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# Quantitative Vestibular Function Testing in the Pediatric Population

Kristen Janky, AuD, PhD

Boys Town National Research Hospital

Amanda Rodriguez, AuD, PhD

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

## Kristen L. Janky, PhD

Dr. Kristen Janky is Clinical Coordinator of Vestibular Services and Director of the Vestibular and Balance Laboratory at Boys Town National Research Hospital. Her PhD is from the University of Nebraska. She completed a postdoctoral fellowship at Johns Hopkins University. Her research focuses on the effects of vestibular loss in children.



## Amanda I. Rodriguez, PhD, AuD

Dr. Amanda Rodriguez is an Assistant Professor and Director of the Concussion and Vestibular Evaluation Laboratory at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL). She received her AuD-PhD from Texas Tech University and completed a postdoctoral fellowship at Boys Town National Research Hospital. Her research interests include examining the effects of sports concussion on the vestibular system and implications of chronic vestibular loss on behavior and lifestyle. Dr. Rodriguez is a practicing vestibular audiologist and coordinates the vestibular and concussion services for the UNL Barkley Speech, Language, and Hearing Clinic and the Nebraska Athletic Department.



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- Kristen L. Janky: Financial: Kristen Janky is employed by Boys Town National Research Hospital. She is a NIH Grant Recipient. She is a consultant for Natus, and an Editor of Balance Function Assessment and Management Textbook. She is a Editorial Board Member of the American Journal of Audiology. She received an honorarium for this presentation. Non-financial: Kristen Janky is President of the American Balance Society.
- Amanda I. Rodriguez: Financial: Amanda Rodriguez is employed by the University of Nebraska- Lincoln. She received NIH T32 post-doc stipend during the time this chapter was written. She received an honorarium for this presentation. Non-financial: Amanda I. Rodriguez is a American Speech, Language, and Hearing Association, Board of Ethics Member.
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# Learning Outcomes

After this course, participants will be able to:

- List which tests of vestibular function are appropriate for children based on their age.
- Describe modifications and considerations that can be made to each test of vestibular function to accommodate children.
- List clinical measures that can be used as screening tools to identify vestibular loss in children.

## Introduction

- Prevalence of balance and vestibular disorders in children is variable
  - Risk factors
- Pediatric vestibular testing has challenges for the child and clinician
- Current testing includes assessments for the entire vestibular apparatus
  - Age appropriate
  - Modifications to improve diagnostic capacity

# Vestibular Evoked Myogenic Potential (VEMP)

- VEMP is an assessment of otolith function and both branches of the vestibular nerve.
  - ocular VEMP (oVEMP): Mainly Utricular function and Superior Vestibular Nerve
  - cervical VEMP (cVEMP): Saccular function and Inferior Vestibular Nerve

## oVEMP

- Contralateral excitatory response activated by a contracted inferior oblique muscle
- Child maintains 30 deg up-gaze
- n10/p16 peak latencies, peak-to-peak amplitudes



## cVEMP

- Ipsilateral inhibitory response activated by a contracted SCM
- Child lifts supine/contralateral head turn
- p13/n23 peak latencies, peak-to-peak amplitudes, & tonic EMG level

## Vestibular Evoked Myogenic Potential (VEMP)

- Age effects:
  - cVEMP responses can be obtained as soon as 5 days term (Wang et al., 2013) and are reliable between 1-12 month (Sheykholeslami et al., 2005)
    - Children have earlier p13 and/or n23 latencies; however, they become more adult-like after late adolescence (e.g., Sheykholeslami et al., 2005; Kelsch et al., 2006).
  - oVEMP responses can be obtained by age 2, with increased reliability and adult-like amplitudes and latencies by ages 3-4 (Wang et al., 2013; Young et al., 2015; Hsu et al., 2009; Chou et al., 2012).

## Vestibular Evoked Myogenic Potential (VEMP)

- Benefit of VEMP in children:
  - Does not induce dizziness
  - Can sit with/ close to parent and not in the dark
  - Testing is fast (about 10 – 15 minutes)
  - Ear and otolith specific diagnostic info
- Challenges of VEMP in children:
  - Variability in VEMP response as a function of insufficient muscle contraction, electrode placement/intolerance, age, and ear canal size differences.

## Vestibular Evoked Myogenic Potential (VEMP)

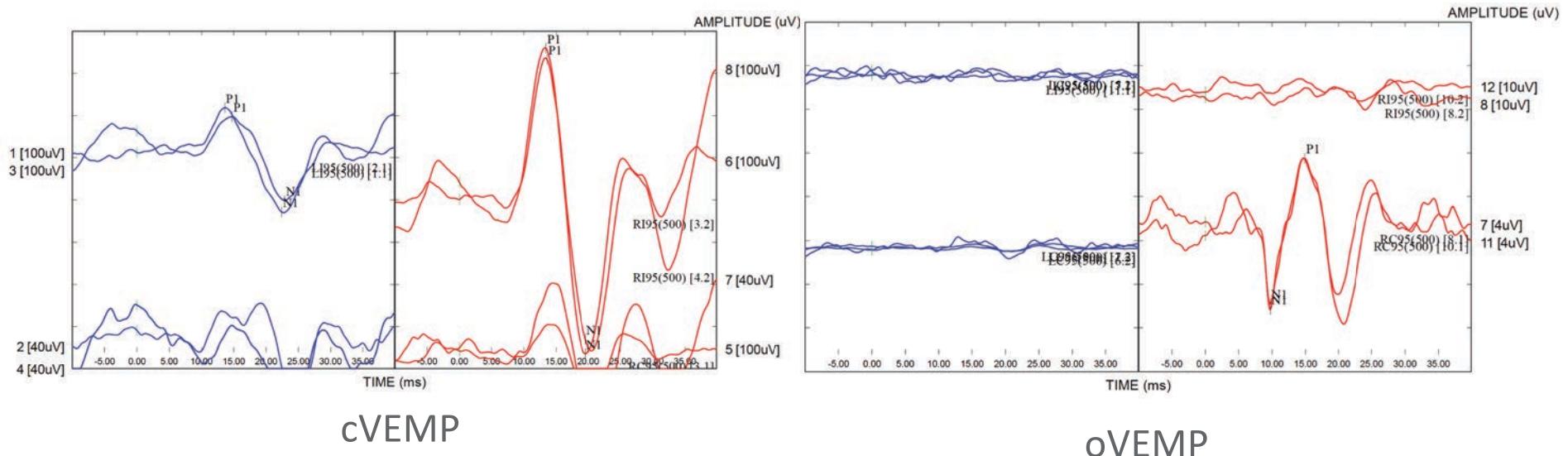
- Modifications for children:
  - Shorten test time:
    - Bilateral stimulation, bone conduction
  - Electrode tolerance:
    - one reference (e.g., chin)
    - oVEMP montage AFTER cVEMP
  - Maintain adequate up-gaze or SCM contraction:
    - Body position and EMG monitoring
    - Play a video, stickers
  - Ensure safe dB SPL
    - 120 dB SPL if ECV is < 0.8 mL
    - Use 750 Hz TB
    - Ascending threshold approach

## VEMP: Case Study

- 5 year old male:
  - Normal hearing in the right ear and a moderately severe sensorineural hearing loss in the left ear, 7 months following MVA with otic-capsule involving temporal bone fracture
  - No prenatal or pre-injury risk factors
  - Parent concern for new change balance, desire and ability to ride a bike, and read.

# VEMP: Case Study

- Positive bedside head thrust to the left
- asymmetrical left cVEMP ratio (78%)
- absent left oVEMP



## Vestibular Evoked Myogenic Potential (VEMP)

- Summary:
  - cVEMP can be done in newborns (Wang et al. 2008), oVEMP can be done in children 3 and + years, reliably (Hsu et al., 2009; Chou et al., 2012).
  - Expect more variability in responses due to inadequate muscle contraction
  - Employ strategies like EMG monitoring (for cVEMP) or using interesting toys/videos to maintain eye/body position
  - Be mindful of smaller ear canals and effects on SPL and hearing if using AC stimuli

## Video Head Impulse Testing (vHIT)

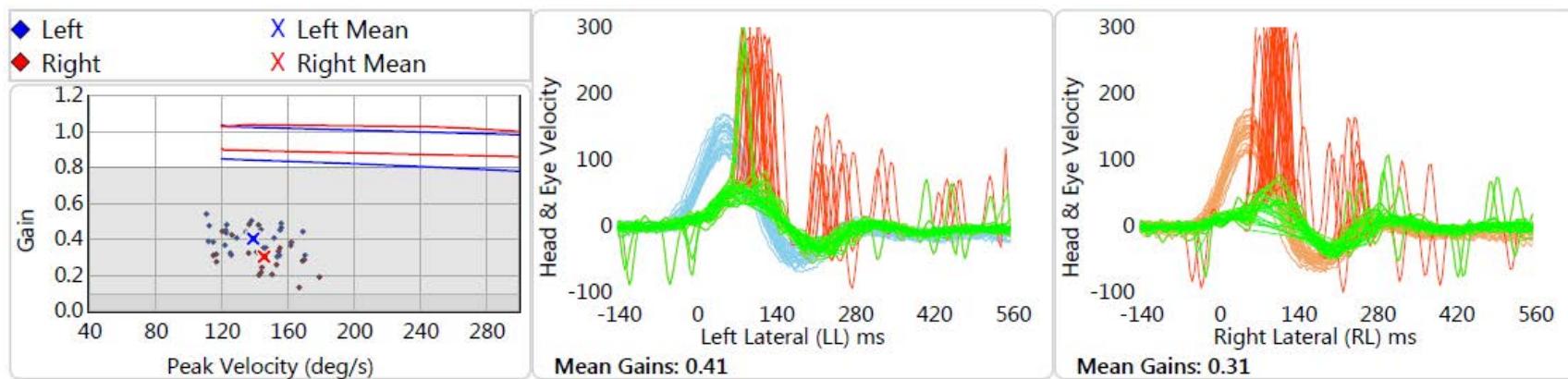
- vHIT is an assessment of individual semicircular canal function and both branches of the vestibular nerve.
  - Horizontal and Anterior canal vHIT: Superior Vestibular Nerve
  - Posterior canal vHIT: Inferior Vestibular Nerve

# Video Head Impulse Testing (vHIT)

- Patients fixate on a stable visual target
- Camera measures eye velocity, gyroscope measures head velocity
- Head velocity
  - > 150 d/s horizontal canal
  - > 100 d/s vertical canals

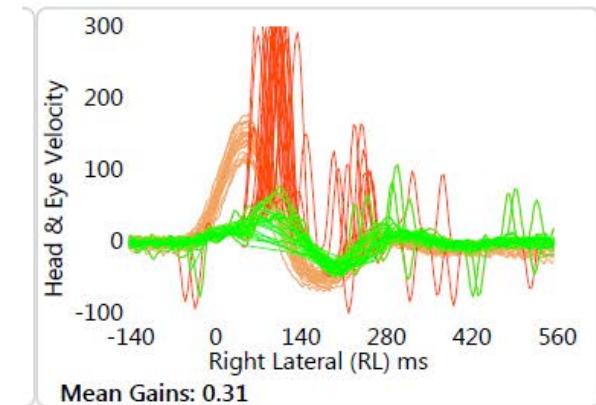
# Video Head Impulse Testing (vHIT)

- Similar to adults,
  - 2 Primary Outcome Parameters:
    - Gain: Ratio of eye velocity/head velocity
    - Corrective Saccades

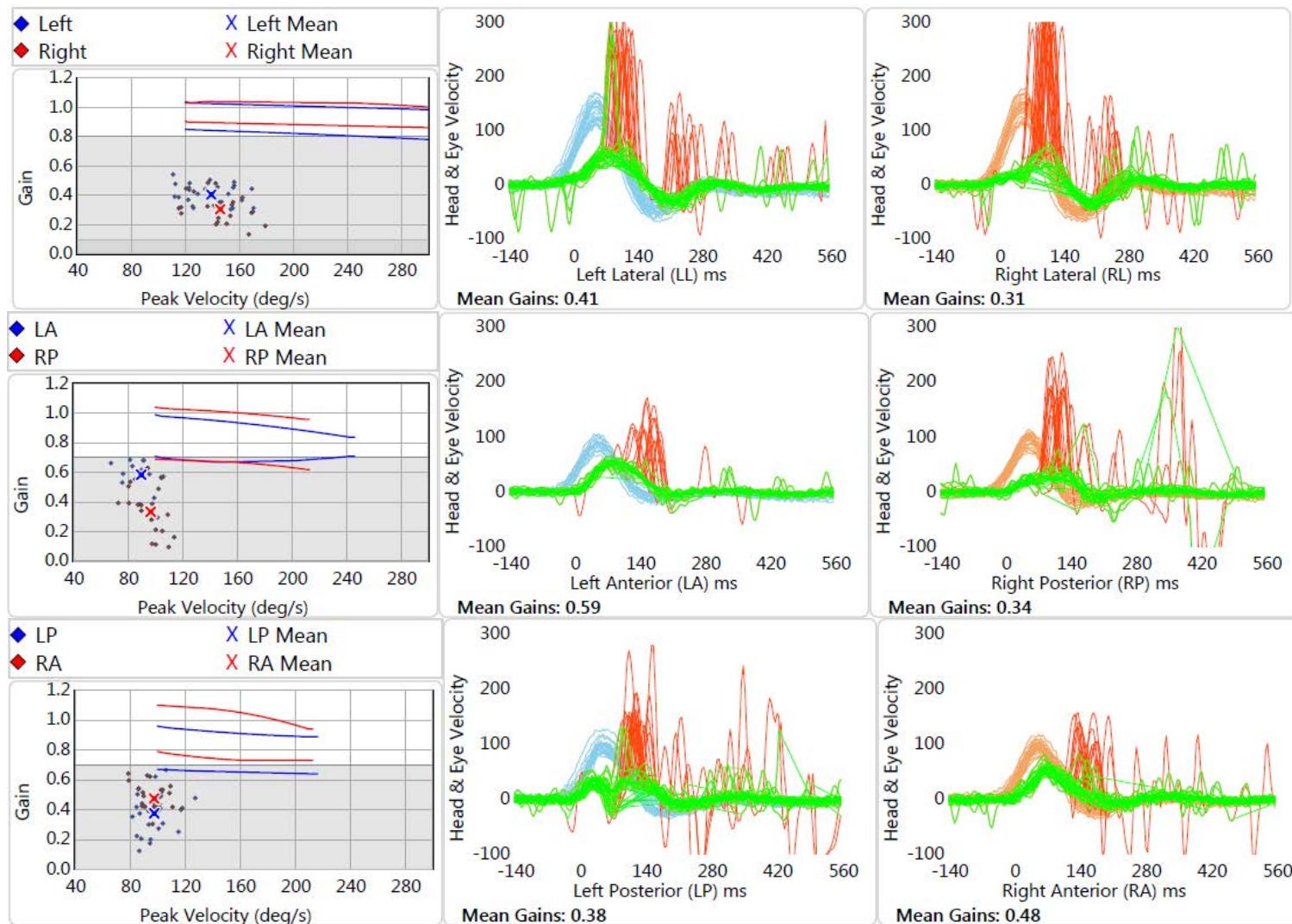


# Video Head Impulse Testing (vHIT)

- Gain:
  - Set Gain cut-off of ~ 0.8
  - HOWEVER, there is evidence that vestibular loss is present even with gain at or above 0.8
    - Janky 2018; Korsager 2017; Matino-Soler 2014
- Corrective Saccades:
  - Frequency (50 – 80%)
  - Velocity (> 100)
  - Latency (< 320 ms)
  - Standard Deviation of the latency



# Video Head Impulse Testing (vHIT)



## Video Head Impulse Testing (vHIT)

- Does vHIT gain change with age?
- Gain reductions in the 8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> decade (Davalos-Bichara 2014; Matino-Soler 2015; McGarvie 2015; Mossman 2015)
  - In children:
    - Many studies report NO CHANGE with age (Janky 2015; Hamilton 2015; Lehnert 2017; Ross 2016)
    - Wiener-Vacher (2017) showed a rapid increase in gain from age 3 to 6 years and then a slow increase up to 16 year

# Video Head Impulse Testing (vHIT)

- Benefit of vHIT in children:
  - Does not induce dizziness.
  - Vision is not occluded, so not as scary
  - Test administration is fast (10 – 15 minutes)
  - Can be completed regardless of middle ear status (PE tubes, perforations, mastoid cavity, etc)
  - Ear and canal specific
- Challenges in children:
  - Loose goggles, inability to follow directions, frequency eye blinks, wandering gaze, decreased attention span, noncompliance, apprehension, longer test duration

# Video Head Impulse Testing (vHIT)

- Modifications for testing children:
  - Loose fitting goggles:
    - Remote video detection:
      - Youngest – 3 months
      - (Wiener-Vacher & Wiener 2017)
  - Sustained Gaze / inattention
    - Foam
    - iPhone
    - Stickers

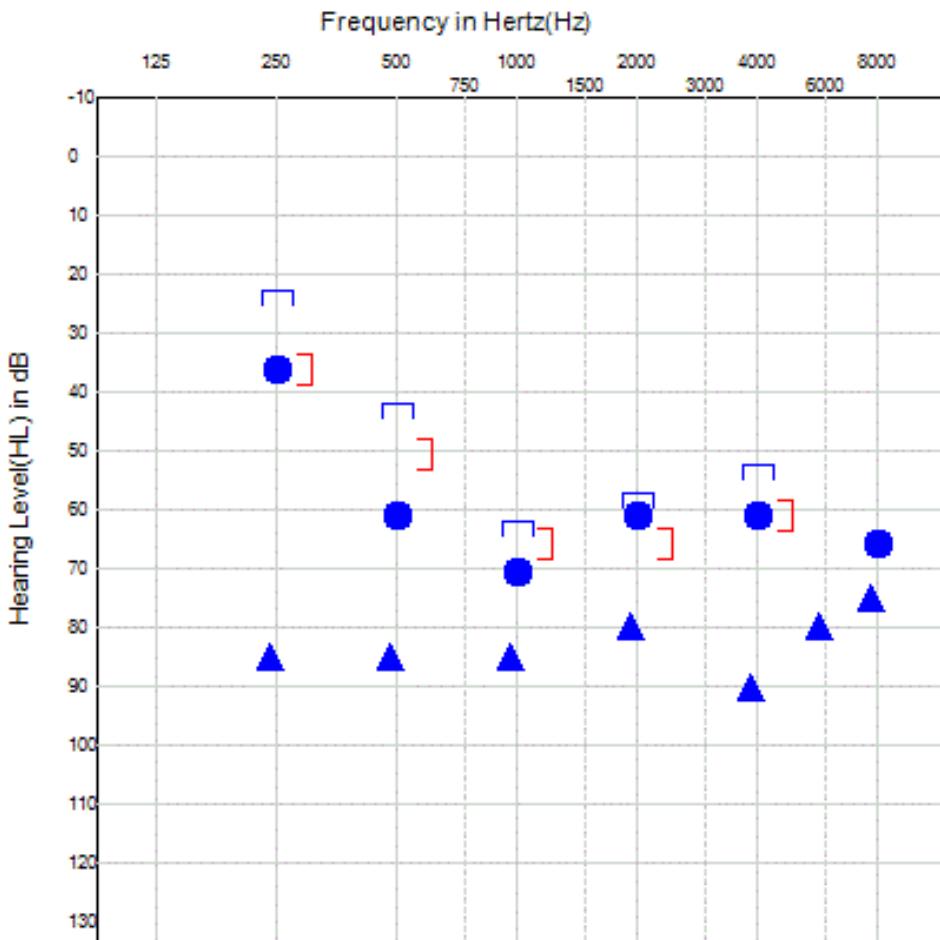


# Video Head Impulse Testing (vHIT)

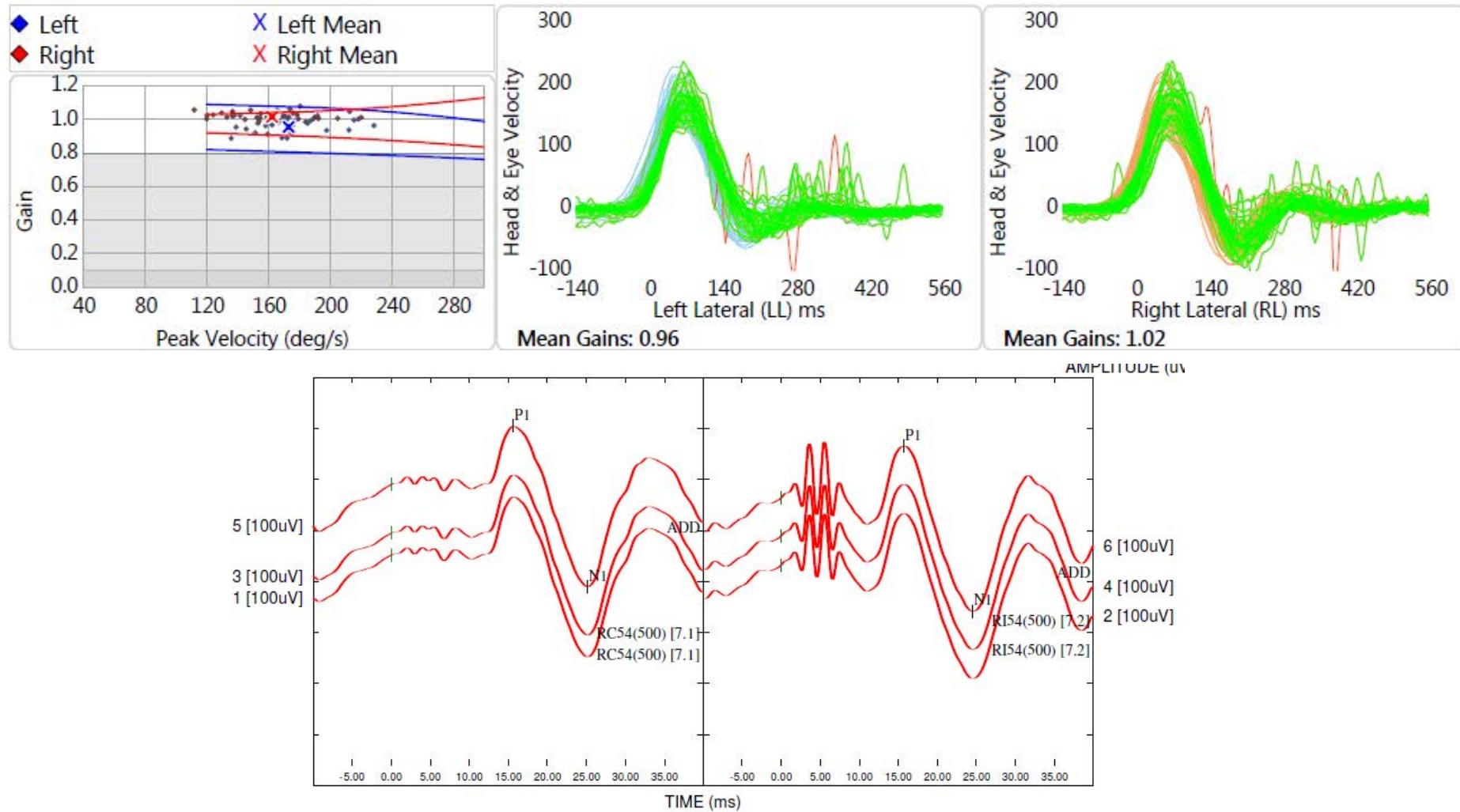
- Summary:
  - Children > 3 months can use a remote system
  - Children > 3 years can use a traditional goggle system
  - Use a fun target for attention
  - You may not get as many responses
  - It's going to take longer (Hulse 2015).
  - The data is not going to be as clean.
  - vHIT is a reliable test of semicircular canal function and can be completed in children age 3 and up
    - (Ross 2016; Hamilton 2015; Hulse 2015).

## vHIT: Case Study

- 12-year old male
  - 2 – 3 times per year patient reports dizziness in conjunction with nausea, vomiting, and headaches.
  - Congenital hearing loss
  - Perforation in left ear



# vHIT: Case Study



## Rotary Chair

- Rotary chair testing takes ~ 10 to 15 minutes
- A midfrequency (0.01–0.64 Hz) assessment of the horizontal canal and superior branch of the vestibular nerve.
- 2 Paradigms:
  - Sinusoidal Harmonic Acceleration:
  - Step test

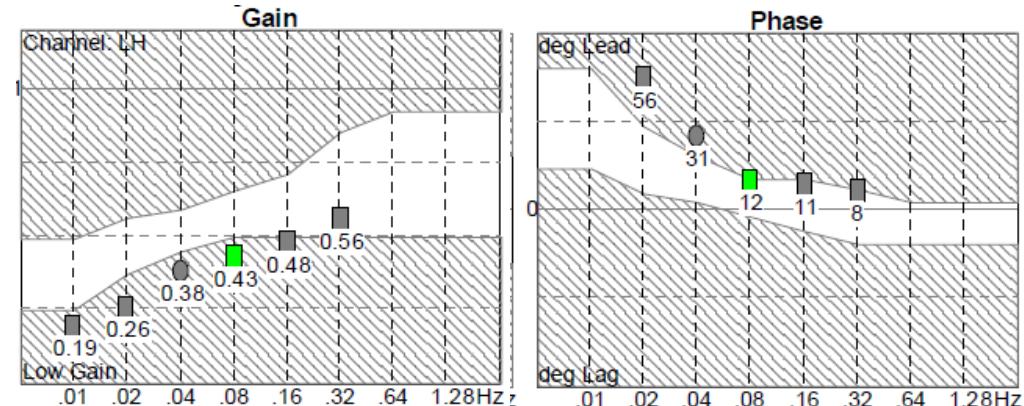
## Rotary Chair

- Benefit of Rotary chair in children:
  - Most common assessment Children > 2 months, but < 5 years (Use vHIT at age 3 years)
  - Does not provide ear specific info, but is the only test of canal function for some children < 3 years
  - < 15 minutes to complete
  - Tolerated by most children
  - Reliable in children
  - Not affected by middle ear status
    - EXCEPT: middle ear effusion
    - Complete tympanometry prior to

## Rotary Chair

- Challenges when testing children:
  - Outcomes: Gain, Phase (time constant), Symmetry
    - Gain: Decreasing gain, increasing gain, and no change in gain have been reported with age in children.
    - In children with normal vestibular function, high rotary chair gains have consistently been reported compared with adults (Charpiot et al., 2010; Maes, De Kegel, Van, & Dhooge, 2014; Valente, 2007); therefore, high gain in young children is not considered a pathologic finding unless coupled with other indications for central pathology.
  - Recommend to generate your own norms; or interpret your findings with regard to the manufacturer norms keeping these trends in mind.

## Rotary Chair



- Similar to adults, gain less than 0.01 with phase greater than 68 degrees in response to 0.01 Hz during SHA testing suggests bilateral vestibular loss (Strupp et al., 2017)
- > 2 months
  - 10% of infants less than 60 days old do not generate measurable nystagmus (Staller et al., 1986)
  - Lack of responses is more likely in children with low birth weight.

## Rotary Chair

- Challenges when testing children:
  - Goggle fit
  - Electrode fit
  - Car seat vs sitting in parent's lap
  - Intolerant
  - Attention
  - Communicating when children have hearing loss

# Rotary Chair

- Modifications for testing children:
  - ATTENTION:
    - a typical order of testing would be 0.04, 0.01, 0.16 Hz for a mid, low, and high frequency assessment.
    - If the child is still cooperative, 0.02 and 0.08 Hz would be completed
    - Parents can place a hand over the child's head to maintain head placement, ensure that electrodes are not removed, and assist with keeping the child awake and alert.
    - If infants do not tolerate wearing electrodes, a subjective assessment of nystagmus can be completed via the infrared video monitor.
    - Parents or examiner can sing songs

# Rotary Chair

- Modifications for testing children:
  - EFFUSION:
    - Complete tympanometry prior to testing
  - MATURATION:
    - If children < 9 months do not elicit nystagmus to rotation, testing should be repeated to rule out maturational effects (Eviatar 1979).
  - INTOLERANCE
    - For older children who choose to ride alone but are scared to rotate in the dark, the rotary chair door can be kept open while the child closes their eyes during rotation, using electrodes to monitor eye movements

## Rotary Chair

- Modifications for testing children:
  - HEARING LOSS:
    - Wear hearing aids during assessment
    - a co-riding parent provide alerting tasks to the child at a close range
    - alerting tasks are discussed prior to closing the rotary chair door.

## Rotary Chair

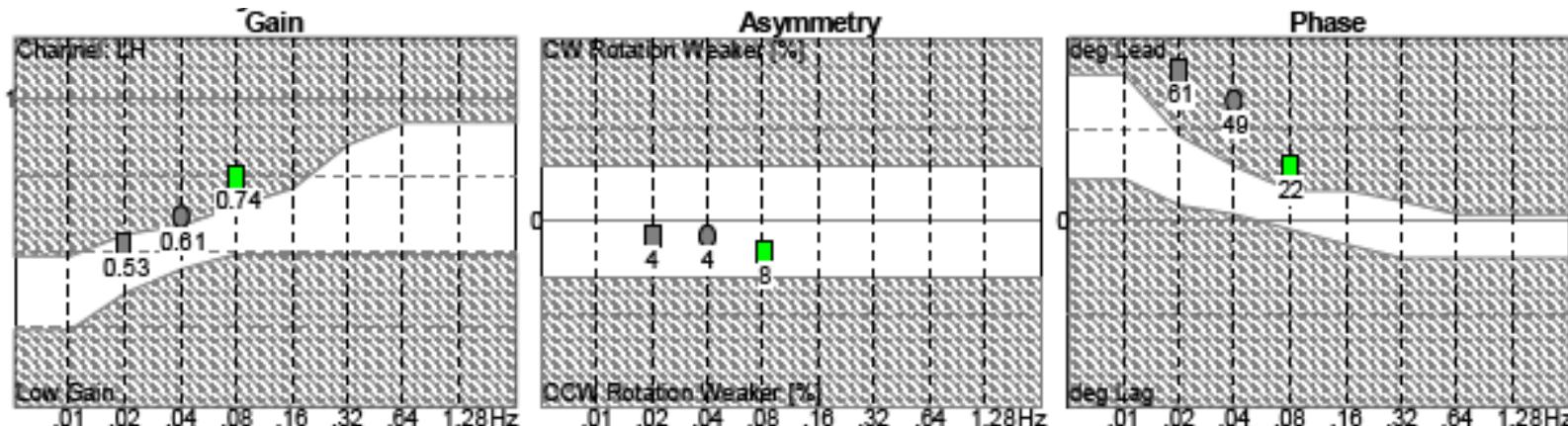
- Summary:
  - Appropriate for children > 2 months
  - Generate your own data
  - Assess Low (0.01 Hz), Mid (0.04 Hz) and High (0.16 Hz)
  - If nystagmus is not measured in children less than 9 months of age, rotary chair should be repeated.
  - Attention and alertness can significantly affect rotary chair gain; therefore, clinicians should use strategies to keep the child awake and alert.

## Rotary Chair: Case Study

- 14 month old female:
  - Normal hearing in the right ear and a profound sensorineural hearing loss in the left ear.
  - Mother reported some concerns for balance
  - The patient began sitting unassisted at 8 months
  - History of ear infections was denied.
  - Seen for determination of hearing loss etiology
- Risk Factors:
  - Gross motor delay
  - Degree of hearing loss

# Rotary Chair: Case Study

- Phase lead at all test frequencies; consistent with peripheral vestibular system involvement without localization to the right or left.
- Left side of localization would more likely given the profound sensorineural hearing loss in the left ear.
- MRI: Congenital absence of left vestibular nerve



## Caloric Testing

- Gold standard of vestibular system testing
- Similar to adults, children lie supine, with their head elevated ~ 30 degrees
  - Cool ( $30^{\circ}\text{C}$ ) and warm ( $44^{\circ}\text{C}$ ) irrigations in each ear.
  - 30 seconds each for water and 60 each for air.
- Electrodes or infrared goggles record eye movements.
- Takes ~ 20 to 25 minutes to complete
- Low-frequency (0.002 Hz) assessment of horizontal canal and superior branch of vestibular nerve.

## Caloric Testing

- Caloric response mature at age 6 – 12 months; however, caloric testing is not routine in pediatric vestibular testing until children are > 6 to 7 years.
- Slow phase velocity decreases from age 2 to 10 years.
  
- Benefit of Rotary chair in children:
  - Ear specific, low frequency information
  - vHIT and rotary chair are insensitive to mild vestibular loss – best assessment for mild, unilateral vestibular loss

## Caloric Testing

- Challenges when testing children:
  - Scary for children
  - Induces dizziness
  - Hearing is temporarily disrupted by water/air
  - Children need to lie still for duration of testing
  - Affected by middle ear pathology
  - Goggle fit
  - Attention

## Caloric Testing

- Modifications for testing children:
  - Reinforcement / Reassurance
  - Parents can hold child's hand
  - Duration of irrigation can be reduced from 30 to 20 seconds
  - Complete Monothermal irrigations
  - Singing songs

# Caloric Testing

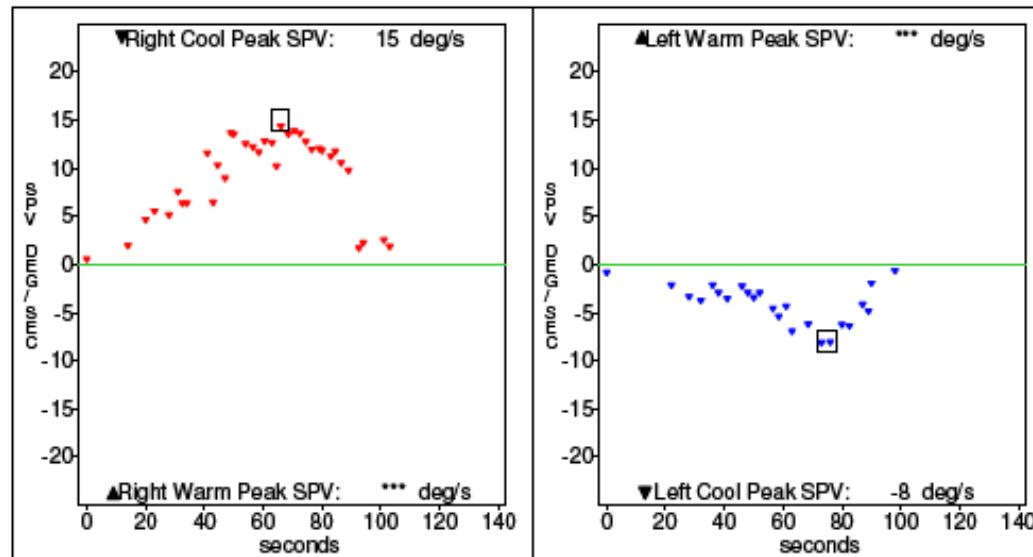
- Summary:
  - Completed starting at age 6 – 7 years
  - vHIT recommended as first tier assessment, if normal caloric can be completed – monothermal, at minimum.

# Caloric Testing: Case Study

- 14 year-old female
  - Patient chief complaint is an episode of true vertigo which caused an inability to stand and nausea.
  - Symptoms lasted several hours. She went to the ER and was given meclizine.
  - Since the episode, she reports occasional bouts of nausea, which last for minutes at a time.
  - Three years ago, she experienced sudden hearing loss in her left ear. She denies dizziness at the time of the hearing loss. Additionally, she denies a change in hearing, tinnitus, and pain with recent episode of vertigo.

# Caloric Testing: Case Study

- Findings demonstrate left peripheral vestibular system involvement given borderline caloric weakness (30%) and absent cervical and ocular vestibular evoked myogenic potential (VEMP) in the left ear.



# Screening

- Do you suspect a child may have vestibular loss?
  - A few simple screening tests can be completed to help rule out vestibular loss.
    - Case history, including age of gross motor attainment, and severity of hearing loss
    - modified clinical test of sensory integration on balance,
    - the bedside head thrust test,
    - the Emory clinical vestibular chair test,
    - the dynamic visual acuity test,
    - single-leg stance,
    - tandem standing,

# Screening

- Case history:
  - Presence of hearing loss?
    - Compute the bilateral pure tone average for 250, 1,000, 2,000, and 4,000 Hz
    - CUT-OFF SCORE: 40 dB, sensitivity = 80%, specificity = 55%
    - CUT-OFF SCORE: 66 dB, sensitivity = 33%, specificity = 91%
  - Concerns regarding gross motor delay?
  - Age the child sat
    - CUT-OFF SCORE: > 7 mos, sensitivity = 62%, specificity = 81%
  - Age the child walked independently
    - CUT-OFF SCORE: > 14 mos, sensitivity = 78%, specificity = 77%

# Screening

- Single Leg Stance
  - Stand on dominate leg with nondominant leg raised, knee bent to 90 degrees, hands on hips, and eyes closed for a maximum of 10 s. Timing is stopped if eyes open, foot is put down, or standing leg is moved
    - CUT-OFF: < 4 seconds, sensitivity = 90%, specificity = 100%
- mCTSIB
  - Maintain balance with arms crossed against chest for 30 s while (1) standing, eyes open; (2) standing, eyes closed; (3) standing on foam, eyes open; (4) standing on foam, eyes closed. Maximum score is 120 s
    - CUT-OFF: 100 s, sensitivity = 88%, specificity = 85%

# Screening

- Bedside Head Thrust Test
  - The head is tilted 30 degrees downward and high acceleration, unpredictable head thrusts are delivered in the plane of each horizontal canal
  - CUT-OFF: corrective saccade, sensitivity = 75%, specificity = 91%

# Screening

- Summary:
  - Screening can be completed in minutes
    - Case History: Gross motor function
    - Audiogram review: severity of hearing loss
    - Single leg stance: < 30 seconds
    - Bedside Head impulse test: < 30 seconds
  - OTHERS:
    - Dynamic visual acuity
    - mCTSIB
    - Tandem stance
    - Emory clinical vestibular chair test

## Pediatric Vestibular Questionnaires

- Children don't always report sx consistent with vestibular loss
- Pediatric Questionnaires can quantify impact of symptoms on daily activities

## Pediatric Vestibular Questionnaires

- *Dizziness Handicap Inventory for parents and caregivers*, ages 5-12
  - 21 items
  - completed by parent/caregiver
- *Pediatric Vestibular Symptom Questionnaire*, ages 6-17
  - 11 items
  - child-reported
  - severity of sx, related to balance, dizziness, vertigo
- *Pediatric Visually Induced Dizziness Questionnaire*, ages 6-17
  - 11 items
  - child-reported
  - severity of sx, related to visual situations

## Summary

- Pediatric vestibular testing can be helpful for children most at-risk
  - HL, CI's, gross motor delay, complaints of dizziness, and/or + screening
  - When age-appropriate, vestibular testing can be modified in various ways to improve compliance and test results
  - Screenings can be helpful to build a case for vestibular referral
  - Questionnaires can quantify severity of functional impact

## Questions?

Thank you!

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