Fiscal Year:	FY 2020	**Task Last Updated:**	FY 07/31/2019
PI Name:	Weaver, Ashley Ph.D.		
Project Title:	Quantitative CT and MRI-based Modeling Assessment of Dynamic Vertebral Strength and Injury Risk Following Long-Duration Spaceflight		
Division Name:	Human Research		
Program/Discipline:			
Program/Discipline--Element/Subdiscipline:	HUMAN RESEARCH--Space Human Factors Engineering		
Joint Agency Name:		**TechPort:**	No
Human Research Program Elements:	(1) **HFBP**:Human Factors & Behavioral Performance (IRP Rev H)		
Human Research Program Risks:	(1) **Dynamic Loads**:Risk of Injury from Dynamic Loads		
Space Biology Element:	None		
Space Biology Cross-Element Discipline:	None		
Space Biology Special Category:	None		
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Zip Code:	27101-4101	**Congressional District:**	12
Comments:			
Project Type:	FLIGHT,GROUND	**Solicitation / Funding Source:**	2015-16 HERO NNJ15ZSA001N-Crew Health (FLAGSHIP, NSBRI, OMNIBUS). Appendix A-Crew Health, Appendix B-NSBRI, Appendix C-Omnibus
Start Date:	10/01/2016	**End Date:**	08/31/2021
No. of Post Docs:		**No. of PhD Degrees:**	1
No. of PhD Candidates:	2	**No. of Master' Degrees:**	
No. of Master's Candidates:		**No. of Bachelor's Degrees:**	1
No. of Bachelor's Candidates:	2	**Monitoring Center:**	NASA JSC
Contact Monitor:	Williams, Thomas	**Contact Phone:**	281-483-8773
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Flight Program:	ISS		
Flight Assignment:	NOTE: End date changed to 8/31/2021 per NSSC information/S. Huppman/HRP (Ed., 2/25/2020) NOTE: End date changed to 2/1/2020 per NSSC information (Ed., 7/8/19)		
Key Personnel Changes/Previous PI:	None		
COI Name (Institution):	Stitzel, Joel Ph.D. (Wake Forest University) Tooze, Janet Ph.D. (Wake Forest University)		
Grant/Contract No.:	NNX16AP89G		
Performance Goal No.:			
Performance Goal Text:			

Task Description:

Prolonged periods of near weightlessness can cause damage to astronauts' musculoskeletal system. This damage can increase the risk of skeletal tissue failure (e.g., fractures, tears) when experiencing forceful, dynamic loads. Fractures of the spine during dynamic conditions such as launch or landing could cause a mission to fail. This study will measure this degradation of astronauts' vertebrae and spinal muscles during missions aboard the International Space Station (ISS). We will then determine the extent of vertebral weakening of crewmembers during long-duration missions. Changes in pre- and post-flight vertebral geometry, volume, cortex thickness, and bone mineral density will be measured from existing lumbar quantitative computed tomography (qCT) scans, as well as from planned qCT scans of the cervical, thoracic, and lumbar spine from nine ISS crewmembers. Likewise, the pre- and post-flight spinal muscle volumes will be analyzed using both existing magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scans and planned MRI scans from nine ISS crewmembers. The qCT and MRI scans will be analyzed to determine structural and material changes in the cervical, thoracic, and lumbar vertebrae and the spinal muscles that indicate damage which could weaken these tissues.

Our unique engineering approach will measure the loss of vertebral strength during spaceflight conditions and predict the risk of failure during traumatic, dynamic loading conditions such as launch or landing. Vertebral strength and risk for vertebral fracture and injury will be quantified in 900 dynamic simulations using a full human body model that is constructed using structural and material data gathered from the pre- and post-flight medical images for each astronaut.

This study has significance in quantifying and addressing risks of long-duration spaceflight, including vertebral injury from dynamic loads, vertebral fracture, early onset vertebral osteoporosis due to spaceflight, and impaired performance due to reduced spinal muscle mass, strength, and endurance.

Rationale for HRP Directed Research:

Research Impact/Earth Benefits:

Microgravity induces similar spinal changes to those seen in the aging population and people with limited mobility. Demonstrating how the vertebral column changes in response to microgravity can aid in refining the diagnostic and treatment protocols of physicians on Earth. Additionally, assessing vertebral column strength using finite element modeling can provide future techniques for assessing the efficacy of osteoporosis treatments, which would particularly benefit the elderly.

Task Progress:

The objectives of this project for the prior reporting year and the resulting progress on each objective are summarized below.
Objective 1. Analyze retrospective pre- and post-flight medical images to quantify spinal muscle changes.

These retrospective analyses were continued from the previous year and completed. Retrospective quantitative computed tomography (qCT) scans from 16 crewmembers were received in March and July 2017. Pre-flight and post-flight qCT scans were used to characterize back muscle geometry, volume, and fat infiltration changes in crewmembers of long-duration spaceflight. Retrospective magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scans of the neck and lower back of six crewmembers were received in June 2017. Pre-flight and a post-flight scans were used to analyze size and fat infiltration changes in the muscles that support the spine.

Objective 2. Continue consenting crewmembers for the prospective arm of the study.

Eleven crewmember briefings took place this year and a total of seven crewmembers have consented to participate in the prospective portion of the study.

Objective 3. Acquire, process, and begin analyzing prospective pre- and post-flight medical images.

Prospective qCT and MRI data collection has begun for five of the enrolled subjects. Preliminary measures of muscle size and fat infiltration are underway and will continue as additional data becomes available.

Objective 4. Prepare the prospective data for integration into human body finite element models.

The available prospective qCT images are being used to create 3D computational models of the C3, T3, and L1 bones in the spine representative of each subject. With the help of computational algorithms, these subject-specific models of the bones are being used to customize existing finite element models of the spine to better represent each crewmember.

Bibliography Type: Description: (Last Updated: 08/02/2022)

Abstracts for Journals and Proceedings

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Khattab K, McNamara K, Greene KA, Lenchik L, Weaver AA. "Neck Injury Risk During Landing for Astronauts with Spaceflight Induced Changes in Muscle Size." BMES 2018. 2018 Biomedical Engineering Society Annual Meeting, Atlanta, GA, October 17-20, 2018.
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Greene KA, McNamara KP, Moore AM, Dang J, Khattab K, Lenchik L, Weaver AA. "Quantifying Lumbar and Cervical Musculature Changes with Long-Duration Spaceflight Using MRI." 2019 NASA Human Research Program Investigators' Workshop, Galveston, TX, January 22-25, 2019.
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Dissertations and Theses	McNamara KP. "Spinal Muscle Changes and Occupant Injury Risk Prediction in Spaceflight." Doctoral Dissertation, Virginia Tech – Wake Forest University School of Biomedical Engineering and Sciences, Winston-Salem, NC, May 2019. , May-2019