gender (116 females and 47 males).
Figure 3. Histograms and scatter plots of the variables: FES_T, Best_T, IPAQ_S, and the TMT_timeA for each subject, color-coded by age group (87 young adults and 76 older adults).
Figure 4: Top: exemplary forces and moments of forces at the horizontal and vertical anterior-posterior (x or ap), medio-lateral (y or ml), and vertical (z) directions versus time. Bottom-left: correspondent center of pressure (COP) displacements at the ap and ml directions versus time. Bottom-right: correspondent plot of COP ap versus COP ml. Subject: 61-year-old male adult during quiet standing on a rigid surface with open eyes.
Figure 5. Plot of the median value across trials of the variables: COP area, resultant COP velocity, and resultant COP mean frequency for each subject at the different visual and support surface conditions color-coded by age group (87 young adults and 76 older adults).

4 Conclusion

This study implemented a public data set with results of qualitative and quantitative evaluations related to the balance of young and elderly adults (a total of 163 subjects).

A limitation of this study is that we did not perform quantitative evaluations of the subjects’ health conditions, particularly of their motor and sensory integrity. However, through the careful anamnesis we performed by interview, we were able to determine the history and current status of the subjects’ health, and together with the different qualitative evaluations
performed, we believe the subjects are relatively well characterized. Nevertheless, the potential
user of this data set should bear this limitation in mind.

The Balance Data Set is the first public repository containing data of quantitative and
qualitative evaluations of human balance. Possible applications of this data set include: to test
new variables to describe the center of pressure displacement in methodological studies; to serve
as reference (normative) data for a new sample of subjects in a research of clinics context; for
training and education regarding the analysis of balance data, among others. Examples on how to
work with this data set are publicly available in a GitHub repository


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