

Predicting Future Falls and Health in the Elderly Using the Timed Up and Go Test

PEARL M. KAFOA & CASI R. HELBIG

Department of Kinesiology; Texas Lutheran University; Seguin, TX

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ABSTRACT

Walking is a complex motor skill that involves interactions between brain and body systems. These interactions allow an individual to quickly adapt to changes in the environment while walking. One's gait can inhibit mobility and limit daily activities. It has also been associated with the risk of falling, nursing home placement, and even death. As people age, their body and overall health deteriorates, including their locomotor skills. The Timed Up and Go (TUG) Test (see Figure 1) is an assessment used in clinical settings such as hospitals, nursing homes and especially physical therapy to predict health, function, and falls in the older adults. The purpose of this study was to determine if the TUG Test is a valid predictor of future falls. Thirty older adults (ages 65 and above) completed a fall history questionnaire, asking how many falls they had experienced in the past five years. In addition, the TUG Test was conducted on each participant (11 males and 19 females). An independent-samples t-test found a significant difference in the scores for the group with zero falls ($M = 8.296250$, $SD = .7755724$) and group with one or two falls ($M = 10.544093$, $SD = 1.5883778$; $t(-5.014) = p = .000$, two-tailed). The TUG Test shows to be a valid assessment tool in predicting future falls in the elderly. If the TUG Test is indeed a valid and reliable predictor of future falls, it can be a tool for health care personnel to target at-risk elderly. Intervention programs can be put into place for these older adults, and the number of falls, as well as hospitalizations due to falls, should decrease.

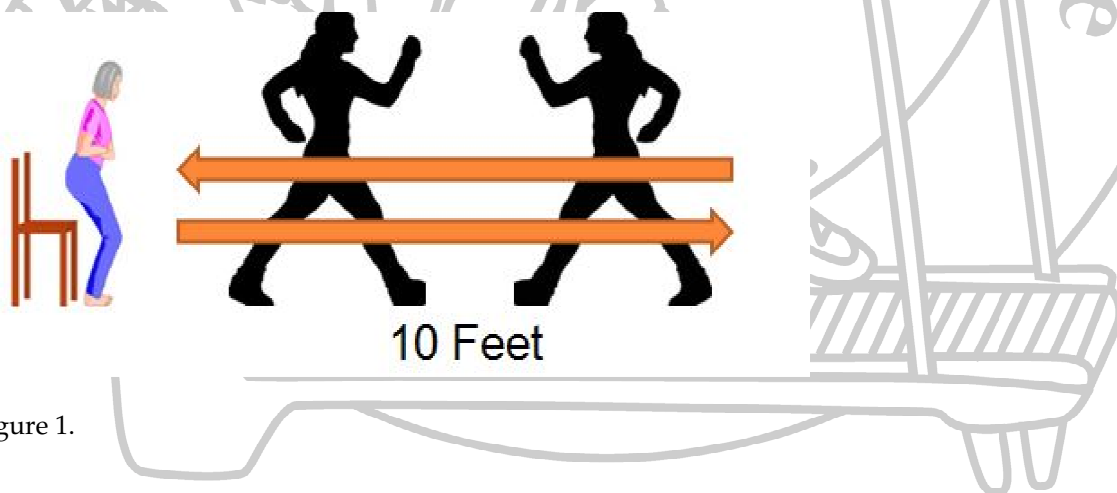


Figure 1.