

OpenSim Tutorial #2

Simulation and Analysis of a Tendon Transfer Surgery

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I. OBJECTIVES

Purpose

The purpose of this tutorial is to demonstrate how musculoskeletal models can be used to study orthopaedic surgical techniques and to illustrate how muscle moment arm, optimal muscle fiber length, and tendon slack length influence the variation of muscle force with respect to changes in joint angle. In this tutorial, you will:

- Become familiar with a wrist model and OpenSim's Muscle Editor
- Simulate a tendon transfer surgery
- Examine the effects of the surgery on joint moment, muscle force, and muscle moment arm
- Investigate the effect of tendon slack length on isometric muscle force

Format

Each section of the tutorial guides you through certain tools within OpenSim's GUI and asks you to answer a few questions. The menu titles and option names you must select and any commands you must type to run OpenSim will appear in **bold face**. The questions can be answered based on information from OpenSim and basic knowledge of the human musculoskeletal system. As you complete each section of the tutorial, feel free to explore OpenSim and the wrist model further on your own. Depending on the amount of exploration you do, this tutorial will take about 1-2 hours to complete.

II. MUSCULOSKELETAL MODEL OF THE WRIST

In this section, you will load a model of the human wrist [1] and examine its motions.

- Click the **File** menu and select **Open Model**.
- Find the *examples* folder, which is located under your OpenSim installation directory, e.g., *C:\Program Files\OpenSim 1.0*.
- Open the *WristModel* folder, select the file *wrist.osim*, and click **Open**.


Use the Coordinate sliders to investigate the wrist model. In particular, become familiar with wrist *flexion* and extension and radial and ulnar *deviation*. It is important to understand the angle conventions to interpret the plots you will make later in the tutorial.

Note: Radial deviation is defined as wrist motion toward the radius bone, or thumb side.

Questions

1. Which motion is expressed in positive angles: wrist flexion or wrist extension?
2. Which motion is expressed in positive angles: radial deviation or ulnar deviation?

In this OpenSim model, muscles are grouped based on their function.

- In the Navigator, expand the **Actuators** and **Muscles** headings. To expand a Navigator heading, click the plus icon  to its left.
- To hide all of the muscles in the model, **double-click** on the **all** muscle group heading.
Note: Double-clicking on any body, muscle group, or muscle heading in the Navigator toggles its display.
- To show the *flexors* muscle group, **double-click** on the **flexors** heading. Now the only muscles displayed should be the wrist flexors. To hide the wrist flexors, **double-click** on the **flexors** heading again.
- Repeat the same steps to display the **extensors**, **radial deviators**, and **ulnar deviators** muscle groups individually.

Questions

3. What are the functions of the Extensor Carpi Ulnaris (ECU) muscle? Check all that apply.
☐ wrist extension ☐ wrist flexion ☐ radial deviation ☐ ulnar deviation ☐ hip extension
4. What are the functions of the Extensor Carpi Radialis Brevis (ECRB)? Check all that apply.
☐ wrist extension ☐ wrist flexion ☐ radial deviation ☐ ulnar deviation ☐ hip extension

III. SIMULATION OF A TENDON TRANSFER

Spinal cord injury at the level of the cervical spine causes a loss of hand function. In some patients, the ability to grasp and release objects may be restored through electrical stimulation of paralyzed muscles, called functional electrical stimulation (FES). However, FES is only feasible in those muscles where the connection between the nervous system and the muscle remains intact within the muscle. In many cases, the muscles that perform the desired functions (e.g., finger flexion, thumb abduction) have been damaged too greatly to respond to FES. In addition, there is often a loss of balance at the wrist joint, causing the wrist to remain in a flexed and ulnarly deviated position [2]. In these situations, tendon transfers are performed to (i) alter the paths of muscles that do respond to FES to locations where they can enhance hand function, and (ii) restore a more functional configuration of the wrist joint so that grasp and release tasks can be accomplished.

In this section of the tutorial, you will transfer the *ECU* tendon to the *ECRB* tendon and evaluate the mechanism by which this tendon transfer restores balance to the wrist.

- To hide all of the muscles, **right-click** on the **Muscles** heading and select **Display > Hide**.
- Display the **transfer** muscle group by **double-clicking** its heading. The *ECU_pre-surgery* and the *ECRB* muscle paths should now be visible on the model.
Note: ECU_pre-surgery represents the ECU muscle before the simulated tendon transfer surgery.
- Expand the **transfer** muscle group and identify each muscle by toggling its display.

To simulate the surgery, you will be using the *Muscle Editor*. This tool allows you to edit the paths of muscles as well as their force-generating parameters. Each end of a muscle-tendon complex connects to bone. In this model, the most proximal connection is the *origin*, and the most distal connection is the *insertion point*. You will now select the insertion point of the *ECU_pre-surgery* muscle and the two via points proximal to it. All muscle points are graphically represented as red spheres on the muscle path.

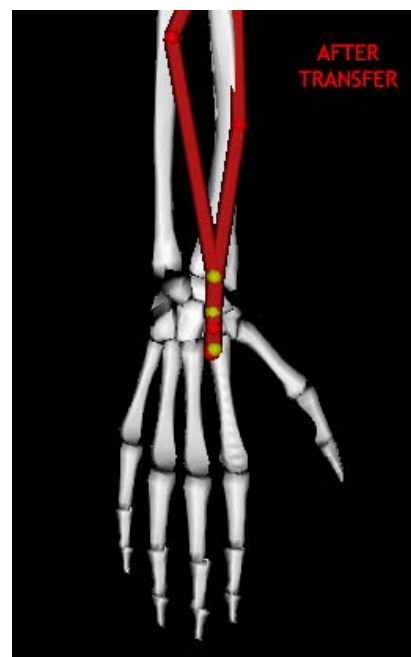
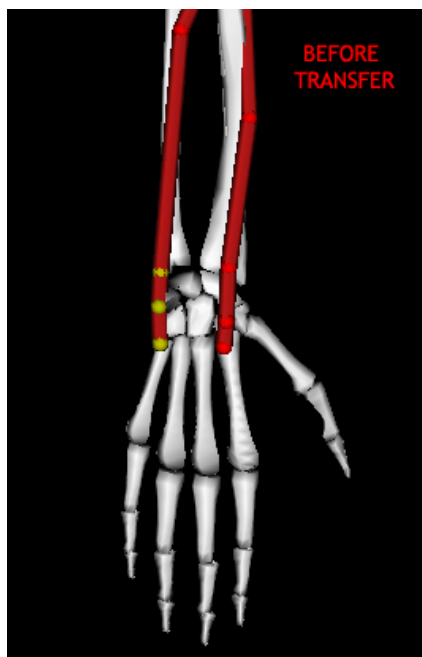
- To return the model to its default pose, click **Poses > Default** in the Coordinates window.
- To open the Muscle Editor, **right-click** on the *ECU_pre-surgery* muscle name in the Navigator and select **Edit**.

Note: If the Muscle Editor opens in the View window, reposition it by clicking and dragging its tab.

- Zoom in on the wrist joint. Hold down the **ctrl** button and **click** on the insertion muscle point of *ECU_pre-surgery*. Additionally, muscle points can be selected within the Muscle Editor by clicking the corresponding check box.

Note: The cursor becomes a crosshair when you press ctrl. Once selected a muscle point changes to yellow.

- Hold down the **ctrl** + **shift** buttons simultaneously and **click** on the two muscle points proximal to the insertion point of *ECU_pre-surgery*. All three muscle points should now be yellow and their names (*ECU_pre-surgery-P7*, *ECU_pre-surgery-P6*, *ECU_pre-surgery-P5*) should be displayed at the bottom-left of the GUI.
- To move selected muscle points, **click** and hold the **left mouse** button on one of the selected muscle points, and move the cursor radially toward the *ECRB* muscle path.
- Align the *ECU_pre-surgery* path with the *ECRB* path, as shown below. Rotate the view of wrist model to align the paths in all three directions. For fine tuning, **de-select** muscle points by “**un-checking**” the appropriate checkboxes in the Muscle Editor and edit the location of each point individually.



IV. BIOMECHANICAL EFFECTS OF TENDON TRANSFER

To analyze the effects of the surgery, you need a model of the *ECU* muscle both before and after surgery. Although you did a great job moving the muscle points, a muscle with a path similar to the transfer you just completed has already been built into the model.

- To restore the *ECU_pre-surgery*, click the **Reset** button at the bottom of the Muscle Editor.
Note: You may have to scroll down within the Muscle Editor window to see the Reset button.
- Expand the *final* muscle group and **double-click** on the muscle titled *ECU_post-surgery*. A muscle path similar to the transfer you completed should appear in the model.
Note: ECU_post-surgery represents the ECU muscle after the simulated tendon transfer surgery.
- Ensure no muscle points are selected and the model is in the neutral (**default**) configuration.

Now you will investigate the effect of the transfer on wrist extensor strength by creating plots of the maximum isometric wrist moments before and after the simulated surgery. To see how the surgery will affect wrist extension strength, you will examine maximum wrist extension moments (i.e., the moments generated when all the extensor muscles are maximally excited).

Note: Isometric moments assume zero muscle velocity.

- Open a new plot, click the **Y-Quantity** button, and select **moment > flexion**.
Note: Do not select elbow_flexion!
- Click the **Muscles** button, and filter the *extensors* group by selecting the **model** option, and then selecting *extensors* from the **group** drop down menu.
- To select all of the muscles in the *extensors* group, click the **select all shown** checkbox.
- To de-select the *ECU_post-surgery* muscle, “**un-check**” the *ECU_post-surgery* checkbox.
- To plot the sum of all the moments, click the **sum only** checkbox.
Note: Keep the muscle selection window open.
- Click the **X-Quantity** button and select *flexion*.
- Click the **Properties** button and type **Wrist Flexion Moment vs. Flexion Angle** into the textbox under the **Title** tab. Click **OK**.
- Edit the **Curve Name** text to read **Before Transfer**. Then click **Add**.

A curve labeled “Before Transfer” should appear on the plot, which is the sum of the isometric moments generated by all of the *wrist extensors* before the surgery. Do *not* close this plot, as you will add more curves to compare the strength of the extensors after the transfer.

- In the muscle selection window, **de-select** *ECU_pre-surgery* and **select** *ECU_post-surgery* by clicking the appropriate check boxes.
- Edit the **Curve Name** text box to read **After Transfer**. Then click **Add**.
*Note: To print or save a plot, **right-click** on the plot and select **Print** or **Export Image**.*

Questions

5. *Is the sign of the extension moment positive or negative?*
6. *What happens to the maximum moment of the wrist extensors if the ECU muscle is transferred to the ECRB?*

Hint: Remember, one of the goals of the surgery is to increase wrist extension strength.

Now let's examine the effects of the transfer on the deviation strength of the wrist muscles.

- To delete the previous curves, select all the names from the **Curves List** and click **Delete**.
*Note: To select multiple curve names, hold down **ctrl** while selecting.*
- Click **Y-Quantity** and select **moment > deviation**.
- To clear the muscle selection list, click the **deselect all shown** check box.
- Filter the **ulnar deviators** group and click the **select all shown** check box.
- To de-select the *ECU_post-surgery* muscle, “**un-check**” the *ECU_post-surgery* checkbox.
*Note: Ensure the **sum only** checkbox is still selected and keep the muscle selection window open.*
- Click **X-Quantity** and select **deviation**.
- Edit the plot title to read **Wrist Deviation Moment vs. Deviation Angle**.
- Edit the **Curve Name** text to read **Before Transfer**. Then click **Add**.

Again, a curve labeled “Before Transfer” will appear on the plot, which is the sum of the isometric moments generated by all of the *wrist deviators* before the surgery. Do *not* to close this plot, as you will add more curves to compare the strength of the deviators after the transfer.

- To compare the strength of the ulnar deviators after the transfer, **de-select** *ECU_pre-surgery* and **select** *ECU_post-surgery* by clicking the appropriate check boxes in the muscle selection window.
- Edit the **Curve Name** text box to read **After Transfer**. Then click **Add**.

Questions

7. *Is the sign of the ulnar deviation moment positive or negative?*
8. *What happens to the maximum moment of the ulnar deviators if the ECU muscle is transferred to the ECRB location?*
9. *One goal of this tendon transfer surgery is to decrease excessive ulnar deviation. Has your simulated surgery achieved this goal?*

After answering these questions, close the plotter window.

You are now going to take a more in-depth look at the effects of the tendon transfer on the function of the *ECU* muscle.

- Open a new plot, and click **Y-Quantity** and select **moment > flexion**.
- Click the **Muscles** button and select *ECU_pre-surgery* and *ECU_post-surgery* from the list.
- Click **X-Quantity** and select **flexion**.
- Edit the plot title to read **Wrist Moment vs. Flexion Angle**, and then click **Add**.
- **Hover** the cursor over a curve on the plot to see a tool tip that gives the coordinates of that particular point on the curve.

Questions

10. *What is the peak value of the ECU extension moment before transfer? At what flexion angle does it occur?*

Note: Remember, extension moments are negative.

11. *What is the peak value of the ECU extension moment after transfer? At what flexion angle does it occur?*

12. *Does the moment-generating capacity of the ECU vary more with flexion angle before or after the simulated surgery?*

Investigate the differences in wrist strength further by creating plots of **tendon force vs. flexion** and **flexion moment arm vs. flexion** for the *ECU_pre-surgery* and *ECU_post-surgery* muscles.

Note: You can open multiple plotter windows simultaneously. When finished, you should have created three plots in three separate plotter windows with two curves each.

Questions

13. *Write down the peak values of each curve, the joint angle at which the peak occurs, and describe the general shapes of the curves.*

OpenSim's Muscle Editor allows you to examine and edit the muscle parameters used to estimate the force-length curve of this muscle.

- To open the Muscle Editor, **right-click** on *ECU_pre-surgery* in the Navigator and select **Edit**.
- To examine the list of muscle parameters, click on the **Parameters** tab.

Questions

14. *What is the optimal fiber length of the ECU_pre-surgery muscle?*

- To edit the *ECU_post-surgery* muscle, **right-click** on *ECU_post-surgery* in the Navigator and select **Edit**.
- To examine the list of muscle parameters, click on the **Parameters** tab.

Questions

15. What is the optimal fiber length of ECU_post-surgery?
16. Calculate the ratio of optimal fiber length to peak moment arm for ECU_pre-surgery and ECU_post-surgery.
17. Explain the differences in the isometric moment vs. wrist flexion angle plots for the ECU_pre-surgery and ECU_post-surgery muscles, based on the plots of force and moment arm and the ratio of optimal fiber length to peak moment arm.
18. Specifically, what does the difference between the ratios of optimal fiber length to moment arm for the ECU before and after the tendon transfer tell you?

After answering these questions, close all of the plotter windows.

V. THE EFFECT OF TENDON SLACK LENGTH ON THE ISOMETRIC FORCE-ANGLE CURVE

The previous simulation illustrated how the moment arm and optimal fiber length of a muscle influence its isometric strength and the portion of the force-angle curve over which the muscle operates. Another factor in determining the isometric force vs. joint angle relationship is tendon slack length. Tendon slack length is the length at which the tendon begins to generate force.

- Make three new plots in three separate plotter windows for the *ECRB* muscle: **tendon force vs. flexion, muscle-tendon length vs. flexion, fiber length vs. flexion.**

Note: You can open multiple plotter windows simultaneously. Do not close any of the plots.

- **Right-click** on *ECRB* in the Navigator and select **Edit**. Click on the **Parameters** tab.

Questions

19. What is the tendon slack length of the *ECRB* muscle?
20. What is the optimal fiber length of the *ECRB* muscle?

- Edit the **tendon_slack_length** text box to read **0.2105** and click the **Set** button.

Note: You may have to scroll down within the Muscle Editor window to see the Set button.

- To add new curves for the edited *ECRB* muscle, click **Add** in each plotter window.

*Note: It may be helpful to edit each **Curves Name** to read “*ECRB* lts = 0.2105 m” before adding the curves.*

Questions

21. *How did changing the tendon slack length of the ECRB alter the tendon force vs. flexion angle curve?*
22. *How did changing the tendon slack length of the ECRB alter muscle-tendon length vs. flexion angle curve?*
23. *How did changing the tendon slack length of the ECRB alter the fiber length vs. flexion curve?*
24. *At what flexion angles do the fiber lengths of the ECRB and the edited ECRB reach the optimal fiber length? Compare these angles with the peaks of the force vs. flexion plots.*
25. *Explain the effect of tendon slack length on the force-angle relationship of a muscle based on what you have learned about its effect on fiber length and muscle-tendon length.*

Feel free to change the tendon slack length and make more curves to further demonstrate the effects you have seen. For additional information, refer to the references below.

References

1. Gonzalez, R.V., Buchanan, T.S., Delp, S.L. How muscle architecture and moment arms affect wrist flexion-extension moments. *Journal of Biomechanics*, vol. 30, pp. 705-712, 1997.
2. Herrmann, A., Delp, S.L. Moment arms and force-generating capacity of the extensor carpi ulnaris after transfer to the extensor carpi radialis brevis. *Journal of Hand Surgery*, vol. 24A, pp. 1083-1090, 1999.
3. Zajac, F.E. Muscle and tendon: properties, models, scaling, and application to biomechanics and motor control. *Critical Reviews Biomedical Engineering*, vol. 17, pp. 359-411, 1989.
4. Delp, S.L. and Zajac, F.E. Force- and moment-generating capacity of lower-limb muscles before and after tendon lengthening. *Clinical Orthopaedics and Related Research*, vol. 284, pp. 247-259, 1992.