

1 **Harnessing Digital Health to Objectively Assess Cognitive Impairment in People**  
2 **undergoing Hemodialysis Process: The Impact of Cognitive Impairment on Mobility**  
3 **Performance Measured by Wearables**

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5 **Short title:** Determine cognitive impairment in hemodialysis patients using mobility  
6 performance

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## 27 **Abstract**

28 **Background:** Cognitive impairment is prevalent but still poorly diagnosed in hemodialysis  
29 adults, mainly because of the impracticality of current tools. This study examined whether  
30 remotely monitoring mobility performance can help identifying digital measures of cognitive  
31 impairment in hemodialysis patients.

32 **Methods:** Sixty-nine hemodialysis patients (age=64.1±8.1 years, body mass  
33 index=31.7±7.6kg/m<sup>2</sup>) were recruited. According to the Mini-Mental State Exam, 44 (64%) were  
34 determined as cognitive-intact, and 25 (36%) as cognitive-impaired. Mobility performance,  
35 including cumulated posture duration (sitting, lying, standing, and walking), daily walking  
36 performance (step and unbroken walking bout), as well as postural-transition (daily number and  
37 average duration), were measured using a validated pendant-sensor for a continuous period of  
38 24-hour during a non-dialysis day. Motor capacity was quantified by assessing standing balance  
39 and gait performance under single-task and dual-task conditions.

40 **Results:** No between-group difference was observed for the motor capacity. However, the  
41 mobility performance was different between groups. The cognitive-impaired group spent  
42 significantly higher percentage of time in sitting and lying (Cohens effect size  $d=0.78$ ,  $p=0.005$ )  
43 but took significantly less daily steps ( $d=0.69$ ,  $p=0.015$ ) than the cognitive-intact group. The  
44 largest effect of reduction in number of postural-transition was observed in walk-to-sit transition  
45 ( $d=0.65$ ,  $p=0.020$ ). Regression models based on demographics, addition of daily walking  
46 performance, and addition of other mobility performance metrics, led to area-under-curves of  
47 0.76, 0.78, and 0.93, respectively, for discriminating cognitive-impaired cases.

48 **Conclusions:** This study suggests that mobility performance metrics could be served as potential  
49 digital biomarkers of cognitive impairment among HD patients. It also highlights the additional

50 value of measuring cumulated posture duration and postural-transition to improve the detection  
51 of cognitive impairment. Future studies need to examine potential benefits of mobility  
52 performance metrics for early diagnosis of cognitive impairment/dementia and timely  
53 intervention.

54

55 **Key Words:** cognitive impairment, digital biomarker, mobility performance, hemodialysis,  
56 wearable technology, motor capacity, daily physical activity

57

## 58 **Introduction**

59 With aging of population, the burden of cognitive impairment appears to increase among  
60 patients with end-stage renal disease (ESRD) including those starting hemodialysis (HD) and  
61 those already established on HD (1, 2). As more patients of older age receive HD, cognitive  
62 impairment and/or dementia has become highly prevalent in this population (3-6). At the same  
63 time, HD-associated factors, such as retention of uremic solutes, anemia, hypertension,  
64 intradialytic hypotension, and metabolic disturbances, may also increase the risk of cognitive  
65 impairment and cognitive decline among HD patients (4, 5). Cognitive impairment leads to  
66 overall diminished quality of life and high medical costs associated with coexisting medical  
67 conditions and expensive care (7). Therefore, early detection and routine assessment of cognitive  
68 function become crucial. They are cornerstones of quality care which can lead to medical  
69 intervention to delay further cognitive decline in HD patients (8).

70

71 Ideally, HD patients should undergo routine screenings of cognitive function. However, routine  
72 assessments using current tools, such as Mini-Mental State Exam, (MMSE) (9), Montreal  
73 Cognitive Assessment (MoCA) (10), and Trail Making Test (TMT) (11), could easily overload  
74 an already overburdened dialysis clinic. In addition, these cognitive tests must be administered in  
75 a clinical setting under the supervision of a well-trained professional. Studies have reported that  
76 the accuracy and reliability of these screening tools depend on the experience and skills of the  
77 examiner, as well as the individual's educational level (12, 13). Usually, in a regular dialysis  
78 clinic, the nurse does not equip with the professional experience or skills. Regular referral to a  
79 neuropsychological clinic could be also impractical as many HD patients have limited mobility,  
80 suffer from post-dialysis fatigue, and rarely accept to go to different locations than their regular

81 dialysis clinics for the purpose of cognitive screening. Thus, it is not surprising that emerging  
82 literature has demonstrated that although cognitive impairment commonly occurs in HD  
83 population, it is still poorly diagnosed (14, 15).

84

85 The technology progress of wearable devices along with advanced digital signal processing have  
86 enabled continuous monitoring of patients and their daily physical activities (16-18). Such rich  
87 and longitudinal information can be mined for physical and behavioral signatures of cognitive  
88 impairment. It can provide new avenues for detecting cognitive decline in a timely and cost-  
89 effective manner. In particular, as the world has gone digital, there is a need to develop novel  
90 digital biomarkers of cognitive impairment, which can be used to screen cognitive function as a  
91 routine assessment.

92

93 “Mobility performance” depicts enacted mobility in real-life situations (19). It is different than  
94 “motor capacity”, which refers to an individual’s motor function assessed under supervised  
95 condition (19). The International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health (ICF)  
96 differentiates between these two measures: what an individual can do (capacity) and does do  
97 (performance) (20). Mobility performance requires multifaceted coordination between different  
98 parts of neuropsychology (21). This includes motor capacity, intimate knowledge of  
99 environment, and difficulty of navigation through changing environments (22). Understanding  
100 the association between mobility performance and cognitive function could help to design an  
101 objective tool for remote and potentially early detection of cognitive decline. Previous studies  
102 have demonstrated that in older adults, people with cognitive impairment exhibit lower level of  
103 activity (23-25). However, in previous studies, the assessment of mobility performance mainly

104 relied on self-reported questionnaires (23-25), Actigraphy (26, 27), or accelerometer-derived step  
105 count (28). Although self-reported questionnaire is easy to access without the need of any  
106 equipment or device, its main limitation is lacking of objectivity (29). Previous studies using  
107 Actigraphy or step count only provided limited information about mobility performance (activity  
108 level and daily step). They also neglected information about posture and postural-transition,  
109 which have been demonstrated to be more reliable than activity level or number of daily steps  
110 (30). Considering the motor capacity in patients undergoing HD is usually deteriorated (31), and  
111 these patients are highly sedentary with reduced daily activity level (31), it may not be efficient  
112 enough to capture cognitive impairment in HD population by just using activity level or step  
113 count alone.

114

115 In this study, we used a pendant-like wearable sensor to mine potential digital biomarkers from  
116 mobility performance for capturing cognitive impairment and tracking the cognitive decline in  
117 HD population. We measured detailed metrics of mobility performance including cumulated  
118 posture duration (sitting, lying, standing, and walking), daily walking performance (step count  
119 and number of unbroken walking bout), as well as postural-transition (daily number and average  
120 duration). We hypothesized that 1) HD patients with cognitive impairment have lower mobility  
121 performance than those without cognitive impairment; 2) the mobility performance derived  
122 digital biomarkers can determine cognitive impairment in HD patients, yielding better results  
123 than using daily walking performance alone.

124

## 125 **Materials and Methods**

### 126 *Study Population*

127 This study is a secondary analysis of a clinical trial focused on examining the benefit of exercise  
128 in adult HD patients (ClinicalTrials.gov Identifier: NCT03076528). The clinical trial was offered  
129 to all eligible HD patients visited the Fahad Bin Jassim Kidney Center (Hamad Medical  
130 Corporation, Doha, Qatar) for HD process. To be eligible, the subject should be a senior (age 50  
131 years or older), be diagnosed with diabetes and ESRD that require HD, and have capacity to  
132 consent. Subjects were excluded if they had major amputation; were non-ambulatory or had  
133 severe gait or balance problem (e.g., unable to walk a distance of 15-meter independently with or  
134 without assistive device or unable to stand still without moving feet), which may affect their  
135 daily physical activity; had active foot ulcer or active infection; had major foot deformity (e.g.  
136 Charcot neuroarthropathy); had changes in psychotropic or sleep medications in the past 6-week;  
137 were in any active intervention (e.g. exercise intervention); had any clinically significant medical  
138 or psychiatric condition; or were unwilling to participate. All subjects signed a written consent  
139 approved by the Institutional Review Board at the Hamad Medical Corporation in Doha, Qatar.  
140 For the final data analysis, we only included those who had at least 24-hour valid mobility  
141 performance data during a non-dialysis day. Only baseline data without any intervention was  
142 used for the purpose of this study.

143

#### 144 *Demographics, Clinical Data, and Motor Capacity*

145 Demographics and relevant clinical information for all subjects were collected using chart-  
146 review and self-report, including age, gender, height, weight, fall history, duration of HD, and  
147 daily number of prescription medicines. Body mass index (BMI) was calculated based on height  
148 and weight information.

149

150 All subjects underwent clinical assessments, including MMSE (9), Center for Epidemiologic  
151 Studies Depression scale (CES-D) (32), Physical Frailty Phenotype (33), neuropathy screening  
152 using Vibration Perception Threshold test (VPT) (34), vascular assessment using Ankle Brachial  
153 Index test (ABI) (35), and glycated hemoglobin test (HbA1c) (36). The CES-D short-version  
154 scale was used to measure self-reported depression symptoms. A cutoff of CES-D score of 16 or  
155 greater was used to identify subjects with depression (32). The Physical Frailty Phenotype,  
156 including unintentional weight loss, weakness (grip strength), slow gait speed (15-foot gait test),  
157 self-reported exhaustion, and self-reported low physical activity, was used to assess frailty (33).  
158 Subjects with 1 or 2 positive criteria were considered pre-frail, and those with 3 or more positive  
159 criteria were considered frail. Subjects negative for all criteria were considered robust (33).  
160 Plantar numbness was evaluated by the VPT measured on six plantar regions of interest,  
161 including the left and right great toes, 5th metatarsals, and heels. In this study, we used the  
162 maximum value of VPT measures under regions of interest for both feet to evaluate the Diabetic  
163 Peripheral Neuropathy (DPN) status. A subject was designated with DPN if his/her maximum  
164 VPT reached 25 volts or greater (34). The ABI was calculated as the ratio of the systolic blood  
165 pressure measured at the ankle to the systolic blood pressure measured at the upper arm. A  
166 subject was designated with the Peripheral Artery Disease (PAD) if his/her ABI value was either  
167 greater than 1.2 or smaller than 0.8 (35).  
168  
169 Motor capacity was quantified by assessing standing balance and walking performance (37).  
170 Standing balance was measured using wearable sensors (LegSys™, BioSensics LLC., MA,  
171 USA) attached to lower back and dominant front lower shin. Subject stood in the upright  
172 position, keeping feet close together but not touching, with arms folded across the chest, for 30-



173 second. Center of mass sway (unit: cm<sup>2</sup>) was calculated using validated algorithms (38). We  
174 assessed walking performance under both single-task and dual-task conditions to determine the  
175 impact of cognitive impairment on motor capacity. Walking performance was measured using  
176 the same wearable sensors attached to both front lower shins. Subjects were asked to walk with  
177 their habitual gait speed for 15-meter with no cognitive task (single-task condition). Then, they  
178 were asked to repeat the test while loudly counting backward from a random number (dual-task  
179 condition: motor task + working memory) (37). Gait speeds under both conditions were  
180 calculated using validated algorithms (39).

181

### 182 *Determination of Cognitive Impairment*

183 Cognitive impairment was defined as a MMSE score less than 28 as recommended by Tobias et  
184 al. and Damian et al. studies (40, 41). In these studies, researchers have demonstrated that  
185 MMSE cutoff score of 28 yields the highest sensitivity and specificity to identify those with  
186 cognitive impairment compared to the commonly used lower cutoff scores.

187

### 188 *Sensor-Derived Monitoring of Mobility Performance*

189 Mobility performance was characterized by 1) cumulated posture duration, including percentage  
190 of sitting, lying, standing, and walking postures of 24-hour; 2) daily walking performance,  
191 including step count and number of unbroken walking bout (an unbroken walking bout was  
192 defined as at least three consecutive steps within 5 seconds interval (42)); and 3) postural-  
193 transition, including total number of postural-transition such as sit-to-stand, stand-to-sit, walk-to-  
194 stand, stand-to-walk, walk-to-sit (direct transition from walking to sitting with standing pause  
195 less than 1 seconds (43)), and sit-to-walk (direct transition from sitting to walking with standing

196 pause less than 1 seconds (43)), as well as average duration of postural-transition (time needed  
197 for rising from a chair or sitting on a chair (44)). Mobility performance was recorded for a  
198 continuous period of 24-hour using a validated pendant sensor (PAMSys™, BioSensics LLC.,  
199 MA, USA, Figure 1) worn during a non-dialysis day. We selected a non-dialysis day because the  
200 data during a day of dialysis could be biased by the long period of sitting/lying during HD  
201 process and the post dialysis fatigue. The PAMSys™ sensor contains a 3-axis accelerometer  
202 (sampling frequency of 50 Hz) and built-in memory for recording long-term data. The  
203 description of methods to extract metrics of interest was described in details in our previous  
204 studies (42-45).

205

206 Fig 1. A patient wearing the sensor as a pendant. Detailed metrics of mobility performance,  
207 including cumulated posture duration (sitting, lying, standing, and walking), daily walking  
208 performance (step count and number of unbroken walking bout), as well as postural-transition  
209 (daily number and average duration), were measured.

210

### 211 *Statistical Analysis*

212 All continuous data was presented as mean  $\pm$  standard deviation. All categorical data was  
213 expressed as percentage. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used for between-group  
214 comparison of continuous demographics, clinical data, and mobility performance metrics.  
215 Analysis of Chi-square was used for comparison of categorical demographics and clinical data.  
216 Analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was employed to compare differences between groups for  
217 mobility performance metrics, with adjustment for age and BMI. A 2-sided  $p < 0.050$  was  
218 considered to be statistically significant. The effect size for discriminating between groups was

219 estimated using Cohen's  $d$  effect size and represented as  $d$  (46). The Pearson correlation  
220 coefficient was used to evaluate the degree of agreement between mobility performance metrics  
221 and motor capacity variable for both groups with and without cognitive impairment. The  
222 correlation coefficient was also interpret as effect size (46, 47). A multivariate linear regression  
223 model was used to determine the association between mobility performance metrics and MMSE.  
224 In this model, MMSE was the dependent variable, and mobility performance metrics and  
225 demographics were the independent variables.  $R^2$  and  $p$ -value were calculated for the  
226 multivariate linear regression model. The Pearson correlation coefficient was used to evaluate  
227 the degree of agreement between the regression model and MMSE. Further, binary logistic  
228 regression analysis was employed to examine the relationship between each study variable and  
229 cognitive impairment. First, univariate logistic regression was employed to investigate the  
230 relationship of the test variables using "cognitive-impaired/cognitive-intact" as the dependent  
231 variable. Nagelkerke R Square ( $R^2$ ), odds ratio (OR), 95% confidence interval (95% CI), and  $p$ -  
232 value were calculated for each explanatory variable. Second, stepwise multivariate logistic  
233 regression, using variables found with  $p < 0.20$  in the univariate analysis, was performed to  
234 investigate independent effects of variables in predicting cognitive impairment. Then, these  
235 variables with independent effects were used to build models for prospective cognitive  
236 impairment prediction. In Model 1 (reference model), we only used demographics as  
237 independent variables. Then, to examine additional values of mobility performance metrics, two  
238 other models were examined. In Model 2, independent variables included demographics and  
239 daily walking performance. In Model 3, we added cumulated posture duration and postural-  
240 transition as additional independent variables. The receiver operating characteristic (ROC) curve

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	Cognitive-Intact (n =44)	Cognitive-Impaired (n=25)	<i>p-value</i>
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241 and area-under-curve (AUC) were calculated for prediction models. All statistical analyses were  
242 performed using IBM SPSS Statistics 25 (IBM, IL, USA).

243

## 244 **Results**

245 Eighty-one subjects satisfied the inclusion and exclusion criteria of this study. However, the  
246 mobility performance data was available and valid for 69 subjects. Reasons of unavailable and  
247 invalid mobility performance data were refusal of wearing the sensor (n=9) and wearing duration  
248 less than 24-hour (n=3). Table 1 summarizes demographics, clinical data, and motor capacity of  
249 the remaining subjects. According to the MMSE, 44 subjects (64%) were classified as cognitive-  
250 intact, and 25 (36%) were classified as cognitive-impaired. The average MMSE score of the  
251 cognitive-impaired group was  $22.6 \pm 3.7$ , which was significantly lower than the cognitive-intact  
252 group with  $29.2 \pm 0.9$  ( $p < 0.001$ ). The cognitive-impaired group was significantly older than the  
253 cognitive-intact group ( $p = 0.001$ ). Female percentage was significantly higher in the cognitive-  
254 impaired group ( $p = 0.008$ ). The cognitive-impaired group was shorter than the cognitive-intact  
255 group ( $p = 0.009$ ). But there was no between-group difference regarding the BMI. No between-  
256 group difference was observed for subjects' weight, fall history, duration of HD, number of  
257 prescription medications, prevalence of depression, prevalence of frailty and pre-frailty, VPT,  
258 prevalence of DPN, prevalence of PAD, and HbA1c ( $p > 0.050$ ). No between group difference  
259 was observed for motor capacity metrics including standing balance and walking performance  
260 ( $p > 0.050$ ). For the dual-task walking, the cognitive-impaired group had lower dual-task walking  
261 speed than the cognitive-intact group. But the difference did not reach statistical significance.

262

263 Table 1. Demographics, clinical data, and motor capacity of the study population.

<b>Demographics</b>			
Age, years	61.8 ± 6.7	68.1 ± 8.8	0.001*
Sex (Female), %	43%	76%	0.008*
Height, m	1.63 ± 0.09	1.50 ± 0.29	0.009*
Weight, kg	83.4 ± 21.5	76.3 ± 16.6	0.156
Body Mass Index, kg/m <sup>2</sup>	31.8 ± 8.6	31.4 ± 5.4	0.804
<b>Clinical data</b>			
Had fall in last 12-month, %	21%	36%	0.158
Duration of HD, years	4.6 ± 5.4	3.5 ± 2.3	0.354
Number of prescription medications, n	8 ± 3	8 ± 3	0.240
Mini-mental State Exam, score	29.2 ± 0.9	22.6 ± 3.7	<0.001*
Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression, score	13.1 ± 6.3	16.0 ± 12.6	0.209
Depression, %	27%	44%	0.157
Robust, %	2%	0	0.448
Pre-frailty & frailty, %	98%	100%	0.448
Vibration Perception Threshold, V	32.1 ± 16.5	34.6 ± 16.0	0.544
Diabetic Peripheral Neuropathy, %	61%	68%	0.534
Peripheral Arterial Disease, %	56%	68%	0.322
Glycated Hemoglobin, %	6.7 ± 1.5	6.6 ± 1.3	0.783
<b>Motor Capacity</b>			
Static balance (center of mass sway), cm <sup>2</sup>	0.38 ± 0.44	0.24 ± 0.23	0.200
Single-task walking speed, m/s	0.49 ± 0.19	0.45 ± 0.20	0.345
Dual-task walking speed, m/s	0.46 ± 0.19	0.43 ± 0.19	0.682

264 Depression was assessed by Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression score with a cutoff of 16 or greater  
 265 Diabetic Peripheral Neuropathy was assessed by maximum Vibration Perception Threshold value with a cutoff of  
 266 25-volt or greater  
 267 \*: significant difference between groups

268

269 Table 2 summarizes between-group comparison for mobility performance metrics during 24-  
 270 hour. The cognitive-impaired group spent significantly higher percentage of time in sitting and  
 271 lying ( $d=0.78$ ,  $p=0.005$ , Figure 2) but spent significantly lower percentage of time in standing  
 272 ( $d=0.70$ ,  $p=0.010$ , Figure 2) and walking ( $d=0.77$ ,  $p=0.007$ , Figure 2). They also took  
 273 significantly less steps ( $d=0.69$ ,  $p=0.015$ ) and unbroken walking bout ( $d=0.56$ ,  $p=0.048$ ) than the  
 274 cognitive-intact group. Longer durations of sit-to-stand transition ( $d=0.37$ ,  $p=0.143$ ) and stand-  
 275 to-sit transition ( $d=0.50$ ,  $p=0.044$ ) were observed in the cognitive-impaired group. Significant  
 276 reductions of number of postural-transition were also observed in the cognitive-impaired group,  
 277 including total number of transition to walk ( $d=0.60$ ,  $p=0.035$ ), number of stand-to-walk  
 278 transition ( $d=0.60$ ,  $p=0.036$ ), number of walk-to-sit transition ( $d=0.65$ ,  $p=0.020$ ), total number of

279 transition to stand ( $d=0.62, p=0.024$ ), and number of walk-to-stand transition ( $d=0.58, p=0.044$ ).  
 280 When results were adjusted by demographic covariates including age and BMI, several mobility  
 281 performance metrics remained significant for comparing between the cognitive-impaired and  
 282 cognitive-intact groups (Table 2).

283

284 Table 2. Mobility performance (in 24-hour) comparison for cognitive-intact and cognitive-  
 285 impaired groups.  
 286 Effect sizes were calculated as Cohen's  $d$   
 287 \*: significant difference between groups

	Cognitive-Intact	Cognitive-Impaired	Mean Difference %	Cohen's $d$	$p$ -value	Adjusted $p$ -value †
<b>Cumulated Posture Duration</b>						
Sitting + lying percentage, %	82.0 ± 11.3	89.1 ± 6.3	9%	0.78	0.005*	0.028*
Standing percentage, %	15.3 ± 9.2	9.9 ± 5.9	-35%	0.70	0.010*	0.061
Walking percentage, %	2.6 ± 3.0	0.9 ± 0.9	-65%	0.77	0.007*	0.010*
<b>Daily Walking Performance</b>						
Step count, $n$	1827 ± 2382	608 ± 688	-67%	0.69	0.015*	0.024*
Number of unbroken walking bout, $n$	62 ± 85	27 ± 25	-57%	0.56	0.048*	0.083
<b>Postural-transition</b>						
Average duration of stand-to-sit transition, $s$	2.9 ± 0.2	3.0 ± 0.2	3%	0.37	0.143	0.128
Average duration of sit-to-stand transition, $s$	3.0 ± 0.2	3.1 ± 0.3	4%	0.50	0.044*	0.023*
Total number of transition to walk, $n$	63 ± 89	24 ± 23	-63%	0.60	0.035*	0.068
Number of sit-to-walk transition, $n$	8 ± 8	4 ± 5	-44%	0.51	0.061	0.183
Number of stand-to-walk transition, $n$	54 ± 82	19 ± 19	-66%	0.60	0.036*	0.064
Total number of transition to sit, $n$	149 ± 71	119 ± 56	-20%	0.46	0.077	0.300
Number of walk-to-sit transition, $n$	13 ± 14	6 ± 7	-53%	0.65	0.020*	0.039*
Number of stand-to-sit transition, $n$	108 ± 64	88 ± 51	-18%	0.34	0.186	0.561
Total number of transition to stand, $n$	175 ± 107	121 ± 61	-31%	0.62	0.024*	0.094
Number of sit-to-stand transition, $n$	111 ± 68	87 ± 50	-22%	0.40	0.126	0.456
Number of walk-to-stand transition, $n$	50 ± 78	17 ± 17	-65%	0.58	0.044*	0.083

288 †: Results were adjusted by age and BMI

289

290 Fig 2. Cumulated posture duration (as percentage of 24-hour) for the cognitive-intact group and  
 291 cognitive-impaired group. Error bar represents the standard error. “ $d$ ” denotes the Cohen's  $d$   
 292 effect size. “\*” denotes when the between-group comparison achieved a statistically significant  
 293 level ( $p<0.050$ ).

294

295 Figure 3 illustrates the correlation between motor capacity and mobility performance among HD  
296 patients with and without cognitive impairment. A significant correlation with medium effect  
297 size was observed between single-task walking speed and number of stand-to-sit transition  
298 among HD patients without cognitive impairment ( $r=0.39$ ,  $p=0.012$ , Figure 3A). But the  
299 correlation among cognitive-impaired subjects was insignificant ( $r=-0.18$ ,  $p=0.417$ ). Similarly, a  
300 significant correlation with medium effect size was observed between single-task walking speed  
301 and number of sit-to-stand transition among HD patients without cognitive impairment ( $r=0.42$ ,  
302  $p=0.006$ , Figure 3B). But the correlation was diminished among cognitive-impaired subjects ( $r=-$   
303  $0.19$ ,  $p=0.378$ ).

304

305 Fig. 3. Correlations between single-task walking speed and (A) number of stand-to-sit transition  
306 and (B) number of sit-to-stand transition among HD patients with and without cognitive  
307 impairment.

308

309 Results from the multivariate linear regression model ( $R^2=0.400$ ,  $p=0.019$ ) revealed that “age”  
310 ( $B=-0.225$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) and “average duration of sit-to-stand transition” ( $B=-4.768$ ,  $p=0.017$ ) were  
311 independent predictors of MMSE. A significant correlation with large effect size of  $r=0.64$   
312 ( $p<0.001$ ) was determined between the regression model and MMSE (Figure 4).

313

314 Fig. 4. A significant correlation was observed between the multivariate linear regression model  
315 and MMSE.

316

317 In the univariate regression analysis, 5 variables in demographics and all variables in the  
 318 mobility performance were associated with cognitive impairment ( $p < 0.20$ ) (Table 3). Two  
 319 demographic variables and 11 mobility performance variables remained in the multivariate  
 320 model suggesting that they are independent predictors (Table 3). These variables were used to  
 321 build regression models. ROC curves for the 3 models were displayed in Figure 5. The AUC for  
 322 Model 1 (demographics alone) was 0.76, with a sensitivity of 44.0%, specificity of 88.6%, and  
 323 accuracy of 72.5% for predicting cognitive impairment. The AUC for Model 2 (demographics +  
 324 daily walking performance) was 0.78, with a sensitivity of 44.0%, specificity of 79.5%, and  
 325 accuracy of 66.7% for predicting cognitive impairment. The highest AUC (0.93) was obtained by  
 326 Model 3 (demographics + daily walking performance + cumulated posture duration + postural-  
 327 transition), with a sensitivity of 72.0%, specificity of 93.2%, and accuracy of 85.5% for  
 328 distinguishing cognitive-impaired cases.

329

330 Table 3. Results of univariate and multivariate logistic regression.

	R <sup>2</sup>	OR	95% CI	<i>p</i> -value
<b>Demographics</b>				
Age	0.190	1.116	1.036 – 1.201	0.004 <sup>^</sup>
Sex	0.136	4.167	1.394 – 12.451	0.011
Height	0.206	0.917	0.862 – 0.975	0.006 <sup>^</sup>
Weight	0.044	0.980	0.952 – 1.008	0.161
BMI	0.001	0.992	0.928 – 1.059	0.800
Had fall in last 12-month	0.038	2.187	0.730 – 6.552	0.162
Duration of HD	0.017	0.940	0.816 – 1.084	0.396
Number of prescription medications	0.031	1.116	0.931 – 1.336	0.235
<b>Cumulated Posture Duration</b>				
Sitting + lying percentage	0.167	1.094	1.022 – 1.172	0.010 <sup>^</sup>
Standing percentage	0.141	0.907	0.838 – 0.982	0.016 <sup>^</sup>
Walking percentage	0.174	0.642	0.441 – 0.935	0.021 <sup>^</sup>
<b>Daily Walking Performance</b>				
Step count	0.158	0.999	0.999 – 1.000	0.027
Number of unbroken walking bout	0.110	0.986	0.971 – 1.001	0.066 <sup>^</sup>
<b>Postural-transition</b>				
Average duration of stand-to-sit transition	0.042	4.515	0.583 – 34.965	0.149
Average duration of sit-to-stand transition	0.078	7.427	0.975 – 56.590	0.053 <sup>^</sup>



Total number of transitions to walk	0.132	0.984	0.968 – 1.000	0.050 <sup>^</sup>
Number of sit-to-walk transition	0.078	0.921	0.841 – 1.008	0.075
Number of stand-to-walk transition	0.136	0.981	0.963 – 1.000	0.051 <sup>^</sup>
Total number of transitions to sit	0.068	0.992	0.983 – 1.001	0.083 <sup>^</sup>
Number of walk-to-sit transition	0.121	0.935	0.880 – 0.994	0.032 <sup>^</sup>
Number of stand-to-sit transition	0.038	0.994	0.984 – 1.003	0.190
Total number of transitions to stand	0.111	0.993	0.986 – 0.999	0.031
Number of sit-to-stand transition	0.051	0.993	0.983 – 1.002	0.133 <sup>^</sup>
Number of walk-to-stand transition	0.130	0.979	0.959 – 1.001	0.056 <sup>^</sup>

331 <sup>^</sup>: Variables remained in the multivariate model

332

333 Fig 5. ROCs of different models for predicting cognitive impairment: Model 1 used

334 “demographics” (AUC = 0.76), Model 2 used a combination of “demographics” and “daily

335 walking performance” (AUC = 0.78), and Model 3 used a combination of “demographics”,

336 “daily walking performance”, “cumulate posture duration”, and “postural-transition” (AUC =

337 0.93).

338

### 339 **Discussions**

340 To our knowledge, this is the first study to investigate the association between mobility

341 performance and cognitive condition in patients with diabetes and ESRD undergoing HD

342 process. The results suggest that although HD patients with and without cognitive impairment

343 have similar motor capacity, those with cognitive impairment have lower mobility performance.

344 We were able to conform our hypothesis that mobility performance metrics during a non-dialysis

345 day could be used as potential digital biomarkers of cognitive impairment among HD patients.

346 Specifically, several mobility performance metrics measurable using a pendant sensor enable

347 significant discrimination between those with and without cognitive impairment with medium

348 effect size (maximum Cohen’s  $d=0.78$ ). In addition, a metric constructed by the combination of

349 demographics and mobility performance metrics yields a significant correlation with large effect

350 size with the MMSE ( $r=0.64$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). By adding mobility performance together with  
351 demographics into the binary logistic regression model, it enables distinguishing between those  
352 with and without cognitive impairment. This combined model yields relatively high sensitivity,  
353 specificity, and accuracy, which is superior to using demographics alone. Our results also  
354 suggest that despite cognitive-impaired HD patients have poor daily walking performance, just  
355 monitoring daily walking performance may not be sufficient to distinguish those with cognitive  
356 impairment. Additional mobility performance metrics, including cumulated posture duration and  
357 postural-transition, could increase the AUC from 0.78 to 0.93 for detection of cognitive-impaired  
358 cases.

359

360 Previous studies investigating association between mobility performance and cognitive  
361 impairment showed that activity level and daily steps are positively associated with cognitive  
362 function in older adults (23-28). Results of this study are in line with the previous studies. They  
363 showed that cognitive-impaired HD patients have lower walking percentage and step count than  
364 cognitive-intact HD patients. Additionally, we found the cognitive-impaired HD patients have  
365 less number of postural-transition than cognitive-intact HD patients during daily living. The  
366 limited number of postural-transition has been identified as a factor which may contribute to the  
367 muscle weakness and activity limitations, causing physical frailty (43, 48). Frailty together with  
368 cognitive impairment (known as ‘cognitive frailty’) has been shown to be a strong and  
369 independent predictor of further cognitive decline over time (49, 50).

370

371 Mobility performance in daily life depends not only on motor capacity, but also on intact  
372 cognitive function and psychosocial factors (51). Studies have shown that cognitive impairment

373 is associated with reduced mobility performance (51-53). However, an individual's scores in  
374 supervised tests are poorly related to mobility performance in real life (51-53). Results of this  
375 study show that among cognitive-intact HD patients, mobility performance is associated with  
376 motor capacity. However among HD patients with cognitive impairment, motor capacity is  
377 poorly related to mobility performance. This demonstrates that cognitive function is a moderator  
378 between motor capacity and mobility performance among patients undergoing HD process. This  
379 is aligned with the study of Feld et al. (54), in which it was demonstrated that gait speed does not  
380 adequately predict whether stroke survivors would be active in the community. Similar  
381 observation was reported by Toosizadeh et al. study (55), in which no agreement between motor  
382 capacity and mobility performance was observed among people with Parkinson's disease, while  
383 a significant agreement was observed among age-matched healthy controls.

384

385 In previous studies, to better link motor capacity with cognitive decline, dual-task walking test  
386 was proposed (56). By adding cognitive challenges into motor task, the dual-task walking speed  
387 can expose cognitive deficits through the evaluation of locomotion. Previous studies have shown  
388 that dual-task walking speed for cognitive-impaired older adults was statistically lower than  
389 cognitive-intact ones among non-dialysis population (57). Surprisingly, we didn't observe  
390 significant between-group difference in our sample. A previous systematic review has pointed  
391 out that older adults with mobility limitation are more likely to prioritize motor performance over  
392 cognitive performance (58). We speculate that because of the poor motor capacity among HD  
393 population, subjects would prioritize motor task over cognitive task. Thus the effect of cognitive  
394 impairment may not be noticeable in this motor-impaired population by dual-task walking speed.

395 If this can be confirmed in the follow up study, it may suggest that dual-task paradigm may not  
396 be a sufficient test to determine cognitive deficit among population with poor motor capacity.

397

398 In this study, we found the cognitive-impaired group had higher percentage of female. This  
399 finding is in line with the previous studies (59, 60). For example, Beam et al. examined gender  
400 differences in incidence rates of any dementia, Alzheimer's disease (AD) alone, and non-

401 Alzheimer's dementia alone in 16926 women and men in the Swedish Twin Registry aged 65+.

402 They reported that incidence rates of any dementia and AD were greater in women than men,  
403 particularly in older ages (age of 80 years and older) (59). Similarly, Wang et al. suggested that  
404 females compared to males showed significantly worse performance in cognitive function (60).

405 In this study, we did not adjust the results by gender because previous studies have demonstrated  
406 that gender does not affect mobility performance in HD population (61-64).

407

408 A major limitation of this study is the relatively low sample size, which could be underpowered  
409 for the clinical conclusion. On the other hand, this study could be considered as a cohort study as  
410 all participants were recruited from the Fahad Bin Jassim Kidney Center of Hamad Medical

411 Corporation, which supports the majority of HD patients in the state of Qatar. All eligible

412 subjects who received HD in this center were offered to participate in this study. Another

413 limitation of this study is that mobility performance metrics were only measured in a single non-

414 dialysis day. We excluded mobility performance monitoring during the dialysis day because we

415 anticipated that data could be biased by the long process of HD (often 4-hour). Patients are

416 holding a sitting or lying posture during the HD process. They also suffer the post-dialysis

417 fatigue on the dialysis day. In addition, the measured single-day mobility performance may not

418 be able to accurately represent the condition of HD patients (including both weekdays and  
419 weekends). Several previous literature reported three or more days of accelerometry data may  
420 more reliably and accurately model mobility performance in adult population (65, 66). It would  
421 be interesting to investigate whether multiple days of monitoring could model mobility  
422 performance more accurately in HD patients in the future study, since HD patients may have  
423 fluctuation in mobility performance due to post-dialysis fatigue and change of renal function  
424 (67).

425

## 426 **Conclusion**

427 This study suggests that mobility performance metrics remotely measurable using a pendant  
428 sensor during a non-dialysis day could be served as potential digital biomarkers of cognitive  
429 impairment among HD patients. Interestingly, motor capacity metrics, even assessed under the  
430 cognitively demanding condition, are not sensitive to cognitive impairment among HD patients.  
431 Results suggest that despite cognitive-impaired HD patients have poor daily walking  
432 performance, just monitoring daily walking performance may not be sufficient to determine  
433 cognitive impairment cases. Additional mobility performance metrics such as cumulated posture  
434 duration and postural-transition can improve the discriminating power. Further researches are  
435 encouraged to evaluate the ability of sensor-derived mobility performance metrics to determine  
436 early cognitive impairment or dementia, as well as to track potential change in cognitive  
437 impairment over time in response to HD process. Future studies are also recommended for the  
438 potential use of sensor-derived metrics to determine modifiable factors, which may contribute in  
439 cognitive decline among HD patients.

440

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444

445 **Conflict of Interest Statement**

446 None.

447

448 **Authors' Contributions**

449 H.Z. wrote the manuscript and contributed in data analysis. C.W. contributed in drafting the  
450 manuscript. A.H., R.I., and T.T. contributed in data collection. F.A.-A. and B.N. contributed in  
451 study design, securing funding, and supervising the study. All authors contributed in  
452 interpretation of results and critical revision of the study.

453

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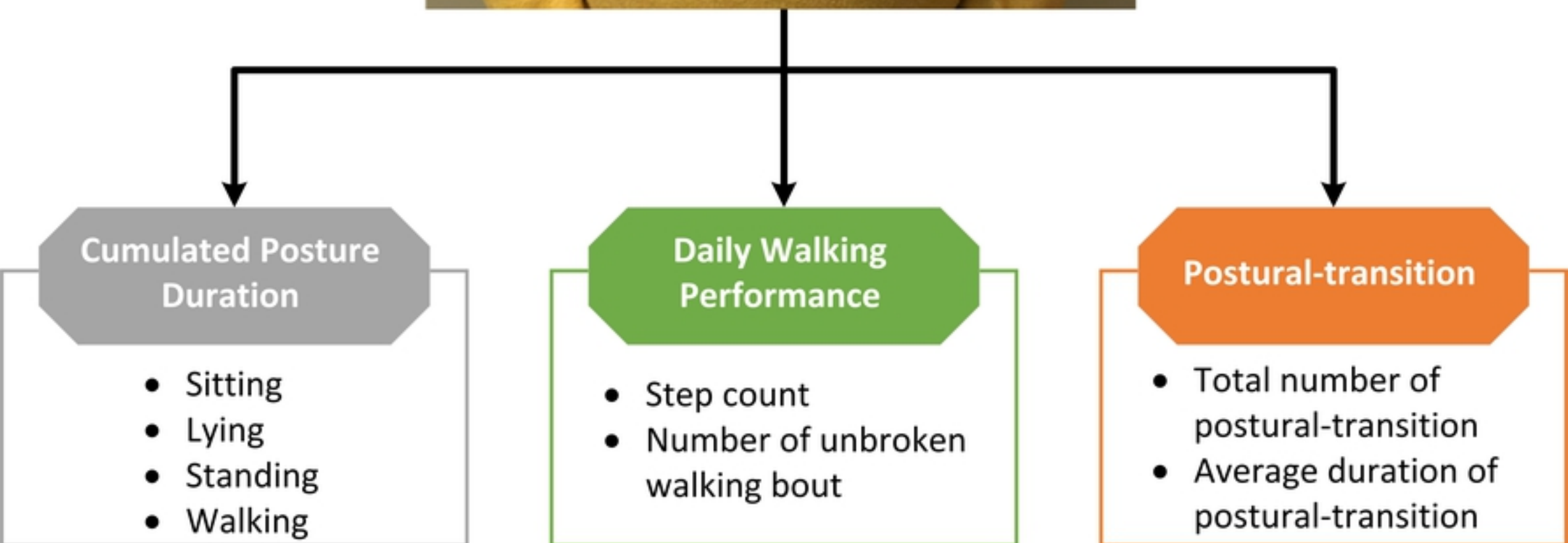
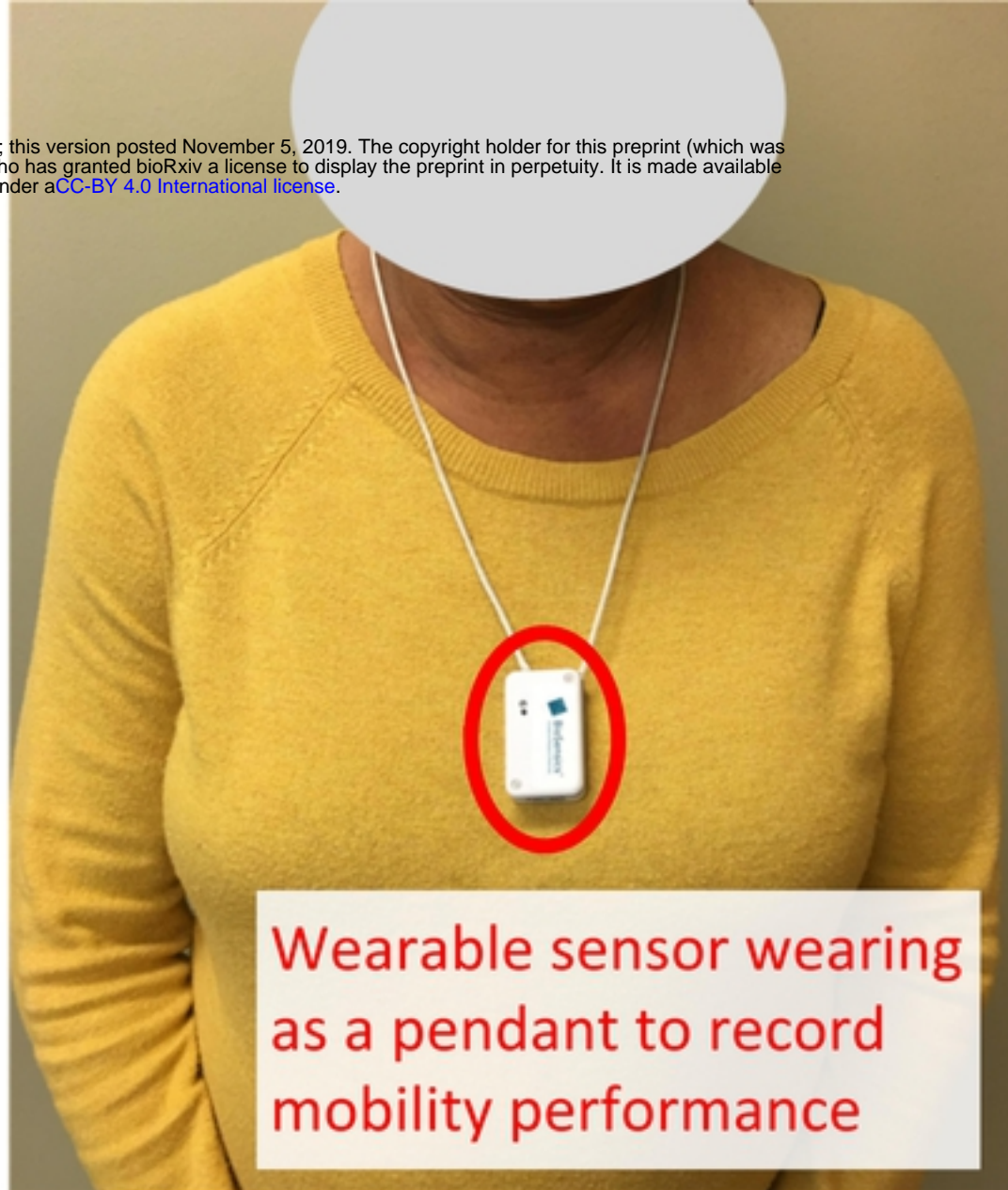


Figure 1



■ Cognitive-Intact    ■ Cognitive-Impaired

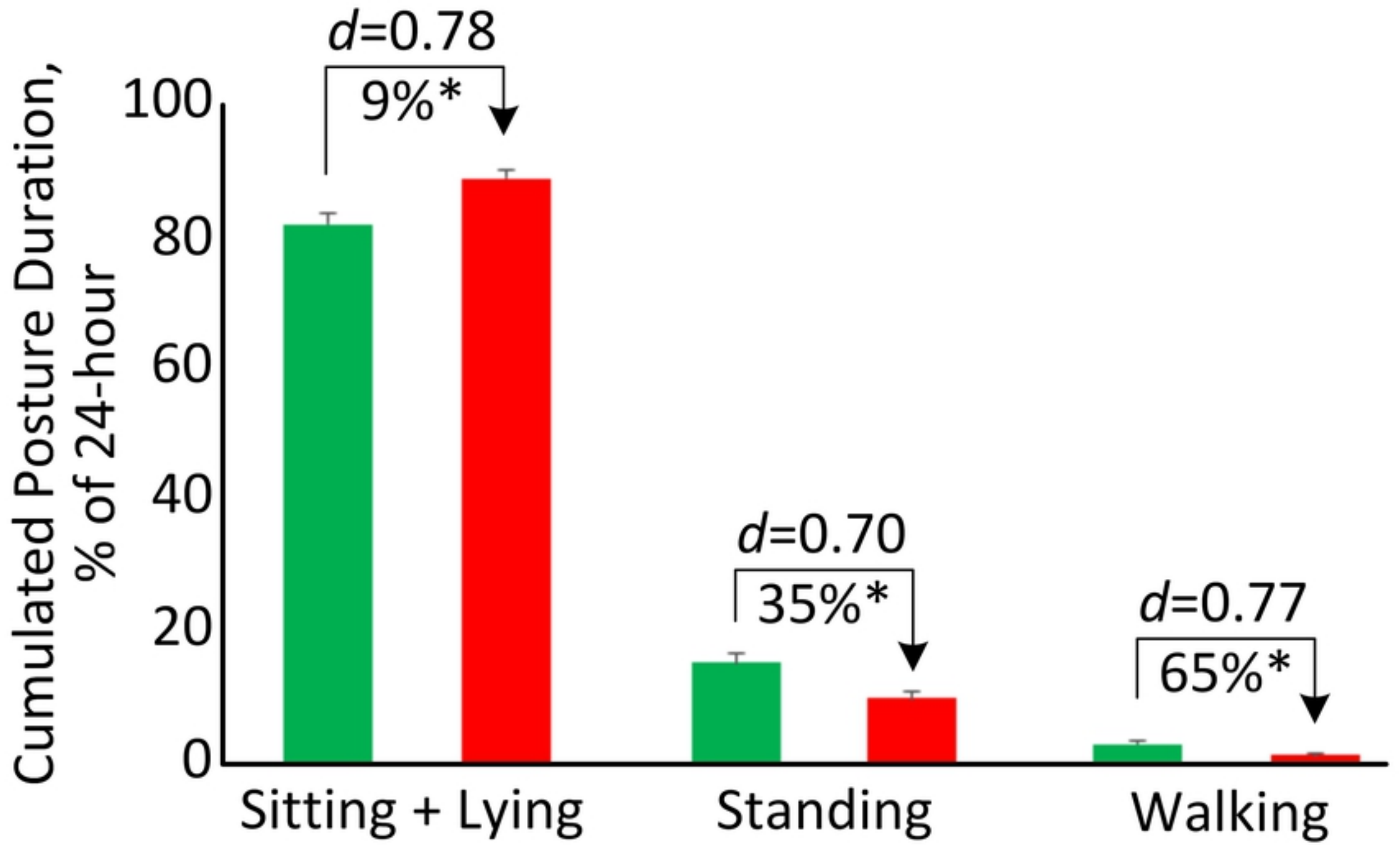


Figure 2

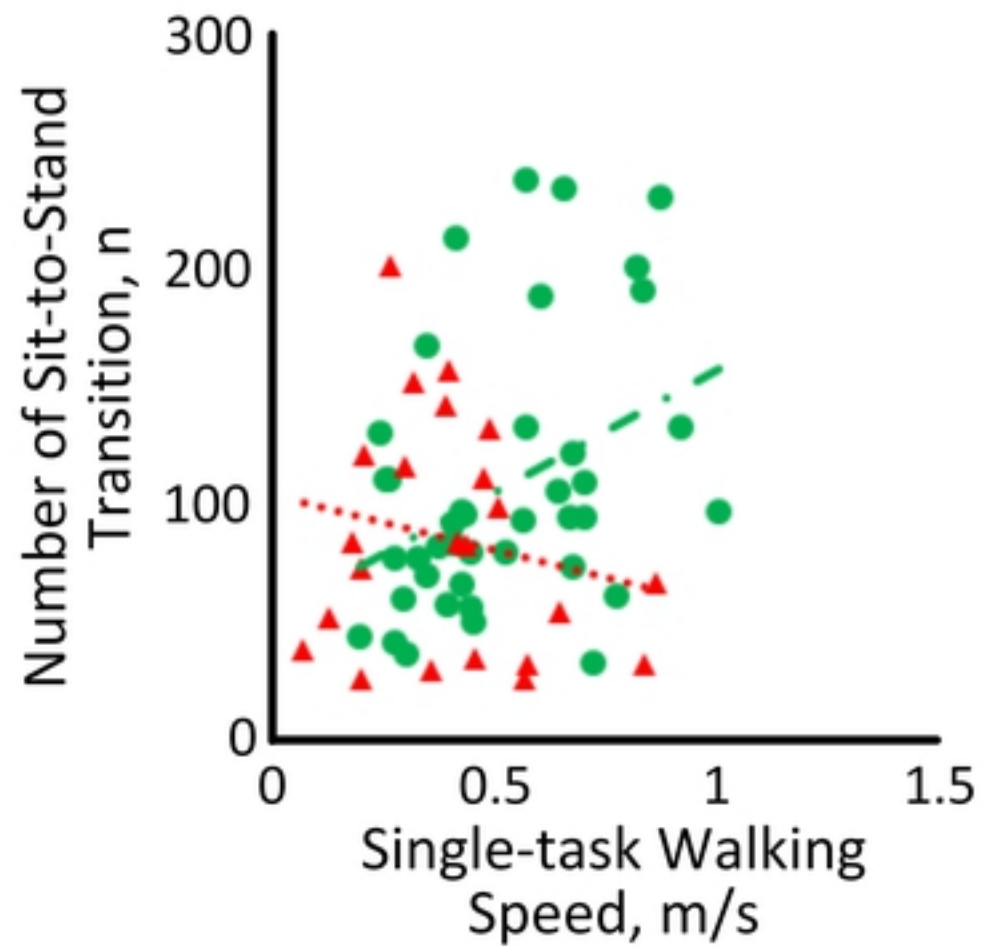
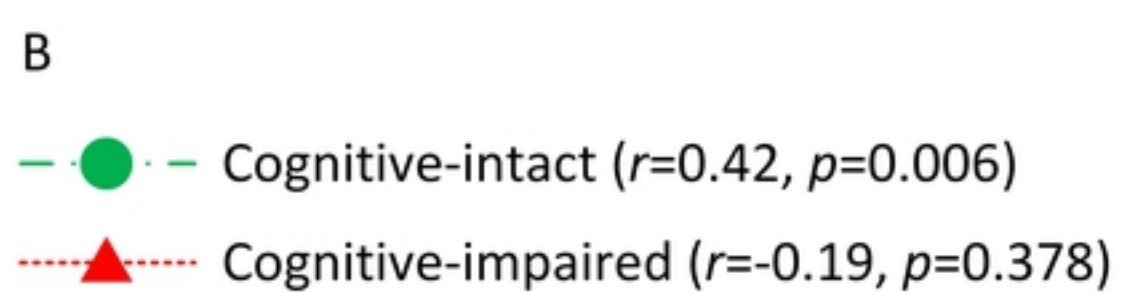
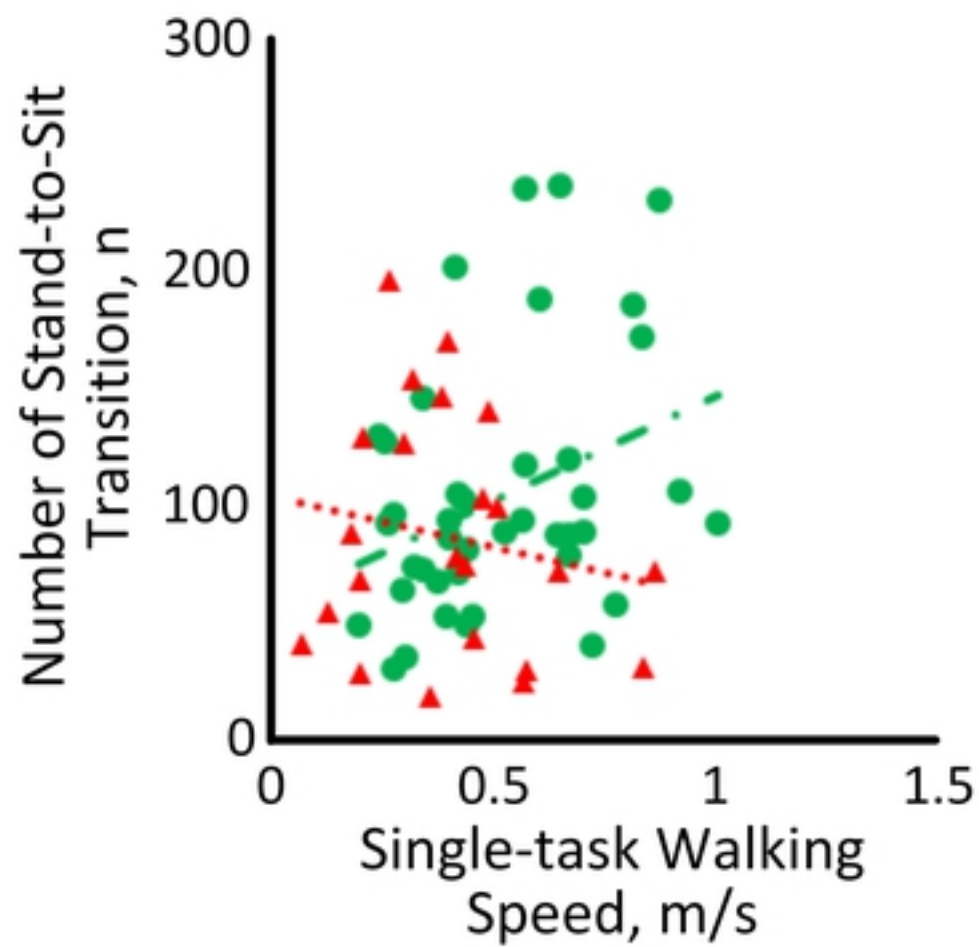
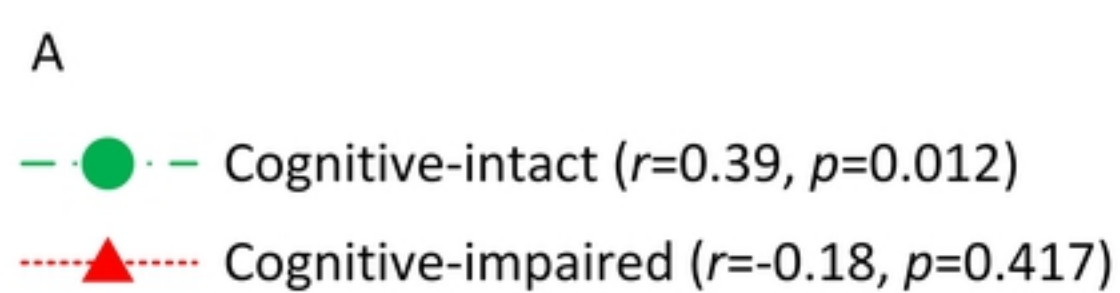


Figure 3

Multivariate Linear  
Regression Model

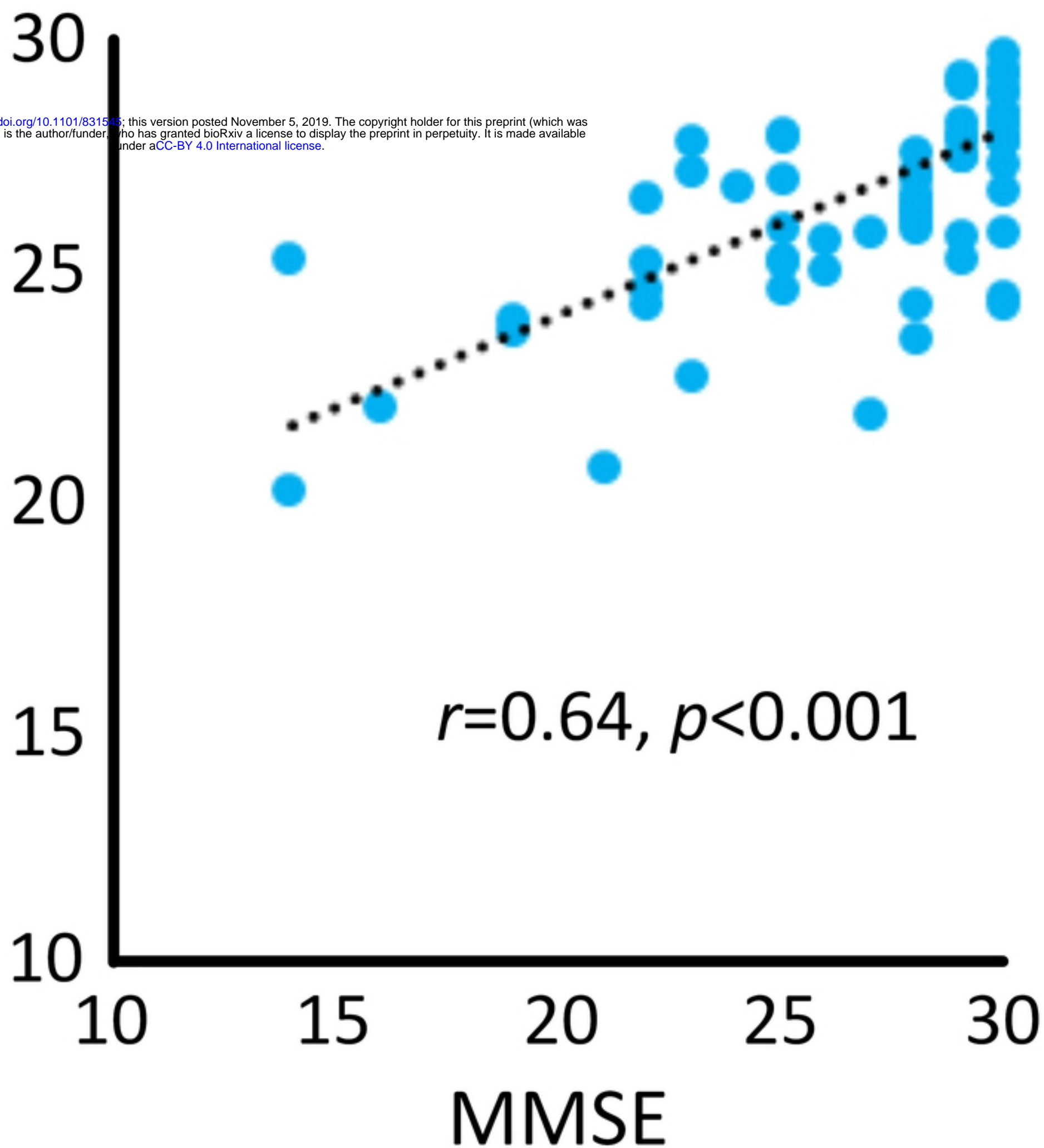


Figure 4



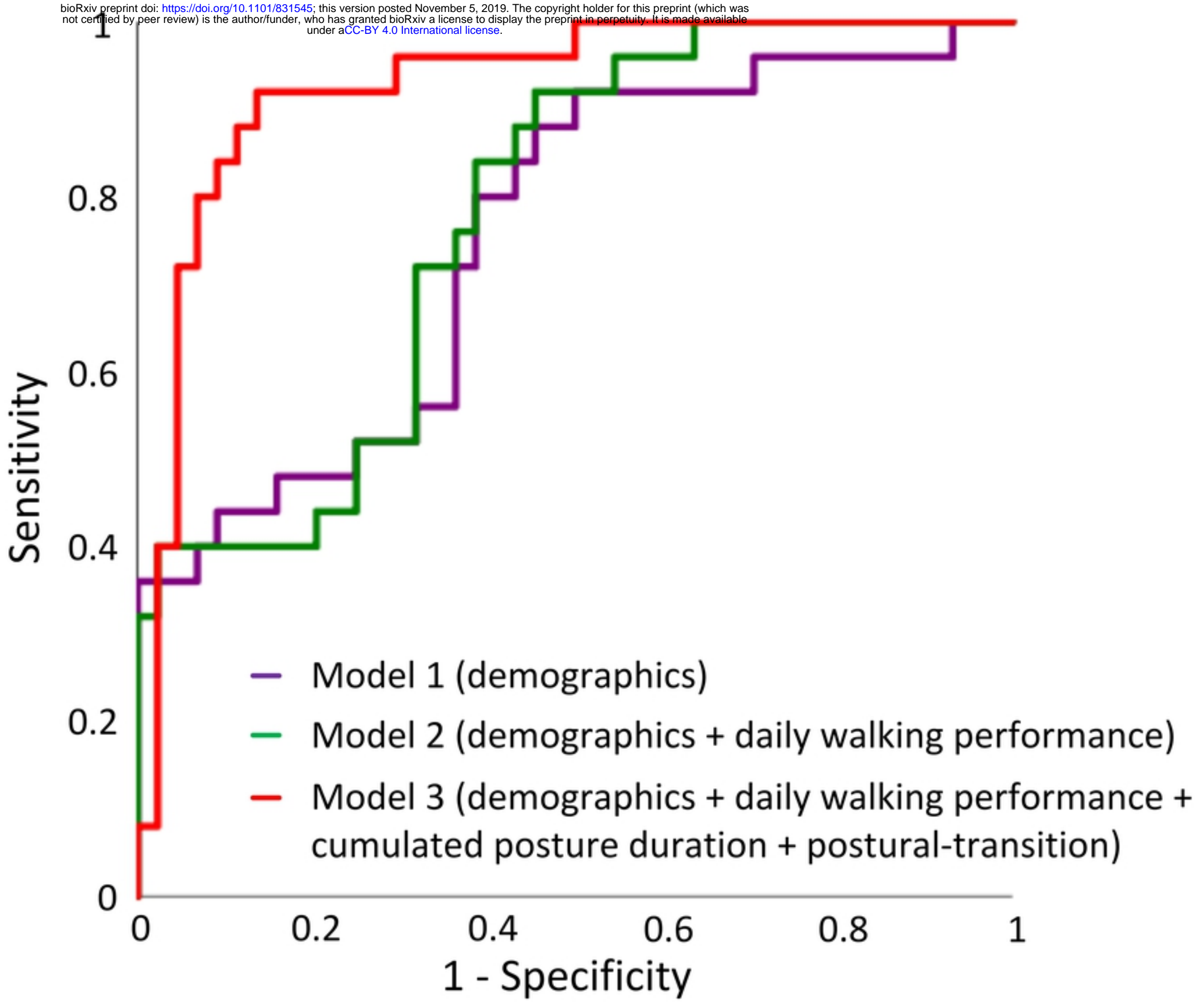


Figure 5