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MEDICAL STABILIZER HARNESS METHOD AND APPARATUS

Abstract

A stabilizing medical belt or harness method and apparatus for averting injury in individuals that are prone to falls is configured to be worn by the user as a belt or harness and operated autonomously. Power is preferably provided by a battery pack located on the belt or harness. The invention includes a plurality of gyroscopic drives that produce a strong stabilizing effect when activated by a central computer that detects when the user is about to slip or fall. The medical stabilizer belt or harness will also aid patients in physical therapy by assisting in balance during recovery.

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Background/Summary

PRIORITY CLAIM [0001] This application is a continuation of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 18/426,292 filed Jan. 29, 2024; which is a continuation of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 16/748,779 filed Jan. 21, 2020, now U.S. Pat. No. 11,883,345; which claims the benefit of priority from U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 62/794,639 filed Jan. 20, 2019, the contents of which are incorporated herein by reference in their entirety.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0002] The invention relates to the field of medical devices used to assist impaired individuals to locomote safely. More specifically, the invention comprises self-driven gyroscopes to minimize fall injuries in geriatric individuals and/or assist with physical therapy.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0003] There are many known devices to assist geriatric individuals to locomote and prevent falls. Most of these are in the form of walkers and canes. One good example is the rollator consisting of a walking frame with wheels, especially one designed for disabled or elderly. While aiding in locomotion and assisting with balance, they do little when the user stumbles or falls. One in four Americans aged 65+ will still fall each year with an older adult dying in a hospital room from a fall every 19 minutes. The present invention seeks to lower injuries/deaths and associated costs.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0004] The present invention comprises a medical stabilizer used to minimize injury in falls and to assist in physical therapy. The invention is configured to be worn by the user. Power for the drive is preferably powered by a battery near or on the user.

[0005] The invention includes a plurality of motors that create a strong gyroscopic stabilizing effect. The drives are integrated into a belt or harness and aligned in such a manner that if the person wearing the invention was to start to fall, they would resume a stable standing position rather than falling in any of 360 degrees.

[0006] Control features are preferably provided as either simply on or off as well as autonomously through a system of electronics that detect an oncoming fall that will activate the device. Power is supplied by a battery or external power.

Description

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0007] Preferred and alternative examples of the present invention are described in detail below with reference to the following drawings.

[0008] FIG. 1 shows a perspective view of the present invention.

[0009] FIG. 2 shows the invention components without a belt or harness.

[0010] FIG. 3 shows a belt or harness with removable straps.

[0011] FIG. 4 shows a perspective view of a stabilizer node with axle cover cross-section.

[0012] FIG. 5 is an exploded view of a stabilizer node.

[0013] FIG. 6 presents a cross section view of a stabilizer node.

[0014] FIG. 7 shows a perspective view of a gyroscopic drive rotor

[0015] FIG. 8 shows a preservative view of a gyroscope drive stator.

[0016] FIG. **9** presents an alternate embodiment prospective view of a hubless stabilizer node and belt or harness.

[0017] FIG. **10** shows a prospective cross-section view of a hubless stabilizer node.

[0018] FIG. **11** presents the assembled hubless stabilizer node with two nodes that can counter rotate to eliminate rotational torque.

[0019] FIG. **12** shows a schematic of a controller node.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

[0020] The terminology used herein is for describing particular embodiments only and is not intended to be limiting for the invention. As used herein, the term “and/or” includes any and all combinations of one or more of the associated listed items. As used herein, the singular forms “a,” “an” and “the” are intended to include the plural forms as well as the singular forms, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise. It will be further understood that the terms “comprises” and/or “comprising” when used in this specification, specify the presence of stated features, steps, operations, elements, and/or components, but do not preclude the addition of one or more other features, steps, operations, elements, components, and/or groups thereof.

[0021] Unless otherwise defined, all terms used herein, including technical and scientific terms, used herein have the same meaning as commonly understood by one having ordinary skill in the art to which the invention belongs. It will be further understood that terms, such as those defined in commonly used dictionaries, should be interpreted as having a meaning that is consistent with their meaning in the one context of the relevant art and the present disclosure and will not be interpreted in an idealized or overly formal sense unless expressly so defined, herein.

[0022] In describing the invention, it will be understood that several techniques and steps are disclosed. Each of these has individual benefit and each can also be used in conjunction with one or more (or in some cases all) of the other disclosed techniques. Accordingly, for the sake of clarity, this description will refrain from repeating every possible combination of the individual steps in an unnecessary fashion. Nevertheless, the specification and claims should be read with the understanding that such combination are entirely within the scope of the invention and the claims.

[0023] New stabilizing belt or harness method and apparatus for controlling falls and assist with physical therapy in a wearable clothing accessory are discussed herein. In the following description, for the purposes of explanation, numerous specific details are set forth in order to provide a thorough understanding of the present invention. It will be evident, however, to one skilled in the art that the present invention may be practiced without these specific details.

[0024] The present disclosure is to be considered as an exemplification of the invention and is not intended to limit the invention to the specific embodiments illustrated by the figures or description below.

[0025] The present invention will now be described with reference to figures representing preferred embodiments. FIG. **1** shows a perspective view of the present invention in an assembled state. As shown with reference to FIGS. **1** and **2**, a stabilizing belt or harness method and apparatus **10** includes stabilizer nodes **12**, a control and power node **14**, a belt or harness **16** with removable straps **16a** and hardware **18a** that attaches the nodes to the belt or harness and **18b** that covers access penetrations to adjust the centering of their internal gyroscope drive rotor. By way of example, hardware **18a,b** may be screws, bolts, adhesives, or any suitable method. As shown with reference further to FIGS. **5-7**, each of the stabilizer nodes contain at least one gyroscope drive rotor top section **20** and bottom section **22** that when assembled lock a plurality of permanent magnets **24** into place. The magnets purpose is two-fold: they cause rotation of the gyroscope rotor when acted upon by a stator's electromagnetic fields and amplify gyroscopic effect due to their mass and perimeter location. To limit rotational torque, each stabilizer can be paired with a second stabilizer whose rotor rotates in the opposite direction.

[0026] As shown further with reference to FIGS. **5-6**, a gyroscope stator **28**, which may be made of iron laminations, ferrous composite or any suitable material, locates a plurality of field coils **30**,

which may be made of copper, aluminum or any suitable material, and when energized through a motor controller will create a phasing magnetic field that acts upon the magnets of the gyroscope's rotor.

[0027] As shown further with reference to FIGS. 4-6, central axle **32** locates the gyroscope drive rotor between a plurality of roller bearings **34** that are locked into place by a plurality of retaining bolts **38**. The gyroscopic rotor assembly is centered between housing top **40** and housing bottom **42**, which may be made of carbon fiber composite, aluminum, or any suitable material, by a plurality of circlips **36**.

[0028] Although the invention is designed to be worn by the user, it can also be configured to stabilize walkers, canes, crutches, or anything that is used to help support the user. Additional non-human uses can include larger versions that stabilize cars and trucks from tipping over, personal air vehicles to maintain stability, boats both powered and unpowered such as sailboats, and static structures to help minimize twisting in large winds, earthquakes and any other influences that could affect the movement of the structure. It could further be used on animals in a variety of settings, including for assisting in pet movement to transportation or treatment of wild and show animals.

[0029] In an alternate embodiment, as shown further with reference to FIG. 10, stabilizer node **12** can be configured as a hubless design with a stator that is supported along its inner bearing intersection support **92**.

[0030] In an alternate embodiment shown further with reference to FIG. 9, the stabilizer node has a hubless gyroscope drive rotor allowing for a design with a central penetration that is large enough to surround the waist of the user and can be connected to a belt or harness/harness (such as shown in FIG. 3). As shown further with reference to FIG. 10, the hubless stabilizer node is composed of at least one gyroscopic drive rotor **90** with a plurality of integrated magnets **91** located in its perimeter. Integrated into the inner surface of the rotor is the bearing support surface **92**. The stator may be made of aluminum, composite or any suitable material. Surrounding the rotor is stator **93** with field coils **94**. A rotor shell **95**, which may be made of a strong lightweight composite, aluminum or any suitable material, locates framework **97** that supports a plurality of roller bearings **96** mounted on a plurality of axles **98**. Hardware **99**, which may utilize screws, adhesives, or any suitable method is used to attach the framework to the rotor shell. Enveloping the device is an outer shell **100**, composed of carbon fiber composites, aluminum, or any suitable material. In an alternative embodiment, as shown further with reference to FIG. 11, rotational torque created by the device can be diminished by employing a second counter rotating hubless gyroscope node placed one above the other or using a double-sided stator that spins two hubless rotors in opposite directions (not shown).

[0031] The counter rotating versions of the medical stabilizer belt or harness can be applied to not only human usage but also can be configured to stabilize walkers, canes, crutches, or anything that is used to help support the user. Additional non-human uses can include larger versions that stabilize cars and trucks from tipping over, personal air vehicles to maintain stability, boats both powered and unpowered such as sailboats, yachts, and static structures to help minimize twisting in large winds, earthquakes and any other influences that could affect the movement of the structure. It could further be used on animals in a variety of settings, including for assisting in pet movement to transportation or treatment of wild and show animals.

[0032] As shown further with reference to FIG. 2, a controller **14** contains electronics that may be used to monitor the user's motions and contains a battery source. The controller can be set to be on all the time or directed by its electronics. As shown further with reference to FIG. 12, the controller preferably includes motion sensing components, motor controller, battery source and available inputs for external control by a therapist and an external power source if available. The external power source can also be used to recharge the battery source.

[0033] In an alternate embodiment, the device is used to assist in physical therapy and is either turned either on or off manually assisting the user with balance and typically powered externally

for longer sessions.

[0034] While the preferred embodiment of the invention is meant to be worn around the waist, appropriate sized versions can be worn on any part of the body when applicable, for example in physical therapy of an appendage. The stabilizer may be electrically powered and sized to create enough artificial balance to meet the needs for the required results. Multiple units can be stacked to increase the artificial balance while keeping the overall diameter to a minimum. Multiple units may be employed by the user at various locations (e.g. one on each arm, one of each leg, one around the waist). In alternative embodiments, multiple stabilizers may be integrated into various regions of the clothing to meet the desired results. For example, proximate to the arms legs, center section or anywhere additional balance is desired.

[0035] In yet alternative embodiments, stabilizers can be utilized to restrict the movements of structures to minimize damage due to outside influence, e.g. a skyscraper swaying due to wind is diminished by the stabilizer. A moving vehicle such as a boat, car, or airplane can integrate the stabilizer to add additional stability. The invention may be used in physical therapy to add balance or resistance without the need for extraneous structures such as physical therapy parallel bars. The invention may be used in sports to train athlete's by adding additional balance, e.g., riding a skateboard, surf board, horse or bicycle. The invention provides artificial balance for the physically impaired, e.g., elderly to limit slip and fall accidents. The invention may also monitor the user and be activated when signaled that a fall might take place. The invention may be operated in an always on or always off mode.

[0036] While the preferred embodiment of the invention has been illustrated and described, as noted above, many changes can be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention. Accordingly, the scope of the invention is not limited by the disclosure of the preferred embodiment. Instead, the invention should be determined entirely by reference to the claims that follow.

Claims

1. A method for wearable user stabilization, comprising: securely coupling a stabilizer apparatus to a user with a harness, the apparatus having a plurality of hubless motors that create a strong gyroscopic force; creating at the apparatus a strong gyroscopic force using the plurality of hubless motors; and transferring inertia to the user from the apparatus to the harness to create artificial balance for the user.
 2. The method for wearable user stabilization of claim 1, wherein the stabilizer apparatus is harnessed to the at least one of the user's waist, arms or legs.
 3. The method for wearable user stabilization of claim 1, wherein the stabilizer apparatus is configurable by at least one of size or shape to adapt to location requirements on the user where the stabilizer apparatus is harnessed.
 4. The method for wearable user stabilization of claim 1, wherein the stabilizer apparatus is configurable to be integrated into the clothing of the user.
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