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1    **Title:** Balance performance in head-shake computerized dynamic posturography: aging effects  
2    and test-retest reliability.

3

4    **Authors:**

5    Marco Y Pang,<sup>1</sup> Freddy M Lam,<sup>1</sup> Gary H Wong,<sup>1</sup> Ivy H Au,<sup>1</sup> Dorothy L Chow<sup>1</sup>

6

7    **Affiliations:**

8        1. Department of Rehabilitation Sciences, the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong  
9        Kong.

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12    **Short running head:** Head Shake Sensory Organization Test

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15    **Corresponding Author:**

16    Marco Y. C. Pang, Department of Rehabilitation Sciences, Hong Kong Polytechnic University

17    Hung Hom, Hong Kong. Fax: (852) 2330-8656; Tel: (852) 2766-7156; E-mail:

18    [Marco.Pang@inet.polyu.edu.hk](mailto:Marco.Pang@inet.polyu.edu.hk)

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20    **Key Words:** Aging; Balance; Posture; Vestibular System

21

22 **ABSTRACT**

23 **Background:** The ability of the Sensory Organization Test (SOT) to detect subtle balance  
24 problems has been challenged. The Head-shake SOT (HS-SOT) has been developed to improve  
25 delineation of balance performance.

26 **Objective:** To examine the age-related differences in balance as measured by the HS-SOT, and  
27 to establish the test-retest reliability of the HS-SOT.

28 **Design:** This observational measurement study used a test-retest design.

29 **Methods:** Ninety-two **healthy** younger adults (mean age=28.3 years) and 73 **healthy** older  
30 adults (mean age=60.3 years) underwent the SOT and HS-SOT. Seventy-seven of them (56  
31 young adults, 21 older adults) underwent the same assessment 1-2 weeks later.

32 **Results:** The equilibrium scores in HS-SOT condition 2 (head movements, eyes closed while  
33 standing on a firm surface) and 5 (head movements, eyes closed while standing on a sway-  
34 referenced surface) were significantly lower than their counterparts without dynamic head  
35 movements added (SOT condition 2 and 5) ( $p<0.05$ ). Older adults attained significantly lower  
36 scores for both HS-SOT conditions than their younger peers ( $p<0.01$ ). Test-retest reliability  
37 [intraclass correlation coefficients (3,2)] of the HS-SOT score in condition 2 and 5 for the  
38 younger adults was 0.85 and 0.78, respectively whereas those for the older adults were 0.64 and  
39 0.55. The corresponding minimal detectable change (MDC) values for the former were 2.7 and  
40 16.2, whereas those for the latter were 3.6 and 22.7.

41 **Limitations:** Only head rotation movements on the horizontal plane were tested.

42 **Conclusions:** Adding head movements to SOT increased the separation of **healthy** young and  
43 older adults. **The HS-SOT has good reliability, and MDC values were computed to facilitate**

- 44 **interpretation of clinical studies in which HS-SOT is used to assess change in balance**
- 45 **performance among young and older adults.**
- 46

## 47 INTRODUCTION

48           The ability to preserve body equilibrium is a complex task that involves the integration of  
49 sensory input from the visual, proprioceptive and vestibular systems, which can be influenced by  
50 aging, trauma, and disease.<sup>1-3</sup> Compromised ability to use sensory inputs may contribute to  
51 balance deficits, which may translate into problems such as falls, and fear of falling with self-  
52 imposed restrictions on activity and participation.<sup>4,5</sup>

53           The Sensory Organization Test (SOT) of Computerized Dynamic Posturography,  
54 originally developed by Nashner, is a common tool for evaluating sensory interactions on  
55 balance.<sup>1</sup> Employing a computerized system using a servo-controlled dual forceplate and visual  
56 surround, the SOT can provide valuable information on whether the individual can effectively  
57 use inputs from visual, proprioceptive and vestibular systems to maintain balance, as well as  
58 his/her ability to suppress inaccurate sensory information.<sup>1</sup> The SOT has demonstrated good to  
59 moderate test-retest reliability<sup>5-7</sup> and has been used to assess sensory contributions to balance  
60 control in various populations, including children<sup>8</sup>, young adults<sup>7</sup>, older adults<sup>9</sup>, and individuals  
61 with different types of diseases or disorders.<sup>10-12</sup> It has also been used as an outcome measure to  
62 evaluate the effectiveness of intervention programs to improve balance.<sup>10,13,14</sup>

63           While the SOT is common balance assessment tool, its ability to detect subtle balance  
64 deficits has been challenged.<sup>13,15,16</sup> For example, it is not uncommon that patients with unilateral  
65 vestibular hypofunction can perform within normal limits on the SOT, despite the presence of  
66 pathological nystagmus and gait abnormalities.<sup>17-19</sup> The Head Shake Sensory Organization Test  
67 (HS-SOT), which is an enhancement to the standard SOT, has been developed to improve  
68 delineation of balance performance.<sup>18-21</sup> In HS-SOT, dynamic head movements were  
69 incorporated when the subject was tested on the standard SOT conditions 2 (eyes closed while

70 standing on a firm surface) and 5 (eyes closed while standing on a sway-referenced surface). **In**  
71 **contrast with the SOT, in which the head is to be kept still while attempting to maintain**  
72 **balance, the HS-SOT involves active head movements. Apart from the possible influence of**  
73 **the mechanics of moving the head on postural stability,<sup>18</sup> the dynamic head movements**  
74 **involved in the HS-SOT also provide stimulation to the semicircular canals, creating**  
75 **additional vestibular input that needs to be integrated during the balance task, thereby**  
76 **providing additional challenge to the sensory organizational mechanism.<sup>18,20</sup> Moreover,**  
77 **adding the motor task of moving the head also constitutes a form of dual task. It is known**  
78 **that vestibular function, sensory processing, and the ability to perform dual tasks can be**  
79 **adversely influenced by aging.<sup>2,22,23</sup> It is thus likely that the HS-SOT may better delineate**  
80 **age-related decline in balance performance than the standard SOT. It is also thought that**  
81 **HS-SOT may be useful in quantifying subtle balance deficits.<sup>19</sup>**

82 Preliminary research has shown that the HS-SOT can detect change in balance  
83 performance than the standard SOT.<sup>18,24</sup> While these findings suggest that HS-SOT may  
84 potentially be a useful outcome measure to assess changes in balance performance following  
85 rehabilitation programs<sup>19</sup>, it would be important to first establish its test-retest reliability. For  
86 example, if repeated exposure to HS-SOT leads to an enhancement in balance, this may become  
87 a confounding factor to the use of HS-SOT to measure improvement in postural stability in  
88 treatment studies. Moreover, as sensory processing may differ depending on age<sup>2,5,7</sup>, it is  
89 important to compare the performance in the HS-SOT between young adults and older adults.  
90 The objectives of this study were to: 1. examine the age-related differences in balance  
91 performance as measured by HS-SOT, 2. establish the test-retest reliability and the minimal

92 detectable change (MDC) (i.e., the smallest difference that would reflect a real change) of the  
93 HS-SOT equilibrium scores.

94

## 95 **METHODS**

### 96 **Sample size calculation and sampling**

97 The sample size calculation was based on the data from a small-scale study by Honaker et  
98 al.<sup>21</sup> In their comparison of the HS-SOT equilibrium scores between the younger adult group  
99 (20-39 years old, n=10) and older adult group (60-69 years old, n=10), the effect sizes obtained  
100 varied between 0.33 and 0.77. A medium effect size of 0.5 was thus estimated for this study.  
101 With an alpha of 0.05 and power of 0.8, the minimum number of participants required to detect a  
102 significant difference in HS-SOT equilibrium scores between younger and older adults was 64  
103 per group.

104 **Participants were recruited from the community by disseminating pamphlets**  
105 **containing the information of the study in a local university and various elderly centers,**  
106 **and an existing database of individuals who had participated in our previous studies (i.e.,**  
107 **convenience sampling). For inclusion, the individual had to be aged 18 or more, able to**  
108 **provide informed consent, able to stand independently for a minimum of 20 minutes, have**  
109 **normal functional range of motion in the cervical region, hips, knees and ankles. The**  
110 **individual would be excluded from the study if he/she had any neurologic or**  
111 **musculoskeletal injury, serious cardiovascular disease (e.g., unstable angina), pain in the**  
112 **spine or lower extremities, nausea, dizziness, or vertigo, contraindications to exercise, or**  
113 **other serious diseases that precluded participation in the study.** All participants completed a  
114 Vertigo Symptom Scale Short Form (VSS-SF)<sup>25,26</sup> to ensure that the participants fulfilled the

115 eligibility criteria. VSS is a 12-item questionnaire that quantifies the frequency of vertigo  
116 symptoms. Each item was rated on a 5-point scale (0-4), yielding a score range of 0-60, with  
117 higher scores indicating more severe problems. Any individual who scored  $\geq 12$ , which indicates  
118 significant vertigo symptoms, was excluded from the study.<sup>25,26</sup> Ethics approval was granted by  
119 the Hong Kong Polytechnic University. All participants were given written informed consent  
120 before participating in the study. All experimental procedures were conducted in accordance  
121 with the Declaration of Helsinki.

122

### 123 **Instrumentation**

124 All measurements took place in the Balance and Motion Laboratory located at the  
125 Department of Rehabilitation Sciences, the Hong Kong Polytechnic University. **All assessments**  
126 **were performed by the same research personnel who was well-trained and had relevant**  
127 **experience in rehabilitation research.** The SMART Balance Master® system (NeuroCom  
128 International Inc., Clackamas, Oregon, USA) was used for SOT and HS-SOT testing.  
129 Participants stood on the platform in bare feet, which were placed in the designated positions,  
130 with the medial malleolus aligned with the axis of platform rotation. To prevent falls,  
131 participants wore a harness that did not restrict the amount of sway. The whole experiment was  
132 closely monitored by an experienced researcher.

133 Participants first underwent condition 2 and condition 5 of the SOT (i.e., SOT-2 and SOT-  
134 5) (Table 1). They were instructed to maintain an upright posture as much as possible under each  
135 individual sensory condition. Three trials were performed for each condition, with each trial  
136 lasting 20 seconds. A brief rest period of 30 seconds was given between trials. An equilibrium  
137 score was generated by the computerized system, which represents the angular difference

138 between the individual's anteroposterior center of gravity displacements and the theoretical  
139 limits of stability.<sup>27</sup> The equilibrium score was expressed as a percentage and could range from  
140 0% to 100%, with a higher score indicating better stability. If participants exceeded their limits  
141 of stability and took a step, or used the hand to hold onto an object/visual screen for support, the  
142 trial was terminated and considered a fall, and a score of 0% was registered by the system. The  
143 score obtained from the 3 trials for each sensory condition was averaged to obtain the mean  
144 score.

145 Each participant then completed the HS-SOT. A head tracker was used to record the  
146 amplitude and velocity of head movements. Before the actual experiment, the head tracker was  
147 placed on a stable horizontal surface for 5 seconds for calibration. The HS-SOT is a modification  
148 of the condition 2 and condition 5 of the standard SOT by adding head movements to the testing  
149 protocol (Table 1). In each of the HS-SOT testing conditions (i.e., HS-2 and HS-5), participants  
150 wore the head tracker and performed head horizontal rotation movements of about 20°-30° to  
151 each side while maintaining neutral flexion and extension of the head. The participants were  
152 instructed to follow the rhythm of the auditory signals (1 Hz) provided by the system while  
153 performing the head movement, resulting in a minimum peak head rotation velocity of 80° per  
154 second (the default minimum value set by the system). The participants were asked to stand as  
155 steady as possible while moving the head rhythmically about the horizontal axis. The system  
156 provided real-time display of amplitude and velocity of head movements on the computer screen,  
157 so that the tester could provide timely feedback to ensure that the participant performed the head  
158 movements within the set parameters. A practice period was given before actual testing until the  
159 participant managed to perform the desired head movements smoothly and consistently.



160 In accordance with the manufacturer's instructions, five trials were performed for both HS-  
 161 2 and HS-5, with each trial lasting for 20 seconds. A 30-second rest period was given between  
 162 trials. The equilibrium scores generated in these trials were averaged to yield the mean  
 163 equilibrium score for each individual sensory condition. For assessing the test-retest reliability of  
 164 HS-SOT, some subjects completed a second testing session after a 1-2 week period. The testing  
 165 procedures of the second session strictly followed those of the first session.

166

### 167 **Data analysis**

168 To examine the effects of adding head movements to postural stability, paired t-tests were  
 169 used to examine the difference in equilibrium scores between SOT-2 and HS-2, and between  
 170 SOT-5 and HS-5. To examine the degree of association of age with HS-SOT equilibrium scores,  
 171 Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient was used. Subjects were then divided into two  
 172 groups according to age (Group 1: <50y, Group 2: ≥50y). For those subjects who completed  
 173 both testing sessions, intraclass correlation coefficients [ICC(3,2)] were used to evaluate the test-  
 174 retest reliability of the HS-SOT equilibrium scores. ICC values of less than 0.4 were considered  
 175 to have poor reliability; 0.40 to 0.75 as having moderate to good reliability, ICC above 0.75 as  
 176 having excellent reliability.<sup>28</sup> Based on the reliability coefficients computed above, the minimal  
 177 detectable change (MDC) of each HS-SOT condition was calculated. The standard error of  
 178 mean (SEM) was first computed using the following formula.<sup>29</sup>

$$179 \quad \text{SEM} = S_x \sqrt{(1-r_{xx})},$$

180 where  $S_x$  is the standard deviation of the equilibrium score, and  $r_{xx}$  is the reliability coefficient.

181 The **MDC** value was estimated using the following formula.<sup>29</sup>

$$182 \quad \text{MDC} = 1.96 \times \text{SEM} \times \sqrt{2}.$$

183  
184 To further assess change of HS-SOT score between sessions, two-way analysis of  
185 variance (ANOVA) with mixed design (within-group factor: time, between-group factor: age  
186 group) was used to determine whether one group has a stronger learning/practice effect than the  
187 other. If significance was found, post-hoc paired t-tests with Bonferroni's correction were used  
188 to compare the HS-SOT derived equilibrium scores in session 1 and session 2 within each group.  
189 All statistical analyses were performed using SPSS 17.0 (SPSS Inc., Chicago, Illinois, USA). A  
190 significant level of 0.05 (two tailed) was set.

191

## 192 **RESULTS**

193 A total of 177 people volunteered for the study during the period between May 2008 and  
194 May 2010. The data from twelve people were excluded. Of these, eight people had VSS score  
195  $\geq 12$ , and another four subjects were unable to perform the head movements consistently. As a  
196 result, the data from 165 subjects [(68 men, 97 women; mean age (SD) = 42.4(18.4) years] were  
197 used for subsequent analysis. Subjects were divided into two groups according to age [Group 1:  
198 92 younger adults <50y, mean age (SD) = 28.3(10.0) years, 41 men, 51 women; Group 2: 73  
199 older adults  $\geq 50$ y, mean age (SD) = 60.3(8.3) years, 27 men and 46 women].

200

### 201 **Effect of adding head movements on postural stability**

202 When all subjects were considered (Table 2), it was found that the HS-2 equilibrium  
203 score was very slightly but significantly lower than SOT-2 by 0.5 (95%CI: 0.1 to 0.8,  $p=0.01$ ).  
204 Similarly, HS-5 equilibrium score was also significantly lower than SOT-5, but to a much larger  
205 extent (mean=8.8), (95%CI: 6.8 to 10.9,  $p<0.001$ ), indicating that adding head movements

206 caused a degradation of postural stability (Table 2). **When the two age groups were analyzed**  
207 **separately, it was found that adding head movements to SOT-5 caused a significant**  
208 **decrease in equilibrium score among both young ( $p < 0.001$ ) and older adults ( $p < 0.001$ ). On**  
209 **the other hand, the slight reduction in equilibrium score caused by adding head movements**  
210 **to SOT-2 only reached statistical significance in younger adults ( $p = 0.002$ ), but not in the**  
211 **older adult group ( $p = 0.66$ ).**

212

### 213 **Relationship to age**

214 The results revealed significant, negative associations of age with all SOT and HS-SOT  
215 equilibrium scores tested ( $p < 0.05$ )(Table 2), indicating that increasing age was associated with  
216 poorer performance in different sensory conditions presented in SOT and HS-SOT. The  
217 between-group difference in HS-5 was particularly prominent (mean=9.0, 95%CI: 4.8 to 13.1,  
218  $p < 0.001$ ).

219

### 220 **Reliability analyses**

221 Seventy-seven subjects completed both testing sessions [Group 1: mean age (SD)=24.2  
222 (6.3) years, 28 men, 28 women; Group 2: mean age (SD)=58.0 (6.0) years, 11 men and 10  
223 women](Table 3). Both groups achieved a peak head movement velocity at approximately  
224 100°/s, and there was no significant difference in head movement velocity between sessions for  
225 both HS-SOT conditions ( $p > 0.40$ ). However, a significant time  $\times$  group interaction in  
226 equilibrium score for HS-5 was found ( $F_{1,75} = 7.22$ ,  $p = 0.01$ ). Post-hoc paired t-tests revealed  
227 that the equilibrium score for HS-5 was significantly increased in the second testing session for  
228 both age groups, indicating a possible learning/practice effect, but the effect was stronger in the

229 older adult group (Group 2) (Group 1: mean change=3.5, 95% CI: 0.9 to 6.2,  $p=0.01$ ; Group 2:  
230 mean change=10.2, 95% CI: 6.0 to 14.4,  $p<0.001$ ). No such time  $\times$  group interaction was found  
231 for HS-2 ( $F_{1,75} = 2.93$ ,  $p=0.09$ ).

232 The results of reliability analyses were shown in Table 4. For the younger group, the test-  
233 retest reliability of both HS-2 and HS-5 was excellent ( $ICC_{3,2} > 0.75$ ). The corresponding MDC  
234 values were 2.7 and 16.2 respectively. On the other hand, the test-retest reliability of HS-2 and  
235 HS-5 was moderate to good for older adults ( $ICC_{3,2} > 0.5$ ), leading to higher MDC values (HS-  
236 2=3.6, HS-5=22.7).

237

## 238 **DISCUSSION**

### 239 **Age-related differences**

240 Our results show that the HS-SOT scores are significantly lower than their respective  
241 SOT scores, indicating that adding head movements to the standard SOT protocol, particularly  
242 condition 5, poses additional challenge to the subjects, leading to degradation of postural  
243 stability. **Like the SOT, the HS-SOT does not directly assess the labyrinth or vestibular**  
244 **nerve, and is thus not specific for vestibular disorders. In HS-SOT, the disruption of**  
245 **balance is likely a combination of added vestibular stimulation and the effects of the**  
246 **mechanics of the head movement itself while attempting to maintain an upright posture.**  
247 **However, Mishra et al.<sup>18</sup> provides some preliminary evidence that adding head movements**  
248 **to standard SOT increases the sensitivity of the test to discriminate patients who have**  
249 **unilateral, peripheral vestibular deficits as determined by the caloric test from healthy**  
250 **individuals. This would be less likely if the head movements alone contribute to postural**  
251 **instability.<sup>18</sup>**

252 Consistent with the findings in the standard SOT reported in previous studies, there is  
253 deterioration of performance in the HS-SOT with increasing age.<sup>5-7,27</sup> Moreover, adding head  
254 movements to SOT-5 increased the separation of **healthy** younger and older adults. As the  
255 postural tasks involved in HS-SOT, particularly HS-5, are more dependent on vestibular  
256 information, it is not surprising that older adults do not perform as well in these tasks when  
257 compared with their younger counterparts, considering the many degenerative changes in the  
258 vestibular system that occur with aging, including the loss of vestibular hair and nerve cells<sup>30</sup>,  
259 neuronal loss in parts of the vestibular nuclear complex<sup>31</sup> and reduced number of myelinated  
260 vestibular nerve fibers.<sup>32</sup> However, there is also a possibility that the deterioration of  
261 performance in HS-SOT among older adults may be related to the reduced ability to manage dual  
262 tasks.<sup>33,34</sup> Among the four tested conditions, the HS-5 is the most novel and complex. The  
263 addition of dynamic head movements while attempting to maintain balance on a moveable  
264 platform imposes an additional task demand on the participants, particularly for older adults.  
265 **Further study is required to decipher the mechanisms underlying the deterioration of HS-**  
266 **SOT equilibrium scores with aging (e.g. vestibular, dual-tasking, mechanical effects).**

267 Our findings are also consistent with that of Honaker et al.<sup>21</sup> In their study based on a  
268 small sample of 40 subjects, negative correlations between age and HS-SOT scores were  
269 identified, although different head movement velocities were used (HS-2: 60°/s and 120°/s; HS-  
270 5: 15°/s and 60°/s).<sup>21</sup> They further demonstrated that adding head movements of peak velocity  
271 as low as 15°/s to SOT-5 can significantly decrease the equilibrium score.<sup>21</sup> We used the same  
272 peak head movement velocity for both HS-2 and HS-5 (approximately 100°/s), as it is the default  
273 value set by the system. Further study is required to evaluate the interaction between age and  
274 head movement velocity on equilibrium score.

275

276 **Reliability**

277           This is the first study to evaluate the test-retest reliability and MDC of the HS-SOT in  
278 different age groups. Our analyses revealed that the test-retest reliability of HS-SOT differs  
279 depending on age. The test-retest reliability of the HS-SOT is moderate to good among older  
280 adults, and excellent among younger adults. On repeated testing, there is a significant increase in  
281 equilibrium score, indicating a possible learning/practice effect. This study has established the  
282 MDC values, which represent the smallest difference in HS-SOT score that reflects a real  
283 change. **This is essential, as it provides guidelines for interpreting the change in HS-SOT**  
284 **scores with time or after intervention.** Based on the results of this study, for **healthy** younger  
285 adults, we recommend using the criterion of 3- and 16-point change for indicating a real  
286 improvement in HS-2 and HS-5, respectively. For **healthy** older adults, a mean change of 4 and  
287 22 points would indicate a real change in these parameters.

288           Our ANOVA results revealed that older adults show a significantly greater  
289 learning/practice effect than younger adults when performing the HS-5, but not HS-2. As  
290 aforementioned, HS-5 is a more complex postural task and is more reliant upon vestibular  
291 information than HS-2. It may thus be very difficult for older adults to tackle the HS-5 on their  
292 first exposure, as vestibular functioning in aged individuals is less optimal than their younger  
293 peers. Interestingly, when exposed to the task the second time, older adults are able to improve  
294 on their performance. It may involve some kind of adaptation, in which a previous experience of  
295 a postural task influences the development of appropriate strategies for maintaining body  
296 equilibrium in subsequent trials.<sup>7</sup>

297

## 298 **Limitations and future research directions**

299 **Firstly, only dynamic head movements in the horizontal plane were tested, as in**  
300 **several previous studies.<sup>18,19,21</sup> Head movements in the horizontal plane were chosen in this**  
301 **study because they are highly relevant to most routine activities of daily living.<sup>18</sup> For example,**  
302 **step turning is a major component of walking activity during daily activities and is**  
303 **associated with undesirable events such as falls and hip fractures.<sup>34</sup> Horizontal eye and**  
304 **head turns are often used to guide the changes in walking directions.<sup>35,36</sup> As pointed out by**  
305 **Mishra et al.<sup>18</sup>, another potential advantage of using horizontal head movement is that it**  
306 **primarily involves the horizontal semicircular canals. The results can thus be compared**  
307 **with those derived from the caloric test. There is evidence that dynamic head tilts in the**  
308 **pitch and roll planes may also lead to postural instability.<sup>20,37</sup> It is possible that headshake**  
309 **movements in the pitch plane may correspond more to the anterior-posterior SOT sway**  
310 **score than those in the horizontal plane. It would thus be important to repeat the study**  
311 **using head movements in the pitch plane.**

312 **Secondly, the four test conditions were performed in the same order across**  
313 **participants. In particular, the HS-SOT was always performed after the SOT. This is due**  
314 **to a constraint imposed by the computerized system, as the generation of the HS-SOT**  
315 **analysis report involves the computation of the HS-SOT:SOT score ratio for condition 2**  
316 **and 5, which requires that the SOT be done first. Because of this, we could not rule out the**  
317 **possibility of an order effect. Nevertheless, our findings are in agreement with previous**  
318 **studies, which showed that the equilibrium score decreases with increasingly challenging**  
319 **sensory conditions as presented in the SOT or HS-SOT.<sup>5-7,18</sup>**

320 **Thirdly, only healthy young and older adults were tested in this study. The findings**  
321 **can only be generalizable to individuals with characteristics similar to those in our study**  
322 **sample, because other patient populations may demonstrate different postural responses in**  
323 **the HS-SOT. For example, horizontal head movements in healthy subjects may not create**  
324 **an asymmetry in postural responses that may be observed among subjects with unilateral**  
325 **vestibular deficits.<sup>38</sup> Future studies should address whether the HS-SOT may be more**  
326 **sensitive in identifying patients with unilateral vestibular deficits who are well**  
327 **compensated and have normal SOT scores. Using a horizontal head movement velocity of**  
328 **60°/s, Mishra et al.<sup>18</sup> found that adding head movements to the standard SOT increased the**  
329 **test sensitivity in identifying patients with unilateral, peripheral vestibular deficits.**  
330 **However, the low specificity obtained would limit the potential usefulness of the test. It is**  
331 **likely that head movement velocity and direction used in their study may not be the most**  
332 **optimal for discriminating the balance performance of these patients from that of healthy**  
333 **subjects. Further study on this important topic is warranted.**

334

### 335 **Conclusion**

336 In conclusion, this study provides evidence that older age is associated with poorer  
337 performance in HS-SOT. Adding head movements to SOT-5 also increased the separation of  
338 **healthy** younger and older adults. The HS-SOT equilibrium scores have excellent test-retest  
339 reliability among **healthy** younger adults, and moderate to good test-retest reliability among  
340 **healthy** older adults. The computation of the MDC values also assists in clinical interpretation.  
341 Further study is required to determine the optimal cut-off HS-SOT score for identifying people  
342 with different balance disorders.



343

344

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446 **Table 1. Testing protocol: SOT and HS-SOT conditions.**

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Condition	Description	Firm surface	Stationary surround
SOT-2	Eyes closed	Firm surface	Stationary surround
SOT-5	Eyes closed	Sway-referenced surface	Stationary surround
HS-2	Eyes closed, head horizontal rotation	Firm surface	Stationary surround
HS-5	Eyes closed, head horizontal rotation	Sway-referenced surface	Stationary surround

448 SOT-2 = Sensory Organization Test condition 2

449 SOT-5 = Sensory Organization Test condition 5

450 HS-2 = Head-Shake Sensory Organization Test condition 2

451 HS-5 = Head-Shake Sensory Organization Test condition 5

452

**Table 2. Performance in SOT and HS-SOT (N=165)**

<b>Condition</b>	<b>All subjects (n=165)  Mean±SD</b>	<b>Pearson's r (Correlation with age)</b>	<b>p-value (correlation)</b>	<b>Group 1: Younger adults (n=92)  Mean±SD</b>	<b>Group 2: Older adults (n=73)  Mean±SD</b>	<b>Mean between-group difference (95%CI)</b>	<b>p-value (t-test)</b>
SOT-2	92.7±2.7	-0.339	<0.001*	93.4±2.3	91.8±2.8	1.6 (0.8, 2.4)	<0.001*
SOT-5	60.9±14.1	-0.188	0.02*	63.0±14.4	58.2±13.4	4.8 (0.4, 9.1)	0.03*
HS-2	92.2±2.4	-0.222	0.01*	92.6±2.3	91.7±2.3	0.9 (0.2, 1.7)	0.01*
HS-5	52.0±14.1	-0.394	<0.001*	56.0±12.7	47.0±14.2	9.0 (4.8, 13.1)	<0.001*

\*p&lt;0.05



**Table 3. HS-SOT equilibrium scores in session 1 and 2 (N=77)**

	<b>Group 1: Young adults (n=56)</b>				<b>Group 2: Older adults (n=21)</b>				<b>p-value (time × group interaction)</b>
	<b>Session 1 Mean±SD</b>	<b>Session 2 Mean±SD</b>	<b>Mean change (95%CI)</b>	<b>p-value (within-group comparison)</b>	<b>Session 1 Mean±SD</b>	<b>Session 2 Mean±SD</b>	<b>Mean change (95%CI)</b>	<b>p-value (within-group comparison)</b>	
<b>Equilibrium score</b>									
HS-2	92.9±2.5	92.8±2.3	-0.1 (-0.6 to 0.4)	0.70	91.6±2.3	90.4±2.9	-0.9 (-1.9 to 0.1)	0.08	0.09
HS-5	58.3±12.5	61.9±11.6	3.7 (1.1 to 6.3)	0.01*	50.0±12.5	60.1±8.2	10.2 (6.0 to 14.4)	<0.001*	0.01*
<b>HS-SOT peak head movement velocity</b>									
HS-2	104.1±13.2	103.6±7.4	-0.5 (-2.7 to 1.8)	0.68	106.5±8.1	108.0±8.0	1.5 (-2.9 to 6.0)	0.48	0.38
HS-5	104.5±9.0	104.2±8.4	-0.3 (-2.2 to 1.7)	0.76	107.1±12.3	106.6±7.2	-0.5 (-6.8 to 5.7)	0.86	0.92

\*p&lt;0.05

**Table 4. Test-retest reliability coefficients and minimal detectable change (MDC) values for HS-SOT conditions**

Condition	All subjects (n=77)		Group 1: Young adults (n=56)		Group 2: Older adults (n=21)	
	ICC (3,2)	MDC	ICC (3,2)	MDC	ICC (3,2)	MDC
HS-2	0.82	2.9	0.85	2.7	0.64	3.6
HS-5	0.77	16.9	0.78	16.2	0.55	22.7

ICC = intraclass correlation coefficient

MDC = minimal detectable change