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Comparison of Simulator Wear Measured by Gravimetric vs Optical Surface Methods for Two Million Cycles

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ABSTRACT INTRODUCTION

Understanding wear mechanisms are key for better implants
- Critical to the success of the simulation
- Small amount of metal wear can have catastrophic effects in the patient such as heavy metal poisoning or deterioration of the bone/implant interface leading to implant failure
- Difficult to measure in heavy hard-on-hard implants (metal-on-metal or ceramic-on-ceramic)
  - May have only fractions of a milligram of wear on a 200 g component
  - At the limit of detection of even high-end balances when the component is 200 g
  - The change in weight is on the order of 0.000 1 grams
- Here we compare two different wear measurement methods: optical and gravimetric.
- The optical method is considered a better method for wear measurements due to the high degree of linearity between optical and gravimetric methods.

RESULTS

Optical measurements done at all weighing intervals (n = 47)
- High degree of linearity between optical and gravimetric methods (R² = 0.997 for heads and R² = 0.96 for cups, Figures 3 & 4)
- Progressive growth of wear scars observed at each measurement over the course of the test (Figure 5)
- Tribofilm formation (Haskett et al, 2014) is seen visibly and identifiable on the optical scans on most bearing surfaces
- Optical method revealed more material loss than the gravimetric method at a statistically high level for both heads (p < 10⁻²) and cups (p < 10⁻³)

Confounding Factors Observed
- Plastic Deformation, Burnishing. Both the optical and CMM methods agree that there was more deformational change than is accounted for by the gravimetric method. The parallel scratches and polishing (Figure 8) we observed in high wear areas on the cups may have been indicative of burnishing, a type of plastic deformation.
- Backside absorption. Beaded backside surface on all the cups attracted proteinaceous debris (Figure 9) from the lubricant solution that could not be removed by the standard cleaning protocol.

CMM and Optical at 2 MC (n = 9 each)
- Heads (Figure 6)
  - Both geometric methods (optical and CMM) measured more volume loss than the gravimetric method (Optical, p = 0.004; CMM, p = 0.08)
  - No statistically significant difference between the two methods in volume loss measured (p = 0.6)
- Cups (Figure 7)
  - Both methods measured significantly more volume loss than the gravimetric method (Optical, p = 0.01; CMM, p = 0.003)
  - CMM measured more wear loss than the optical method (p = 0.04)
  - Two cups recorded negative wear at 2 MC by the gravimetric method but none by either the optical method or by CMM

DISCUSSION

In high wear areas, particularly in the cups, we observed parallel scratches and polishing similar to that described by McKellog et al (2014). Its appearance and our data suggests that some of this may be burnishing, a type of plastic deformation that could account for the enhanced geometric loss data not explained by the gravimetric measurement. In some situations, burnishing is applied as a form of work hardening in low wear situations. We have not observed this type of wear in our retrievals suggesting that burnishing may not affect them.

In the cups, the higher deviations between the geometric and gravimetric data we believe are due to a couple of confounding factors; the above mentioned surface deformation and protein absorption on the beaded back. Burnishing would tend to bias the geometric methods to measure more wear whereas protein absorption would bias the gravimetric method to underestimate wear. The use of a combination of geometric measurement and gravimetric measurements may help distinguish between material removal and surface deformation.

There was a tendency for the CMM method to record significantly more material loss than both optical and gravimetric methods in some very low wear cups. In one cup, it measured over 8 mm³ of loss when gravimetrically it was near zero and 3 mm³ optically. In another, it recorded 5 mm³ as opposed to negative wear gravimetrically and 0.7 mm³ material optically. On the other hand, the optical method was not able to measure the excluded hip components where the serum was lost and burned unless it was changed to a ‘ceramic’ setting instead of a ‘polished’ setting.

SIGNIFICANCE

The optical and CMM geometric measurement methods provide valuable information that cannot be obtained by the gravimetric method alone; the total wear area, its location, its depth profile and isolation of bearing surface changes from the backside wear. With automation, the optical method allowed each surface scan to be performed in minutes making it possible to monitor the progression of the wear scar with each weighing procedure. Such tracking may be used to estimate the direction and amount of wear beyond the test duration and provide more reliable values for extremely low wear allowing for improved patient outcomes through longer lasting implants.